HANDFULS ON PURPOSE - VOLUME 1

by James and Lee, Robert Smith

Smith's collection of sermon outlines, Bible study notes, and spiritual illustrations for preachers and teachers, opening with detailed notes on the typological significance of the Old Testament tabernacle. A practical resource for Christian ministry preparation.

98 Chapters

Table of Contents

1. Preface (12 Volumes)
2. Spiritual Patterns: Notes On The Tabernacle
3. The Setting Up
4. The Coverings
5. The Pillar Of Cloud
6. The Brazen Altar
7. The Laver
8. The Door
9. Prove Your Own Selves
10. The Altar Of Incense The Altar Of Incense
11. The Table Of Shewbread.
12. The Candlestick
13. The Vail
14. The Holy Of Holies
15. The Cherubim On The Mercy-Seat
16. The Priesthood
17. The Great Day Of Atonement
18. Expository Outlines: Old Testament
19. Genesis
20. Exodus
21. Leviticus
22. Numbers
23. Deuteronomy
24. Joshua
25. Judges
26. Ruth
27. 1 Samuel
28. 2 Samuel
29. 1 Kings
30. 2 Kings
31. 1 Chronicles
32. 2 Chronicles
33. Ezra
34. Nehemiah
35. Esther
36. Job
37. Psalm
38. Proverbs
39. Ecclesiastes

40. Song Of Solomon
41. Isaiah
42. Jeremiah
43. Ezekiel
44. Daniel
45. Hosea
46. Joel
47. Amos
48. Jonah
49. Micah
50. Nahum
51. Habakkuk
52. Zephaniah
53. Haggai
54. Zechariah
55. Malachi
56. Expository Outlines: New Testament
57. Matthew
58. Mark
59. Luke
60. John
61. Acts
62. Romans
63. 1 Corinthians
64. 2 Corinthians
65. Galatians
66. Ephesians
67. Colossians
68. 1 Thessalonians
69. 2 Thessalonians
70. 1 Timothy
71. 2 Timothy
72. Titus
73. Philemon
74. Hebrews
75. James
76. 1 Peter
77. 2 Peter
78. 1 John
79. 2 John
80. 3 John
81. Jude

82. Revelation
83. Expository Studies
84. The Penitential Psalm
85. The Golden Passional Of The Old Testament
86. The Death Of Christ
87. Gospel Studies
88. Studies For Believers
89. Scripture Couplets
90. Ten "Fear Nots" Of The Bible
91. Some Old Parables
92. Bible Readings
93. Fruitfulness
94. A Bible Christian
95. Visited And Redeemed
96. Visited And Redeemed
97. The Image Of God
98. The Church

Preface (12 Volumes)

Preface

These Handfuls have been sent out after much prayerful study of the Word in the hope that they might be helpful to some busy workers for the Master who may not have much leisure for study. In these days when there is so much to tempt us away from the simplicity of the Truth it is needful for us to have our own minds and hearts well fortified with the deep and powerful thoughts of God. Other facts and things may interest and amuse, but we must have the "sincere milk of the Word" if we are to grow. Everything that awakens and increases our appreciation of the Word of God is of immense value to our spiritual life, but our love for and delight in the Word will only be in proportion as we go on to experience its mighty power in our lives. We are convinced that the way to stir up and deepen the desires of others after Christ and the Scriptures is to present those God-given truths which meet the needs of an individual soul in all its various states and conditions. No book in all the world comes within a thousand miles of the Bible in this great and glorious mission, "Preach the Word." That there should be a growing demand from an ever-widening circle of interested workers for such plain spiritual teaching is hopeful and gratifying. "Points" and "Outlines" are but for the aid of the memory, and should be reckoned only of secondary importance. In preparing these notes we have earnestly endeavoured to get into the heart-thoughts of the Word, so that weary workers might find food for the strengthening of their tired and hungry hearts.

We count it a great privilege and honour to be in this way a co-worker with any toiler in the Master's vineyard. If we can but help to sharpen another worker's weapons for the fight, or carry a cup of cold water to those who are bearing the burden and heat of the day, we will rejoice, and do rejoice.

JAMES SMITH.

Preface (2) "Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth" (James 3:5).

Little did we think when, with fear and trembling, we launched the first small monthly part, that it would so soon grow into so many volumes. For this special token of the Master's favour we are sincerely thankful. It is an unspeakable delight for us to know that very many weary gleaners have found therein "Handfuls on Purpose." All who choose to glean here, are as much at liberty to take home for their own use what they find as Ruth was, when she gleaned among the sheaves in the fields of Boaz.

We esteem it a great privilege to have the opportunity of ministering in any small degree, to the encouragement and usefulness of the lowliest of Christ's servants, believing that "inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me" (Matthew 25:40). In this volume, which we trust will also be found helpful in "the quiet hour," we have once more humbly attempted to fulfil the Apostle's injunction, "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things" (Galatians 6:8). What we have prayerfully received, we

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JAMES SMITH

Preface (5)

It is with deep thankfulness to the Giver of every good gift that we send forth this Fifth Series of "Handfuls on Purpose." It is very gratifying to us that the interest taken in them has been steadily growing since the first; and as they have been the means of leading many Christian workers into a closer study of the Word for themselves, we rejoice, as this was one of the chief objects of their publication. We were much cheered lately on receiving a note from a Pastor abroad who has

evidently been greatly blessed and helped by them. Some of the Press notices have been a little amusing. In one review of Volume Four, the writer says, "This is another compilation of sermon outlines." In the sense of being gathered out of other books, they are not compiled. As far as the Author knows, only one Outline in these five Volumes has been copied, and the Author's name is given. Not that we would in the least disparage others, but that is outside of our present purpose. Our aim has been to examine those portions of Scripture in the light of the teaching of the whole Bible, and where opportunity offers to emphasise those deeper truths which have been blessed to so many at Keswick and other Conventions. Another reviewer has termed these notes "Skeletons." We almost shudder at the name. Whatever they are, we trust they are not flesh less, bloodless, breathless, lifeless skeletons. They are sent out as "living creatures," on a ministry of love and mercy to needy souls. We fondly hope that they may be what the Editor of Joyful News says they are, "Handfuls of the kind of wheat which makes bread for hungry souls."

JAMES SMITH

Preface (6) This Sixth Volume will, we trust, be found quite as fresh and helpful as any of its companions. As our readers are aware, their aim is more to be spiritual than critical or historical. We can lay no claim to the critical faculty, but such as we have we desire to give. There are abundance of other books, easily accessible, where a careful criticism of the text can be had. What we are concerned about is to encourage the reader to dig deeper down into those rich veins of spiritual thought that abound beneath the surface of this wonderful Book, that stimulate and enrich the inner man. After all that we can say, we feel that we have just slightly scratched the surface of the field. But so rich is the soil here, that even a scratch reveals some sparkling gems beneath. The treasures hid in this field are not meant to be discovered by chance; they yield themselves plentifully to the hand of the diligent seeker. "Seek and ye shall find."

JAMES SMITH

Preface (7)

It is with deep thankfulness to the Giver of every good gift that we send forth this Seventh Series of "Handfuls on Purpose. " It is very gratifying to us that the interest taken in them has been steadily growing since the first; and as they have been the means of leading many Christian workers into a closer study of the Word for themselves, we rejoice, as this was one of the chief objects of their publication.

We hoped at first to publish, perhaps, four volumes of these Outlines Studies, thinking that they might be quite sufficient to cover the whole Bible in the manner in which we had purposed to deal with it. But this is now Volume Seven, and we have only managed to get about half through the Book. Although we have made some gallant attempts to get over the ground more quickly, yet, somehow, the further we go, the attractions to linger becomes growingly powerful.

We should like, if the Lord will, to issue other three volumes, and so complete the blessed task that has been on our heart to do unto His Name. But perhaps this will depend on whether our many friends, who have hitherto received them gladly, will care to continue their favour to such an extent. For the many grateful expressions that reach us of the helpfulness of these books, we seek to praise Him, from whom all blessings flow.

JAMES SMITH.

Preface (8) With the eighth volume I feel constrained to offer my sincerest thanks to all who have so heartily assisted is making these books known to those who have been longing for such help as they afford, and who have been in turn truly thankful to God for them. Testimonies as to their usefulness have been innumerable.

One of the best proofs of their suitability to meet a felt need is the ever increasing demand for them by those who are busy in the thick of the fight. The assurance that many Christian workers have found them strengthening, and refreshing to their own souls, has brought much refreshing to the heart of the author. It was with this object in view that they were first offered for publication. It is but a small and ordinary matter to present thoughts to the mind, but it is, in our way of thinking, a very great matter to be able in any measure to put some freshness and inspiration into a weary, languid heart. The Word of God, as revealed in the "Scriptures of Truth," is the infallible weapon of the Holy Spirit. Our strength and our victory lie in getting into the citadel of God's mind, and in allowing and reckoning on the current of His will flowing through us, and so accomplishing His own merciful and gracious purposes with us. In His will, in His work, and in His way there is no failure and no defeat.

Brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His all-conquering might. Take that sword, the Word of God, which is the only sword the Holy Spirit believes in and uses, "Praying always with all prayer in the Spirit, and supplication for all saints, and for me."

Yours sincerely in His service,

JAMES SMITH

Preface (9)

It is with deep thankfulness to the Giver of every good gift that we send forth this Ninth Series of "Handfuls on Purpose. " It is very gratifying to us that the interest taken in them has been steadily growing from the first; and as they have been the means of leading many Christian workers into a closer study of the Word for themselves, we rejoice, as this was one of the chief objects of their publication. In preparing these "Handfuls" we have sought to get at the heart-thoughts of the Word of God, so that weary workers and busy men might find food for the strengthening of their faith, and assisting in their work for the Master.

Without making any claim of literary or critical value, we have sought to give original matter, very little if any in the whole series having been copied.

We purpose, if the Lord will, adding one more Volume to the Series, and thus in measure encompassing the task on our heart, of going through the entire Book.

We esteem it a great privilege to have the opportunity of ministering in any small degree, to the encouragement and usefulness of the lowliest of Christ's servants, believing that "inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me" (Matthew 25:40). In this volume, which we trust will also be found helpful in "the quiet hour, " we have once more humbly attempted to fulfil the Apostle's injunction, "Let him that is taught in the Word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things" (Galatians 6:6). What we have prayerfully received, we

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JAMES SMITH

Preface (10)

HANDFULS ON PURPOSE, Volume IX, was written before I left Scotland, fifteen years ago. I am thankful that after the lapse of these years I have been permitted to add one more to the number. In my own manner I was hoping to get through the Wonderful Book with this volume; but while I have managed to get to Malachi in the Old Testament Section, I have only got, with 51 Separate Studies, from Corinthians to Titus in the New Testament Series. I felt compelled to halt at the gate of "Hebrews, " partly for lack of space.

It is now about 25 years since these "Handfuls" first appeared, and from the fact that they still have the freshness of youth in their face is ample proof that while men's words and thoughts may in time grow stale and loose their vitality, the living and life-sustaining truth unveiled in God's Word, like the living Christ Himself, is the "same yesterday, today, and for ever. " In these "Expository Outlines" we have diligently and prayerfully sought to honour the Lord, by first receiving, and then endeavouring to make known the discoveries made "in the volume of The Book. " May the blessing of the Lord that maketh rich, attend all who are pleased to make use of these "Notes" for their own spiritual growth in grace, as well as in their more public service for the Master. I am now in my 80th year, and can praise Him that I still know something of the holy heart-burn that comes while "He talks with us by the way, and while He opens to us the Scriptures" (Luke 24:32). I am thankful to the "Giver of All" to know that in His great goodness, through His Holy Spirit, He has been making these "Outline Studies" helpful to many. I wish also to thank the many friends who have been doing good service in making these books known to needy and weary workers, and especially do I offer my sincere thanks to the Publishers, who have been so faithful, so considerate, and generous in their dealings with the Author.

It is a God-honouring work to "minister seed to the sower, and bread for eating, that their giving may yield a plentiful harvest" (2 Corinthians 9:10).

Yours in the Eternal Fellowship.

JAMES SMITH.

Nhill, Victoria,

Australia.

Preface (11) My first introduction to "Handfuls on Purpose" must have been as far back as 1907, and was on this wise: The late Sir Harry Veitch, the eminent Horticulturist, not only carried on his own great business, but was also interested in Christian work. As President of a flourishing Mission Hall in Chelsea, London, he had to give occasional addresses and Bible Readings, and having little time for preparation, and longing for some book assistance, sought the advice of the late Alfred Holness, who at once recommended "Handfuls on Purpose." Purchasing a copy, he found in it just the help he needed, so that he procured all the volumes then and subsequently issued, and took a real delight in recommending and presenting copies to others.

These are days of whirl and rush, leaving little time for original study, hence the value to busy preachers of such Homiletical helps as "Handfuls." Then there are many who lack the creative faculty, and in consequence find it extremely difficult to get new addresses. Such can do wonders with just a bare outline. When the late Pastor Smith began the preparation of "Handfuls" he never imagined that so many volumes would be required to cover the Bible, and that he would not be spared to complete the task. Shortly after the issue of his last volume-Vol. X-he was called to higher service. When the Publishers requested me to prepare these, the concluding volumes, I viewed the task as a great privilege, yet a serious responsibility. Re-studying "Handfuls" in an effort to capture Pastor Smith's spirit and plan, I have prayerfully and carefully prepared these volumes.

Living an exceedingly busy life, the preparation of these books has nevertheless been a task that has brought great blessing to my own soul. Though the preparation of these volumes has been accomplished amidst much other work, the actual studies it contains are the fruit of many years' study, the notes of which I had preserved. That fellow-workers in the Gospel might be helped in their own private studies, and in preparation for Gospel ministry by these volumes is the ardent prayer of the author. What an honour and privilege to be a helper of others! In the New Testament Outlines, the following letters indicate the various renderings: R.V., Revised Version; W., Weymouth; M., Moffatt Version; 20th Cent., Twentieth Century New Testament; J.N.D., J. N. Darby's excellent Version; C. & H., Conybeare & Howson's Version; Way, Way's most valuable translation; R., Rotherham; Y., Young's Literal Translation.

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Chapter 2

Spiritual Patterns: Notes On The Tabernacle

Spiritual Patterns.

NOTES ON THE TABERNACLE.

Chapter 3

The Setting Up

THE SETTING UP.

Exodus 25:1-9; Exodus 30:11-16; Hebrews 9.

In seeking to give an exposition of the Tabernacle we do not wish to dogmatise, but humbly to follow the method of Paul as seen in his letter to the Hebrews. In referring there to the Tabernacle and the Priesthood he reveals his method of interpretation by such keynote sentences as the following: "The shadow of heavenly things" (Hebrews 8:5), "The patterns of things in the heavens" (Hebrews 9:23), "The figures of the true" (Hebrews 9:24), "A shadow of good things to come" (Hebrews 10:1). Seeing that these things were shadows, patterns, and figures of heavenly or spiritual things yet to come, I think we have sufficient warrant for taking all the spiritual teaching out of them we possibly can. The question is not, Does the Tabernacle teach this or that New Testament truth? but, Do you not see this or that spiritual truth prefigured in it?

All have not the same eye, because all have not the same light and experience. The deeper our Christian experience is the more deeply will our eyes penetrate into these dim shadows, and the more shall we praise the God who showed Moses the pattern on the Mount.

Let us come to these types, then, as Simeon came to the Temple "seeking Jesus." And unless our eyes are holden, as were those of the disciples on the way to Emmaus, we shall surely see Him, and our heart shall rejoice.

I. The Divine Request. "Let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them" (Exodus 25:8). Who? Those who had been redeemed from bondage and separated for Himself. God can dwell only with a separated people. But notice that this proposal originated with God Himself. He so loves those whom He hath saved that He desires to dwell among them. This is but a fresh manifestation of a long-standing purpose in the heart of God. The great craving of the divine heart is to get an abode with man. He dwelt with man in the Garden, then in the Tabernacle, then in the Temple, then in the Person of His Son, now in believers. "Know ye not that ye are the Temple of God, and that God dwelled in you?"(1 Corinthians 3:16).

II. The Pattern. "Look that thou make them after the pattern which was showed thee on the Mount" (Exodus 25:40). It was because these things had a spiritual meaning that they were to be made according to a heavenly pattern. The plan of the Tabernacle, like the plan of salvation, was all of God. Man's opinions and reasonings were entirely excluded by the "Thus saith the Lord." The whole thing was a Revelation. Rationalism could add nothing to what was revealed on the Mount. The scheme of redemption has been showed us on the Mount of Calvary. There you and I may see Him, who is the Pattern for our lives.

III. The Materials. Where did these pilgrims dwelling in a desert get all the rich and rare materials necessary for such a costly structure? "The Lord knew that they would need these things, so He gave them all they required before they left Egypt" (Exodus 12:36). When the Lord's people are

put into the possession of riches it is because the Lord hath need of them. They "offered willingly." Love is always liberal. If every redeemed one was offering to God what they have there would be no lack, no need of Church bazaars, or such questionable make-shifts (Acts 4:34). Their liberality was so great that Moses had to restrain them (Exodus 36:6). Instead of the people of God being restrained in these days, every art and dodge is being used to constrain them even to give a little.

IV. The Principal Workman. "See, I have called Bezaleel, and have filled him with the Spirit of God" (Exodus 31:1-2). Bezaleel means "In the shadow of God." How suggestive his character-in the shadow of God. His work-in the Spirit of God-filled with wisdom and understanding in all manner of workmanship, that is, all the workmanship needed to accomplish the mind and will of God. What a beautiful type of the Holy Spirit, the great Overseer, in this present dispensation during the building of the greater spiritual Temple, "an habitation of God" (Ephesians 2:22). Bezaleel, like the Holy Spirit, gave to "every man his work," and not only that, but also imparted to each workman the wisdom needed to make his work acceptable to God. Only that which we do under the guidance of God's Spirit will be pleasing unto Him, and fit for a place in the great Temple. Bezaleel alone had the right to devise (Exodus 35:32). The Holy Spirit of God is sovereign in His work. We cannot limit the Holy One to old ruts and forms. "The wind bloweth where it listeth" (John 3:8). The work of the Tabernacle, like Christian work, had many different phases, but was all done for the glory of God under one guiding Spirit.

V. The Foundation. Seeing that this house was to be typical of heavenly and eternal things, we may be sure that something very special will be seen about the foundation. In Exodus 30 we see that every man had to give half a shekel as an atonement for his soul. In Exodus 38 we find that this "atonement money," the price of souls, was to be made into sockets, in which the boards of the Tabernacle were to rest. The sockets formed the foundation, so that the Tabernacle literally stood upon "Atonement." Peter perhaps had this fact in view when he said, "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold,.. but with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:18-19). The Tabernacle had no standing apart from the atoning price of souls; neither has the Church of Christ, the House of God, any foundation at all apart from the atoning, precious blood. To deny the redeeming power of Christ's death is to deny the only foundation laid by God upon which it is possible to build true worship and acceptable service. "Other foundation can no man lay" (1 Corinthians 3:11). "All other ground is sinking sand."

VI. The Boards. As we have seen the foundation represents the atoning work of Christ. The boards resting on and fixed in the foundation we may take to typify the believer's relationship to Christ and to one another. Each board was fifteen feet long and twenty-seven inches broad, furnished with a tenon by which it laid hold of the silver socket (Hebrew for tenon means hand). The history of these boards may serve to illustrate the experience of many a soul. See them- 1. Cut Down. Saul had this experience while on his way to Damascus, severed from his old ways and works.

2. Dried Up. The old sap of selfishness and carnality must be dried up before much good work can be wrought on us or in us. David knew about this when he cried, "Thy hand was heavy upon me. My moisture is turned into the drought of summer" (Psalms 32:4).

3. Cleansed. It is not enough to be cut off from the old life, everything about us that would hinder us from filling a place in the House of God.

4. Clothed. These boards were not only cleansed, but covered with gold. A new beauty was put upon them; so when the sinner has been cleansed he is clothed upon with the beauty of the Lord. "The righteousness of God, which is unto all and upon all them that believe" (Romans 3:22).

5. Fitly Framed Together. When planted in the foundation they were closely joined one to another. On the foundation alone could they be united together. True spiritual union can only come through our being joined together in Christ. There is a great cry for union in these days. Many of the boards want the union without the foundation."All one in Christ." Every board resting on the sockets of atonement had a point of contact and fellowship one with the other. Why should it not be so with every believer in Christ?

VII. The Bars. These strong bars encircled the golden boards like the arms of the Almighty, keeping them straight on the foundation and close to one another. What a picture of God's care over those who rest upon the atoning work of Christ! Kept by the power of God! Every board had three rings, through which the bars ran. Each believer has a threefold connection with the keeping power of God: Faith, Hope, Love-three golden rings clasping the threefold sufficiency of the three-one God, viz., "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost" (2 Corinthians 13:14).

VIII. The Setting Up. "On the first day of the first month thou shalt set up the Tabernacle" (Exodus 40:2). So you see the Tabernacle was set up on "New Year's Day." It was a new beginning for them, because there was now to be a new order of things. Everything had to be set up and put in order before the God of Glory could come and make His abode with them. So is it still. All we are and have must be set up before God if we would have the mighty filling of His Holy Spirit. One vessel unconsecrated would hinder the divine indwelling. But when all was given up to God, and everything set in order before Him, He did fulfil His Word and manifest His sanctifying presence. It is always a new start when God comes by His Spirit and possesses the Temple of our body. When the glory of His presence filled the Tabernacle every vessel, curtain, board, and pin were sanctified and made holy. His Holy Spirit in us sanctifies and makes holy every gift, faculty, and member we possess. The ten days' experience of the disciples in the upper room also correspond to the setting up of the Tabernacle, in that there followed the powerful purifying presence of God. A new beginning was then made, a new order of things established, of which all believers have been made partakers.

IX. The Purpose. The Tabernacle was not set up as an ornament nor as an exhibition of human skill, but as a sanctuary, a holy place for God. It was "God's House." Every Christian is to be "God's House." "Ye are the Temple of God" (1 Corinthians 3:16). We have been set up upon the sure foundation, not that we might be saved only, but that we might become the habitation of God. The Tabernacle had three courts-the outer, the holy, and the most holy. There are three parts in man-the body, soul, and spirit. It is in the inmost court that the Spirit of God dwells. If He has possession of our spirit, then all else will be yielded up to Him. But this tent in the wilderness was also to be a witness. It is called "The Tabernacle of Witness." Like the Church of God, it was a witness in the wilderness to the reality, power, mercy, and holiness of God. But what constituted it a witness? The presence of God. Until God possessed it it was no witness for Him. Here we have the secret of true witness-bearing. We can only be witnesses for God in proportion as we are filled with God. It is not you the world needs, it is the God that's in you. "Greater is He that is in you than

he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). If the Holy Ghost is not filling us our testimony is but empty prattle. "Ye (not your tongues) are My witnesses" (Isaiah 43:10). "Ye are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14).

Chapter 4

The Coverings

THE COVERINGS.

Exodus 25:1-5; Exodus 26:1-14.

The coverings of the Tabernacle were four in number, each one different from the other, and may represent four different views or aspects of the character and work of Him whose name is Wonderful, just as we have in the Gospels four independent records of the one Person, Christ. Each Gospel, like each curtain, is complete in itself, but all are needed to give us a full-toned testimony of Himself. In the "badger's skin" covering we see in Matthew's Gospel Christ as a King in disguise; in the covering of "rams' skins" dyed red we have in Mark's Gospel Christ as the suffering Servant. In the third covering of "goats' hair" (white) we may see in the Gospel of Luke Christ as the Son of Man, pure and holy, obedient and pleasing to God. In the innermost covering of "fine-twined linen" we recognise in the Gospel of John Christ the Son of God, and the image of the Invisible One. Let us look at these separately, and as we look may the Holy Spirit take the things which are Christ's, and show them to us.

I. The Covering of Fine-twined Linen. This gorgeous covering of blue, scarlet, and purple, with its cherubim interwoven, was in ten pieces, perhaps having reference to the ten commandments, and was laid over the golden boards and formed the roof of the house, or, as it is called, the "covering of the Tabernacle." Christ is here exhibited in all the perfection of His glorious character. Note the colours-

1. It was Blue. This points our eyes to the heavens. How calm and impressive is the deep blue of Heaven. Clouds may obscure it, but nothing can pollute it. It is high above all. No human eye can pierce it. It is illimitable, unchangeable, and eternal. How like the divine nature of the Son of Man, how like Him who was with the Father before the world was! In Christ we see this uncreated yet visible glory, the deep blue of unfathomable divinity.

2. It was Scarlet. This colour constrains us to look downward and think of the "red earth" from which man at first was made. If the blue tells of Christ's divinity, then the scarlet proclaims Him human. The one points to Him as the Son of God, the other as the Son of Man. The hunger, weariness, and tears of our blessed Lord tell how truly human He was.

3. It was Purple. Where shall we look for this? This is a new colour formed by mixing together the blue and the scarlet. The union of these two colours forms a third and distinct one. How beautiful! Christ is divine, Christ is human, and Christ is both in one distinct Person! In the purple, then, we behold our Lord in His mediatorial glory, the Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.

4. It was Inwrought with Cherubim. Perhaps this may signify that He is Lord also over the angels, or, as I am more inclined to think, they represent His own redeemed people, so closely united to Him that they become part of Himself, "bone of His bone" (Genesis 2:23). The Church was

interwoven with the character of Christ in the purpose of God before the world was, "He was the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8). Wonderful thought! Oh, the unsearchable riches of His grace, "Chosen in Him before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4).

II. The Covering of Goats' Hair. This covering was pure white, and was laid over and rested on the first one of fine-twined linen. May we not see here the spotless holiness of the Man Christ Jesus, one fit to come into contact with and even to rest on the awful holiness and righteousness of God. But this curtain may also suggest to us the character and privilege of the believer. Made white through the blood of the Lamb, and resting in fellowship with Him, who is both God and Man in one Person for ever, in heavenly places with Christ Jesus, even now beholding His glory. Purity only can have communion with divinity; the pure in heart shall see God. Who shall ascend into this holy hill of privilege? Who shall stand in this holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart (Psalms 24:3-4). The divinity of Christ is a holy, devouring fire. Who shall dwell with it? These are they which have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God (Revelation 7:14-15).

III. The Covering of Rams' Skins. Fine linen or goats' hair does not imply suffering, but skins cannot be got without sacrifice. "Rams' skins dyed red" suggest both death and transformation. Jesus is before us here as the "Man of Sorrows," with dyed garments, as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. Let us put the shoes off our feet as we enter Gethsemane, and see there the skin of the Sacrifice being dyed red with the blood of agony. In this covering we have Christ on the Cross; in the "goats' hair," Christ in the Resurrection; in the "fine linen," Christ in the Glory. But these "rams' skins dyed red" speak to us as Christians. We are indebted to the transforming power of the atoning blood for our fitness to dwell in His holy presence. The white curtain was under the red one. Purity in the sight of God can only be enjoyed "under the blood." We must be crucified with Christ before we can enter into resurrection life. Are we willing to die to self that we might be made alive unto God? As the white covering was kept clean by the crimson covering, so may we be kept clean by a constant trust in the ever-cleansing blood.

IV. The Covering of Badger Skins. Some think that for "badgers' skins" we should read seal skins. It was evidently meant for a waterproof, not for beauty, but for protection. This covering may typify Christ in His rejection, "When we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him" (Isaiah 53:2) without comeliness. It had to bear the heat of the day, and was exposed to the storm and the tempest. Think of our loving, gracious Lord, how He was misunderstood while being made a curse for us. He was strong to bear. Thank God, He was proof against it all. He answered not a word. The Devil came, but found nothing in Him. If to the world there was no beauty in Him, to the Father He was all-glorious. "I delight to do Thy will, O My God" (Psalms 40:8). "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). Those who only saw the "badger skins" saw nothing of the hidden glory within. Christ may still be to the world "a root out of a dry ground" (Isaiah 53:2), but to the Christian who has access within the veil He is the altogether lovely. Oh, that our hearts may be like the heart of the Tabernacle, the habitation of God, or like the King's daughter, "all glorious within." Although our faces may have the uncomely badger's skin appearance, yet in heart we may have the beauty of the Lord our God upon us.

These four coverings may also represent the different divisions in connection with the Tabernacle.

1. The Holy of Holies, by the "fine-twined linen."

2. The Holy Place, by the pure goats' hair.

3. The Court of Sacrifice, by the rams' skins dyed red.

4. The wilderness without, by the "badgers' skins."

They also teach us, as we may have already noticed, a fourfold experience the Christian has of Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

1. In our natural state we could only see the blessed Redeemer as the "badger skin" covering-no beauty, no attractiveness, because we had no sense of our guilt or need.

2. In the "rams' skins dyed red" we have been cleansed and changed by the power of His atoning blood through faith.

3. In the "goats' hair" covering we experience what it is to be made clean, delivered from the power of sin, hid in God, and kept by His almighty, overshadowing power.

4. In the innermost curtain of "fine-twined linen" we are walking in the light, as He is in the light, beholding His glory, and filled with all the fulness of God. Is this our experience? Do you know what it is to live within the Holy of Holies, in sweet, unbroken fellowship with the Holy One? This is your privilege in Christ Jesus.

Chapter 5

The Pillar Of Cloud

THE PILLAR OF CLOUD.

Numbers 9:15-21; Exodus 40:33-38.

1. What it Signified. The origin and formation of the Pillar of Cloud is a mystery. It is a type of the incarnation of the Son of God. God was in the pillar; God was in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:19). In both we see the union of weakness and power, as weak as a "cloud," as strong as a "pillar." The Man Christ Jesus. Great is the mystery of godliness. God manifest in the flesh. To those outside the pillar may seem only a column of smoke, but to those who through the atoning blood had witnessed the glory within, it was the visible presence of the Eternal God. To some Christ was "without form or comeliness;" to others He was "the Christ, the Son of the Living God" (Matthew 16:16).

God in the pillar may also be a foreshadowing of Christ in the Scriptures. "They are they which testify of Me" (John 5:39). Sceptics may sneer at the cloudy pillar, and say, "The first desert storm will tear it to pieces, and melt it in the air." But they know not that God is in the pillar. All the storms of criticism cannot hinder the steady and stately march of the Scriptures of Truth. There is a living divine personality abiding and breathing through this holy pillar-"His Name is called The Word of God" (Revelation 19:13). May we with holy reverence bow before it, and with obedient hearts follow on.

II. What it was to the Israelite. It was to them the evidence of-

1. A Personal God. The cloudy pillar was the visible evidence of the invisible God. "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved" (Psalms 46:5). Jesus Christ is to us what the pillar was to Israel, the visible expression of the invisible God (Hebrews 1:3). "I and My Father are one" (John 10:30). The glory was hid until the veil was rent-the veil of His flesh-then the glory shone forth in the coming of the Holy Ghost.

2. Of Divine Fellowship. "God spoke to them out of the cloud" (Deuteronomy 5:22). He was a sojourner with them. Wonderful condenscension! "Lo, I am with you alway" (Matthew 28:20). Out of the pillar of His Word God still speaks to His people. The Holy Spirit is now the "Urim and Thummim" of every individual believer. He takes the things of Christ, and shows them to us. Our fellowship is with the Father, with the Son, and with the Holy Ghost.

3. The Pillar was also the Guarantee of Abundant Supply. While abiding with the pillar all their wants were met. Here the manna fell daily from Heaven. The waters also from the smitten rock followed the guiding pillar. "They drank of the rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:4). All the promises of God are in Him. Abide in Him, and the fulness of God will abide in you. Oh, follow Him, for lameness will bring leanness!

4. The Presence of the Pillar also Meant Protection. At the Red Sea the pillar came between the Israelites and the Egyptians (Exod. 14), delivering the one and destroying the other. How

significant are the words, "The Lord looked through the pillar, and troubled the host of the Egyptians" (Exodus 14:24). The Lord looked through Christ, and saved us. He still looks through Him to protect and keep us. He will also one day look through Him in judgment upon the ungodly. "He will judge the world by that Man whom He hath ordained" (Acts 17:31). The coming of Christ to the Cross was the coming of the pillar between us and our great enemy sin. He came between that He might overcome the foe, and save all them that believe.

5. The Pillar was a Shelter to Israel. It was, in fact, a huge umbrella overshadowing the whole camp, with its shaft resting in the midst, upon the mercy-seat. They could truly sing, "The Lord thy shade" (Psalms 121:5). The presence of Christ with the believer has a wonderful shading and comforting effect when the hot, fierce rays of adversity are falling upon us. "In the day of adversity consider" (Ecclesiastes 7:14), consider that the Lord thee keeps. The Lord is thy shade. He shelters from sin and wrath by His blood, from sadness and sorrow by His comforting Spirit. Abide under His shadow and you will have great delight.

6. The Pillar was their Source of Light. It was a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. They had no light of their own. Apart from the indwelt cloud, they had no light to lighten their darkness. Christ is the Light of the world. He that followeth Me, He says, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. What is this light? The light of the pillar was the life in the pillar. "The life was the light" (John 1:4). To be filled with life is to be filled with light. There is no spiritual light but from the personal life-giving One. If we are the light of the world it is because we have the life of God abiding in us. If we would shine for God, then we must live for Him.

7. The Pillar was their Guide (Num. Exodus 9:18). When it moved they moved; when it rested they rested, whether it was for a day, or a month, or a year. To go without the pillar was to go without God. That meant without light, shelter, protection, or provision-without a promise. Let us ponder this. Without Christ we are out of touch with the person, the preciousness, and fulness of God. There is as much danger of losing His fellowship through lagging behind as running before. If we do not grow in grace, grace will not grow from us. Many Christians have ceased to be glad and useful because they have allowed the pillar to go out of their sight. Christ does not now fill the vision of their soul. To walk in the light is to keep in personal touch with the living God. This guide was infallible, because it was God in the pillar who guided. The Word of God is a guiding "lamp to our feet," "a sure word," wherein we do well to take heed. In this "sure word" there is the "still, small voice" of the infallible God. The books that move men as they ought to be moved are the books of the Bible. The truth here taught move men ought of darkness into light, out of death into life. Oh, thou life-giving, soul-leading pillar of power move on!

Before we speak of the court itself, let us take a look at the "pins and cords" which kept the coverings in their place, binding them to the Tabernacle and to the earth. These pins were of brass, speaking of that which is able to endure (Exodus 27:16-19). The earth symbolises the place of death. The pins were partly in the earth and partly out. The cords were fastened, of course, to that part which was above the earth, but the ability of the pin to bear the weight of the house depended on its connection with the earth. You see the parable. It signifies death and resurrection. On the resurrection of Christ hangs all the glory of the Church as the habitation of God. But what would have been the value of His life if He had not been driven into the place of death. He died for our sins, and rose again for our justification. The risen Christ is mighty, but because of His

connection with the earth and its curse is He mighty to save. The cords were supposed to be of the same material as the veil, and the innermost covering of glory and beauty, blue, purple, and scarlet. This would represent the power of Christ in His mediatorial office to preserve His own House, or Church, on the earth. Men talk of preserving the earthly Zion, they forget that it takes the power of a glorified Christ to do that. The Tabernacle, like the Church of God, was in the world, but not of it. Its strength to resist lay not in itself, but in the threefold cord of Jehovah's love and grace and power. A threefold cord is not easily broken. How safe the blood-washed ones are! "Kept by the power of God" (1 Peter 1:5). "I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me" (Psalms 23:4). The Court of the Tabernacle was a hundred and fifty feet long, seventy-five feet broad, and was enclosed by a wall, or hangings of "fine-twined linen," seven and a half feet high. At the east end was the gate through which the worshippers entered to the altar of burntoffering. From the gate we may learn many precious lessons. Let us give thanks to God that-

1. There is a Gate. What a dark world this would have been had there been no way of entrance into the knowledge of and into fellowship with God! "Behold, I set before you an open door" (Revelation 3:8). But note that-

2. There was but One Gate. The Gate said, "I am the Way" (John 14:6). The wall of curtains said, "There is none other name under Heaven whereby ye must be saved" (Acts 4:12). These hangings were suspended from "rods of silver" made from "redemption money"-"hanging on atonement." How suggestive. They seem to occupy the place and do the work of the evangelist. They were made of "fine linen"-this means the righteousness of saints. They depended entirely upon the price of souls (rods of silver) for their support (Exodus 30:12-16). They bore a united testimony that the only way to God was by the altar of sacrifice, the Cross of Christ.

3. This was a Wide Gate. It was the same size cubically as the door or the veil. What it lacked in height it had in width. Height means greater or a more enlarged spiritual experience; breadth indicates great liberty of access. Whosoever will may come. The gate of atonement is as wide as the world (1 John 2:2). The way of substitution is as straight as the new birth. If few find it, it is because few there be that seek it (Matthew 7:7). The way into life is straight in this sense, that it is the only way, and that all who enter must have only one purpose in their heart, and that is to trust all to Him who died for sin-open for all, yet only for those who seek atonement at the altar.

4. This was a Strongly-supported Gate. It hung on four pillars. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is supported by four infallible pillars. Each holds up a different aspect of Him who is "The Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6). Their names are Matthew, Mark, Luke, John.

5. This Gate was of the Same Material as the Vail. "Fine-twined linen, blue, purple, and scarlet." The Son of God, the sinless Man, in one Person meets us at the gate of life. A whole Christ to begin with is God's provision. All was needed to open up the way. All is needed to meet the need of man.

6. This Gate was the Way into Life. Immediately in front of the gate stood the altar of sacrifice. It was impossible to pass in without coming within sight of God's provision for the sinner. Passing through the gate meant the acceptance of God's way of salvation. What do we learn from this? This one thing certainly, that the moment the sinner trusts the Lord Jesus Christ as the way to the Father, that moment he comes into personal contact with the atoning blood of the Lamb, and may

read his title clear in the light of the Cross. Although two steps may be indicated here between the gate and the altar, yet in Christ there is but one. He is both Gate and Altar. Experimentally we decide at the gate; we are justified at the altar. The one act is ours, the other is God's. "All that believe are justified from all things" (Acts 13:39). Precious faith! Precious blood! Precious promise!

Chapter 6

The Brazen Altar

THE BRAZEN ALTAR.

Exodus 26:1-8; Exodus 28:1-5; Leviticus 6:7-13.

The word "altar" means simply "high place," or that which lifts up. The altar, with its sacrifice, is profoundly significant of Christ on the Cross (John 3:14). Through the altar Israel was lifted up into fellowship with God. The Cross of Christ is a ladder reaching unto Heaven. Like the ladder Jacob saw, it is the way of God-to God-set up on the earth. It lifts us up into communion with the Father. To come into contact with the altar was to come into touch with the claims and character of a Holy God through sacrifice. At the Cross the sinner comes into contact with the goodness and the severity of God-condemnation of the sin, but mercy for the sinner. This altar of burntoffering lifted up all that was laid upon it. The sacrifice was lifted up in the form of smoke by the consuming fire that burned continually thereon. Heart-searching truth! Are we willing that our bodies should be turned into smoke for the glory of God? Have I been lifted up, crucified with Christ? Is the fire of the Holy Ghost feeding upon my life? Am I wholly yielded up to Him? and is He causing my whole being to ascend as a sweet savour unto God? The sacrifice, being dead, was unconscious of its own virtue. Moses wist not that his face shone. Oh, for such a blessed state of unconsciousness! As He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was changed. But let us note further-

I. The Purpose of It. This brazen altar, standing at the gate of entrance, represented the claims of God. As a holy and righteous God He has claims that must be satisfied before He can, in mercy, meet with man and bless him. The altar must be filled before man can approach God in peace. The altar was filled, and all the demands of a holy God fully met when Christ cried on the Cross, "It is finished" (John 19:30). The great purpose of the altar was to burn sacrifices. Here the sin-offering was slain, then carried without the camp, but its blood was poured out at the "bottom of the altar." The value of the sin-offering lay in the blood. "The blood is the life," or, "The life is in the blood." This was left at the foot of the altar, laid down before God. Here we see Christ as the sinner's Substitute, pouring out His soul unto death. "They overcame by the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 12:11). The burntoffering, representing Christ as the wholly-devoted One, was entirely consumed upon the altar. Only the skin was saved; this was given to the priest for a covering -covered through sacrifice. Adam and Eve were naked, though clothed with leaves, till God made for them coats of skin. We are all naked till covered with the righteousness of God, which is unto all and upon all that believe.

II. The Position of It. It stood right in front of the gate. This reminds us that atonement is the first necessity in our approach to God. The first blessing our gracious God desires to give us is the forgiveness of our sins, but "without shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). When the sense of sin is brought home to the heart, how eagerly, like Job, we long for a "daysman" to come between us and lay his hand upon both. Those who refuse "Christ and Him crucified" as their sin-atoning Substitute have no liberty of access to God. To approach God disregarding the altar meant death. Cain tried it; he ignored the blood, and brought the curse of God upon himself. "A

sin-offering lieth at the door" (Genesis 4:7). God hath laid it there; it is there for us. It has a voice, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved,... for I am God" (Isaiah 45:22). Do not trample on it.

III. The Materials of It. Singularly enough, it was composed of two different materials, "Shittim wood and brass," two distinct elements in one altar. Man would never have thought of putting wood in an altar had it not been revealed to Moses on the mount. The altar, like Christ, the Son of Man, must have a twofold nature. The type is perfect; the wood speaks of the truly human sympathy of Jesus, while the brass reveals the strong, enduring character of the Divine One-these two elements in One, and that for the salvation of man. That the human nature of Christ was not consumed in coming into such close relationship with the divine is a mystery as great, perhaps, as that the wood in the altar was not consumed. The divine fire was in the human bush, yet the bush was not consumed. Although the altar was partly wood, it was never called the wooden altar, but the brazen altar, one that was strong and mighty, so that when the sacrifice was laid upon it, it was indeed "help laid on One that was mighty."

IV. The Size of It. It would seem that by comparing the measurements given of the other vessels with that of the altar it had capacity enough to contain them all. This is very suggestive. All spiritual blessings flow out of the atoning death of Christ. "Delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things" (Romans 8:32). All the other vessels were sprinkled with the blood of sacrifice, and so connected with the altar (Hebrews 9:21-22). It is a precious truth that when we trust in Christ as a Sacrifice for us we may enter into all the blessings of His resurrection and life. This we can only do as we by faith are able to apprehend and appropriate. "Lord, increase our faith" (Luke 17:5).

V. The Horns. This altar was four-square; it stood solid and stable. At each corner was a horn. The horn is the symbol of power. They pointed in every direction, and spoke of power sufficient for the whole world. The sacrifices were bound to the horns of the altar before being slain (Psalms 118:27). What bound our Great Sacrifice to the altar of the Cross? Not the nails, but the cords of a love that was stronger than death. "No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10:18). These are His own words. As the horns of the altar looked every way, so the power of the Cross of Christ looks over this whole sin-benighted, sin-smitten world. The value of this Sacrifice is sufficient to meet the dying need of all men.

VI. The Grate. Right in the middle of the altar was a grate, on which the fuel and the offerings were laid. The ashes fell through the grate into pans underneath. It is most significant to notice that the grate, although halfway down in the altar, was still as high as the mercy-seat (one and a half cubits). Who would have thought of this? Yet how could we think of an atoning sacrifice below the lever of the mercy-seat of a Holy God. The mercy-seat was the throne of God, the sacrifice must be equal to it. Glorious truth! Marvellous grace! The Cross of the crucified Son of God is on a level with the righteous throne of God. The life and death of Jesus Christ are equal to the demands of the holy law, and of the just claims of a righteous God; and all this on our behalf as sinners before Him. Oh, self-righteous one, except your righteousness is equal to and on a level with the righteousness of God you have no hope! To offend, or come short in one point, is to be guilty of all. In the death of Jesus there is enough to satisfy God. Is there not enough to satisfy you?

VII. The Ashes. What about them? Cast them outside, anywhere, and let the winds scatter them abroad. Yes, if human wisdom is to decide. But everything is sacred here; nothing is to be lightly esteemed. The ashes are a precious morsel in the priest's eyes, because of the value attached to them by Jehovah. The ashes speak of a sacrifice made, and more especially of a sacrifice accepted by God through the consuming fire. The ashes were the evidence that "It was finished," that the offering was accepted in the sinner's stead. It was the last thing they saw of the sacrifice. The last word heard from Christ on the Cross was, "It is finished;" the work of suffering and death was done; atonement was accomplished. The dead body of the Son of God (the ashes) declared that all was done that could be done. But what was to be done with the ashes? They were to be "carried out" and laid in a "clean place." The carrying forth of the ashes was in the sight of Israel a solemn funeral. They were precious, because they were to be used for the "sprinkling of the unclean." In them lay the merit of the sacrifice. This was applied to the cleansing of the leprous. How suggestive! The body of Jesus was carried forth and laid in a clean place, "a new tomb, wherein never man before was laid" (Luke 23:53). Now the merit of His death and resurrection is for the sprinkling of the unclean, the cleansing away of sin. The sprinkling process was a very personal one. The value of the ashes does not lie in what we think of them, but in the high estimate set upon them by God Himself. Let us ponder this and praise Him.

VIII. The Blood. The blood of the offering was poured out at the bottom of the altar. "The life is in the blood" (Leviticus 17:11); thus the life of the devoted one was symbolically poured out before God. "All that a man hath will he give for his life" (Job 2:4). But when a man gives his life he gives all that he hath. Our blessed Lord gave His life, poured it out before God, and in giving His life He gave all that He had. How much was that? "Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). Oh, how poor He became! Oh, how rich we may become! The blood, the life of the sacrifice, was for God; the ashes, the fruit of the sacrifice, were for man. The death of Christ had a double aspect; it had to make atonement to a Holy God and cleanse a guilty man. The Hebrew word for "atonement" is used in three different aspects: (1) To cleanse (Lev. 16); (2) to cover (Genesis 6:14); (3) to appease (Genesis 32:20). It has an appeasing power towards the righteous Jehovah. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). As a holy and just God no man can come before Him empty-handed. As sinners we must have our hands filled with His offering and our hearts cleansed by His blood. The atoning death not only appeases God, but also cleanses and covers the believing man. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered" (Psalms 32:1). Think much of the blood, the precious blood; the mercy of God is only through the blood.

IX. The Fire. The fire on the altar was to "burn continually; " it "was never to go out." Where did this eternal fire come from? From Leviticus 9:24 we may believe that it came directly from God Himself, from the Shekinah Glory, or visible presence, which rested upon the mercy-seat within the vail. It came from God; it was the symbol of the holiness of God, and the visible token on the altar of His presence with them. "Our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29). This fire is an awful element in an awful place. Let those who deny that God demands atonement for sin meditate upon it. Abraham went up the mount to offer a sacrifice with the knife and the fire in his hand (Genesis 22:6). Every burntoffering had to come into contact with the knife of the priest and the fire of God. Here the sinner's Substitute must face, not the mercy or love, but the fire of God. The fire must be satisfied on the offering before the "ashes of sprinkling" could be taken or used.

The justice of God must first be fully met before the mercy of God can freely flow. The continual fire on the altar taught the Israelite that God was always ready to receive them through sacrifice. There was no other way. Christ, our Sacrifice, has been offered once for all. Through Him God is always ready to accept and forgive all who come (Hebrews 7:25). The fire that was never to go out also proclaimed emphatically that the demands of God, as the Holy One, would never be lowered or changed. The continual burning demanded a continual sacrifice. Let us give thanks unto God that this incessant and inexorable claim has been, and is now, being fully met in Jesus Christ, who died, and is now in Heaven with the marks of the altar (the Cross) in His hands and feet; whose blood constantly speaks, and who maketh continual intercession for us. The fire of God's holiness is receiving eternal satisfaction through the glorified Son of Man at His own right hand.

There was no other altar for Israel. Private altars were of no value, there was no God-given fire on them. "There is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Chapter 7

The Laver

THE LAVER.

Exodus 30:17-21; Exodus 38:8; Titus 3:4-6, R.V., margin.

The laver stood between the altar and the door of the Tabernacle, and right in line with the mercy-seat and the altar of incense, signifying that the privileges and blessing connected with it lay in the way of our approach to God. In the altar we have Christ dying for our sins; in the laver the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The laver comes after the altar. "The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:30). First the Cross, then Pentecost; first justified by His grace, then sanctified through the truth. The laver was filled with water, the water is a type of the Word; the laver, of the Spirit. The great truth here is the ministry of the Word in the power of the Holy Ghost. This, of course, can only come after we have been justified from all things through the blood of His Cross. If you do not know your sins forgiven at the altar, the truth taught here will not likely profit you. Trust Jesus Christ now, and enter with us into the inheritance revealed in type by the laver. We shall notice first-

I. Its Origin. In Exodus 38:8 we learn that the laver was to be made of brazen "looking-glasses," which belonged to the women who assembled at the door of the Tabernacle. There are two ways in which we might see ourselves-in the light of our own polished mirror, or in the light of the Lord as we stand before Him.

When, like these women, we stand at the door of the Tabernacle, and see ourselves in the light of the presence of a holy and sin-hating God, we get so disgusted with ourselves that we don't wish to look at our own proud persons, and so willingly part with our looking-glasses that we might get that which will give us inward beauty and adorning. The choice has still to be made, even by redeemed ones, as to whether they will walk in the light of their own eyes or in the truth as revealed and applied by the Holy Spirit. These who live according to their own standard are simply seeing themselves in their own looking-glass. All the light such have comes from the sparks of their own kindling. The law of God is a looking-glass to show us our need of the laver of regeneration. When Nicodemus, a man familiar with the looking-glass, came to Jesus He pointed him at once to the laver of an inward change to be wrought by the Holy Ghost. "Born of water and of the Spirit" (John 3:5).

II. Its Purpose. The chief end of the laver was, of course, "to cleanse," "to wash withal." Judicial righteousness was to be followed with personal righteousness. Inward cleansing was to accompany the act of justification.

Perhaps the polished brass of the laver helped to reveal the uncleanness, while the water would cleanse it away. This is, at least, the work of the Spirit, to convince of sin, and to apply the cleansing Word. The water of the laver was only for redeemed ones. "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). The ministry of the Spirit gives fitness for service. The priests must wash here lest they die. Unless we are kept in constant

touch with the Holy Laver our testimony for God will die; we will become as withered branches. Instead of having power with God and men, we shall be trodden under foot of men, like savourless salt. The fact that these two vessels (laver and altar) were separated the one from the other, may also teach us that the receiving of the Holy Spirit is to be a definite and personal experience (Acts 19:2). The blessings of the laver could only be enjoyed by those who wished to serve in the holy place. Alas, is it not true of many that they take the blessing of salvation at the altar, and then turn away satisfied? They don't press on to holy service in the presence of God, so they know nothing of the special ministry of the laver, and little of the joy of fellowship with God. Christ was crucified to save us. He was glorified to sanctify us (John 7:39). If we have been saved by His blood, so may we be taught by and filled with His Spirit.

III. Its Form. When Moses received instructions to make "the laver and its foot," no mention at all is made of size or shape. At first sight one wonders at this. Is it an overlook? God can make no mistake. Every omission with Him is as emphatic as a declaration. It is surely significant that the vessel which represents the work of the Holy Spirit should not be limited to any particular form or size."The wind (Spirit) bloweth where it listeth; thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth" (John 3:8). Why was the laver not made of wood and brass like the altar? The answer seems clear and unmistakable. Christ had two natures-divine and human. The Holy Spirit is one Person. Let us adore the wisdom of God. Those who study and understand the types have no difficulty about the inspiration of the Scriptures. The other vessels of the Tabernacle had staves or shafts by which they were to be carried. The laver had none. This may also confirm the inference that we have here not only a work represented, but a Divine Person. We are saved by the work of Jesus Christ for us; we are sanctified by the presence of the Holy Ghost within us.

IV. Its Connection with the Altar. Like all the other vessels, there was a blood connection between it and the altar of burntoffering. It was sprinkled with the blood of atonement. The laver could not be used till after the blood had been shed. The Spirit did not come till after the work on the Cross had been finished. The sprinkling of the laver with the blood was symbolically the consecrating and imparting of divine authority for its work. When Christ entered into Heaven by His own blood, He sent the Holy Spirit. The Holy Ghost received His authority from the Son of God on the ground of His own atoning death. There is a very vital connection between Calvary and Pentecost. Would that it were so in the experience of every Christian. The laver was to be filled with water-water, doubtless, from the smitten rock. Is this not wonderful? "That Rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:4). The laver could be filled, and men could be cleansed, because the rock had been smitten. At the altar we see the blood of atonement; at the laver we see the water of cleansing. Both are needed. Both come to us through our Divine Redeemer. You remember that when they had pierced His side, "forthwith came there out blood and water" (John 19:34)-the blood first, then the water. The water, or ministry of the Spirit, always comes by way of the altar (Ezekiel 47:1-12)."He shall take the things of Christ, and show them unto you" (John 16:13-15). Ye believe in the forgiveness of sin; believe also in the indwelling Spirit. Trust Him to apply the cleansing Word, and to impart fitness for service. The water was in the laver. The two were very closely connected, but not more closely than the Spirit and the Word. If we would be mighty in the Spirit we must be mighty in the Word. It was when Ezekiel had eaten the book that the Spirit lifted him up and took him away (Ezekiel 3:1-14). The Spirit always lifts up and takes away those in whom the Word of

Christ dwells richly.

V. Other Important Lessons. From the teaching of this vessel we further learn-

1. That they must be Clean who would Stand before God. Every time the priest entered into the holy place he must wash. Purity of heart is a necessity for seeing God. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. It is not so much a change of place we need to see God as a change of state. Believe, and thou shalt see.

2. That there was but One Means of Cleansing. There was but one laver; no other was needed. This was God's provision. They might wash themselves elsewhere, but that would not make them "clean before the Lord." Hear Job's testimony, "If I wash myself,... and make my hands never so clean; yet shalt Thou plunge me in the ditch" (Job 9:30-31). The snow-waters of earth and self-will never avail while the "Fountain opened for sin and uncleanness" (Zechariah 13:1) is neglected and despised.

3. That One Little Act may Unfit for Service. If the priest should refuse but once to wash at the laver, this one act of disobedience would unfit him for his priestly work. Our secret sins may not affect our lives before men for a while, but our relationship to God is affected at once. The flickering light tells of a crack in the lantern. An unsteady testimony speaks of failure somewhere. One fly will spoil the ointment. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear" (Isaiah 52:11). They must be clean that bear the vessels of the Lord.

4. That to Wash was a Matter of Necessity, not of Opinion. The priest, guided by his own carnal wisdom, might say, "Oh, I washed in the morning. I don't see the need of washing again in the evening. Besides, as far as I can judge, there is no uncleanness to wash." You see it was not "What saith the priest?" but "What saith the Lord?" "Wash, that ye die not." "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves" (1 John 1:1-8). While we are "clean through the Word," yet the feet need washing, and that continually. The feet represent our relationship as Christians to the world. It is most frequently in our connection with the ungodly and the things of this present world that the defilement comes. It may come in the form of hard, unkind thoughts about the unsaved, lack of compassion, failing to embrace the opportunity of witnessing for Christ, impatience, covetousness. "Cleanse Thou me from secret faults" (Psalms 19:12).

Chapter 8

The Door

THE DOOR.

Exodus 26:36-37; John 10:9.

Why should there be a door between the ministry of the laver and the service and fellowship of the holy place? Perhaps to teach us that the work of the one was just to fit us for the enjoyment and privilege of the other. To grow in grace means receiving to the full the blessings offered us in Christ Jesus. Those who walk in the light they have shall receive more light "The path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more" (Proverbs 4:18). In the experience of the Christian there is always more to follow. The hangings which formed the door, like the gate outside and the vail inside, were made of "fine linen- blue, purple, and scarlet." Here, again, we have Jesus as the Son of God, the Son of Man, and the Mediator between God and men. It must be Jesus in His threefold character all the way with the believer. We live by faith on the Son of God. The door had five pillars, made of shittim wood overlaid with gold, the wood and gold again pointing to the human and divine nature of Christ. He Himself said, "I am the Door" (John 10:9). The five pillars may represent His fivefold name as given in Isaiah 9:6, "Thou shalt call His Name JESUS." He is the (1) King, (2) Eternal, (3) Immortal, (4) Invisible, (5) the only wise God (1 Timothy 1:17). If at the altar we have to do with the work of Jesus Christ, here it is Himself in all the riches of His glorious character that is presented before us. The truth about the "fuller" or "higher Christian life" so freely taught in these days is here in type before us at the door. It is a definite acceptance of or entering into all the fulness of Jesus Christ, purchased for us by His atoning blood, offered to us in His Word, and accomplished in us by faith through the Holy Spirit. Having come under the power of the laver cleansing, we may now behold and enjoy the unsearchable riches of Christ. The Door was-

1. The Way into Acceptable Prayer. Through the door, right in front, stood the golden altar of incense, the type of intercession. When Christ Himself becomes the chiefest among ten thousand to our hearts, then prayer will become a delight. Being now filled with His love and Word, we ask and receive (John 15:7). The ministry of the Holy Ghost (laver) is needed to fit us for this holy and blessed privilege (Romans 8:26-27). This is also-

2. The Way into Continual Light. Within the door was the ever-burning candlestick, the light that was "never to go out." When the door is entered, or when Christ is received in all the fulness of His grace and power, then the soul enters into the sweet experience of walking in the "light of the Lord." Many Christians know nothing of this continual shining. Christ is seen by them only at the altar of atonement. They know their sins forgiven, but they don't know what it is to be "filled with all the fulness of God" (Ephesians 3:16-20). The teaching of the laver is neglected. O that men would believe in the Holy Spirit and submit to His power and teaching, then would Christ be glorified in them, then would they walk in newness of life.

3. The Way into Abiding Fellowship. When the priest went through the door he also came into the presence of the "table of shewbread." The table speaks of "fellowship." Here we have fellowship with God in His Son, who is the "Bread of Life." This fellowship with Christ at the table of bread is a fellowship which strengthens and satisfies. This precious blessing, too, comes after the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, represented in the laver. Every unclean thing must be put away if we would abide in the soul-satisfying friendship of the holy Son of God. How can two walk together except they be agreed. This privilege does not come to us every now and then like the ordinance of the "Supper." There is no necessity why we should ever go down from this holy mount. Abide in Me.

4. The Way into Nearness to God. In passing through the door the priest must have been conscious that he had approached nearer to God. Now there was only the vail between him and the glory which rested on the mercy-seat within. This is the solemn experience of those who, through the power of the Holy Ghost, walk in the light of the fellowship of Christ. Only the vail between, only this vail of flesh between us and the immediate vision of the glory of God. "Absent from the body,... present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8). When we think of our own sinfulness, well may we, like Ahab, "walk softly" (1 Kings 21:27). When we think of the grace of God by which we have been brought into this privilege, well may we rejoice and adore. Let us fall down and worship.

5. The Way into the Calm of Divine Safety. No matter how stormy the day might be, within the door there was always calm and quiet. Here the worshipper had the conscious assurance that he was specially sheltered under the wings of Jehovah's presence. General protection was promised to all who abode under the cloudy pillar. This was a special blessing enjoyed only by the priests, the hidden ones; those only who had to do continually with the work of the laver, the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The importance of this truth is the only excuse for repeating it so frequently. We may be Christians living under the pillar of promise, and enjoying pardon through the altar of His Cross, yet all the while utter strangers to the calm and quiet of those who live and serve in the holy place. Here we are "hidden," hidden from the strife of tongues (Psalms 31:20), from trouble (Psalms 27:5). Here we are strengthened with "hidden manna," taught with "hidden wisdom" (1 Corinthians 2:7), and satisfied with "hidden riches" (Isaiah 45:3). Your life is hid with Christ in God. How calm, how quiet, how safe, how full, how holy, how happy, how thankful, how praiseful we should be! Through the door was also-

6. The Way into the Sphere of Holy Service. Here, by priestly hands, the incense was put upon the coals of the altar, the lamps were trimmed, and the bread renewed. Holy work indeed-praying, testifying, teaching. Praying unto God; offering up, not cold, formal petitions, but desires, like incense from the burning coals of a holy, self-consuming zeal. The incense sent up no sweet perfume till it came into contact with the burning coals. The coals of our affection must be burning if our prayers are to ascend. Here the lamp of our spiritual life is kept regularly replenished and constantly shining, so that a steady, God-pleasing testimony is borne. Here the bread of His presence, ever fresh, is given and received. If we would minister to others in holy things, we must know what it is to minister "before God." This fitness for holy service, let me repeat it, comes through personally participating in the power and grace of the Holy Ghost. Yield yourselves unto God.

There was no floor in the holy place. The bare feet of the priest still walked on the sandy desert. He was reminded that, although he was in the place of holiness enjoying heavenly things, he was still on the earth. The lesson here is obvious. These great spiritual blessings and privileges are for us now in our present earthly state. Many Christians relegate their possessions to Heaven instead of entering into the enjoyment of them now. "I am the Door; by Me if any man enter, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture"-strength for service (John 10:9). "Behold, I have set before thee an open Door" (Revelation 3:8).

Chapter 9

Prove Your Own Selves

PROVE YOUR OWN SELVES.

2 Corinthians 13:5.

This is a needful work. Beware of the deceitfulness of the heart. This self-proving should be done-
1. Instantly. The secret of our failure should be searched out at once.

2. Willingly. Are you prepared to know yourself?- ready to have a sight of hidden sin?

3. Carefully. Let no beloved sin deceive you. Judge each by their fruits. Don't label things harmless that are unholy.

4. Fearlessly. With the lamp of God's searching Word (Hebrews 4:12).

5. Mercilessly. Spare no Agag. Make confession. Acknowledge the sin (Psalms 51:3).

6. Honestly. Be severe on the sin, but approve what is good. Distinguish between sins and infirmities.

7. Prayerfully. Remember, the Lord alone can search the heart. "Search me, O God; try my heart."

Chapter 10

The Altar Of Incense The Altar Of Incense

The Altar Of Incense The Altar Of Incense.

Exodus 30:1-10; Exodus 30:34-38; Luke 1:9-13; Revelation 8:3-4.

From the wilderness without to the presence of God within the holy of holies there were seven steps or experiences. 1. Decision at the gate. 2. Acceptance at the altar. 3. Cleansing at the laver. 4. Intercession at the altar of incense. 5. Fellowship at the table. 6. Testimony at the candlestick. 7. Faith turned into sight within the vail.

I. Its Purpose. The altar of incense must not be confounded with the altar of burnt offering. No sacrifice was ever offered upon this altar. Only incense could be put upon its ever burning coals. The sacrifice must be made outside, at the door of entrance. The incense of this blood-sprinkling altar speaks of the merit of the atoning blood ascending up unto God, and may also be a foreshadowing of that precious Name through which we make our requests known unto God. "If ye ask anything in My Name, I will do it" (John 14:14). "His Name is as ointment poured forth" (Son_1:3).

II. Its Materials. Like the great altar outside, this one was also made of two different materials. Not wood and brass, but wood and gold. Here again the divine and human character of Christ is brought before us. In the brazen altar the wood was strengthened by the brass. In the altar of incense the wood (human nature) is glorified by the gold. Christ was crucified in weakness, but raised in glory. He who was the "Man of Sorrows" is now the Man in the glory. He took upon Him the likeness of sinful flesh. Now the likeness has been glorified in Him. What an encouragement to prayer and faith when we remember that the Lord of the glory is still truly human! "Consider Him" (Hebrews 12:3).

III. Its Position. It stood within the door, in the centre of the holy place, and straight with the brazen altar, the laver, and the ark of the mercy-seat. Those vessels which stood in line with the great altar and the mercy-seat seem to indicate the provision made for our approaching unto God. The mercy-seat was the throne of God, the altar of incense stood before it. This is the position of it in Revelation 8:3. How significant of Him who is our Great High Priest, now before the throne making intercession for us.

IV. Its Height. It was "two cubits" high. For some special reason it was half a cubit higher than the other vessels. He who humbled Himself unto death has now been "highly exalted." God raised Him from the dead and set Him "far above all" (Ephesians 1:20-21). He is now Head over all to His Church. In the estimate of God the merit of His Son's death is far above all. Praise His Name, although we may not be able to appreciate the full value of the Saviour's death, God can-and God does. He can and will bless us, according to His own high estimate of the worth of Christ's atoning work.

V. Its Staves. The staves or shafts by which it was to be carried were not to be removed. They were to be ever present with the altar. Thus the altar was ever ready for the march. May we not learn here that the value of Christ's intercession may be ours, in every place or circumstance, and that continually. "Lo, I am with you alway" (Matthew 28:20). Always ready! What a privilege! Always near! What a blessing! Are we living in the power of it? When we offer our petitions unto God, mingled with the sweet incense of the precious Name of Jesus, do we realise that we are standing between the staves of His faithfulness and power?

VI. Its Horns. At each corner of the altar was a golden horn. The horn is the symbol of power. Here they speak of the power of His intercession. The number four may have reference to the four camps of Israel, and would indicate power sufficient for all. "Able to save to the uttermost, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession" (Hebrews 7:25). The power of Christ's intercession does not lie in His persuasiveness, but in the fact of His presence before God as the glorified Son of Man. That God has exalted Him to His own right hand in human form is the guarantee to every believer of every temporal and spiritual blessing. The wounds of Christ never heal in the eye of our gracious God. He is always "the Lamb as it had been slain" (Revelation 5:6). He has power to put away sin, power to keep us from falling, and if we wish to grow in the knowledge of God let us not forget that He has also "power to open the book" (Revelation 5:5).

VII. Its Crown. Around the top was a ridge or crown, to keep the coals from falling off the altar. The coals of fire were protected by a crown of gold. Christ's priestly power is preserved and assured, in that He is now "crowned with glory and honour" (Hebrews 2:9). It was doubtless a comforting thought to the pilgrim Israelite while carrying the altar over the rough desert that God had made provision against the falling of the coals of fire. Their feet might stumble, but the burning coals were still preserved by the crown of gold. Precious truth, although Peter stumbled and fell, the coals of Christ's prayer failed not. "I have prayed for thee" (Luke 22:32). We may fail, but the incense of His merits still ascends. Read the 17th chapter of John while standing at this altar.

VIII. The Incense. The value of this altar lay in the incense. As we might expect, that which typifies the merit of God's sin-atoning Son will have something peculiar and mysterious about it. It was made by the mingling of three spices, each part was to be equal weight (Exodus 30:34-38). What these spices were no man can tell. The merit of the Lord Jesus Christ as our Redeemer consists of three parts- 1. The merit of His Life.

2. Of His Death.

3. Of His Resurrection.

These parts are all of equal weight in the sight of God. No one or two of them could avail without the other. It is a mysterious compound which only God can fully understand. He knows the value of each sweet spice. No man was to make anything like it for his own use. It must not be imitated. Who can make a substitute for the merit of Jesus Christ? Alas, there are still many proud enough to make the attempt. The savour of our own righteousness is an abomination to God. Only the sweet incense of God's own appointing will be pleasing to Him. The righteousness of God, which is unto all and upon all them that believe. When the priest put the spices on the altar the "coals of fire" lifted it up in sweet perfume before God. We need both the incense and the fire. Both come to us through Christ. When the preciousness of Christ is realised by one whose afflictions are like

burning coals, adoration and praise will rise like a fragrant cloud. Prayers to be sweet and fragrant to the heart of God must come from a burning heart. "I would that ye were cold or hot" (Revelation 3:15).

It is also suggested that the incense was put on the altar "while he trimmed the lamps." The incense of prayer and the lamp of testimony must always go together. We shine best before men while our heart's affections are burning toward God. "The love of Christ constraineth us" (2 Corinthians 5:14). In the experience of Isaiah the "live coal" and the great commission were very closely associated (Isaiah 6:5-8). "I will put my Spirit within you, then the heathen shall know" (Ezekiel 36:27-36). "Ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost and with fire, then ye shall be witnesses unto Me." This altar, like the other vessels, had to be sprinkled on the great day of atonement with the blood of the sacrifice, teaching us that the blessings signified here comes to us through the death of Christ on the Cross, and are all ours in Him. Have we entered into them? Do we enjoy them now? They may be ours at this present moment. We are reminded of this by the fact that the priest, while ministering in the holy place, was still treading on the sands of the desert. He was in "heavenly places," though yet on the earth. There was no seat here. The priest never sat down, because his work was never finished. Our Great High Priest has entered in, and is set on the right hand of the throne. Hallelujah!

Chapter 11

The Table Of Shewbread.

THE TABLE OF SHEWBREAD.

Exodus 25:23-30; Leviticus 24:5-9.

"Why seek ye the living among the dead?" Why seek the living Saviour among these dead forms and symbols? He is not here. He is risen. Yes! But we come to see, "the place where our Lord lay." If these are only "grave clothes," they are the grave clothes of our beloved, glorious Redeemer. Everything connected with Him is deeply interesting to those who love Him with all their heart.

I. The Table. Like the altar of incense and the ark of the mercy-seat it was made of shittim wood, overlaid with gold, telling out again, as with silent tongue, the divinity of the Son of Man. The table suggests at once the thought of fellowship. The bread was the "Bread of God," yet it was to be eaten by the priests. God and the priestly worshippers had communion and fellowship at the table. Blessed privilege, to feast on that which satisfies the heart of God. This sacred joy is ours. Christ is the "Bread of God" (Isaiah 6:33). Think of it, the holy heart of God feasting on the character and work of His Son as our Saviour. He finds infinite satisfaction in Him as man's Redeemer and Representative. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). But Christ is more, He is the "Bread of Life," bread for man as well as bread for God. Wondrous grace, Christ satisfies both God and man, meets all the claims of the one, supplies all the needs of the other. At the table-in Christ as the Living Bread-we have fellowship with the Father and with His Son. Truly, we have a meat to eat which the world knows nothing of. Is Jesus Christ to us what He is to the Father- enough? It would seem from Exodus 25:24-25 that the table had two crowns of Gold, one upon the table itself, and one upon the "border thereof." In the holy place Christ is crowned by God and by the worshippers. It is only when we enter into the full enjoyment of Himself as the heavenly bread for our souls and the strength of our lives that we will be able to crown Him Lord of all. God has crowned Him, giving Him to be "Head over all." In all things He has the pre-eminence with the Father. In all things He has the pre-eminence with us? Is it God first? Crown Him, crown Him, and your fellowship with Him will be more sweet and abiding.

II. The Loaves. It seems to us that while the table, made of wood and gold, represents Christ in His twofold nature as God and man, the loaves represent His own moral character and also the character of His people in union with Himself. They were-

1. Made of Fine Flour. Flour is the product of earth, and the necessity of man. The human body of Jesus Christ may be seen here. His earthly life was like fine flour, perfect in its whiteness. Pilate testified to this when he said, "I find no fault in this Man" (Luke 23:4). He was without spot. As fine flour He was tested and tried- tempted at every point by God, and men, and devils, but all and everywhere He was the same. No unevenness, no irregularity; everything was methodic, uniform, straightforward, pure. You turn "fine flour" any way you may, it is still fine flower. No sifting, pressing, or bruising can alter its character. Such was the earthly life of our Lord, because the

leven of sin was not in Him.

How does our character correspond with the fine flour? Are we the same joyful, trusting Christians in adversity as in prosperity? Are we always and everywhere alike? Does change of circumstances never bring out any pride, impatience, or self-seeking? Alas! Alas! "Examine me, O Lord, and prove me, try my reins and my heart" (Psalms 26:1-2). "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." (Matthew 11:29).

2. Had to be Baked. Although the flour had to be baked into cakes, or loaves, it was "fine flour" still. The baking did not change the character of the flour. The Lord Jesus had no sin, yet He suffered for sin. He was indeed baked in the hot oven of Jehovah's wrath. "Made a curse for us" (Galatians 3:13). See Him in the garden in that awful hour of agony and blood. Oh, how fierce was the fire through which our loving and devoted Saviour had to pass! Yet in the midst of it all He remained the same pure, unchanged, and unchangeable One. Fine flour still-glory to His Name! May He make us partakers of such a nature. There are some Christians who are like inferior flour, they don't bake well. The firing does not seem to improve them much. The flour had to be baked before it could be eaten as holy bread. Our lives will not be of much good to others until we ourselves have passed through the testing fires. Artificial baking-powders will not make up for lack of purity of flour. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me" (Psalms 51:10).

3. Twelve in Number. We naturally infer from this that the twelve tribes were represented in them. All God's people stood before Him in these loaves, and stood on one that was well able to bear them up-the golden table. What a picture of our high calling in Christ! All resting on Him who is able to lift us up and keep us ever fresh and acceptable to God. There were great differences among the people in the camp outside; inside they were all alike before God. Judah may go first and Dan last while on the march in the wilderness, but such distinctions vanish on the table. It is so still. We may have gifts, talents, and experiences, differing the one from the other, but before God we are "all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28), all accepted in the Beloved. Not only is our oneness with Christ clearly taught here, but also our oneness with one another. This is of great importance to us. No matter from what part of the camp the twelve loaves came from, in the holy place they were all united to the table and to one another. Being members of Christ, we are members one of another. This double union comes out very fully in that great revelation prayer of the Lord in John 17, "That they all may be one."

4. Renewed every Sabbath. The bread of His presence must be ever fresh. Christ as the "Living Bread" is always fresh in the eyes and estimate of God. And what is true of Christ is true also of His redeemed people who are one with Him. The story of the Gospel may appear old and time-worn to many, but to the awakened and hungry soul it is fresh bread from Heaven. The secret of all soul freshness is feeding continually upon Christ the hidden bread. Those who minister in the holy place never need to cry out about their leanness, they walk in the light, and they have a meat to eat that the world knows nothing of. We cannot keep fresh if we live upon the stale bread of old experience. We ought to have a renewal at least once a week. There is ample provision made that we should be so "strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man" (Ephesians 3:16-20).

III. The Frankincense. The loaves were placed in two rows upon the table, the frankincense, pure, white, and fragrant, was put on the top of the loaves. This pure incense covering the loaves

speaks to us of the righteousness of God-or the merit of Christ's atoning work-imputed to us as we stand by faith upon redemption ground. "Unto all, and upon all them that believe" (Romans 3:22). The loaves, though pure in themselves, had no fragrance. A man, though he be righteous, has not whereof to glory before God. The frankincense is more than human goodness, it is divine worthiness, something that rises unto God with a sweet, soul-pleasing savour. "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing" (Romans 7:18). In Christ, through the sweet influence of the Holy Spirit, God is able to work in us that which is pleasing in His sight. Amen.

Chapter 12

The Candlestick

THE CANDLESTICK.

Exodus 25:31-40; Leviticus 24:1-4; Revelation 1:12-20. The candlestick would be more properly called the "lampstand," as on the top of each branch a lamp stood. It is most suggestive to notice that a distinction is made between the lampstand and its branches. The central or upright part was the candlestick, the other parts were simply the branches of it. This is the same precious thought that we have in John 15, "I am the Vine, ye are the branches." Notice the-

I. Formation. It was made of "pure gold of beaten work." There was no wood here; but still, like all the other vessels, it had a twofold character, "Its shaft and its branches." It is supposed that this candlestick was made out of one solid piece of gold, and that it was brought into the desired form by the process of beating. We are here brought within sight of some very deep New Testament truth in connection with Christ and His Church. All of one piece to begin with. In the purpose of God the Lamb was slain, and we were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1 4). All of one piece, before the world began. Oh, the depths of the wisdom of God! But the candlestick did not appear in reality till the beating had been accomplished. The beating is an emphatic symbol of suffering It was through the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ The candlestick was not made in the holy place. The hard, wearisome process of beating was done outside. Christ had to come out from His Father's presence and go outside the gate of Jerusalem. He only knows all the depth of meaning that lay in this word "beating." It was that we might become partakers of His divine nature He suffered for us, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.

II. Size. The candlestick, like the laver-the type of the Holy Spirit-was given without measure. It is to be wondered at that those two vessels, which represent the two great mysteries of the Church and the Holy Ghost, should be mentioned without any definite measurement. The Church was a mystery hid in the ages of old. Who can measure the mystical body of Christ? Its presence cannot be understood by the carnally minded. It is a great mystery. There are three unions that are all alike mysterious:

1. The union between the Father, Son, and Spirit.

2. The union between the Son and man.

3. The union between the believer and Christ.

III. Position. The laver stood in the centre of the holy place, the table of shewbread on the right side, and the candlestick on the left. All those vessels which stood in a straight line show the provision God has made for our coming near unto Himself. Those which stood by the way represent the privileges and responsibilities of the saved ones. The only light in the holy place was from the golden lampstand. There were no windows, no natural light. In this light only did the priest offer incense and renew the bread on the table. In the light of His presence must all holy work be done. "Thou art my lamp, O Lord" (2 Samuel 22:29). It is when we walk and work in the light of the

sparks of our own kindling that we blunder and stumble and fail. The Church, like the candlestick, is in the purpose of God a separate thing. In the world, but not of it. "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified in truth" (John 17:19). The branches are not of the world, because the shaft is not of the world (John 17:16-18).

IV. Shaft and Branches. The shaft, or centre part, was called the candlestick. The shaft is Christ, the branches on either side are His people. Jesus in the midst. In all things He has the pre-eminence. The branches were beaten out of it. Eve, the type of the Church, was taken out of the side of Adam, "Members of His flesh, and of His bones" (Ephesians 5:30). The shaft with its branches were all of pure gold. The branches were made partakers of the same nature as the candlestick. This we, as believers, have through the operation of the Holy Spirit. Observe further that the strength of the branch lay in the shaft. Apart from the shaft the branch had no power to stand. "Without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me" (Php_4:13). The beauty of the shaft was put upon each branch. The knobs, bowls, and flowers which adorn the centre lamp-stead was to be wrought upon each individual branch. Is not this beautiful? Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us. It is the will of God that the same spirit which wrought in Jesus should work in us, changing us into the same image (2 Corinthians 3:18). Let us "put on the new man, which is after the image of Him that created him" (Colossians 3:10; John 17:22). The same position and privileges which belonged to the shaft belonged also to the branches. Risen with Him and seated together with Him "in heavenly places" (Ephesians 1:3). "Where I am there shall ye be also" (John 14:3). Perhaps the three branches on either side may also indicate the three great gifts in the Church-evangelists, pastors, teachers. This is the true order. The outside branch was the longest. The first duty of the Church is to evangelise. The second branch is the pastor, who gathers together the evangelised ones, and cares for them as a flock. The third branch is the teacher. This one dwelt nearest to the shaft. Nearness to Christ is indispensable to profitable teaching. They sit at His feet and learn of Him. Although the offices are different they all belong to, live by, and exalt the same Lord-"all one in Christ."

V. Light. The light of the candlestick was something different from the candlestick itself. You may have a lampstand without a lamp, or a lamp without a light, just as you may have the form of godliness without the power. But the candlestick was made for the very purpose of bearing the light. Its light was the gift of God. "The Life was the Light" (John 1:4). The light then is a beautiful type of life. The life we have in Christ is life from God, it is the life of God. Ere we can shine before God we must, like the candlestick, be lit with the holy fire of life from God. This light was never to go out. No. The life we get is "eternal life," it shall never go out. The secret of a steady, powerful testimony lies not in having abundance of knowledge, but in having abundance of life. Let us remember that the life is the light. Letting our light shine simply means letting the life of the Christ who dwells within us be seen. This light, like the fire on the altar, was to be used and kept, but not made. Eternal life is not the product of men, it is "the gift of God" (Romans 6:23). "Ye must be born from above" (John 3:3).

Note further the great purpose of this light. It was to-

1. Shine "before the Lord." Our first great business as Christians is to live before God." One is your Master, even Christ" (Matthew 23:8). Walk before Me, said God to Abraham. It is possible to shine

in the eyes of men and yet not be shining before God. To this end we need the devoted heart and the single eye "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your bodies and your spirits which are His" (1 Corinthians 6:20).

While the candlestick was shining "before the Lord" it was also-

2. Shining upon the Table. When we are living only to please God, then are we revealing Christ as the bread of life to others. Men see in Christ the bread they need for their poor, perishing souls by the bright joyful light of the consecrated life. In shining before God we best commend the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no room here for men-pleasing. In shining "before the Lord" it also-

3. Shone upon the Altar. The power of prayer will be seen and felt through the life that's lived before God. The God that answers prayer is the God that answers by the fire of a holy, God-glorifying life. It also-

4. Shone upon Itself. In shining before God we are manifesting to others the beauty the Lord our God hath put upon us. "They, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father who is in Heaven" (Matthew 5:16). Only that which He hath wrought in us can be seen when we live and labour in the presence of "Jesus only."

VI. Oil. The power of the candlestick was in the light that it bore. But the light needed to be fed. The new life given us of God needs sustenance Pure olive oil was provided for the light. Oil is a striking emblem of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost was the pouring in of the oil upon the flickering lives of the early disciples. We may have life, but we cannot have life abundantly unless we have a plentiful supply of the spirit of grace. A dry wick testimony is a poor one. How is this oil applied? The Spirit takes the things of Christ and shows them to us, so when these precious things are seen and accepted, faith is strengthened and the life made brighter. The holy oil is a prime necessity if the lamp of testimony is to be kept brightly burning. There is no escape from this. If our Christian life is dull, hazy, and fitful, that is evidence enough that we lack the oil of the spirit of liberty. Education and earnestness are no substitutes for the pure life-inspiring oil of the Holy Spirit. The oil cannot shine of itself, neither can it make a dead lamp shine. It can only manifest its mighty power through the fire of a living soul. It is said of the Spirit that "He shall not speak of Himself," but He can make the life which we have received through Christ shine so brightly that Christ our Lord shall be magnified in us. "He shall glorify Me," Jesus said. He does thus glorify Him in us. The priest supplied the oil for the lamps. He trimmed them with his own hands. How much more will He give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him? To be filled with the Spirit means to be filled with faith, with love, with wisdom, and power, so that our lives will be Christ-like and honouring to God. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord" (Zechariah 4:1-6).

VII. Tongs and Snuffers. These were small but indispensable things. The lamps needed trimming, the ashes must be removed from the wick. Oh, yes, there are ashes even here. There is something betimes in the best of men that could do better without. But note that the ashes which mar the testimony of the light do not come from the holy oil, but from the body of the wick. The hindrance is never in the Holy Spirit, but in ourselves. It may be a little rising of the self-will, some duty neglected, some sin unconfessed. But it is a blessed consolation that although our Great High Priest may need to use the snuffers of trial and affliction to purify, He never uses the extinguisher. When Peter denied Him He did not extinguish him, but applied the trimming tongs of gracious

intercession. We have not an high priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities. The snuffers were of pure gold. The fiery trials through which we may be brought will not be joyous, but grievous. Nevertheless they work for us an eternal weight of glory. The trial of your faith is "more precious than gold" (1 Peter 1:7). The snuffers are not used for pain, but for profit, that the lamp should shine all the brighter. Golden trials in the hands of a merciful high priest who looks to the "afterwards." "Thy will be done" (Matthew 26:42). Work then in us both to will and to do of Thy good pleasure. Beloved fellow-believer, in the day of trouble consider the golden snuffers.

Chapter 13

The Vail

THE VAIL.

Exodus 26:30-32; Mark 15:38; Hebrews 10:19-20.

I. The Name. The name "vail" suggests something which conceals, a something hidden behind which cannot yet be seen. The vail on the face of Moses screened the glory gleaming within. The vail of unbelief in the heart hides from the soul the glory of the grace of God, as seen in the face of Jesus. The vail of the Tabernacle hid-or came between-the priest and the glory of the divine presence, which rested on the mercy-seat in the holy of holies. It is a type of the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. He took upon Him "the likeness of sinful flesh" (Romans 8:3). This flesh, like a vail, concealed the glory of His divine character. His transfiguration on the mount was an incidental outburst of the hidden glory which dwelt within. The divine majesty was always there, but the weak body of flesh vailed it. Our own bodies are but vails which hide from us the face of our loving and glorified Lord. Death is but the rending of the vail, the opening of the way for our access into His immediate presence. "Absent from the body, present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8). Just now-how sweet the thought- only a vail between.

II. The Character.

1. It was made of "fine twined linen." May we not see here the moral purity of Jesus Christ as a Man. His character was as "fine linen," pure and spotless. Satan came but found nothing in Him. The garment of His thoughts and life was without spot. This linen was to be "fine twined." Who can look at the texture of Christ's life and character without exclaiming how wonderful! The divine and human natures were indeed finely twined. So beautiful were they wrought together, so closely were they united, that in looking on one can only say, "Behold the Man" (John 19:5).

2. It was to be of "cunning work." Now we must look deeper down than the visible texture of the life of Jesus. We come to His birth, the mystery of the incarnation. This is in truth "cunning work," because it is the work of the Holy Ghost. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (1 Timothy 3:16). Cunning work! "Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh!" (1 Timothy 3:16). Who but Christ Himself could ever have suggested such a type.

3. It was "blue, purple, and scarlet." The same colours appear in the gate and the door, because it is the same Divine Man all the way. The "blue" speaks of Him who came from Heaven. The scarlet of Him who was lorn of a woman. The purple, formed by mingling blue and scarlet, speak of Him as God and Man in one Person, the Mediator, the Royal Priest, Emmanuel. Can we join with Mary in saying, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour" (Luke 1:46).

III. The Position. This holy vail hung right in front of the ark of the mercy-seat. It was the only wall of separation between the holy place and the holy of holies. It was only through the vail that the priest could enter into the holy presence. It is only through Christ that we can have access unto God, "I am the Way" (John 14:6). This vail could only be parted once a year, as the priest entered in not without blood. But notice that before he could enter in the vail had to be removed. This must have been a deeply solemn act on the part of the priest. In putting aside the vail he had at once to do with Jehovah Himself. How significant! Let us approach the truth with profound reverence. Christ must be removed. The holy One must needs be set aside ere man through atoning blood can enter into fellowship with God. When those sin-blinded priests and rulers cried, "Away with Him! Away with Him!" (John 19:15), they were ruthlessly tearing the holy vail aside, and exposing themselves to the wrath of the God of Israel (Acts 2:23). Yet the purpose of God was being fulfilled.

IV. The Rending. As soon as Jesus gave up the ghost "the vail of the Temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom" (Matthew 27:51). The vail of the Temple is supposed to be the same vail that was used in the Tabernacle. The death of Christ on the Cross and the rending of the vail on the pillars are closely linked together, because they signify the same thing, that we may have liberty to enter into the holiest "by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, His flesh" (Hebrews 10:19-20). It was-

1. Divinely Rent. It was rent from the top. Rent from above, rent by God. Had it been the work of man it would have been torn from the bottom There is a deep meaning in all this It was true that "with wicked hands" they crucified and slew Him. Yet He could say, "No man taketh My life from Me." Here is the point. "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him, He hath put Him to grief" (Isaiah 53:10). "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" (Psalms 22:1). He made our sins to meet on Him. The vail was rent from the top, the hands of God were stretched forth, they took hold of it and opened it up, indicating that the death of His beloved Son has met every righteous claim, and that now He sets before us an open door into the presence of His mercy-seat.

2. Rent in the Midst. Not down the side. It was no side entrance Christ made for us by His atoning death. The ark, with its mercy-seat and shekinah glory, stood in the centre of the holy of holies and close to the vail. The vail, being rent in the midst, was rent right in front of the mercy-seat. Faith in Christ brings the sinner into immediate touch with a merciful God (Romans 3:25).

3. Rent Completely. From the top to the bottom. Not a thread was left in the way. Grace began it and grace completed it. "It is finished!" He hath indeed perfected that which concerneth us. Every difficulty in God's way of saving men is now removed, and removed by Himself. The Lamb of God has taken away the sin of the world (John 1:29). God rises up and rends asunder the separation vail, that He might offer His mercy to all who approach Him in the Name and through the blood of Jesus Christ His Son. "God is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses" (2 Corinthians 5:19). "I flee to Thee to hide me" (Psalms 143:9). There is salvation in "none other Name" (Acts 4:12). Now that the vail is rent all human priestly pretensions are worthless. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31).

Chapter 14

The Holy Of Holies

THE HOLY OF HOLIES.

Exodus 25:10-22; Numbers 7:89; Hebrews 9.

There were three divisions in the Tabernacle. The "court," the "holy place," and the "holy of holies," perhaps corresponding to the body, soul, and spirit. In the innermost of all the God of glory dwells. The holy of holies was but a small apartment, 15 feet every way, a perfect cube. What condescension for the God of Heaven to manifest His presence in such a lowly place. God, who dwells in the high and holy place, dwells also with him who is of a humble spirit (Isaiah 57:15).

Why was it called the "holy of holies?" Because it was the abode of Him who is the "holiest of all." The presence of God makes holy. The secret of all holiness is the indwelling of the holy One. It is not so much an attainment as a possession, not so much a rising up as a bowing down. All holiness is in God. We are holy just in proportion as we are filled with the holy One. Be filled with the Spirit, and Christ the holy One shall dwell in your heart by faith (Ephesians 3:16-17). The way into the holiest was only by the blood. There is no holiness possible to man but through the blood of Jesus. The priest approached this sacred place but once a year, not without blood, with shoeless feet, and clothed in white linen robes. Here that voice was ever heard saying, "Put off thy shoes from thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5). Looking for holiness is a solemn and awful search. It is seeking to live in the light and presence of Him who tryeth the heart and who cannot look upon sin. It implies the concentration of all our desires into one purpose, to glorify Him (Psalms 27:4). We don't know that the priest ever uttered an audible word within the vail. The nearer we come to God the more we are inclined "to keep silence before Him." The holy of holies is the true place of worship. May His presence ever be so real to us that when we do bow to worship we shall realise in deed and in truth that we fall down before Him.

Why did the high priest never refer to what he saw within the vail? There are spiritual experiences which are not to be talked about. Eye blinding visions and heart melting manifestations that are unspeakable. Paul was caught up to the third Heaven (holy of holies), and heard unspeakable words which it is impossible for a man to utter (2 Corinthians 12:1-4). These are some of the secret soul-satisfying evidences Christians have, that the wisdom of the world knows nothing about. A meat to eat that they knew not of. But remember, only in the holy of holies shall it be seen. "In the secret of Thy Tabernacle, O Lord, hide Thou me!"

I. The Ark and the Mercy-Seat. The furniture of the most holy place was very scant. There is no need for much else where God Himself is. Having Him, we have all things and abound. The ark and the golden censer alone had their place inside the vail. The ark with its mercy-seat lid, covering a law that had been broken, representing the finished work of Christ. The ever-present censer (unless on the great day of atonement) suggesting continual intercession before God.

It is most interesting to notice that the ark was the first vessel God instructed Moses to make. In revealing this way of salvation God began with that which was nearest to Himself. This ladder

came down from Heaven. It was a way made from within. How could it be otherwise if man is to be saved by grace? The first step toward redemption is a divine one. As it has been "God first" for us, so it should be "God first" in us. There are two ways of looking at the great salvation accomplished for us through Christ Jesus. Looked at from within we see the sovereign grace of God coming out to man, seeking him in spite of all his sin and guilt. Looked at from without we see man's great responsibility.

II. The Materials of the Ark. It was made of "shittim wood, overlaid with gold within and without." Once more the double character of the Lord Jesus as the way to God is before us. The wood telling us of His human nature, the gold of His divine. Here humanity in the Person of Christ is glorified both within and without. As a Man God was glorified in His inward thoughts and in His outward acts alike. The wood of itself is of little worth, but the gold gave value and preciousness to it. Here all the worth of the gold is imputed to the wood It was one ark. Precious thought, all the value and power of divinity is in Christ our Lord as the Son of Man. He is risen now in the form of Man, yet possessing all the preciousness and power of Almighty God. Within the vail He is the glorified Man, both within and without. No wonder Peter calls His blood "precious." The life is in the blood. All the value of the eternal God was in the Blood of Jesus. The divinity of Christ gives infinite efficacy to the blood of Christ. The Unitarian delusion has not a spot for the sole of its foot in the types of the Tabernacle. Every vessel is a condemnation of such a Christ-dishonouring creed. The wood in the ark within was the same as the wood in the altar without (shittim), proclaiming the truth that the Jesus who suffered on the Cross without is the very same Jesus who is glorified on the throne within. God has highly exalted Him who became obedient unto death.

III. The Position of the Ark. As you already know the ark rested in the holy of holies. Christ, "who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God," is now in the presence of the living God serving Him (Hebrews 9:14). God's high estimate of Jesus is seen in His finding rest in the presence of God. The ark was the centre of the camp of Israel. God was in the midst of her. Jesus Christ His Son was, and is, in the midst of all God's plans and purposes. By Him God made all things; "without Him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:1-3). Through Him God made the world; through Him God also redeemed it; in all things He has the pre-eminence. Let us give Christ the high place God gives Him, the Centre of all. May He be in the centre of our hearts, our purposes, and lives! This is His true place. "If any man open the door I will come in" (Revelation 3:20). All the other vessels were valueless without this one. They all prepared the way to this, they were but steps leading up to fellowship with God here at the mercy-seat. We are saved and sanctified that we might be made meet to serve and worship.

IV. The Contents of the Ark. There were three things in the ark. The tables of the law, the pot of manna, and the rod that budded. The contents of the ark represent what Christ has secured in behalf of His people, an inheritance for the saints. Let us look at them-

1. The Tables of the Law. The law is holy, just, and good. It represents the holy and righteous demands of a just God. It was given at the hands of Moses to a people who clamoured for a written declaration of His will, and who said, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" (Exodus 19:8). And while the law was being received they danced around a golden calf. The law was broken and judgment incurred. When man failed at first God did not give him a law but a promise (Genesis 3:15). He knew that man could never be saved through law-keeping. "By the deeds of

the law shall no man be justified" (Romans 3:20). By the law is the knowledge of sin, not the forgiveness of sin. By works man is a great failure. But now, since man has failed, grace comes in. God tells Moses to shut up the law in the ark. The ark literally kept the law. The lid or golden mercy-seat covered it, and hid it in the heart of the ark. "The law was given by Moses, but grace came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). Christ as the ark of God could say, "Thy law have I hid in My heart, I delight to do Thy will, O my God." The holy broken law was shut up in Him. He kept it. He still keeps it. It was magnified in Him. Now it is taken out of the way as an obstacle in the way of men's salvation, "Nailing it to His Cross" (Colossians 2:14). The law finds a peaceful resting-place in Him who is all glorious, both within and without. It is perfectly kept here. God Himself guards it and rests satisfied on Him who covers it. Now grace reigns in righteousness.

2. The Pot of Manna. The children of Israel fed on manna during the forty years of their wanderings. A golden pot of manna was deposited in the ark as a memorial. This was bread hidden in the ark, "hidden manna" (Revelation 2:17). There is in Christ a secret soul-satisfying power. He is the Living Bread which came down from Heaven. The hidden bread can only be enjoyed by those who understand and appreciate a covered law. But perhaps the "hidden manna" in the ark, in which the God of glory rested, had also a heavenly aspect. Had it not a voice for God? The Lord Jesus Christ is also the "Bread of God," soul-satisfying food for the heart of His heavenly Father. The hidden law speaks of a justice that has been satisfied, the hidden manna of a satisfied heart-"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17).

3. The Rod that Budded (Hebrews 9:4). The story of the rods is found in Numbers 17. The dead stick, representing Aaron, was made to bud and blossom, and bear fruit while it stood before God. The rod, then, signifies one chosen of God, One called to resurrection and life, One who was dead, but is alive again. In the ark was the rod that budded; in Christ is life for the dead. In the covered law we see His obedience; in the manna His body broken for us in death; in the rod His resurrection. The first is Christ, the Way; the second is Christ, the Truth; the third is Christ, the Life. "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6).

V. The Lid of the Ark. This was a slab of solid gold which completely covered the ark. There was no wood in the lid, but it rested on shittim wood, overlaid with gold. Here we have the pure grace of God resting on Him who is both human and divine. Grace came by Jesus Christ. The great and wondrous thought here is, that this lid, while covering the ark, formed at the same time a mercy-seat for God. Carefully observe that this lid is called a "seat," the mercy-seat of God. We cannot think of a seat without associating with it the idea of rest. This was a resting-place for God. The only seat in this house of God was occupied by Himself. How refreshing it is to our hearts to know that God does find a place of rest in the finished work of His own dear Son. There is no other place where the weary soul of man can find rest from sin, but where God has found it, in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Notice further that this seat was called the mercy-seat, the place where mercy sat. Mercy sat here because there the broken law was covered. Mercy reigns in Christ because in Him justice is fully satisfied. This was to Israel the "Throne of Grace." Here God rested to bestow His favour upon those who approached Him by the way of shed blood (Hebrews 10:19). "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us therefore come boldly into the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:14-16).

VI. The Grown of the Ark. Although we cannot all see eye to eye in our interpretation of the things which belong to the Tabernacle, yet I think we all agree that every whit speaketh of His glory. If every pin and cord has a tongue we may expect that the "crowns" will cry aloud. The crown of the ark was a rim of ornamental workmanship. It was a crown of glory. He who was despised and rejected among men is now "crowned with glory and honour" in the presence of God. But while the crown speaks of honour it also speaks of power and security. This golden rim, or crown, would prevent the lid of the ark from moving out of its place. It is of great importance that the mercy-seat should not be disturbed. The law can only minister death. If the covering is removed then grace is hindered, and judgment leaps forth. The fact that Christ is crowned with honour in Heaven as our Kinsman Redeemer is a double assurance that grace will save. As long as He sits before the Father mercy shall thus be enthroned. The time will come when He shall rise up. Then the lid will be lifted from the ark, the throne of mercy removed. The day of grace will then be gone. This is a solemn thought; do not trifle with the grace of God. "Behold, now is the accepted time." We have a forecast of this awful truth in 1 Samuel 6. The men of Bethshemish lifted the lid of the ark, and fifty thousand three score and ten men perished. They cried, "Who can stand before this Holy Lord God?" The answer is: none when the mercy-seat is removed. Despise the atoning and law-covering work of Jesus Christ, and you expose yourself to the vengeance of a broken law. "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me" (John 14:6).

VII. The Staves of the Ark. Concerning these shafts by which the ark was carried it was said, "They shall not be taken out." The staves abiding in the ark may teach us that the ministry was to be continuous. The efficacy of the ark was ever the same in behalf of the people. This also is precious to the believing heart. We may, and do, often come far short of walking worthy of such grace. We fail to take full advantage of our high privileges, and often stumble. But the throne of mercy remains the same toward us. The staves are ever in, always ready to help in time of need. Almighty grace is always within the reach of human need.

VIII. The Purpose of the Mercy-Seat. It was the only meeting place between God and man. "There will I meet with you" (Exodus 25:22). Thank God there is a meeting place. God rested on the mercy-seat waiting to meet with man, there God is in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. There, in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Sacrifice and Mediator, will you meet with God in mercy. Here is a God ready to pardon. Will you meet Him now at a throne of grace, or afterwards at a throne of judgment? (Romans 3:24-25).

Chapter 15

The Cherubim On The Mercy-Seat

THE CHERUBIM ON THE MERCY-SEAT.

Exodus 25:18-22; Hebrews 9:5.

We thought first of all to pass this subject over with a short note, but when we think of the very important and prominent position the cherubim occupy, we dare not treat that as common which God has so highly distinguished. Many different interpretations have been given; we cannot resist the conviction that they represent the position of the redeemed within the vail, in glory. At least, looked at in this light, there is much to cheer and encourage, and to inspire the people of God with wonder and adoration. Before we look more closely at the cherubim on the mercy-seat, let us see them (see Ezekiel 10:15) as they appear in Ezekiel, chapters 1 and 10. The character and history of the Church of God is beautifully set forth here in these "living creatures." Notice their-

I. Origin. They came "Out of the midst of the fire" (Ezekiel 1:4-5). These words "out of the midst" occur three times, perhaps indicating the presence of the Triune God. Fire is an emblem of God. The origin of the Church was with God. We have been born of God. The life we have as Christians is divine life. We are His workmanship.

II. Character. They are called "living creatures" (Matthew 19:5), not dying creatures; they possess eternal life. They are a peculiar people. Such is the character of those who belong to God. They are not of the earth, earthly; they don't belong to this dying world. They are living, "Alive unto God" (Romans 6:11).

III. Appearance. "They had the likeness of a man" (Matthew 19:5). Every individual member of the Church, as known to God, bears the likeness of the Man Christ Jesus. They have been created after the image of Him. They bear the image of the heavenly. Made partakers of the divine nature. "Changed into the same image, from glory to glory" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

IV. Characteristics. They had four faces (Matthew 19:10)- 1. They had the face of a man. They were wise. Christ is made of God unto us wisdom. Wise in Christ.

2. The face of a lion. They were strong and courageous.

"I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me" (Php_4:13).

3. The face of an ox. They were patient and persevering.

4. The face of an eagle. They were far-seeing and high-flying. The redeemed of the Lord see things in the light of eternity and have their affections high up on the things which are above. They had also four wings (Matthew 19:11). With two they did fly, with two they did cover themselves. Is this characteristic of us, that we live only to serve God and conceal ourselves?

V. Movements. They went "straight forward" (Matthew 19:12). They went like those who had only one thing to do, one purpose to carry out. "This one thing I do" (Php_3:13). Then note further that

they went "Whither the Spirit was to go." This is most significant. They were lead by the Spirit. "When He the spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13). What could more accurately describe the characters and attitudes of the Church of the living God than this? But what follows now that they are guided by the Spirit?

VI. Influence. "Their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps" (Matthew 19:13). As coals of fire they were all alive and all aglow in themselves; as lamps they were lights to others. Moreover, they ran and returned as a flash of lightning (Matthew 19:14). This is what the Church ought to be. This is what we as Christians ought to be. Filled with and guided by the Holy Spirit, this is what we will be, "coals of fire," hearts all aglow with zeal; "lamps," letting our lights shine; "messengers," running and returning-running with and returning for fresh messages from the King. But note yet further, that "Their noise was as the voice of the Almighty" (Matthew 19:24). It is the purpose of God that the Church should be led by the Holy Spirit, filled with holy zeal for the glory of God, and that its testimony should be as "the voice of the Almighty;" but, alas, through worldliness and sin its voice is more like the voice of impotence. Our testimony will always be weak when we are not "in the way" of the Holy Spirit of God.

VII. Accompaniments. "When these living creatures (cherubim) went, the wheels went by them" (Matthew 19:19). These wheels are described as "very high" and "full of eyes." They had a work to do in connection with the living creatures (Matthew 19:16). They seem to symbolise the very mysterious, all wise, and ever active special providence that accompany the chosen of God while on earth. "All things work together for good to them who love God, who are the called according to His promise" (Romans 8:28).

VIII. Translation. "The cherubim lifted up their wings and mounted up from the earth, the wheels also were beside them" (chap. Matthew 10:19). Here is the translation of the Church in figure, and the special providence which attended it on earth going with it. "Caught up together to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Thus the cherubim, like the Church, came from God, and, guided by the Spirit, went up to God. So we think that in the cherubim on the mercy-seat, in the holy of holies, we may see our position as "God's own" within the vail, seated with Christ in heavenly places. That they represent the privileges of the redeemed in glory may appear yet more clear when we consider-

1. How they were Formed. They were made out of the end of the mercy-seat, as the more literal rendering of Exodus 25:19 affirms. They were not made separately and put on the mercy-seat, but were in reality a part of it. They were both one. The mercy-seat declares God's mercy toward men through Jesus Christ, the ark on which it rested. The cherubim, or church, is connected with the mercy-seat resting on the ark of Christ's redemptive work, but linked on to God's purpose in Christ before the world began. This sentence may seem vague, but read it again, there is hidden manna in it. They were made of "beaten work," wrought out by the process of beating. "Beaten work" suggests a lingering process of suffering, made through much crushing and bruising. Yes, before a Church could stand redeemed before God there must be much beating and bruising, much soul suffering and agony. Who can tell all the anguish of God while in love He gave His Son up to the death for us all. "He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:5). A saved people, a glorified Church in His own presence, will be the result of this beaten work of pure gold. Only pure gold could have stood such a terrible test; only infinite grace could

have accomplished such a work. By grace are ye saved. "Grace, 'tis a charming sound."

2. Where they Stood. They stand upon the mercy-seat, they were part of it. We are "bone of His bone," the connection is both real and deep. Born, "not of the will of man, but of God," partakers of His nature. "According to His mercy He saved us" (Titus 3:5). On this mercy we shall stand, even in the Heaven of heavens. Rutherford said:

" I stand upon His merit. Not e'en where glory dwelleth, I know no other stand; In Immanuel's Land."

3. What they Did. "They looked one to another, with their faces toward the mercy-seat." What a suggestive attitude for the saved in glory, looking on one another with the look of family recognition, a hint that we shall know each other in the Better Land, the holier place. But their faces were specially toward the mercy-seat, they looked with adoration on Him who had purchased for them this high and holy privilege. If you ask, "What are these?" we answer, "These are they which have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple, and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them" (Revelation 7:15). If their voice could be heard, we would doubtless hear them saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." Not only were they part of the mercy-seat, but in it; they stood on it, they looked, and over it they spread their wings. It was their all and in all. Such is the mercy of God, in Christ Jesus, to all them that believe.

4. What they Enjoyed. We must not overlook this great fact that they rested continually in the very presence of the Holy One Himself. God dwelt on the mercy-seat, between the cherubim, God was in the midst of them, they were "for ever with the Lord." Within the vail we are in the presence of our Lord. "To depart" is to be "with Christ." At the throne of mercy we first meet with God; before the throne we shall stand and serve for ever, with an acceptance that reaches through all eternity, because we are accepted in the Beloved. "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2).

Chapter 16

The Priesthood

THE PRIESTHOOD.

Exodus 28; Leviticus 8; Hebrews 7.

There is a difference, of course, between a priest and an apostle. An apostle is one who comes out from God with a message to man. A priest is one who goes in to God on behalf of man. The Lord Jesus Christ is both Apostle and High Priest (Hebrews 3:1). He came from God, and He went back to God. The great work of the priest was to minister unto the Lord (Exodus 28:3). "I delight to do Thy will, O my God," is the language of the Great High Priest. This will also be the delight of our lives if we are walking in the white robes of our holy priesthood (Revelation 1:6).

I. The Priestly Calling.

1. Aaron was Called of God. "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron" (Hebrews 5:4). "Every high priest is ordained" (Hebrews 8:3). Jesus Christ our High Priest was the chosen of God, He is the only divinely ordained high priest, the only "mediator between God and man" (1 Timothy 2:5).

2. He was Washed. They must be clean that bear the vessels of the Lord. Aaron is a sunlight type of Christ, but this washing just brings out how far short the best of men come in resembling the Holy One of God. He needed net this cleansing.

3. He was Clothed. The coat, the robe, and the ephod were put upon him. Our great High Priest was robed in garments of glory and beauty. These holy robes were, as we shall see, typical of His character.

4. He was Crowned. The mitre, or holy crown, was put upon his head. The priestly dress was not complete without the crown (Zechariah 3:1-5). The priest must be one fitted to wear a crown. The mediator between God and man must be one able to wear, and worthy of a glorious crown. The crown of holiness is His.

5. He was Anointed. "Moses poured the anointing oil upon Aaron's head" (Leviticus 8:12). The anointing spirit was poured out upon the head of God's beloved as He stood by the Jordan. The Spirit, like a dove, crowned Him with honour. He is the Lord's anointed.

6. He was Consecrated. Aaron was sprinkled with the blood and had his hands filled for the Lord (Leviticus 8:24-27). Claimed and filled is the true consecrated state. The Lord Jesus Christ was both. The voice from Heaven said, "This is My beloved Son"-claimed. The Spirit was given unto Him without measure-filled. His holy hands were indeed filled for God and for man.

7. He fed on the Bread of Consecration (Leviticus 8:31). Holy bread was his. What none other could touch was his by right of his character as priest. Jesus could say, "I have a meat to eat that ye know not of" (Leviticus 21:22). He did eat the "Bread of His God."

8. He was Blameless. No man that hath a blemish shall come nigh to offer the offering of the Lord (Leviticus 21:23). Our High Priest was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners" (Hebrews 7:26). Man could find no fault in Him, and God was infinitely pleased with Him. Aaron is a type of Christ.

II. Aaron's Sons represent the position and privilege of all those who belong to Christ. Let the Holy Spirit now take the things which are Christ's and show them unto us. From Leviticus 8 we learn some deep spiritual truths concerning the priesthood of believers.

1. Their Names were Closely Associated. Ten times do we read, "Aaron and his sons." Aaron was called, and his sons were called in him. Oh, the depths! Chosen in Him from "before the foundation of the world." Called to be holy, "Be ye holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16). Aaron's sons were priests by birth. So are we. Priests because they were sons. Now are we the sons of God, blood relatives to the Great High Priest, bone of His bone, flesh of His flesh.

2. They had the Same Calling. Called to be priests. "As the Father hath sent Me, so have I sent you" (John 20:21). He hath made us priests unto God. Are we abiding in our high and holy calling, or are we doing nothing at it just now?

3. They had the Same Underclothing. Aaron had robes of glory and beauty which belonged to himself only as high priest. His sons, like himself, had the pure linen coat. There are glories which belong to the Lord Jesus Christ as the divine and eternal One which we cannot have, but, like Him, we may all have, and ought to have, the linen coat of inward purity.

4. They had the Same Anointing. They were accepted by the same blood and anointed with the same oil. Christ is entered by His own blood, and so are we as His. The same Spirit that come upon Him is to anoint us (1 John 2:27). How unerring the type. The oil was first poured upon Aaron's head before it was given unto his sons. The Spirit was given unto Christ without measure that He might give the Spirit to them that ask Him. "The promise is unto you, and to your children" (Acts 2:39). This was true of Him also. The anointing oil was not to be put upon strangers. The world cannot receive the Holy Spirit. Only those born into the family of God can receive this sacred honour.

5. They had their Hands Filled with the Same Offering. We have nothing else to offer God on our behalf than that which Christ, our Aaron, offered. But we must wave before the Lord that which He waves.

6. They Eat the Same Food. They fed on the same holy bread. Jesus lived by faith, so must we. His soul rested on and was strengthened by the promises of His Father. This also is our high privilege. Live as He lived. He "left us an example that we should follow His steps" (1 Peter 2:21).

7. They were Under the Same Authority. "They were to keep the charge of the Lord" (Joshua 22:3). Oh, how faithfully Jesus kept the charge given Him, "I must be about My Father's business" (Luke 2:49). He went about continually doing good. "I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the Work which Thou gavest Me to do" (John 17:4). "It is finished!" Are we so seeking to keep the charge of the Lord? Are we glorifying Him on earth? Are we finished, or shirking the work given us to do? "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I sent also them into the world" (John 20:21).

III. The Priestly Dress reveals the priestly character. Every part of it was appointed by God. He was to be a man after God's own heart, both inwardly and outwardly. In the inward thoughts of His heart and in the outward acts of His life the Lord Jesus was all and everything that God desired. The attire of the high priest was in three different parts, just as there were three divisions in the Tabernacle. We get the same thoughts in the priest's dress as we find in the coverings and the vessels. They all speak of Him who came in human form to glorify God and save men. There was-

1. The Coat. This was made of "fine white linen," and worn next to the body. "White linen is the righteousness of the saints" (Revelation 19:8). So the linen here reminds us of the pure and spotless human character of the Lord Jesus, who knew no sin as a personal experience, but was "holy, harmless, undefiled. "What a contrast between the "fine linen" of His righteousness and the "filthy rags" of man's own righteousness! No man was ever so particular about his linen as God was about this. Before we can wear the white linen coat of His righteousness, like the sons of Aaron, we must be washed in the blood of the Lamb. The white linen was not to cover uncleanness, but to cover nakedness. Connected with this coat was "the girdle" of fine white linen. The teaching here is plain, the girdle speaks of service, the white linen girdle tells of the Man Christ Jesus as the Servant of God. He girt Himself with a towel and washed His disciples' feet. His girdle was never loose. He went about continually doing good. God the Father said of Him, "Behold My Servant" (Isaiah 42:1). As a servant, He made Himself of no reputation, and was obedient unto death (Php_2:5-7). The service of the Lord "in fashion as a man" was in the sight of God as "fine white linen." All the sons of Aaron wore this coat and girdle. Every believer in the Lord Jesus has the coat of righteousness and the girdle of service. But, alas! the girdles of many are hanging loose, if not altogether cast off. The girdle was attached to the coat. God means both to go together. We are saved to serve (Luke 1:74).

2. The Robe. This robe was worn over the white linen coat, and was "all of blue." It was "curiously wrought," and "without seam." As the "white linen" speaks of the perfect man, so "all of blue" speaks of the Lord from Heaven. "Curiously wrought" in His incarnation, and with regard to His eternal existence, "without seam." In the one we see Christ as the "Child born," in the other as the "Son given." This robe of blue was worn by the high priest alone. It represents something belonging to Christ which cannot be put upon His people-Divinity, Godhead. This robe was to be strongly bound. The Deity of Christ, our High Priest, can neither be torn nor tarnished, it is unchangeable.

Attached to the skirt of this robe were "golden bells" and "pomegranates." The bells speak of a harmonious, joyful sound. The juicy, pleasant-flavoured pomegranate speaks of refreshing, satisfaction, and fruitfulness. It is most significant to notice that these were not connected with the coat (the human nature), but with the robe (the divine). If Christ had only been a man there could have been no joyous sound of salvation, no soul satisfaction for us as sinners before God. The glad song of the herald angels was, "Fear not, I bring you good tidings of great joy, for unto you is born a Saviour which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). The sweetness of this song lay, not in that a man was born, but in that this Man was the Holy One, the Son of God. The bells were hung on the robe of blue. These bells and pomegranates doubtless had a reference to God as well as to man. From the fact that they belonged only to that part of the dress which distinguished the high priest indicate this. There is in Christ Jesus, as our great High Priest, that which is infinitely sweet and melodious to the ear of God, and also that which is refreshing and satisfying to His heart. The

Gospel bells and pomegranates of promise have brought gladness and satisfaction to many a weary, despairing soul. "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound" (Psalms 89:15). These are the golden bells of the grace of God, and they have a charming sound.

3. The Ephod. This part of the priestly attire was worn above the "robe of blue." It was made of the same materials as the vail, "blue, purple, and scarlet." We have the same order here as in the curtains. The white coat, representing the human character of Christ, the "robe of blue" His divinity, the ephod and two natures in One Person. The first is the Man Jesus; the second is the Man Christ Jesus; the third is the Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus. There was also a girdle connected with the ephod, made of the same materials. The girdle means service. Thus we learn that even while the priest was clothed with these "robes for glory and beauty" he was still in the attitude of serving. Our great High Priest, although now robed with glory and beauty, still wears the golden girdle of service (Revelation 1:13).

4. The Breastplate. This breastplate was nine inches square, and was formed with "cunning work of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet" (see Exod. 28). It was "not to be loosed from the ephod." It is therefore typical of something which belongs to Christ as our Mediator. Twelve stones were set in it, in four rows, one for each tribe in Israel, bearing their names. Thus the high priest carried the people of God on his bosom, written on his heart. This is a precious thought for every one redeemed by the blood of Christ. They are ever remembered by Him, they are ever before Him. Our place with Him is on His heart, held up before God, and ever accepted in Him. The priest could not lay off the breastplate without stripping himself of his garment of glory. If the Lord casts away His people He casts away His own glory as the redeeming Son of God. Christ's glorious character and His people are bound together. He will not be in glory and leave me behind. These stones had all different colours. The people of God may possess very different gifts and spheres of usefulness, but they were all one in the breastplate, all alike near to the priest, all one in Christ. But one thing more we must notice here, that is, the "shoulder pieces." They were connected with the breastplate and the ephod. In each of these pieces was a stone with the names of six of the tribes of Israel engraven on them. So all the people of the Lord were represented on the heart and on the shoulders of their mediator. On the heart, the place of affection; on the shoulders, the place of strength and security. Every time the high priest entered the holy place he carried with him all the ransomed of the Lord. Where he went they went. Remember the words of the Lord, how He said, "Where I am, there shall ye be also" (John 14:3). "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous" (1 John 2:1).

5. The Mitre. This was the head-piece, or "holy crown," of the priest. It was made of fine white linen, and had a plate of pure gold in the forefront, with these solemn words clearly engraven upon it, "Holiness to the Lord" (Exodus 28:36). While the truth taught here is a deeply humbling one, it is also comforting. This holy crown was put upon Aaron that he might bear the "iniquity of the holy things." Think of it. There is that in our most holy things which mar their purity and disfigure their character, but our representative is crowned with holiness, and we are in Him that is true. Praise the Lord! It is most significantly added that "It shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord" (Exodus 28:38). "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" (Romans 8:34). Who shall separate us from Him who hath bound us to His shoulder and heart with the cords of love and power? I am nothing; He is everything. Of myself I can only say,

"Unclean," but He is "Holiness to the Lord." "Abide in Him." "Ye are complete in Him." In Him ye are perfect, entire, wanting nothing.

6. The Urim and Thummim. These mysterious stones were connected with the breastplate, they mean "Lights and Perfections." It would seem that they were used when making special inquiry of the Lord (Numbers 27:21; 1 Samuel 28:6). Perhaps they either brightened or grew dim according to God's "Yes" or "No." It is evident that God's mind was at times in some way or other revealed through them. They appear to us to typify the revealing and sanctifying ministry of the Holy Ghost. It would be strange indeed, if, where there is so much that speaks of Christ's character and work, there was nothing to indicate the great gift that has come to His Church through His entering into the holiest. The Urim and Thummim through the high priest, revealed the will of God. The Holy Spirit coming to us through our High Priest "leads us into all truth."

These precious stones, like the Holy Spirit, testify only of Him. That they were two in number may be intended to show us further that the Holy Spirit is the gift of both Father and Son. The greatest importance was always attached to the Urim and Thummim. A priest without them was only a man without power with God (Nehemiah 7:65). It was through the eternal Spirit that Christ offered Himself unto God. If we would, as priests, have power with God and with men, let us see that we have always with us the Urim of the Holy Spirit.

Such were the official garments of the great high priest. But these could not be put on till after the great day of atonement. Christ must first offer Himself a sacrifice unto God before He could put on His robes of glory and beauty as our representative before the throne of God.

IV. The Work of the Priest. The great work of Aaron the high priest, as well as the work of his sons, was summed up in these words, "To keep the charge of the Lord" (Leviticus 8:35). Keeping His charge meant doing all His will. This the Lord Jesus Christ delighted to do. The priestly work was very varied. He had to-

1. Present Himself before God. He had, first of all, to make atonement for himself before he could do anything for others. He must be without sin himself who would offer a sacrifice unto God for others. Christ needed no sacrifice for Himself, being "holy, harmless, and undefiled" (Hebrews 7:26). He was able at once to present Himself before God in the room of others.

2. Make Atonement for the People. This priest had to offer himself twice; once for himself, and again for the people. Jesus Christ "offered Himself once" (Hebrews 9:28). This atonement was made once a year, it was "the great day," All the vessels of the Tabernacle were sprinkled with blood. They all received their authority and efficacy on the ground of the great atonement. The teaching is plain. All spiritual blessings come through the great atoning death of Jesus. The high priest only could make atonement. He was to be alone in the work. Who could help the Son of God to make atonement for sin? He "trod the winepress alone, there was none to help" (Isaiah 63:3). On this day the priest had to put off his garments of glory and beauty, and do his greatest work in the attire of an ordinary priest. Christ did not die in the purple robe (Mark 15:20), nor with His garments white and glistening, but in "His own clothes" of humility and meekness, as the holy Man.

3. Sprinkle the Vessels. The sprinkling of the vessels meant the sanctifying, or opening up, of the way into the presence of God (Hebrews 9:21-26). Jesus, by His own blood, hath consecrated for

us a new and living way into the holiest (Hebrews 10:20). He died for our sins that we might be justified before God, and for every justified one there is provision made by Him for every step of the way. "All the way long it is Jesus."

4. Offer Gifts. Besides the sacrifices and meatofferings, the priest also offered the gifts of incense on the golden altar. Jesus, too, had somewhat to offer. "A body hast Thou prepared Me" (Hebrews 10:5). "He bare our sins on His own body" (1 Peter 2:24). Gifts of sweet incense He also offered in the days of His flesh, "prayers, supplications, strong crying, tears" (Hebrews 5:7). And here is the sweet perfume, "He was heard in that He feared."

5. Trim the Lamps. The priest supplied the oil daily for the lamps. The lamps would soon die out if the priests failed to keep the charge of the Lord. Our High Priest will not fail, He gladly supplies the Spirit of grace that we may be able to bear a bright testimony for Him. "My grace is sufficient for thee" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

6. Discern between the Clean and Unclean. He who was "Holiness to the Lord" was well fitted to pronounce judgment between the clean and the unclean. "Who art thou, O man, that judgest?" (Romans 2:1). If there is any perplexity as to whether a thing is clean or unclean, right or wrong, take it to Him who knows everything that is unclean in the sight of a holy God. There need be no doubt, unless we are afraid to submit it to the searching eye of the Holy One. If we walk according to His judgment we shall "walk worthy of the Lord in all pleasing" (Colossians 1:10).

7. Make Intercession. If the people would inquire of the Lord it must be by priest or prophet. The Lord Jesus is both priest and prophet. A prophet to declare the will of God to us, a priest to make intercession for us. He was able to intercede because He was qualified to atone. He who could reconcile could also plead their cause. By reason of death the priesthood had to be changed, "but this Man (Christ), because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood, wherefore He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:24-25). The high priest never sat down during the time of his ministry; he went in and out, but never sat, his work was never done. Jesus could say, "I have finished the work Thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4). So that "after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, He sat down on the right hand of God" (Hebrews 10:12). But the order of the priest's work was not complete until he came out and presented himself to the waiting people and blessed them. Our high priest has gone in, now we wait for His Son from Heaven, who said, "If I go, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, ye may be also" (John 14:3).

Chapter 17

The Great Day Of Atonement

THE GREAT DAY OF ATONEMENT.

Leviticus 16; Romans 5:1-10; Hebrews 10. The word "atonement" does not mean reconciliation so much as "covering." It is never once used in the Old Testament in the sense of to reconcile, always as "coverings," or "to cover." The atonement was that by which everything was covered that hindered man's approach to God. The great day of atonement was the great day of coverings. Just as the curtains of the Tabernacle covered the holy things from the eye of man, so the atonement covers our sins and iniquities from the eye of God. It secures unto us the righteousness of God, which is unto all and upon all that believe. What a covering! The great day of atonement was-

I. A Day of Priestly Humiliation. The robes of glory and beauty had to be laid aside and the common "holy linen coat" put on. In the morning of this great day he went forth in the form of a servant. How solemn and suggestive is all this! Christ came not forth to make an atonement in the robes of His visible glory. The glory that He had with the Father was laid aside. In the form of a servant "He appeared to put away sin" (Hebrews 9:25). The priest was still the high priest, although clothed in the ordinary coat. The Lord Jesus was still the eternal Son, although He made Himself of "no reputation." Even when "in fashion as a man" He was clothed in the pure white linen coat of a spotless character.

II. A Day of Special Sacrifice. The taking of the two goats from the congregation as one sin-offering was a singular yet most instructive type. Having come from the people, the people were therefore represented in them. In Adam, the first man, all die. In Christ, the second man, taken from among the people, shall all be made alive. These two goats bring out, not only Christ's connection with the people as man, but also the twofold aspect of His sacrificial work. Both goats were presented before the Lord, then, after the lot was cast, one was given to the Lord, the other became the scapegoat for the people. The great sin-atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ had to meet all the holy claims of God, and all the deep need of sinful humanity. As the two goats constituted one offering, so Christ by His one offering met the twofold need of God and man. The day that Christ died upon the cross was the world's great day of atonement. What has it brought for thee?

III. A Day of Solemn Imputation. We read, "Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all their iniquities and all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities" (Leviticus 16:21-22). Substitution is clearly taught here. The goat bore the sins of the people, they were laid on by one who was "holiness to the Lord," the holy One of God. How significant these words are, "Jehovah laid on Him the iniquities of us all. It pleased the Lord to bruise Him. He hath put Him to grief" (Isaiah 53:6, Isaiah 53:10). The holy God laid on His holy Son the sin of the world. Christ "bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24). We sometimes sing, "I lay my sins on Jesus." But what right have I to lay my sins on the holy Son of God? I dare not. But oh, the depths of divine grace, it pleased the Father to do it. Who can challenge the righteousness of substitution when it is the

Lord's doing.

These two goats reveal the twofold aspect of the redemption that is in Christ. The one goat was offered to the Lord for an atonement, the other was a substitute for the congregation. The first cannot save without the second. The atonement of Christ is the opening up of a way of access to God. It is the providing of that which is sufficient to cover the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:3). He is the atonement (covering) for our sins, whether we believe it or not, but He is only the substitute and Saviour of those who identify themselves with Him through faith in Him. When we come to Christ we take shelter under the covering of His wings (Matthew 23:27).

IV. A Day of Lonely Service. While the priest was making atonement no man was to be in the Tabernacle till he came out (Leviticus 16:17). He was to be alone in his solemn work. It was his own work, the work for which God had called him and sent him. How like this is to the work of the Son of Man. He looked, but there was none to help Him. While treading the winepress of sorrow and suffering He was "alone." He took Peter, James, and John into the garden with Him. But still, in the bloody sweat of His awful agony He was alone. He came and found them sleeping. He looked, but there was none to help. In the dark and bitter hour of death He cried, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Psalms 22:1). He was alone. But even while going about preaching and teaching He was alone. "Neither did His brethren believe in Him" (John 7:5), and His closest disciples did not fully understand Him. In His sacred, holy, self-sacrificing purpose He was alone. Sinners, stand back, ye can have no hand at all in this great atoning work. "God has laid help in One that is mighty" (Psalms 89:19).

V. A Day of Acceptance before God. Once a year, on this great day, the high priest entered within the holy vail. He carried with him the blood of the sacrifice, while his hands were full of sweet incense. The blood he sprinkled both upon and before the mercy-seat, on the place where God rested, and on the place where he himself stood. Thus the blood made atonement before God, and gave man a ground of acceptance in His holy presence. He stood on "redemption ground." The incense was put upon the fire in the censer, and the cloud of fragrance was to cover the mercy-seat. As we have already observed, the word "atonement" means covering. Here we see the merit of the atoning death in the cloud of incense, covering both God and man. The priest was within the vail on the ground of atoning blood, standing as the peoples' representative. Accepted before God. What a picture of Jesus, our great High Priest, who now appears in the presence of God for us! He hath entered in by His own blood, and we are accepted in Him, in Him whose merit covers both the mercy-seat of God and the naked soul of man.

VI. A Day of Soul Affliction. On that day "ye shall afflict your souls" (Leviticus 16:29). While the people looked on and saw the priest accomplished for them the great atoning work, they were to afflict their souls. It was to bring sorrow and repentance into their hearts because of their sins. "They shall look on Him whom they have pierced, and mourn for Him" (Zechariah 12:10). It is a solemn, heart-breaking sight, to look upon the Lamb of God being slain for us. Can you look upon Him whom your sins have pierced without your soul being afflicted? There were to be no frivolous hearts on that awful day. The great atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ can only be appreciated by afflicted and sin-smitten souls. In the presence of the dying Son of God the mouths of argument and controversy must be sealed with dumbness. "Truly this was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:54). "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like My sorrow"

(Lamentations 1:12). Through the tears of a crushed and broken heart can we best see the beauty and deep meaning of "the blood of the Lamb."

VII. A Day of Perfect Rest. "Ye shall do no work at all; it shall be a Sabbath of rest unto you" (Leviticus 16:31) The priest shall make an atonement for you. Ye shall do no work. What a perfect pattern we have in this! On the day of atonement the people whose sins are being atoned must do nothing. Anything they do just goes so far to hinder the great work of the priest. They cannot help, they must cease from their doings and trust the work of the priest on their behalf. How beautifully simple all this is. Christ alone can put away sin. We must rest from our works. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saves us" (Titus 3:5). "By the deeds of the law shall no man be justified in the sight of God" (Romans 3:20). We are "justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24). Jesus paid it all. Rest! The Result of the Priestly Work was that they were "clean before the Lord." What a blessed privilege. Although we take much soap and make ourselves never so clean in our own eyes, only the precious blood of God's redeemed Son can make us clean in His eyes. "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). "Except I wash thee, thou hast no part with Me" (John 13:8). "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31).

Chapter 18

Expository Outlines: Old Testament

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Genesis

CREATION.

Genesis 1.

"In the beginning God." Regeneration, like the work of creation, has its beginning in God (John 3:5). The new creation, like the old, begins with the "Word of God" and the moving of the Spirit. Compare the order here with the experience of a soul passing from death into life. Observe-

I. The State of Disorder (Genesis 1:2). The threefold condition of man's state by nature is here very forcibly suggested:

1. Confusion. "The earth was without form." No order; nothing in harmony with the ultimate purpose of God. No perfect thing. The carnal mind is enmity against God. Spiritual things foolishness.

2. Emptiness. "Void." Utterly unable of itself to produce any good. Life and fruitfulness are the gifts of God. "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelled no good thing" (Romans 7:18). Man is utterly void apart from the moving Spirit." Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" (Job 14:4).

3. Darkness. "Darkness was upon the face of the deep." There can be nothing but darkness till the light is sent forth. We would have been in darkness until now had not God commanded the light to shine forth (2 Corinthians 4:6). To be under sin is to be under the power of darkness. Satan is the Prince of Darkness.

II. The Work of the Spirit. "The Spirit moved." The earth may move, but its own motion could not mend it. It must be moved upon. Regeneration is not the outcome of the movements of the natural heart. Not evolution, but creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). Born, not of the will of man, but of God; born from above (John 6:63).

III. The Power of God's Word. "God said, and there was." He spake, and it was done. The Word of God is quick and powerful. This Word, this mighty, moving, re-creating energy is in the Gospel of Christ. It is the power of God unto salvation. "Lazarus, come forth" (John 11:43). His Word was with power.

IV. The Divine Separation. "God divided the light from the darkness" (Genesis 1:4-5). The Word of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit working in the "new man," divides between soul and spirit, and separates the spiritual and the carnal. "What communion hath light with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

V. The Manner of Fruitbearing. "Yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself" (Genesis 1:11). Fruitbearing is the outcome of the light and the moving Spirit. The result of a condition, not an effort; of what we are, not of what we do. The fruit of Christ in us will be Christ-likeness-fruit after His kind, and with the seed in itself. Reproductive.

VI. The Position of the Lights. "In the firmament to give light upon the earth" (Genesis 1:15). The light must be above the earth if they are to shine on it. "Ye are the light of the world." Not of it-lifted above it. Seated in the heavenlies to shine upon it" (John 17).

VII. The Image of God. "God created man in His own image." The climax of His creative power results in His own likeness. It is so in the new creation, "After the image of Him that created him" (Colossians 3:10). The great work of the Holy Spirit is to renew the soul after the image of God. Both God and man will be satisfied when we are perfected in His likeness.

VIII. The Crown of Honour. "God gave him dominion." Power and authority come when we have been made like Him. In the Kingdom we shall reign with Him (Revelation 20:6). THE CREATORS SABBATH.

Genesis 2.

Only when God had finished the heavens and the earth did He rest. He found no rest until He had ended all His work. The Sabbath, or rest of God, means perfect satis faction in that which has been accomplished. He alone was the worker. His alone was the rest. Let us notice:

I. The Sabbath Ordained. The seventh day was fixed and settled by God to be a time of rest and joy to Himself and to all creation.

1. It is a Day of Rest. No more work to be done. He rested, not because He was weary, but because every good thing had been done that could be done.

2. It was a Day of Blessing. "God blessed it." The special favour and delight of God was in it-truthfulness and satisfaction.

3. It was a Separated Day. "God sanctified it." Set it apart as His own possession and inheritance because it manifested the results of His own wisdom, power, and goodness. But note more particularly that-

4. It was the Day of Grace for Man. God made man on the sixth day, so that the first day that dawned upon Adam was the Sabbath of God, that is, man immediately entered into the enjoyment of the rest of his Creator. God finished the work; man enters with Him into the rest and enjoyment of all that God had made. O the grace of God to delight in bringing man into such a possession!

II. The Sabbath Destroyed. It would seem that man did not long enjoy the rest of God. The tempter came, man failed the rest was broken, Adam fled from God. Sin ruined man for the enjoyment of God's rest. In the ages that follow man seems to have forgotten that the Sabbath was "made for man," so when the law was given (Exod. 22) the word "Remember" was significantly prefixed to the Second Commandment. The Sabbath of divine rest, which was a gift to man, now comes back to him in the form of law, but still it reminds him of God's rest. "No manna fell" on the Sabbath day. To enjoy rest now they have to gather double on the sixth day-not of grace now, out of works.

III. The Sabbath Restored. Through Jesus Christ man can be brought back to the enjoyment of God's rest.

1. Through Him another Work has been Finished. "I have finished the work" (John 17:4). He put away sin, the work of atonement is ended, and God has pronounced all very good.

2. Another Rest is Enjoyed. As God rested upon the mercy-seat on the Holy of Holies, so doth He now rest satisfied in the work of His beloved Son.

3. Another Day of Grace is Proclaimed. "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). As Adam entered into God's rest, so may we now through faith in Jesus. "There remained a rest (Sabbath) for the people of God" (Hebrews 4:1-9); "Enter into His rest." This rest means to us all that it meant to Adam: 1, A ceasing from works; 2, continual fellowship with God; 3, to bear His holy image; 4, to find our all in His possession; 5, to rejoice in God. "They could not enter in because of unbelief" (Hebrews 3:19). THE GARDEN OF EDEN.

Genesis 2:8-19.

The garden in Eden speaks of grace upon grace. The man God made was invited to enter into and enjoy all the fulness of God. The garden may be regarded as a type of the provision God has made for man in Christ Jesus.

I. God's Gracious Provision. There is something in the fact that-

1. It was a Garden. This suggests a special enclosure, a place prepared for a prepared man. We are reminded of the Covenant made with Christ before the world was. He was the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4).

2. It was Planted by the Lord. Man had no hand in the making of this inheritance. This, like the scheme of salvation, was the work of God: "Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9). Both the "plant" and the planting were His alone (John 3:16).

3. It was Planted for Man. God had the good of man before Him in the planting of every tree. He considered all man's need, and made ample provision for his complete satisfaction. All the eternal forethought of God in our behalf is seen in the fulness that dwells in Christ. In Christ is God's provision for needy man. Look at some of these tree blessings:

(1) The Tree of Life. This stood in the midst of the garden (Genesis 2:9). Life is man's first need: "I am come that ye might have life" (John 10:10). This was the tree of eternal life to Adam. The Cross of Christ in the midst is the tree of life for fallen man. Before Adam could die he had to be driven from the tree of life. To be without Christ is to be without hope.

(2) Every Tree that was Pleasant. Here also Adam found his pleasure. In God's provision for us in Christ there is life and every pleasant thing, every pleasure worth having-"Wisdom's ways."

(3) Every Tree that was Good for Food. There are many pleasures which don't satisfy; these are good for food. They build up and strengthen. Every promise of God is a fruit tree; the garden of the Lord is full of them.

(4) There was the "Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil." Would it have been better without this? Here is a deep truth. We cannot know good and evil, in a real sense, till we have been planted into Christ. Sin and grace are well known there.

(5) There was a River of Water (Genesis 2:10). A river watered the garden. "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God" (Psalms 46:4). The blessings in Christ are all made fruitful by the power of the Holy Ghost. Surely in Christ we have a goodly heritage.

II. Man's Wondrous Privilege.

1. He was Put in by God. "The Lord put the man into the garden" (Genesis 2:15). Adam was not made in the garden. Our engrafting into Christ is a divine act. The provision is much, but that is not enough. The soul of man, by the Holy Ghost, must be brought into touch with it.

2. He was Put in to Enjoy the Work of God. What grace! We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus.

3. He was Put in to Work and Watch-dress it and keep it (Genesis 2:15). The Christian life, though a life of faith, is not a life of idleness.

4. He was Put in with a Divine Liberty and Warning (Genesis 2:16-17). Shall we sin that grace may abound. God forbid! Sin may not cut off sonship, but it will destroy fellowship. THE FIRST MARRIAGE.

Genesis 2:18; Genesis 2:21-25.

God said, "Let Us make man in Our image." This first man we may regard as a type of the Second Man, the Lord from Heaven, who is the image of the Invisible God. Eve may represent the relationship of the redeemed to Christ: "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church" (Ephesians 5:32).

I. The Declaration. God said, "It is not good that man should be alone" (Genesis 2:18). God considers this man's highest need, and thinks that loneness is not for his greatest good. Think of God away back in eternity saying this regarding the Son of His love! Not good for Him to be alone, the only Son, bearing the image and reflecting the glory of the Father! He will bring many sons into glory.

II. The New Creation. "I will make him an help meet for him" (Genesis 2:18). Eve was the workmanship of God, and His gift to the man in His own image. We are His workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus. The Church is an help meet for Christ, is made by Him, and is the gift of the Father to the Son. "All that the Father hath given Me shall come to Me" (John 6:37). "Them which Thou hast given Me" (John 17:9).

III. The Operation. "The Lord caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam" (Genesis 2:21). Sleep is the figure of death. While Adam was in this state the wonder-working hands of the Divine Operator brought forth a helper after His own likeness. It was a deep sleep the Lord God caused to fall upon the Second Adam when He bowed His head and gave up the ghost. "It pleased the Lord to bruise" (Isaiah 53:10). God took a rib from the first man, but nothing less than the blood of the Second Man would suffice if a helpmate is to be given Him. His Church had to be bought with His own blood.

IV. The Presentation. "The Lord brought her to the man" (Genesis 2:23). Every Godlike man may have his wife from the Lord. "The Lord brought her to the man." What for? To share his love, to enjoy his fellowship, to be a partaker of the blessings freely given him by God, and to be a joy and a comfort and a help to him. Thus the Holy Spirit brings us to Christ, that we may receive of His, and be workers together with Him. Every Christian is to be a helpmate to Christ.

V. The Acceptance. "Adam said, This is now bone of ray bones" (Genesis 2:23). He acknowledged Eve, the gift of God, as a part of himself. "They shall be one flesh." He never thought of refusing her. "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). How close the union! We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. Yes, "He will receive you unto Himself."

VI. The Result. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife" (Genesis 2:24). Every relationship that would hinder us from cleaving to Christ and serving Him must be broken. The whole heart and life are to be yielded if we would be faithful. Christ left His Father when He came to earth. He left His mother when He died on the Cross. He cleaves to His wife and His redeemed people. Leave all, and cleave to Him (Matthew 16:24). THE FALL OF MAN.

Genesis 3. The first sin was like Elijah's cloud, it was little at the beginning, but it blackened the whole heavens. By one man sin entered, and death came upon all. By Man (Christ) came also resurrection and life (1 Corinthians 15:21-22). We have here the revelation of some root principles. There are:

I. Satanic Teaching. "Ye shall not surely die." The personality of the devil is clearly implied. He does not say "There is no God," but suggests that God does not mean what He says, or if He does He is not a God of mercy. His great purpose is ever to mar the design of God toward man. Wiles of the devil.

II. Carnal Reasoning (Genesis 3:6). She saw, because she looked, and, judging by appearance, she desired, and when the desire was nourished it grew into a deliberate act, she took. Then, not satisfied with taking for herself, she gave. The process may have been something like this: 1, Giving heed to the tempter; 2, forgetting God's mercies; 3, looking at the forbidden thing; 4, wishing God had not forbidden it; 5, doubting the Word of God; 6, believing Satan's lie; 7, yielding to taste.

III. Presumptuous Working. "They sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons" (Genesis 3:7). Their eyes were opened. Sin opens the eyes of the saints to see their own weakness, while it blinds the eyes of the ungodly. This is a vain attempt to cover sinful self. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper" (Proverbs 28:13). Why not confess and receive forgiveness (1 John 1:9).

IV. Guilty Concealing. "They hid themselves" (Genesis 3:8). Hid among the trees of the garden, among the very blessings God had given them. Many still hide behind the gifts of God while they live in sin. The "voice of the Lord" is always a terror to evil-doers. It is in vain for man to hide anywhere away from God. "I flee to Thee to hide me." Sin always separates from God.

V. Divine Seeking. "Where art thou?" (Genesis 3:9). This is the call of Grace. God is always the first seeker. When would Adam have sought God? This divine question (1) Reveals great compassion; this is the Good Shepherd seeking the lost sheep. (2) It awakens conviction by leading to deep heart-searching. (3) It demands confession; yield, and unburden all to God. (4) It suggests judgment, "Where art thou?" There is no escape from Him.

VI. Vain Excusing. "The woman Thou gavest, she gave me" (Genesis 3:12). His mouth has not yet been stopped (Romans 3:19). God justifies the believer, not the boaster. If men don't now lay the

blame of sin on God, they go as near as possible when they blame circumstances. There is no excuse for doubting God.

VII. Merciful Covering. "God made coats of skin and clothed them" (Genesis 3:21). Man's best will never cover his nakedness in the sight of God. These coats of skin suggest sacrifice. It is significant to remember that atonement means covering. Adam's covering was the covering of another, substitution. It was of God's making and giving, the righteousness of God, which is unto all and upon all them that believe.

CAIN AND ABEL.

Genesis 4:1-16.

Of Cain and Abel it may be said: "Two men went up to worship, the one was a Pharisee, the other was a publican" (Luke 18:10). Although both enjoyed the same privileges and opportunities, they were far from being alike. Christian privileges will not in themselves make a Christian. We have here-

I. Self-will Rejected. "Unto Cain and his offering" God had not respect (Genesis 4:5). Cain must be acceptable first himself before his offering can be. His offering was rejected, because he himself was guilty. Christ was without spot when He offered Himself. The way of Cain was his own way (Jude 1:11). Man's own way is to seek acceptance with God without confessing guilt. There is no road this way; both the offerer and the offering are rejected.

II. Faith Accepted. "The Lord hath respect unto Abel and his offering" (Genesis 4:4). "By faith Abel offered up a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain" (Hebrews 11:4). The offering and the offerer stand or fall together. When by faith we lay hold upon Christ there is no possibility of rejection, for this offering has been accepted by God, and every believing offerer is accepted in Him. All that believe are justified from all things. Faith in Christ is always acceptable faith.

III. Enmity Manifested. "Cain was wroth" (Genesis 4:5). He was religious in appearance, but in heart he was at enmity with God. He had the form of godliness, but he was a stranger to its power. Many there are in these days who have gone the way of Cain, content with the mere ceremony, while the living substance has never been touched or tasted.

IV. Mercy Revealed. "God said, Why art thou wroth? a sin-offering lieth at thy door" (Genesis 4:6-7). God in mercy points out to Cain that the only way of acceptance as a sinner is through a sin-offering. Christ bore our sins in His own body on the tree. This sin-offering lies at the door of every sinner. What a mercy that the atoning price is so near 1

V. Righteousness Hated. "Cain slew his brother" (Genesis 4:8). And wherefore slew he him? (see 1 John 3:12). He hated the righteousness of God as seen in his brother. The carnal mind of man would rather quench the divine light in bloodshed than acknowledge sin. Christ was the Righteousness of God, and men cried, "Away with this Man" (Luke 23:18). They loved darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil.

VI. Wickedness Judged. "Now art thou cursed" (Genesis 4:11). The counsel of God with regard to the sin-offering was rejected; now the curse comes. What a striking fulfilment of John 3:18. Rejecting Christ as the sin-offering means no escape from the wrath and curse of God. What think

ye of Christ?

VII. Justice Vindicated. "Cain said, Mine iniquity is greater than that it may be forgiven" (Genesis 4:13, margin). He acknowledges the justice of his condemnation, yet so hardened is he that he begs not for mercy. "There is mercy at the eleventh hour," say many; but what if your heart becomes so hard that you will not even yield to seek mercy. The heart is desperately wicked; don't trust it. False worshippers, remember the doom of Cain.

NOAH SAVED FROM WRATH.

Genesis 6:7.

In these chapters we have a dark, dismal picture of man. After about two thousand years' trial he is here only as a total failure. When man has altogether failed God comes in sovereign grace and manifests His saving power. It is always so. Grace comes when man is utterly lost and helpless. The coming forth of Noah and his family from the ark may be a foreshadowing of the coming of Christ and His saints to bless a new earth, purged by the judgment of God. Look at the-

I. Divine Verdict. "God said, The end of all flesh is come before Me" (chap. Genesis 6:13). What a poor end this was! "Evil, only evil, continually." Mark, this is the end of all flesh. Evolutionists predict a different end, but the divine verdict has already gone forth-"Only evil." "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6). "They that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:8). Unregenerate man, this is the end of your supposed good life, as seen by a righteous and holy God.

II. Divine Plan. "God said to Noah, Make an ark." Noah and his family could never have escaped the flood had not God been pleased to reveal this way of deliverance. It is not in man (1 Corinthians 2:10-11). Salvation is of the Lord. What a revelation of grace has come to us through Jesus Christ! God laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

III. Divine Warning. "Behold, I, even I, will bring a flood" (Genesis 6:17). How gracious our God is in providing a Refuge for us in Christ, and in so plainly warning us of the coming wrath (Luke 3:7). There is no escape for those who neglect His merciful provision (Hebrews 2:3). "Remember Lot's wife" (Luke 17:32).

IV. Divine Invitation. "Come thou, and all thy house, into the ark" (chap. Genesis 7:1). He who made the provision sends forth the invitation (Matthew 22:2-3). He who gave His Son up to the death for us invites us to "hear Him." The pleading of Jesus is the pleading of God in Him (Matthew 9:28). God's gracious purpose is to save both you and your household (Acts 16:31).

V. Divine Security. "The Lord shut him in" (Genesis 6:16). They are safely kept whom God shuts up. When He shuts, no man can open. If any man enter in he shall be saved (John 10:9), kept (1 Peter 1:5), and comforted (John 14:16). To be shut in by God is to be shut out from the world-from its pleasures, its sins, and its doom. If your life is hid with Christ in God, seek those things which are above.

VI. Divine Carefulness. "God remembered Noah." Those who hide know where to seek. Those hidden by God are ever remembered by Him. All who are shut up in Jesus Christ, like Noah, are shut up to faith. It is a blessed privilege to be where we cannot be touched by judgment, and

cannot be forgotten of God.

VII. Divine Commission. "God said unto Noah, Go forth" (chap. Genesis 8:16). We go in for salvation, and go forth for testimony. We are first taken out of the world before we are sent into it (John 17). Those who go in and out will find pasture. To the unsaved God's word is, "Come in;" to the saved His word is, "Go forth." Blessed coming and going! THE ALTAR AND THE BOW; OR, DEATH AND RESURRECTION GLORY.

Genesis 8:20-21; Genesis 9:12-16.

There is a very close connection between the altar and the bow. The same connection exists between the death and resurrection of Christ. The altar speaks of sacrifice, the bow of promise and assurance. Christ died for our sins, and rose again for our justification.

I. The Altar. It was an altar builded unto the Lord. It was both a witness and a confession that God had holy and righteous claims that must be acknowledged and met. The first thing that Noah did in coming forth was to recognise that God's place was the first place. "In the beginning God."

1. The Need of an Offering. A new beginning was now to be made. If the life is to be a blessed and fruitful one the favour of God must be secured. In the fulness of time the Son of God stepped forth. A new order of things was about to begin. He made peace by the blood of His Cross. By His offering we are reconciled to God. This is a good start.

2. The Nature of the Offering. "Every clean beast." Every clean beast means the combination of every creature excellency. A perfect offering. When Christ offered Himself a sacrifice unto God it was an offering without spot or blemish. Although the first man failed, God found in the second every heart-satisfying virtue.

3. The Result of the Offering. God found in it: 1, A savour of rest (Genesis 8:21, margin). Precious thought! Every desire of God's heart fully met in the sweet savour of Christ's offering (Ephesians 5:2). 2, An assurance of safety. No more curse. There is, therefore, now no judgment. Never come into condemnation. 3, The promise of unceasing blessing (Genesis 8:22). Every spiritual blessing is ours in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:3).

II. The Bow. The bow of promise comes after the altar of sacrifice. As all the colours of nature are in the bow, so all the promises of God are in Christ. Every divine perfection is manifested in the resurrection glory of Jesus. Christ as our Sacrifice is seen on the altar of the Cross; Christ as our Intercessor is seen in the bow of His mediatorial glory. The bow is-

1. A Token of God's Goodness. How kind of God to give such a visible expression of His love and favour, such an assurance of heart. If Christ is not risen we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen (1 Corinthians 15:17-20).

2. A Token of God's Fulness. There is fulness of colour and beauty in the bow, a fulness that is in sweetest harmony. Think of the fulness of the Godhead in Jesus Christ, in Him for us, and all in perfect harmony with a just and holy God. O the riches of His glorious grace!

3. A Token of God's Faithfulness. "I do set My bow for a covenant" (chap. Genesis 9:13). The setting of Christ at God's right hand is to us who believe a token of eternal security. He is faithful

who hath promised. "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" (John 9:35). THE TOWER OF BABEL.

Genesis 11:1-9.

There are seven interesting points of contrast between this scene and the one recorded in Acts 1. The gift of new tongues by the Holy Spirit is the divine remedy for the pride that results in the strife of tongues. We have here-

I. A Revelation of Human Ambition. "Out of the heart are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23). A straw may indicate which way the wind blows. Observe-

1. The Object in View. "Let us make us a name." The natural man seeks a name for himself, and one of his own making. Name-making is a very common and popular business, although it never pays well in the end. See the failure of three name-makers in Numbers 16. It is possible to be doing Christian work with the same end in view.

2. The Method Employed. "Let us build a city and a tower." This purpose of theirs betrays a felt need of protection, abiding fellowship, and future prospect. Every man needs a city of safety and a tower of hope. The self-righteous seek to build them for themselves. "Going about to establish their own righteousness" (Romans 10:3). Thank God, Jesus Christ has built such a city and tower where all may have salvation and hope.

3. The Means Used. "Let us make brick." Those who would save themselves by their own works have much to do. They have not only the building, but the very bricks to make. Not only to do good works, but they have the very desires to manufacture (a hard task), and, after all is done, it is only brick at the best. In Luke 18:11-12 we see one of these brick-makers busy at work.

II. A Manifestation of Divine Displeasure. What will all our building do for us if it does not please God? It is only wood, hay, stubble-fit for the fire.

1. The Divine Inspection. "The Lord came down to see what they had built." Every man's work will be tried. This is a very solemn truth. The eyes of Jehovah will scan every brick or jewel. Every motive and act alike must be tested. "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6).

2. The Sudden Confusion. "The Lord did there confound, so they left off to build." What a change when God comes! When the Spirit of God comes upon the self-righteous He makes them leave off their vain and presumptuous works. Think of it. The presence of God means confusion to the religious self-seeker. What may be very pleasing in the eyes of men may be suddenly turned into Babel at the approach of God. "He that believeth on Him shall not be confounded" (1 Peter 2:6).

3. Complete Dispersion. "From thence did the Lord scatter them abroad." The very thing they were labouring to prevent was the thing that came upon them. Proud men labour to save themselves from being cast out by God at last, and their faithless works are securing for them the doom they strive to avoid. The city of God, seek ye it (Hebrews 11:10). The name of the Lord is a strong tower; flee unto it (Proverbs 18:10). THE CALL OF ABRAHAM.

Genesis 12:1-4.

The life of Abraham, like the course of a river, had many windings, but it seemed to deepen and gather in strength as it went on. No Old Testament saint figures more prominently in the New Testament. A life of faith in God will always be fragrant for good.

I. When the Call Came. It came while he was living in ignorance and idolatry (Romans 4:10). He was not called because he was better than his countrymen. The grace of God seeks for no worthiness. Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

II. How the Call Came. Whether he heard an audible voice, or whether the Spirit of God whispered the message into his heart by working in him an irresistible desire we know not. At anyrate, the call was very personal. He alone could answer it. The calling of God brings individual responsibility. God calls us not that we may be better than our neighbours, but better than ourselves. God's saving call comes to us through the Gospel.

III. What this Call Involves.

1. An Entire Separation. "Get thee out." His country, kindred, or father's house must not hinder. Every connection and friendship that stood between him and the divine call must be broken and left behind. If a man is not willing to forsake his sins he is not willing to be saved (Isaiah 55:7).

2. A New Life. This life is a life of faith in God and fellowship with God-a blessed life. All who obey God live by faith. It is the transplanting by the Spirit out of the barren soil of self into the fat, fruitful soil of infinite grace.

IV. What Accompanies this Call.

1. The Promise of a Possession. "A land that I will show thee." Many linger when God calls, thinking of what might have to be given up, forgetful of what God offers. The Prodigal had, of course, to give up his rags when he got the best robe.

2. The Promise of Being Made a Blessing. "I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing." All the families of the earth are being and will yet be blessed through Abraham's seed (Christ). We can only be a blessing for God after we have been blessed by God. This is God's order. We are saved to serve. It is out of those who come to Jesus and drink that the living water flows (John 7:37-38).

V. How the Call was Received. It would seem from chapter Genesis 11:31 that Abraham was led by his father instead of the command of God. Under his leadership he only got to Haran. After his father's death Abram fully obeyed (Genesis 12:4). Worldly wisdom will never help us in the life of faith. There is no rest or blessing for those who stop short of Christ, no matter how far they may have gone. Not far from the kingdom is still outside. Almost saved means lost. "God is calling yet. O hear Him!"

ABRAHAM IN CANAAN.

Genesis 12:4-9.

Perhaps Terah, the father of Abraham, was seeking only his own comfort when he called a halt at Haran. In such a spirit the Land of Promise can never be possessed. There must be a crossing of the river (Euphrates) and a passing into the desert if Canaan is to be enjoyed. Half-and-half

Christians who abide on the border never inherit the fulness of the land (Joshua 1:3).

I. A Prosperous Journey. "They went forth to go to Canaan, and into Canaan they came." The life of faith is always a life of going forth. "A going on still" (Genesis 12:9).

1. The Start. "They went forth." What from? From all the past sins and failures, from worldly pleasures, from self-ease, and self-seeking. What on? On the sure word of God's unfailing promise, not leaning on their own feelings, wisdom, or understanding. "He went out, not knowing whither he went."

2. The Journey. The way lay through the Syrian desert. The passage into the place of blessing may be extremely trying to flesh and blood, the way to the Cross may be sorrowful, but the burden rolls off when there. The entrance into the fulness of the blessing is always through the barren desert of self-despair.

3. The End. "Into Canaan they came." Those who go out in the expectation of faith will not stick in the mud of disappointment. There are two great and common causes of failure in the Christian life. First, stopping short of the purpose and promise of God; second, going without the divine promise. Going forth in the energy of the flesh, having no special call of God to lean on. So when the heat of temptation comes they wither, having no root.

II. A Continual Difficulty. "The Canaanite was then in the land" (Genesis 12:6). Canaan is not a type of Heaven, for there will be no enemy there. It is typical of the new relationships into which believers enter after having trusted God, and gone forth in His Name. Here we have trial and warfare, and as pilgrims and strangers have need of continual faith. Being in the place of warfare, we are in the place where God has promised to bless. Abraham got no blessing while among his own kindred (Genesis 12:1). It is in the high places of promise that we wrestle against principalities and powers (Ephesians 6:12).

III. An Unfailing Assurance. "The Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, 'Unto thy seed will I give this land'" (Genesis 12:7). The assuring promise was given when Abram had got right into the centre of the land. When by faith we take our stand right upon His Word, then shall we find it sweetly fulfilled in our experience. The centre of God's promises is in Christ. We shall come short until we are found in Him. "All the promises of God are in Him" (2 Corinthians 1:20). Go forth, believer, into the heart and centre of all God's purposes in Christ. You will find grace sufficient there. The anxious soul must get to this centre before the assurance of salvation will be given. The sealing comes upon believing (Ephesians 1:13).

IV. A Powerful Testimony. "He pitched his tent, and builded an altar unto the Lord" (Genesis 12:8). Abram's great mission in Canaan was that of a witness for God. His altar was a public testimony. To this end is every Christian called. "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me" (Acts 1:8). By his tent he declared himself a pilgrim and a stranger, looking for a city; by His altar he testified to

1. His Faith in the Reality of God. While the Canaanite looked on he must have been convinced that Abram believed in a living, personal, prayer-hearing God.

2. His Belief in the Holiness of God. The altar speaks of sacrifice. God is holy, and can only be approached through atoning blood. Does our lives bear this much-needed testimony? Do we by our acts condemn the world? (Hebrews 11:7).

3. His Confidence in the Faithfulness of God. He was not ashamed to lift up his altar in the presence of the heathen, declaring thereby his expectation of the fulfilment of the divine promise. How often are we afraid to venture much for God, lest He should fail and our confidence stagger.

4. His Surrender to the Claims of God. All who really know the need and meaning of the altar will gladly yield up all to Him. May our lives be lived in the light of that awful altar and sacrifice lifted up on Calvary. Yield yourselves unto God.

ABRAHAM IN EGYPT.

Genesis 20:10-18; Genesis 13:1-4.

In the spiritual world of our Christian experience, as well as in the natural world, changes may come very suddenly. Who would have thought that a man with Abraham's faith would turn aside at the first temptation. At our best and strongest moment we are in danger of falling, if not kept by the power of God through faith.

I. The Trial. "There was a famine in the land." It is always a great trial to experience drought and lack of pasture in the Land of Promise. But if faith is to triumph and grow it must be tested. "The trial of your faith is precious" (1 Peter 1:7). Well-watered plains please the eye. Faith must lay hold on the things which are unseen. It is often in the place of blessing where the keenest pangs of thirst are felt. Trials make the promise sweet; there is no discipline of soul without them.

II. The Failure. "He went down into Egypt" (Genesis 13:10). Why? Had God failed? Ah, no! But it seems to have happened to Abraham as it often turns out in our own experience. He had been trusting more to the land than to the God of promise; looking more to the blessing than the Blesser. This God will not permit. Our faith must not rest on His gifts, but on Himself. Note what this downward step led to.

1. It Led to Fear (Genesis 13:12). He was now afraid they would take his life. His courage for God is gone. None are so weak and silly as Christians when turned aside from the life of faith.

2. It Led to Selfishness (Genesis 13:11 and Genesis 13:12). He is more concerned about his own safety than the honour and chastity of his wife. When a man turns away from God his interest is sure to become centred in himself.

3. It Led to Hypocrisy (Genesis 13:13). He pretended to be what he was not, only the brother of Sarai. This was a deliberate misrepresentation. This is the next step of the backslider, pretending not to be what he really is.

4. It Led to Open Rebuke. Pharaoh said to him, "What is this that thou hast done?" (Genesis 13:18). It is sad when the child of God has to be warned and corrected by the man of the world.

5. It Led to Trouble upon Others. "The Lord plagued Pharaoh because of Abraham's wife" (Genesis 13:17). The plague of divine judgment will doubtless need to fall upon many because of the unfaithfulness of many of God's believing people. May our light so shine that they will be led to glorify our Father in Heaven.

III. The Restoration. "Abraham went up out of Egypt, and came unto the place of the altar which he had made at the first" (chap. Genesis 13:1-4). It has been said that "the man of God makes but a

poor worldling." Abraham built no altar in Egypt. There is no fellowship with God while we walk by sight and not by faith. The only remedy for backsliding is to come again to the place of the altar, the Cross of Christ. This is the place of sacrifice, forgiveness communion, and consecration. There was no happiness nor restoration for the prodigal until he came back to the place from whence he had wandered away (Luke 15). "Ye have forsaken Me," saith the Lord. "Return unto Me, and I will heal your backslid ings."

ABRAHAM, THE SEPARATED ONE.

Genesis 13:5-18.

Abraham and Lot are types of two classes of Christians. Lot was a righteous man, but, living by sight and sense, he sought only his own pleasure and profit. He is the type of an unconsecrated Christian. Abraham lives by faith on the promise of God. He may fail, but not like Lot, who never could do anything to help Abraham. Lot builded no altar. The unconsecrated life can live without worship. The well-watered plains have more attraction for the worldly believer. The "higher Christian life" just means higher motives in living.

I. The Impossible Relationship. "The land was not able to bear them" (Genesis 13:6). The conditions of the country would not permit of Abram and Lot dwelling together. Even the Land of Promise is not able to sustain such an unequal yoke as the life of faith in God and the life of sense and worldly wisdom. This is a strife that often takes place in the heart of the believer, a conflict between the fleshly life and the spiritual. As long as the strife goes on the Land of Promise seems to yield no blessing (see Rom. 7). Worldly Christians, like Lot, set no value on the promises of God.

II. The Generosity of Faith. "Abram said to Lot, The whole land is before thee; separate thyself" (Genesis 13:8 and Genesis 13:9). The friend of God can easily afford to let others have the first choice. Either hand will do for the man of God. The servant of God must not strive. We can show our trust in God by standing back from the strife of tongues, and by allowing others to occupy the chief seats. Let us stand up for God, and God will stand up for our rights. All our rights are in Him.

III. The Selfishness of the Worldly-Minded. "Lot lifted up his eyes" (Genesis 13:10-13). He looked for the best, and chose it, and never said "Thank you." He separated himself from the man of faith with a light heart. Worldly Christians do not set much value on the fellowship of a holy man. His mind was set on earthly prosperity, not on heavenly things. How much did he gam by it? He pitched his tent (no altar) toward Sodom, and was burned out of it himself, saved as by fire.

IV. The Privilege of the Separated." The Lord said unto Abram, after Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes" (Genesis 13:14). After the separation comes the message of comfort, "Come out from among them.... and I will receive you" (2 Corinthians 6:17). Greed and covetousness constrained Lot to lift up his eyes. Abram lifted up his eyes at the invitation of the Lord. Herein lies the great distinction between the worldly Christian and the faithful one. The one is moved by self-interest, the other by the Word of God. "Looking up" is the abiding attitude of every separated one. Lot goes leaning on his own understanding. Abram goes leaning on the promise of God (see Galatians 2:20).

V. The Altar of Testimony. "Abram came to the plain of Mamre and built there an altar unto the Lord" (Genesis 13:18). Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom; Abram pitched his toward God. The self-seeking Christian bears no testimony for God. When he does attempt it, it looks like mockery (Genesis 19:14). The just shall live by faith. Live to the will of God (1 Peter 4:1-2).

ABRAHAM, THE MAN OF FAITH.

Genesis 14:18-24.

God called Abram, and he went out, not knowing whither he went. Lot went with him. Lot followed Abram, and Abram followed God. Lot is soon found dwelling in Sodom. Now we see him as a captive. Worldliness is sure to lead to spiritual bondage. Abram's character shines out here as-

I. A Man of Sympathy. "They came and told Abram that his brother was taken captive" (Genesis 14:13 and Genesis 14:14). Think of what he might have said: "He has himself to blame. Serve him right; he should not have gone into Sodom." Just the wages of worldliness. But not so. He at once bestirs himself to seek his deliverance. Those who walk in fellowship with God cannot remain indifferent to the sufferings and sorrows of their brethren.

II. A Man of Courage (Genesis 14:14 and Genesis 14:15). With his handful of servants he goes forth against the four kings. The man of faith attempts great things. He knows that God can use weak things to confound the mighty. Abram's faith worked by love. He loved his brother Lot, and dared to do this great deed. Great faith constrains to attempt what seems impossible. Think of Nehemiah, of Moses, and of Paul (Php_4:13).

III. A Man of Power. "He brought back all" (Genesis 14:16). Abram, as a separated man, dwelt in the presence of God. He went to battle as one who had come out from the holy, soul-inspiring presence. The victory is complete. Lot mingled with the ungodly, and he could not even save himself. It is the separated one alone who is able to save others. Abram's power lay in his life of faith. If we would have victory for God, then we must be separated unto God. Remember where and how Samson failed (Judges 16). The fruitful branch must abide in the vine.

IV. A Man of Independence. "I will not take anything that is thine" (Genesis 14:23). Abram took all he could get from the King of Salem, because he was the priest of the Most High God; but he would take nothing from the King of Sodom, lest he should say, "I have made Abram rich." God had enriched him, and he would take nothing likely to hinder Him from having all the honour. This is not the independence of pride and self-sufficiency, but that of a holy jealousy for the Name and character of God. It is the independence of entire dependence upon God alone. May our hearts be stirred up to the exercise of it. "The LORD is the portion of His people" (Deuteronomy 32:9).

V. A Man Approved of God. "Melchizedek met him and blessed him" (Genesis 14:18 and Genesis 14:19). He also refreshed him with "bread and wine." Jesus Christ, the Priest of the Most High God, will so bless and refresh all who, like Abram, go forth in His Name to walk, to work, and to war. What a privilege to meet the Blessing Priest when returning faint and weary from the struggle of faith! Many a battle the separated man of God will need to fight on behalf of others, but Jesus, the succouring King of Peace, will meet him with His help and blessing, and at last with His "Well done," which brings eternal benediction.

ABRAHAM ENCOURAGED.

Genesis 15:1-6.

A word in season; how good it is! God's words are always in season. He knows how to speak a word to them that are weary. His consolations are neither few nor small.

I. The Time. "After these things the Word of the Lord came to Abram." After the battle and rescue of Lot from the hands of the four kings. It is no unusual experience for the man of God to tremble, even after a great victory has been gained. The achievements of faith never bring self-confidence. Abram may have feared the return of the kings with renewed force; he may have been vexing his soul at refusing the gifts of the King of Sodom; but God's "Fear not; I am thy reward," would be a word lull of consolation and comfort. Let us look at- II. The Message. This message contains-

1. A Revelation of God's Love. "Fear not." This is the language of One who, in love and grace, had considered all his need. Jesus said, "Give ye them to eat," for "He Himself knew what He would do" (Luke 6:6). This message reminds us of the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ. Fear not; He who gave His Son for us, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

2. A Revelation of God's Power. "I am thy shield." The Omnipotent, Personal God declares Himself as the protection of the man who walks by faith. God is our refuge. Your life is hid with Christ in God. I am thy shield. Christ shelters from sin by the shield of His Blood (Exodus 12:13). Christ shelters the weak and faltering with the shield of His intercession (Luke 22:32).

3. A Revelation of God's Fulness. "I am thy exceeding great reward." It is still the desire and delight of God that His people should be satisfied with HIMSELF. The great ultimate purpose of the incarnation is that the believing soul should be rewarded with the revelation of God. These unsearchable riches are in Christ for us now. In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead. The greatest reward God can bestow upon us is a fuller and better acquaintance with Himself. For this the Holy Ghost has been given, that He might take the things of Christ and show them to us. This precious promise was given to Abram after he had refused the unhallowed gifts of the King of Sodom (Genesis 14:23). Every sacrifice for Christ's sake will bring exceeding great reward.

III. The Result. "He believed in the Lord" (Genesis 15:6). This is very beautiful. He accepted God's gracious message, and rested calmly on His Word, and we read, "And God counted it to Him for righteousness." His was the righteousness, not of works, but of faith (Romans 4:3). Faith in God has always a transforming power. God justifies the believer in Jesus. He counts, or reckons, them righteous. Who shall condemn whom God counts righteous? This believing in the Lord implies the entire surrender of ourselves unto God, that He may work in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

ABRAHAM WALKING BEFORE GOD.

Genesis 17:1-5.

Abram was ninety-and-nine years old when the Lord appeared unto him. Not too old to have fellowship with Him. Age may shut us out from the joys and companionships of youth, but through grace it may ripen our friendship with God.

I. The Revelation. "I am the Almighty. I am God all-sufficient." This is a divine plaster large enough to cover any human sore. A son had been promised Abram; he was now old, and no son had yet

been given to him; but in this promise he had enough to brighten faith and trim afresh the flickering lamp of hope. This revelation of God, as our all-sufficiency, is made known to us in Jesus Christ. There is enough in Him to meet all our need, both as sinners and as servants. Weary, downcast Christian toilers, hear Him say, "Look unto Me; I am God all-sufficient." To brighten thy little dwelling there is plenty of light in this sun; to float thy little vessel there is plenty of water in this ocean.

II. The Commission. "Walk before Me, and be thou perfect." Perhaps Abram had been walking too much before Sarah. Seeking to please her, guided by her counsel, he had already turned aside from the life of faith in God (chap. Genesis 16:1-4). This was a call-

1. That Affected His Life. "Walk before Me." In all things he was to act as one who lived in the immediate presence of God Almighty. This is not a life of dread and awkward restraint, but a holy, joyful, divinely-satisfied life. It is, in fact, the life of faith. This is the high privilege of every Heaven-born son of God.

2. It Affected His Character. "Be thou perfect." That is, be whole-hearted. Not having a double heart (Psalms 12:2), seeking to please both God and man. All perfection comes from Him who alone is perfect. The highest human perfection lies in a whole-hearted life before God.

III. The Submission. "And Abram fell on his face" (Genesis 17:3). The best answer to God's high calling is a humble and broken spirit. Abram did not say boastingly, like some of his descendants, "All that thou sayest will we do" (Rth_3:5). He bowed his face to the dust, and "God talked with him." A deep, conscious sense of ignorance and weakness brings us into the right attitude to be taught of God. God always talks to the heart of the self-abased. When John fell at His feet he felt the touch of His gracious hand, and heard His comforting "Fear not" (Revelation 1:17). May He give us that humbleness of heart, that calmness of spirit that bears the faintest whisper from the lips of the Holy Ghost.

IV. The Transformation. "Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram; but thy name shall be called Abraham." Abram, the exalted, is changed into Abraham, the fruitful. He has bowed with his whole heart unto the will of God, and his character is transformed. It is not always so? Complete surrender brings a complete change of nature. Jacob became a prince, and prevailed when he yielded entirely to the heavenly wrestler. It is when we are crucified with Christ that Christ liveth in us (Galatians 2:20). It is by yielding to the Spirit of Christ that we are transformed into His holy and heavenly image.

ABRAHAM RECEIVING AND SERVING.

Genesis 18:1-17.

Every Old Testament incident yields some New Testament truth. Let us read this portion in the light of the New Revelation.

I. A Gracious Visit. "The Lord appeared unto him;. . .and he lift up his eyes, and, lo, three men stood by him" (Genesis 18:1 and Genesis 18:2). This is striking language, that Jehovah should manifest Himself in the form of three. Does this not suggest the Trinity of the Godhead? The whole Trinity is interested and exercised in seeking to bless and save man. The Father loved, and sent His Son; the Son loved, and gave Himself up to the death to redeem; the Spirit loved, and came to

make His abode in the believing heart. This threefold salvation is summed up in the benediction, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost" (2 Corinthians 13:14).

II. A Hearty Reception. The manner in which Abraham received the visitors, and his various acts toward them, may serve us as an illustration of how a weary, longing soul may receive Jesus, and be drawn out in eagerness after Him.

1. There was a Longing Desire. "He lift up his eyes and looked" (Genesis 18:2). A good work has been wrought in us before we will even lift up our eyes. The Lord is sure to appear in grace to the looking ones. They looked, and were lightened.

2. There was a Ready Mind. "He ran to meet them." He was in haste to receive the visitors. When the heart is really hungering for the living bread it will receive it gladly. The soul that is sighing for Christ will hasten to Him.

3. There was a Humble Spirit. "He bowed himself toward the ground." The more closely we come to Jesus, the heavenly Visitor, the more unworthy do we see ourselves to be. The way to God is a self-humbling way. The nearer we come to His light the more unseemly doth the garments of our own righteousness appear.

4. There was a Willing Confession. Abraham said, "My Lord." When a soul has found its way into the presence of Jesus Christ we expect to hear the language of confession and testimony. "My Lord!" These two little words imply two great thoughts-(1) appropriation; (2) entire subjection. He is mine and I am His.

5. There was a Love for Fellowship. "If I have found favour in Thy sight, pass not away, I pray Thee, from Thy servant" (Genesis 18:3). What could be more natural? The soul that has found the Lord yearns to abide in His presence. In His presence is fulness of joy. The lonely heart finds its home in the bosom of His love.

6. There was a Desire for their Refreshing. "Rest yourselves,... and comfort your hearts" (Genesis 18:4 and Genesis 18:5). In our selfishness we are apt to be satisfied with getting His favour and blessing, and stopping short of seeking rest for His soul and comfort for His heart. Christ gave us rest and comfort by giving Himself for us; let us give Him rest and comfort by giving ourselves to Him.

7. There was a Readiness to Serve. "Abraham ran and fetcht and gave" (Genesis 18:6 and Genesis 18:7). Love lends swiftness to the willing feet." The Lord loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7). "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as unto the Lord" (Colossians 3:23). "The love of Christ constraineth us" (2 Corinthians 5:14).

III. A Blessed Reward. "The Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" (Genesis 18:17). The devotion of Abraham is rewarded with a revelation of the secret purpose of the Lord. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. The way into the deeper things of God often lies through self-sacrifice and active service. If we would know the hidden wisdom of God, and feed on the finest of the wheat, we must lay ourselves and all that we have at the feet of our Lord. Open your heart to Him, and His heart will be open to you. THE HISTORY OF LOT.

Genesis 19. The history of Lot is the history of a backslider. When he turned away from Abraham he turned aside from faith. When he sought the well-watered plains he was seeking his own glory. While seeking his own interest his testimony as a believer in the Lord was despised. Then came failure and flight, but being the Lord's he himself was saved as by fire, though all his works were burnt (1 Corinthians 3:14-15). Look at the-

I. Choice He Made. "He chose the plain of Jordan, and pitched toward Sodom" (Genesis 13:10-12). Those who walk by sight and not by faith will always be influenced by appearances. The choice of Moses was the choice of faith (Hebrews 11:24-25). If we follow the dictates of our own hearts we will be sure to pitch toward Sodom.

II. Position He Occupied. "Lot sat in the gate of Sodom." Having become a companion of the Sodomites, he now becomes a partner with them. When a Christian can find pleasure in the fellowship of the ungodly he will soon become a sharer of their iniquity. Worldly advancement is no evidence of growth in grace. Mixing with the world often means helping the ungodly (2 Chronicles 19:2).

III. Message He Received. "The Lord hath sent us to destroy this place" (Genesis 19:13). Wicked places and wicked things must all be destroyed. If all your wicked things were destroyed would you lose anything? How would it affect your plans and purposes? If our heart interests are entangled with the wickedness of this world we will suffer loss. Set your affections on things above, then, when every wicked place is destroyed your inheritance will remain untouched.

IV. Testimony He Bore. "Lot went out and spake unto his sons-in-law; . . .but he seemed as one that mocked" (Genesis 19:14). Our testimony for God will always be a mockery if we are living the selfish life. Who will believe that sin is bitter if we roll it under our tongue as a sweet morsel? Neither earnestness nor eloquence will make up for inconsistency. It is the life that is the light.

V. Reluctance He Showed. "While he lingered the men laid hold upon his hand" (Genesis 19:16). We are always slow to obey the call of God when our lives are entangled with the affairs of the world. The young man went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions (Matthew 19:22). Many perish in the full light of knowledge for lack of decision. Escape for thy life-tarry not.

VI. Request He Offered. "Behold this city is near; let me escape hither" (Genesis 19:20). He thought the appointed mountain of refuge too far away. Why should he wish to be saved as near the city of doom as possible? Why should we wish to be saved, and nothing more? Is there not a lurking unwillingness in the minds of many of God's people to flee to the distant mountain of entire separation? Lot was saved, but he was still near enough the place of death to fill him with fear (Genesis 19:30).

VII. Favour He Enjoyed. "I cannot do anything till thou be come thither" (Genesis 19:22). How precious even a poor backslider is to God! Judgment cannot fall on Sodom till he is outside. But think further how the presence of this worldly-minded believer among the ungodly was hindering God from carrying out His own purposes. Until he came out from among them the work of God was at a standstill. A SOLEMN REFLECTION.

Genesis 19:27-28.

"Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the Lord; and he looked toward Sodom;... and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace." This was a sacred spot to him. Here the Lord met him, and here he made intercession for the righteous in Sodom. Now from this holy place he beholds the judgment of God. Those flame-girt columns of smoke declare the fulfilment of His word, and reveal His awful character when dealing in righteousness with sin and guilt. "Our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29). It is when we stand like Abraham in these high and heavenly places, walking by faith in fellowship with the Lord, and in the spirit of intercession, that we see and understand what a holy, sin-hating God we worship. As we in imagination stand with Abraham gazing on the fiery doom of Sodom, let us reflect on the-

I. Awfulness of Sin. It constrained the Lord to come down from Heaven to deal with it (chap. Genesis 18:20-21). The cry of Israel in Egypt brought the Lord down to deliver. The cry of Sodom brought Him down to destroy. The cry of the world's need brought Jesus our Lord from Heaven that He might deal with it. When God comes in grace He deals with sin, putting it away by the sacrifice of Himself. When He comes in judgment He deals with the sinner, putting him away. "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

II. Certainty of Judgment. "We will destroy this place; . . . the smoke went up" (Genesis 19:13-28). A man might as well hope to escape from his own shadow as from guilt and punishment so long as his sins are unforgiven. The judgment of God may slumber, and guilt may lift up its haughty and defiant head; but (1) it is certain; (2) it may be sudden; (3) it will be complete.

III. Sovereignty of Grace. As Abraham looked with tear-filled eyes upon the smoke of perishing Sodom he might have asked himself, "Why am I not there? How have I been saved from it? Why was I called out of Ur? What better was I than many left in their sins?" The answer is, "By grace are ye saved" (Ephesians 2:8).

IV. Security of Believers. "I can do nothing till thou be come hither." "I will not destroy it for ten's sake." God will not destroy the righteous with the wicked. All who belong to Him are under a special providence. God said to Moses, "Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them" (Numbers 16:21). Before the flood came the righteous were shut up in the ark. Before the judgments are poured out on the earth the Church will be translated to Heaven. "Neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand" (John 10:28).

V. Importance of Witness-Bearing. The Sodomites, like the men of this world, were under condemnation, but believed it not. God has not left us in ignorance of our doom if we reject His Son. "He that believeth not is condemned already" (John 3:18)

VI. Value of Present Opportunity. Soon our day of testimony will be over. Soon those among whom we live will be clothed in white robes before God, or rapt up in the smoke of torment. Lot's twenty years in Sodom were fruitless to God. Now the day of his privilege is gone and his very companions perish in their sins. Behold, now is the accepted time both for salvation and service (see Jude 1:20-23).

HAGAR THE HELPLESS.

Genesis 21:14-19.

"What aileth thee, Hagar?" Human ailments are very many, and may overtake us, as they did Hagar, in a very unexpected way. Who could be happier than she while nursing the son of Abraham? But the birth of Isaac (type of that which is born of the Spirit) brings trouble and separation to Ishmael (that which is born of the flesh). Poor Hagar, crushed in spirit, wanders forth into the wilderness, where, like the weary dove outside the ark, she is ready to perish, but the merciful hand of God is stretched out, and she is received into the favour of Him who seeks to save the lost. Notice-

I. Divine Question. God called, and said, "What aileth thee, Hagar?" (Genesis 21:17). How timely and tender is the sympathy of God! This is no formal question of curiosity, but the loving inquiry of One whose heart yearns to help the needy. When Jesus said, "What will thou that I shall do unto thee?" (Luke 18:41) He was opening the door into His own divine fulness. Hagar's ailment, in a typical sense, is a very common one.

1. She was an Outcast. "Cast out this bondwoman" (Genesis 21:10). "Abraham sent her away" (Genesis 21:14). She was shut out from the Master's house and presence. Why? Because her son mocked at Isaac-the gift of God. Those who were found sneering at the Word of Christ were all put outside, "And He put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise" (Luke 8:54). Sin always separates and leads from the house of blessing to the desert of sorrow and misery.

2. She was Destitute. "The water was spent in the bottle" (Genesis 21:15). The resources of an outcast are speedily exhausted. The prodigal's fortune was soon spent (Luke 15). When the sinner gets to an end of himself he has nothing left but prayer. His wit's end is often his best end. It is when all self-created streams are dried that the longing eye seeks the Living Fountain.

3. She was Helpless and Hopeless. "She went a good way off, and said, Let me not see the death of the child" (Genesis 21:16). She now sees nothing but the grim face of death before her. Her parting with the lad must have been like wringing the last drop of blood out of her agonising heart. It is possible to see and feel the greatness of our needs, so that we are afraid to listen to their voice. Stifling their cry does not improve our condition. She is a true and painful picture of one who is "without strength." "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6).

II. Divine Word of Comfort. "The angel of God said, Fear not, for God hath heard." What a beautiful fulfilment of "He knows how to speak a word in season to them that are weary" (Isaiah 50:4). Man's extremity is God's opportunity. It was "while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). The divine "Fear not" is always accompanied with the divine fulness (Isaiah 41:10).

1. The Provision. "She saw a well of water" (Genesis 21:19). She was sitting perishing in an agony of thirst while a well of salvation was close at hand. Spiritually this is the state and condition of many perishing for lack of knowledge while the Word of Truth is lying at their side, and even ringing in their ears.

2. The Preparation. "God opened her eyes." It was not enough that the well was there; her eyes must be opened to see it. The great provision of the Gospel is twofold: 1, The outward work of Christ on the Cross; 2, the inward work of the Holy Spirit in the heart. The well of atonement cannot satisfy without the eye-opening power of the Spirit of God. "Open Thou mine eyes" (Psalms

119:18).

3. The Acceptance. "She went and filled the bottle with water." She could not make the well, but she could take the water freely offered to her. We are not asked to make salvation, but to take it (Revelation 22:17). What a revelation this was to Hagar: 1, Of her own blindness. It was only when her eyes were opened that she discovered how blind she had been. 2, Of the goodness of God. He made the provision, and imparted to the needy one the very capacity to apprehend it. God opened her eyes, but she must fill the bottle. It is an awful responsibility to have the opened eye and yet to refuse the blessings revealed. In the Fountain opened for sin and uncleanness there is enough to fill every bottle to satisfy every heart.

4. The Result. "She gave the lad drink." In accepting the divine provision she saved both herself and her son. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31). THE SACRIFICE OF ABRAHAM.

Genesis 22:1-14.

He who is to be the father of the faithful has to face the father of all the trials of faith. We see the workings of great faith in the actions of Abraham.

(1) He reasoned not; he consulted no one.

(2) He staggered not under the crushing weight of such a demand.

(3) He was prompt; he rose up early in the morning.

(4) He was deliberate; preparing the wood beforehand.

(5) He was fully determined; bade the young men keep back that they might not hinder him. This is a very fruitful portion. Look at the-

I. Father's Sacrifice. "Take now thy son." Think of the preciousness of this son. All the hopes and desires and affections of the father are centred in him. In offering up his son Abraham was giving up his all. He had absolutely nothing left but his God. Yet this is enough for faith. God gave up His Son, although all His affections and purposes were centred in Him. We can never understand the greatness of His sacrifice until we can understand the greatness of His love for His beloved Son. Like Abraham, in giving His Son He gave His all.

II. Son's Submission. It is significantly stated that "they went both of them together." In a deep and real sense this was true of Jesus Christ and His Father. In making an atonement for sin "they went both of them together." "I delight to do Thy will, O my God" (Psalms 40:8). The purpose of the Father and of the Son was one. Like the Lord Jesus Christ, Isaac submitted-

1. To be Burdened. "Abraham took the wood and laid it upon Isaac, his son." What a burden in the eyes of the father! It was the cross of sacrifice, the symbol of death. What a picture of the only-begotten Son of God, with the burden of our iniquity laid upon Him, and laid on Him, too, by a loving Father! "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). He also submitted-

2. To be Bound. "He bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar." As a young man, twenty-five years of age, he might have resisted; but he, like our Isaac, was led as a lamb, he opened not his

mouth. Love and devotion were the cords that bound the Son of God to the altar of sacrifice.

III. Sacrificial Requisites. Isaac carried the wood, while he himself was to be the burnt-offering; but let us not fail to observe what was in the father's hands.

1. The Fire. "Abraham took the fire in his hand." There is something awfully solemn about this. "Our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29). "Who shall dwell with devouring fire?" (Isaiah 33:14). Does not this suggest the holy, testing, consuming character of God when approaching the altar of expiation?

2. The Knife. "He took the fire and a knife." If the fire represents the holiness of God, then the knife may well symbolise the sword of justice. "Awake, O sword, against the man that is my fellow" (Zechariah 13:7). The knife was quivering in the air when Jesus cried, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Psalms 22:1). In these days men are ready to forget that every sacrifice to God must have to do with the divine knife and fire.

3. The Altar. "Abraham built an altar." Isaac did not make the altar; it was prepared by the father. My soul, tread softly here. This was solemn work for Abraham. In eternity God in His own heart and mind prepared the altar for Christ. He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

4. The Cords with which Isaac was bound to the altar, typical of the nails which bound Christ to the Cross. Not the nails, but love bound the Saviour. It was the love of the Father to the Son, the love of the Son to the Father, and the love of both to man-a threefold cord that is not easily broken.

IV. Doctrine of Substitution. "He took the ram and offered him in the stead of his son" (Genesis 22:13). The scene on Mount Moriah, as typical of the greater scene on Mount Calvary, could scarcely have been perfect without the thought of substitution being made prominent. The figure now changes. The ram becomes the burnt-offering, and the submissive one goes free. You observe this sacrifice was provided by God. We have still Jesus before us, not as the Son now, but as the Substitute of one condemned to die. Man found a Cross for Christ, but it was God who found the Ransom-"Jehovah-Jireh." "He spared not His own Son (like Abraham's), but delivered Him up for us all" (Romans 8:32). "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7). Ask Isaac, as he gazes on the ram burning in his stead, if he believes in substitution. "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). THE BRIDAL SEARCH.

Genesis 24. This is one of the most wonderful seed-plots in the whole field of Revelation. It is an epitome of the scheme of salvation, and an outline history of the Church of God. May our eyes be opened to behold these wondrous things. Here we may see-

I. Abraham; or, The Father's Purpose. "Thou shalt go and take a wife unto my son Isaac" (Genesis 24:4). The thought of a bride for Isaac originated with the father. It was the outcome of his love for his son, and a desire to bring into great blessing one who was as yet a great way off. What a picture of Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:32). God the Father saw that it would be good for His Son to have a Bride with Him in the glory of His Father's presence. This purpose was declared, and the covenant made before the world was formed. The Church, as His Bride, was chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. O the unsearchable riches of His grace! O the unfathomable depths of His kindness toward us!

II. Isaac; or, The Son and Heir. "Unto him hath he given all that he hath" (Genesis 24:36). Isaac, like Jesus, came into possession of his inheritance after passing through the bitterness of death (Genesis 22:9-10). In the experience of both father and son Isaac virtually died and rose again. Now he becomes heir to all. Jesus Christ "humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death;... wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him" (Php_2:8-9). Now it hath "pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell" (Colossians 1:19). "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead" (Colossians 2:9). Unto Him hath the Father given all that He hath, that all the wants of His happy Bride may be fully satisfied. "Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). He emptied Himself that He might get into touch with the poverty of His Bride. Ye are complete in Him.

III. Eliezer; or, The Spirit's Mission (Genesis 24:2). This old steward of the house of Abraham is a perfect type of the Holy Spirit.

1. He had Authority in the House. He looked after the domestic affairs of Abraham. The Spirit is One with the Father and the Son. He attended to the home affairs of this world (Genesis 1:2).

2. He was Sent by the Father. "The Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send" (John 14:26).

3. He was Sent in the Name of the Son (John 14:26).

4. He did not Speak of Himself (Genesis 24:33).

5. He Revealed the Things of Isaac (Genesis 24:53; John 16:14).

6. He Witnesses for his Master (Genesis 24:35).

7. He Guides all the Way Home (Genesis 24:61). "The Comforter may abide with you for ever" (John 14:16).

Every act of this servant seems instinct with deep spiritual teaching. He would not eat bread until he had made known his errand (Genesis 24:33). The Holy Spirit cannot have fellowship with us until He has revealed to us the character of the Father and of the Son. He said, "Hinder me not" (Genesis 24:56). If the presence of Jesus Christ is to be enjoyed we must be obedient to this Holy Messenger.

IV. Rebekah; or, The Bride of Christ. "Wilt thou go with this man? She said, I will go" (Genesis 24:58). While Rebekah is a type of the Church-called out by the Spirit of God, and separated unto the Name of Jesus-yet we must not lose sight of our individual responsibility. The heavenly Eliezer is still calling out a people for His Name. In the Gospel we still hear the divine entreaty," Wilt thou go with this Man?" This call- 1. Is Gracious. It is not a question of character.

2. It is Personal." Wilt thou?" She alone could answer it.

3. It is Urgent. "Hinder me not." He may pass on to others.

4. It is a Question of the Will. "Wilt thou?" It is not a question of moral fitness. "Whosoever will." Unwillingness is the only unfitness.

5. It Implies Separation. "Wilt thou go?" Count the cost (Rth_1:16). Are you prepared to leave all and follow Him?

V. Following; or The Present Life. "Rebekah arose and followed the man." She believed, and so she obeyed. She knew whom she was following-the messenger who had come forth from the father to guide her into the presence of the son. What attractions would the country through which they passed have for her while her guide talked to her of the goodness and glories of Isaac, and while her heart burned within for a sight of him whom, having not seen, yet she loved, and rejoiced in the hope of his fellowship! Such is our present privilege-guided by the Spirit, taught of Him by the way, and looking for the appearing of our coming Lord. Are we as intent pressing on for the prize of this high calling as Rebekah was?

VI. Canaan; or, The Future Home. "Isaac took Rebekah, and she became his wife" (Genesis 24:67). All the troubles of her weary journey are forgotten now. One sight of our glorified Lord will heal all the wounds and scars received by the way. She now rests in his love, and becomes a joint-heir of his riches. She endured, as seeing him who was invisible; now she is satisfied in his presence and likeness. It is a precious thought that at the end of our journey Jesus will be as real to us as Isaac was to Rebekah; that this union is a personal one, and that the joy will be for ever. If we follow the Spirit now we shall follow the Lamb then.

REHOBOTH; OR VICTORY THROUGH YIELDING.

Genesis 26:17-28.

To own a well in Palestine was to possess a fortune. To be in possession of the Well of Salvation is to own the good fortune of everlasting refreshing and delight. Observe the-

I. Trial of Faith. "Isaac's servants digged, and found a well; and the herdmen of Gerar did strive, saying, The water is ours." Well-digging-seeking to open up for ourselves sources of blessing-is a very common occupation. Not every well we dig will yield contentment. This one had to be named "Contention" (Genesis 26:20). They digged another; it also brought strife with increased force, and was called "Hatred." It was a severe trial to Isaac to spend so much labour on these wells and to let others claim the water. Isaac strove not, but meekly journeyed farther back into the valley. This is one of the hardest lessons we as Christians have to learn, to resist not the evil done against our own personal interests. It is so natural for us to "stand up for our rights." Fall back, and make room for God. "Not rendering railing for railing, but contrariwise" (1 Peter 3:9).

II. Compensation of God. "They digged another well, and called it Rehoboth, for the Lord hath made room for us." By calmly yielding and trusting they found the-

1. Provision of the Lord. "The Lord hath made room for us." The Lord alone can make room for us. He knows when, and where, and what room we do need. When the Lord does make room for us He makes room for every gift and talent we have, room for every holy desire and every pure affection. It takes room of His making to meet all the needs of man as an immortal spirit. He has made room for us- (1) In the Atoning Death of Christ, (2) In the Glorious Gospel, (3) Room in His Loving Heart.

(4) Room in His Heavenly Home. The Lord hath made room for us; let us enter in and take possession of His fulness in Jesus Christ.

2. Promise of the Lord. "The Lord appeared unto him, and said, I will bless thee." Isaac sought not his own, and the blessing of the meek came upon him. The herdmen of Gerar took the wells from

him, but they could not rob him of the blessing of God. Our afflictions and trials often drive us back to the place of blessing prepared for us by the Lord. The meek shall inherit-

3. Presence of the Lord. "The Lord said, Fear not, I am with thee." Let us not strive nor cry when the men of the world seek to rob us of some of the wells of our earthly comforts. The bulls of Bashan often pitch the meek believer into fatter pastures. Abiding in His presence we shall be hid from the strife of tongues, and kept as the apple of His eye. Take no thought for your life. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God,... and all these things shall be added" (Matthew 6:33). The Lord will make room for us.

4. Power of the Lord. "They said, We saw certainly that the Lord was with thee." When Christians are found seeking not their own, but the good of others, others will see certainly that the Lord is with them. Isaac showed his faith in God by refusing to strive for the wells he himself had dug. "My God shall supply all your need" (Php_4:19). When shall this selfish, spirit-grieving hunt after worldly honours and preferments come to an end on the part of Christians? Has it come to an end with you? The Lord will make room for us; let us cast all our care upon Him. As a servant of Jesus Christ have you found your Rehoboth-room made for you by the Lord?

JACOB'S VISION.

Genesis 28:10-22.

It is now a proverb among men that "Man's extremity is God's opportunity." When in the midst of the fire and the lions God delivered His Hebrew children. It was while Stephen was being stoned that God opened the heavens before him. It was when John was an exile in Patmos that the Revelation came. It was after the sun had set on Jacob's path that he saw the ladder. The valley of Achor often becomes the door of hope. Observe-

I. The Benighted Wanderer; or, The Sinner's Condition. "He tarried there all night, because the sun was set." Jacob's plight was a sad one. As a terrified fugitive he was running for his life (Genesis 27:27-41). Night overtook him in a "certain place." Ah, these certain places-places and experiences into which we often run unawares, but places appointed by God where we shall meet with Him. It may be a Christian friend, a meetinghouse, or a season of deep affliction. Jacob, like every other self-righteous sinner, was seeking to have a success by a life of deceit and unreality. Such a life is a life of misery through constant dread of discovery. Is the sun of thy hope setting? Is the night of dread and despair gathering around? Rest and look up!

II. The Wonderful Ladder; or, The Way of Salvation. "Behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to Heaven." This new and heavenly way was revealed to Jacob by God Himself. It is a lovely type of Him who is "the Way" (John 14:6). This ladder, like the salvation of Jesus Christ, was "set up on the earth," indicating that it was a way of access for man. Its "top reached to Heaven." The ladder of Christ's Cross did not come short of the very Throne of God's Holiness. All men's ladders fail to reach Heaven (Romans 10:3). Jesus Christ, like Jacob's ladder, links earth to Heaven. "I am the Way" (John 14:6). "There is none other Name" (Acts 4:12).

III. The Angelic Climbers; or, The Ministry of Angels. "Behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it." The angels, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Hebrews 1:14). As soon as the ladder is set up the angels are on

it. How quick they are to take advantage of any opportunity of service! The angels have no way from earth to Heaven but this one way: they ascend and descend upon the Son of Man (John 1:50).

IV. The Gracious Promise; or, The Gospel Message. "Behold, the Lord stood above it." God by the way of the ladder revealed Himself and His will to Jacob. What a foreshadowing of God in Christ-the New Way-reconciling us unto Himself. The Lord stood above it, assuring us that Christ is the Way to God. The Gospel of God, preached to Jacob, offered a threefold blessing-

1. A Possession. "The land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it." Those who trust Christ, the Living Ladder, will receive an inheritance among the saints in light.

2. Protection. "I am with thee, and will keep thee." At Jesus' feet this sweet promise is ours also, "The Lord, thy keeper" (2 Kings 2:2).

3. His Abiding Presence. "I will not leave thee." Fear not. At the foot of the Cross there is the promise of grace sufficient (Hebrews 13:5-6). "I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken."

V. The Solemn Discovery; or, The Testimony of the Awakened. "Jacob awaked, and said, Surely the Lord is in this place." To those still asleep the Cross of Christ is but as a confused dream; to those awake it is a "dreadful place"-dreadful both to God and man; aye, and to the devil also. The experience of Jacob at the foot of the ladder has been the experience of many at the foot of the Cross, and very much after the same moral order. 1, The Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. God in Christ, on the Cross, and I knew it not. What a solemn discovery! 2, This is a dreadful place-dreadful, because at is the place where the awful question of sin has been settled; where the wrath of God fell upon the head of His Holy Song of Solomon. 3, This is the House of God. Here God dwells, in Christ, as a Refuge and a Hiding-place for sinful man. 4, This is the Gate of Heaven-the door of access into eternal life and unfading glory. "If any man enter in he shall be saved" (John 10:9).

VI. The Anointed Pillar; or, The Sacrifice of Praise. Gratitude and thankfulness constrained the privileged wanderer to lift up the pillars of praise to the Name of Him who had so graciously blessed Him. Only the presence of God can make a Bethel; only those to whom this presence has been revealed can really raise the anointed pillars of song. Where are the pillars that the goodness of God has constrained us to set up? Are they within sight of those who pass by? Every act of kindness done to others, for Jesus' sake, is a memorial pillar. The oil of grace makes every such deed holy and acceptable before God.

VII. The Willing Vow; or, The Covenant of Consecration. "Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me,.. then shall the Lord be my God." Let us make this covenant without the "ifs," for the promises of grace are unconditional. Jacob on condition of prosperity was willing to give God a tenth part of his possession. This is good, but very Jacob-like. Any worldly man would gladly make such a bargain. Consecration goes deeper down than the tenth; it embraces all. "Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price: glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Therefore "present your body a living sacrifice unto God" (Romans 12:1). In so doing we shall "prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:2). THE MYSTERIOUS WRESTLER.

Genesis 32:24-31.

It is now twenty years since Jacob made his covenant at Bethel with the God of all grace. Had God been faithful to His promise? Let Jacob testify, "With my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands" (Genesis 32:10). The blessing of God is not a passing emotion, but the abiding favour of His presence and power, therefore something that cannot fail (Genesis 28:15). The blessing of God, it maketh rich. The various attitudes of Jacob as brought before us here are suggestive.

I. See Him Fearing. "He was greatly afraid and distressed" (Genesis 32:7)." And he sent them over the brook, and Jacob was left alone" (Genesis 32:23-24). He feared his brother, and tarried behind alone. The fear of man bringeth a snare, but by the infinite mercy of God Jacob fell into the arms of almighty grace and love. He was alone; now was God's opportunity to get into close contact with him. Lone souls are fit subjects for the fellowship of Heaven. Come ye yourselves apart that the Lord may have a better chance of dealing with the innermost thoughts of the heart.

II. See Him Resisting. "There wrestled a man with him." When Jacob was alone the Divine Overcomer draws near. All at once Jacob finds himself struggling against Him. This is so natural. In the pride of our heart our self-will refuses to bow submissively at the first manifestation of the divine will, when that will is to deliver us by yielding rather than by self-effort and carnal wisdom. The Jacob nature always strives to supplant the will of God by its own. Let us thank God that He contrives to wrestle with us till the day break. He knows that our only hope of success, as His servants, lies in our entire submission to Him.

III. See Him Crippled. "When He saw that He prevailed not, He touched the hollow of his thigh, and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint." The heavenly One wishes to prevail over our whole character and life that all may be filled with His power and blessing. The source of our strength must be touched, and broken, and withered, that His strength might be perfected in our weakness. Think of it! Our strength is just so much power of resistance. Peter's wisdom was a wrestling against his Lord (Mark 8:32). Hath not the potter power over the clay? Submit yourselves to God.

IV. See Him Clinging. "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me." Now that his strength is broken the resister becomes the clinger. This is the true attitude of blessing, clinging to the Overcomer. A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise. This submissive and helpless cry of entire dependence is always sure to bring forth such an answer as will for ever change our character and revolutionise our whole life. Clinging to the pleading Christ is the all-conquering attitude of a conquering soul. "By faith we cling to Thee."

V. See Him Changed. "Thy name shall no more be called Jacob, but Israel, for as a prince hast thou prevailed." The new name indicates the new nature; the new nature came not by struggling, but by yielding. The measure of our submission to Christ will be the measure of our victory for Him. Jacob has now gained his degree in the divine school, "P. G. M." (Power with God and with Men). Covet earnestly the best gifts. The way to prevail with men is to prevail with God; the way to prevail with God is to cling to Him with a stubborn trust.

VI. See Him Testifying. "I have seen God face to face." This is a great testimony. "I have seen God." No man can remain the same as before after he has seen God. The glory of such a vision is sure to blind the eyes to the sinful pleasures of the world by transforming the inner life. To see

Jesus is to see God. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). "This is the true God" (1 John 5:20). Have you got into such close touch with Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit, that you can truthfully say, "I have seen God?"

VII. See Him Halting. "As he passed he halted upon his thigh." His walk evidenced the fact that he was a God-conquered man. Does our walk and conversation prove that we are princes with God by bearing the mark of a life wholly surrendered to God? All God's conquered ones are princes. It is surely significant that "As he passed the sun rose upon him." The sun of God's light and power will immediately rise upon us when we have yielded ourselves entirely up to the holy will of God. "His ways are ways of pleasantness" (Proverbs 3:17). Thy will be done. "Lift Thou up upon me the light of Thy countenance" (Psalms 4:6). THE CALL TO BETHEL.

Genesis 35:1-7.

Terror laid hold on Jacob because of the bloody deeds cf his sons Simeon and Levi at Shechem. "I shall be destroyed, and my house," he said. Is this the language of "a prince with God?" Why this change? The God of Bethel has been forgotten. If Jacob has forgotten his covenant with God, God has not forgotten His promise to Jacob. God said unto Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel." Although we believe not, our gracious God still remains faithful, and reminds us of the place of refuge for our troubled souls. Look at the-

I. Place Appointed. "Go to Bethel." The very mention of Bethel would be enough to arouse the drowsy faith and slumbering thoughts of Jacob. Bethel was to him both "a dreadful place" and "the gate of Heaven." The gate of Heaven becomes the House of God, His place of refuge and succour. It is beautiful to observe how the grace of God brings salvation to His thoughtless servant. Troubled Christian, go to Calvary. Go to the Throne of Grace, the House of God, the Gate of Heaven.

II. Command Given. "Arise, go to Bethel, and dwell there." Abiding at Bethel under the shadow of the Almighty he will be safe from the vengeance of the angry Shechemites. Bethel (House of God) is typical of the place or condition of fellowship with God. This we may always have by resting in Christ, who is the way to Heaven and the abode of God. God is in Christ, therefore abiding in Him we abide in the fellowship of the Father. It is God's will that we should dwell there. Let us dwell in, this house for ever.

III. Preparation Made. "Jacob said unto his household, Put away the strange gods, and be clean and change your garments." Some of Jacob's household had brought the gods of strangers with them from the land of Mesopotamia. A separation must be made. If we would dwell in unbroken companionship with the God of Bethel there must be no other God among us, no usurping thought or thing. We must be clean, cleansed from all sin, and clothed in change of garments. Holiness becometh the House of God.

IV. Reason Urged. "I will make an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress." God's call to Jacob reminds him of His former kindness to him in the time of trouble. The kindness of God showed us in the gift of His Son, and at the time of our spiritual distress should surely constrain us in the time of weakness and fears to arise and go to Him. "Lord, to whom can we go?" (John 6:68). "He that spared not His own Son,... how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32). Not one hath failed of all His Promises.

V. Effect Produced. "They journeyed; and the terror of God came upon the cities." When the people of God set their faces to seek Him, and to be obedient to Him at any cost, it is impossible but the ungodly will feel the power of it. When God is sanctified in His people He will be exalted among the heathen. The reason why the ungodly arc so brazen-faced in these days is because the people of God are so worldly-minded. Bethel is forgotten, and other gods have dominion in the camp.

VI. Place of Blessing. "Jacob came to Bethel, and built an altar; and God appeared unto Jacob again" (Genesis 35:9). When he came to the appointed place he inherited the promised blessing. God's Word will be fulfilled in us when by faith we take our stand upon it. It is impossible to dwell at Bethel and be a stranger to God, or to remain unchanged. God said unto Jacob, "Thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel." This was Jacob's second blessing. It was the breaking up of that self-seeking spirit which characterised him all along the past. Have we had such a vision of God that every idol has been buried, the altar of complete consecration erected, and our characters so entirely transformed that we have become dead to self-serving and alive unto God? If not, "Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there."

JOSEPH, THE PATIENT SUFFERER.

Genesis 37.

Joseph is a well-known and fruitful type of Jesus Christ. He was indeed despised and rejected; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Like our blessed Lord, when cast out by man, He was exalted by God to be a Prince and a Saviour. It is instructive and comforting to observe that in all His afflictions there were some compensating elements. If demons tempted Christ, angels strengthened Him. God has always some way of escape for His suffering ones (1 Corinthians 10:13). Every trial endured for Christ will bring in some way fresh supplies of grace and blessing.

I. He was Despised by his Brethren, but Beloved by his Father (Genesis 37:3-4). Like Christ, he came to his own, but his own received him not; but although his brethren despised him, he was acknowledged by the father as his beloved son, in whom he was well pleased. What a consolation to the timid Christians, persecuted it may be in their own home by their own kith and kin. "Beloved of the Father" (Genesis 38:3). Let this sweeten every bitter trial. Remember it was the experience of our Lord and Master. "Neither did His brethren believe in Him."

II. He was Hated for his Words, but Honoured with Visions (Genesis 37:8-9). His words of wisdom and revelation were as goads in their hearts; they wounded their pride while they manifested the purpose of God. "They hated him the more; and he dreamed yet another dream." Stephen was hated and stoned by men; but God opened the heavens to his vision. We might be hated more for our words if we were like Joseph and Jesus, faithfully telling out the whole truth as revealed to us by God's Holy Spirit. If the Word is not preached the visions will cease, and that which we have learned will become stale and formal.

III. He was Cast into a Pit, but there was no Water in it (Genesis 37:24). The ungodly can have no power at all over us except it be given them of our Father in Heaven. The fire had no power over the three Hebrews, because their time of testimony had not yet come to an end. They cast Paul and Silas into prison, but there was nothing in it to damp the joy of their heart or hinder their fellowship with God. "They prayed and sang praises." They cast Christ into the pit of death, but it

was to Him the place of eternal victory. Fear not.

IV. He was Sold as a Slave, but he was a Prosperous Man (Genesis 37:28; chap. Genesis 39:2). Like our heavenly Joseph, he became of no reputation, being bartered for the price of a common slave. "But he was a prosperous man." "I have finished the work Thou gavest Me to do" (John 17:4). The man is always prosperous who succeeds in doing the will of God. Sold for thirty pieces of silver, yet the pleasure of the Lord prospered in His hand. It does not matter what low value the world may set upon the servant of God, he will be a prosperous man in God's sight if he pleases Him.

V. He was Falsely Blamed, but the Lord was with Him (Genesis 39:7-23). Many unrighteous and blasphemous charges were brought against the Holy Son of God. No Joseph beloved by the Father shall escape. The pure in heart not only see God, but suffer for His sake. If your heart be hot with zeal for God, men will charge you, if not with wrath and malice, at least with uncharitableness. But if they say all manner of evil against you falsely, rejoice and be exceeding glad (Matthew 5:11-12).

VI. He was Neglected by the Butler, but Remembered by his Master. If his companions in tribulation forgot him, the Lord whom he served remembered him, and made all things to work together for his good. We need not be discouraged, although those whom we may have helped, and from whom we might expect a word spoken in our favour, forget all about us in their eagerness to secure favour for themselves. The Lord knows where His faithful ones are. He needs no letter of commendation; He can easily create the circumstances which will make it necessary to call forth the hidden one. As Christian workers let us be faithful where we are, although it should be in some seemingly forgotten dungeon. It is possible for us so to live that we may become even indispensable to God. God's great ones are often prepared in pits and prisons. He knows what we are good for, and when and how to lift us up. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:6).

JOSEPH, THE EXALTED HEART-SEARCHER.

Genesis 42-44.

Joseph came out of great tribulation to inherit the kingdom of privilege and honour. Like Jesus, he who was despised by his brethren was exalted by the King to His own right hand. As long as Joseph was in his state of "humiliation he was rejected by his own. As long as Christ was in weakness He was despised by His own nation. While Joseph remained unknown to his brethren his dealings with them were perfectly mysterious. Is it not so still with our exalted Kinsman-Redeemer? Until we know Him His dealings with us by His Spirit seem strange and puzzling. Notice the-

I. Attitude He Assumed. "He spake unto them by an interpreter" (chap. Genesis 42:23). They were not yet reconciled to him, so he could not talk to them as a friend face to face. The Holy Ghost is the great Interpreter of our heavenly Joseph's words. He speaks to us while in our sins by His convicting Spirit. While we are strangers to Him He can only deal with us as a ruler, not as our brother. We should be thankful that He is pleased to speak to us in any way.

II. Manner of His Speech. "He spake roughly unto them" (chap. Genesis 42:7). "He spake hard things." The Lord has to speak sharp things to us that we may be awakened to a sense of our sinfulness. His brethren had never yet confessed their sin. They must be made to feel the bitter pangs of guilt ere they can know the depths of His forgiving love. If Jesus by His Spirit speaks hard things to us, it is that we might be prepared for His exceeding great kindness.

III. Results that Followed. "They said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother" (chap. Genesis 42:21). When He is come, the Interpreter, He shall convince of sin. The work is now done; their sin has been brought to remembrance, and made exceeding sinful in the presence of him whom they sinned against. "We are surely guilty." This is the opening of the door of the heart for the entrance of the saving Word of Him who is alive from the dead. Have you made this confession?

IV. Privilege they Enjoyed. "Joseph said, Bring these men home, for they shall dine with me" (chap. Genesis 43:16). They have acknowledged their sin. Now they receive his favour. What grace to be brought into the house of Joseph the prince, and to dine with him! The Lord Jesus Christ leads the penitent soul into His banqueting house of love that all their needs may be fully met. But as yet they know him not. It is possible to be feasting on His mercies and yet be strangers to Himself.

V. Compassion He Showed. Three times do we see Joseph weeping (chap. Genesis 42:24; Genesis 43:30; Genesis 45:2). Oh, what tenderness was in his heart, even when he spoke roughly. How Christlike was all this! What a lesson for those who deal with souls in His Name! If the tongue must speak sharp, piercing words, let them come from a loving, weeping heart. Think of Paul when he said, "I tell you, even weeping" (Php_3:18). "Jesus wept" (John 11:35). Our words are many, but our tears are few.

VI. The Victory He Gained. The one who sold him now says, "Let thy servant abide instead of the lad, a bondman to my lord" (chap. Genesis 44:33). What a change has been wrought! He who persecuted his brother is now willing to be a bondslave in his brother's stead. What has brought about this moral transformation? The words and actions of him whom God hath highly exalted. Has the influence of Christ wrought such a good work in us? Are we prepared to give ourselves for the good of others?

VII. The Revelation He Gave. "Joseph said, Come near, I am Joseph, your brother" (chap. Genesis 45:4). They have confessed that "God hath found out their iniquity" (chap. Genesis 44:16). Thus enmity is slain, and now the full revelation is given them. Joseph was not satisfied until he manifested himself. Jesus Christ, like Joseph, offers us His gifts and tender invitations to come near that He might reveal Himself to us. This blessing, in all its mighty, melting fulness, can only be enjoyed by those who come near to Him. Such a revelation is needed to keep us low and trustful at His feet. He still says, "Come near, and I will manifest Myself." "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

VIII. The Comfort He Administered. "Now therefore be not grieved;... for God did send me before you to preserve life" (chap. Genesis 45:5). "Moreover, he kissed all his brethren; after that his brethren talked with him" (Genesis 42:15). How sublimely suggestive is all this! When the Lord makes Himself known to us then comes the sweet assurance of forgiveness through His own

blessed Word. After that we are in a condition to talk with Him. Oh, how sweet and precious is this fellowship! How much we shall have to talk about when we see Him in the glory of His power, and are "for ever with the Lord."

JOSEPH, THE REVEALED KINSMAN.

Genesis 45. This is a most thrilling chapter, read in the light of Christ's second appearing. Joseph's brethren sold him and cast him out. They would not have this man to reign over them; now he appears before them in the character as a ruler. They look upon him whom they have pierced with many a sorrow (Zechariah 12:10), and wail because of him. Confessing their sin, they receive him as their kinsman, and own him as their lord. Afterwards they go forth to proclaim the glad tidings of his resurrection and glory. "Joseph is alive, and is governor over all the land!" Although Christ was despised and rejected by His brethren He shall appear in great power and glory, and shall be King over all the earth. Then His brethren (Jews) will acknowledge Him as the One "sold and rejected," and become the heralds of His power and glory, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom. Here notice-

I. The Revelation. "Joseph made himself known unto his brethren" (Genesis 45:1). No one could reveal Joseph to them but himself. Christ manifests Himself unto us. He shall be revealed from Heaven. The revelation of Christ to us is very much what the revelation of Joseph was to his brethren.

1. It is the Revelation of One whom we have Rejected. How often have we heard His pleadings through the preaching of His Word (chap. Genesis 42:21). "Behold, I stand at the door and knock" (Revelation 3:20).

2. It is the Revelation of a Guilty Past. "They were troubled at his presence" (Genesis 45:3). When Christ is revealed to the soul our sins are sure to stand out before us. They are realised that they might be blotted out; uncovered that they might be buried for ever.

3. It is the Revelation of Real Kinship. "I am Joseph, your brother" (Genesis 45:4). Members of His flesh and of His bones. He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh that we might be partakers of His divine nature. What fulness of consolation wells up out of these simple words, "I am your brother!" My Father and your Father.

4. It is the Revelation of Great Grace. "Joseph said, Now therefore be not grieved" (Genesis 45:5). He is willing to forget the past. "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Hebrews 10:17). The revelation of Christ is the revelation of the infinite grace of God.

II. The Commission. Now that they have been reconciled to their exalted and kingly brother they receive a grand commission from him. "Haste ye, and go up and say." Does every revelation of Christ not imply a commission? "Let him that heareth say, Come" (Revelation 22:17). "Go ye into all the world" (Mark 16:15).

1. Proclaim that He is Alive. "They went and told, saying, Joseph is alive." He who passed into the pit and the prison is now lifted up to the throne. "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain" (1 Corinthians 15:14). "The Lord is risen indeed" (Luke 24:34).

2. Proclaim that He is Exalted. "God hath made me lord of all." The keys of the treasure-houses of Egypt hang on the girdle of Joseph. Our exalted Kinsman is the possessor of all. The keys of hell and of death are in His hands, and all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him. "All things are yours; for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Corinthians 3:23).

3. Proclaim His Willingness to Receive. "Go and say, Come unto me" (Genesis 45:9). Now that he is exalted he desires others to behold his glory and share his blessing. What an invitation is this, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). It comes from One who is mighty to save.

4. Proclaim His Power to Supply all Need. "I will nourish thee." Come, and abide with Him. "My God shall supply all your need" (Php_4:19). Is not this a glorious Gospel? "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ" (Romans 1:16). He saves the sinner and He nourishes the saved,

III. The Reception. How did Jacob receive the great and glad tidings sent by his long-lost son? Just in the same way that many receive the tidings of salvation through a once crucified but now risen Redeemer.

1. He Doubted. "Jacob believed them not." To those who know not the character and purpose of God it seems too good news to be true (Acts 17:32).

2. He Believed. "When he saw the wagons Joseph had sent to carry him, he said, It is enough." Ah, yes! when the eyes are opened to see the suitable provision made for us by our exalted Lord, and realise our own need, we can no longer doubt His message of love and mercy.

3. He Decided. He said, "Joseph is alive; I will go." Faith leads to action. It is not easy to move people for God until their heart finds rest in His Word.

4. He Possessed. "Joseph gave them a possession in the best of the land" (Genesis 47:11). To receive Christ's invitation is to become the heir of an eternal inheritance (1 Peter 1:4-5). Our kingly Master always gives the best. "In Thy presence is fulness of joy; at His right hand are pleasures for evermore" (Psalms 16:11).

JOSEPH, THE RULING PRINCE.

Genesis 47.

There was a famine in the land, but there was enough and to spare in the hands of him whom God had exalted, and who carried the royal seal. All the needy ones must "go to Joseph." The time of dire necessity only helped to show forth the unsearchable riches of the Great Deliverer. There is enough in Jesus Christ to satisfy every famishing soul. "Lord, to whom can we go? Thou only hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). It is not without deep meaning that the famine came to an end only when the people had no more to give. When they came to an end of themselves then God stepped in and delivered them. Many are still struggling through a time of spiritual famine in their souls, because they have not yet ceased bartering with God for blessing. In this chapter we have Joseph honoured and served by those who once denied and persecuted him. We may see here in type our relationship to Jesus Christ as servants. There is-

I. Great Privilege. "He gave them a possession in the best of the land" (Genesis 47:11). In being brought into the land of Egypt they were brought under Joseph's rule; into the kingdom of Joseph. We as Christians have been brought into the kingdom of God's dear Son, within the sphere of His gracious rule. This is our Goshen, the frontier of Heaven. This blessed Land of Promise is the best of all lands, for here the Prince Himself exercises His Personal care over us. "He nourished them with bread."

II. Honest Confession. "And they said, Thou hast saved our lives" (Genesis 47:25). He saved their lives by making provision for them long before the famine came. Jesus made provision for us many years ago. He still keeps mercy for thousands; He only cart save our lives. Have we honoured Him by such a testimony? Thou hast saved my life; saved by grace alone. Unto Him be the glory for ever.

III. Willing Service. "Let us find grace in thy sight, and we will be servants" (Genesis 47:25). If the grace of Joseph constrained them to consecrate themselves to the service of Pharaoh, how much more should the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ constrain us to yield ourselves unto God. "The love of Christ constraineth us" (2 Corinthians 5:14). "Present your bodies a living sacrifice... unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1).

IV. Ample Provision. "Joseph said, I have bought you; lo, here is corn for you, sow the land" (Genesis 47:23). Joseph not only bought them, but filled their hands with good seed that they may now become fruitful labourers. The parable is plain. Redeemed by His blood and filled with the seed of the Word we go forth as sowers that fruit may abound to the glory and praise of His Name. Let us never forget that He supplies the seed. In our emptiness let Us come to Him who gladly fills the hands of those whom He hath bought. This is the consecrated life-filled with His fulness.

V. Special Reward. "Look out men of activity, and make them rulers" (Genesis 47:6). The diligent shall stand before kings. Men of activity for the cause of Christ will receive their reward in the day of His appearing. Our Joseph will look them out. Not a cup of cold water given in His Name will be forgotten. How many Christians are losing this honour by trifling away their precious time! The day will declare it. Let us not be weary in well-doing; remember the due season.

VI. Royal Honour. "Joseph took his brethren and presented them before Pharaoh" (Genesis 47:2). Our Kinsman, Redeemer, and Prince is able also to present us faultless before the presence of His Father with exceeding joy. If He should ask you on that day, "What was your occupation?" As a Christian what would you answer? Could you say, "Thy servants were shepherds," men who fed the flock of Christ. Let us praise Him for the all-atoning blood, and for the almighty, indwelling Spirit by which we may be able to stand before the throne without fault. Be active for Him if you would be blameless before Him at His coming.

TYPES OF CHRISTIANS.

Genesis 49. This is Jacob's dying and prophetic benediction, "I will tell you what shall befall you in the last days." Taught by the Holy Spirit, he is able to declare the consequences that will surely follow certain well-defined characteristics that had already appeared among his own family. The features of Jacob's sons, with their results, are still being manifested among the children of God. We have with us still the-

I. Unstable Reubens. Reuben had many excellencies, "excellency of dignity and of power," the first-born, and the child of great hope, but being "unstable as water" he did not excel. Reuben is a type of those Christians who have many excellent gifts, but who have one besetting sin that acts like a fly in the ointment. Reuben's sin cost him his birthright (1 Chronicles 5:1). Sin always engenders instability, and leads to the loss of our birthright, of spiritual power, and progress. Stand fast.

II. Self-Willed Simeons and Levis. "In their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they digged down a wall." Jacob had to say of them, "Ye have troubled me" (chap. Genesis 34:30). How much of the trouble that comes upon ourselves, and others, has its root and cause in the same evil source, self-will. No wonder Jacob said, "O my soul, come thou not into their secret." The conduct of these sons led to division and scattering (Genesis 49:7). There are always the fruits of a self-seeking spirit. Let the cursed self-will go to the Cross. "I delight to do Thy will, O my God"(Psalms 40:8).

III. Praising and Courageous Judahs. Judah means the "praise of Jehovah." Judah is a lion's whelp. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah." The praising and courageous Christian will always possess the sceptre of power. Like Judah, we shall be able to put the foot of victory on the neck of the enemy when we have more of the nature of the lion of the tribe of Judah in our lives and the praise of Jehovah on our lips. The sceptre of spiritual power has departed from many a once Judah-Christian because of cowardliness and unfaithfulness to God. The true Judahs are always leaders (Numbers 10:14).

IV. Comforting and Consoling Zebuluns. "Zebulun shall be for a haven." The words means "dwelling," or a place of refuge for the distressed. "Zebulun's border went up toward the sea." This son of Jacob may be taken as a type of the modern sons of consolation-ready to offer a hand of help or a word of comfort to souls who, like ships, are seeking refuge from the crushing tempest. Zebuluns are always in great demand. The ministry of kindness is always acceptable. "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God "(Isaiah 40:1). "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Matthew 5:9).

V. Timid and Self-Oppressed Issachars. "He saw that rest was good, and that the land was pleasant," and, being afraid to offend the enemy, "he bowed and became a servant to tribute." And so the dying father characterises him as a "strong ass." Strong, but stupid; one who possesses the power, but, through the fear of man, gets ensnared and enslaved. Issachar is typical of those who, though they have all the strength of Christ at their disposal, yet remain timid and weak and helpless, bowing to the yoke of every passion, the bond-slaves of the world, strong asses.

VI. Gunning and Sharp-Dealing Dans. "Dan shall judge, and shall be a serpent that biteth the horse heels, so that the rider shall fall." This is close, personal dealing. Dan may represent those Christians who have the wisdom of the serpent, or rather the cunning way of the adder, in knowing how to bring down the pride of the enemy. The spiritual Danites can discern and judge. They know how to apply the truth, so that the enemies of God are brought low. Such can serve God best through personal dealing.

VII. Overcoming Gads. Gad shall be overcome, "but he shall overcome at last." Every Christian who would be an overcoming Gad must first himself be overcome. We must be vanquished if we

would be victors in the cause of God. Those who overcome by the blood of the Lamb have been overcome by the blood of the Lamb. Lives conquered by the grace of God become conquerors through grace.

VIII. Blissful Ashers. Asher means "blessed." "His bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties." He is a type of those blessed ones, so few in number, who are themselves satisfied with good things, and who are able to bring out of their treasures rich dainties for others. They have received the unsearchable riches of Christ; they are filled with the fulness of God, and so can minister kindly portions to others. Those who do not eat fat things will groan in their leanness.

IX. Joyful Naphtalis. "He is a hind let loose; he giveth goodly words." The happy, skipping hind escaped from bondage, and now, growing goodly antlers, is a fit figure of those bright, joyful Christians who always delight in the liberty wherewith Christ has made them free. They continue to revel in their first love; their words are goodly, and their appearance attractive.

X. Fruitful Josephs. "Joseph is a fruitful bough, whose branches run over the wall." Here we have the type of an ideal Christian. As a branch he abode by the well, kept within touch of the source of supply. He was fruitful, an evidence that as a bough he was fully satisfied. He was shot at, persecuted for righteousness' sake. Those fruitful for God are sure to be hated by the ungodly. His branches ran over the wall. The fruitful life is a blessing to others, even to those outside the wall of salvation. His bough abides in strength. Power for service remains as long as we abide by the well.

XI. Discontented Benjamins. "Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf: he shall devour and divide." Alas! that he should have so many successors in the camp of Christ; they are known by their fault-finding spirit. They are the tittle-tattle tale-bearers, always dividing the spoil, delighting to pass round the faults and failings of their brethren. From such, good Lord, save us!

Exodus

LIFE IN EGYPT.

Exodus 1 and 2.

Egypt, after the death of Joseph, is the type of a world lying in wickedness. Pharaoh, who knew not Joseph, represents the god of this world. The experiences of the children of Israel in Egypt give us a plain, though painful, picture of the experiences of backsliding Christians in the world. It becomes to them the "house of bondage." What a difference from the land of Canaan! "A land which the Lord thy God careth for; the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year" (Deuteronomy 11:12). Notice their- I. Sorrowful Position. They were-

1. Friendless. "Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation" (chap. Exodus 1:6). Those Christians who abide in the Egypt of this present evil world must sooner or later part with the fellowship of Jesus and the company of His brethren. The arm of flesh failed them when Moses fled (chap. Exodus 3:15).

2. Faithless. The tidings of deliverance had been sent, but they believed not (chap. Exodus 5:21). It is with great difficulty that backsliders are awakened to a sense of God's forgiving and restoring love. They are slow of heart to believe.

3. Hopeless. "They hearkened not for anguish of spirit" (chap. Exodus 6:9). How true all this is of those in the world without Christ (Ephesians 2:12). Without faith they are without the Friend; without Him they are without hope; so taken up with the miseries of their condition that they will not hearken to the voice of God's mercy in the Gospel.

II. Bitter Service. They-

1. Served an Enemy. "They built for Pharaoh" (chap. Exodus 1:11). They served one who sought their destruction. All their work went to strengthen the hands of their great oppressor, helping the ungodly. That is all we can do as long as we are outside the kingdom of God's dear Son (Matthew 12:30).

2. Served with Severity. "The taskmasters hated them" (chap. Exodus 5:13). Theirs was a joyless, thankless work. What a cruel master is the god of this world! What a task to please those who are under his authority! Child of the world, you have a hard taskmaster! All work and no pay.

3. Served in Misery. "The taskmasters afflicted them" (chap. Exodus 1:11). Constrained to labour, not by love, but by fear of the oppressor's lash. Poor sinners, struggling to supply your tale of good works, to earn a little peace of mind, you are under a law that cannot reward you with mercy (Romans 7:13-24).

III. Despairing Cry. It was-

1. Earnest. "Their cry came up unto God" (chap. Exodus 2:23). Their very misery helped to work out for them a great deliverance. Grace has gained a victory when the devil's bondslaves have realised that there is no help for them but in God (Psalms 32:3-5).

2. Heard. "God heard their groanings" (chap. Exodus 2:24). The eye and the ear of God are quick to see and to hear the movings of the hearts of the oppressed. He is faithful to His promise, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you" (Psalms 50:15). The father saw the returning prodigal while yet a great way off (Romans 10:9-13).

3. Answered. "God looked upon them and knew them" (chap. Exodus 2:25, margin). His tender look of love implies His full knowledge of our need. God looked down from Heaven and knew man's real need, so in love He sent His Son. The cry of perishing Israel was fully met with, "I am come down to deliver them" (chap. Exodus 3:8). "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

MOSES' BIRTH AND FAILURE.

Exodus 2:1-15.

Bible characters, like old manuscripts, need close and patient study if the deep and precious teaching of their lives would be understood. Every Old and New Testament saint is the embodiment of some special feature of character which is to be an example or pattern for us (1 Timothy 1:16).

I. His Birth. He was born a "goodly child." He was "exceeding fair"' (Acts 7:20). Miriam and Aaron, his sister and brother, were doubtless very comely in the eyes of their parents; but Moses, the man drawn out for God, was the fairest of all. All God's fair ones are drawn-out ones-out from the hiding-place of darkness and fear, out from the river of death and doom. He was hid by faith and saved by God (Hebrews 11:23).

II. His Upbringing. "Pharaoh's daughter said, Take this child and nurse it for me." In the providence of God his mother was chosen for his nurse. The goodly children of God are always well looked after. "All things work together for their good" (Romans 8:28). By and by he is taken up to the palace; is learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and likely engages in military pursuits. Moses is like the clay in the hands of the potter, a vessel on the wheel of God's unerring providence being prepared and made meet for the Master's use. May we be willing to take on any shape or fashion His love and wisdom may care to impress. Thy will be done on the earth of this poor vessel.

III. His Sympathy. "When Moses was grown he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens." What a sorrowful sight would meet his eyes! They were digging, kneading, moulding, carrying, building, while they sighed, and groaned, and wept. A man will not be much use for God as long as he refuses to go out and look upon the sufferings of the sin-burdened. Nehemiah viewed the walls before the work was began. If the power of the Gospel is to be valued, the awfulness of sin and the helplessness of the sinner must be seen.

IV. His Choice. "He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God" (Hebrews 11:24-26). Having seen his own relationship, and the miseries of his brethren, he takes this bold and decided step for God and His people. It may have cost him many a sleepless night. There was much to be given up, but faith gained the victory. Our

sympathy for the oppressed and the perishing is not very deep if it has not led us to a more definite consecration of ourselves to God and His work.

V. His Failure. "He looked this way and that way, and slew the Egyptian. Who made thee a prince and a judge over us?" (Exodus 1:12 and Exodus 1:14). When a man has to look this way and that way before he acts it is clear that he is not yet fit to be used of God. The fear of man still ensnares him. Moses knew that he was called of God to deliver his brethren. "For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them, but they understood not" (Acts 7:25). The time was not yet come, the vessel was not yet prepared. He had given himself to God, but this effort was only the energy of the flesh, the impatience of self-will. We have not only to yield to God, but also to wait on Him. God's clock has two hands-His promise and providence. Both are moved by the same will-they always act in harmony.

VI. His Flight. "Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh." How deep and bitter must have been his disappointment after all his agony of soul and decision of purpose Only God is left. All the wisdom of the Egyptians is not enough; he must be taught of God. The withering up of our own self-sufficiency is needful if we would be strong in His might. "Looking this way and that way" is sure to end in fleeing from the face of man. "If any man would serve Me, let him take up his cross and follow Me" THE CALL OF MOSES.

Exodus 3:1-10.

In the first chapter we see a picture of helpless bondage, in the second, failure and despair; in the third, the Almighty Deliverer appears. The king had died, and the darkness of sorrow and oppression was fast thickening over Israel; but God knew where to find a man suited for His gracious purpose of deliverance. Moses is now eighty years old, but he is not too old for God; he is more fit for His work now that he has been bleached in the wilderness for forty years. It takes a good deal to dry up the old, sinful sap of self that is within us. Moses had attempted to save his brethren, but failed. Now he receives the call of God for the work. He went unsent; now God sends him. In this portion we have-

I. A Startling Manifestation. "The angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush." "This great light." The flame of fire was the symbol of God's presence.

1. It Signified Purity. "Our God is, a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29). "Who shall dwell with devouring fire? Who shall abide with everlasting burnings?" (Isaiah 33:14). Only the pure in heart. The presence of God in the soul devours the unclean desire of the heart." Be ye holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16).

2. It Signified Power "The bush burned with fire." When the Holy Ghost came down to empower the disciples He came in the likeness of tongues of fire. If we are made partakers of the divine nature we are made partakers of an Almighty power.

3. It Signified Mystery. "And the bush was not consumed." The holy, consuming presence was there, yet the bush was preserved. What a symbol of God in Christ! Great is the mystery of godliness-God manifest in the flesh. What a picture of the believer! We have this treasure in earthen vessels. God dwelleth in you.

II. A Timely Resolution. "Moses said, I will now turn aside and see this great sight."

1. This Turning Aside was Needed. Think of what he would have missed if he had heedlessly passed on. To meet with God, and be taught of Him, man has often to turn aside, even from his lawful occupation, but especially from the pleasures of sin and the reasonings of a carnal mind. When you see a new light burning in the bush of God's providence, or in a text of His Word, turn aside and seek to know the full meaning of it.

2. He Turned Aside with a Purpose. "I will now turn aside and see why the bush is not burned." Perhaps he stood for a time wondering if he would turn aside, but now his mind is made up, "I will seek it out." "Ye shall find Me when ye shall search for Me with all your heart." "My people doth not consider."

3. In Turning Aside He Heard God's Voice. "When the Lord saw that he turned aside, He called unto him." A man soon finds God when he leaves all to seek Him. The voice of God is soon heard in the soul when we have yielded to His invitation. God saw that he turned, and immediately He manifested His presence. God sees every turn we take, whether it is to Him or from Him, and He acts accordingly.

III. A Gracious Revelation. In turning aside Moses was turning to God; in turning to God he received-

1. A Revelation of His Character. "I am the God of thy fathers." This was a declaration of the eternity of His Name. When a sinner turns aside to see that great sight on Calvary's Cross what a revelation of God is made known to him!

2. A Revelation of His Sympathetic Interest. "I have surely seen the affliction, and have heard their cry, for I know their sorrows." God knew the sorrows, and heard the cry of a groaning world. In answer, out of His own bosom He sent His Son. Herein is love. Christ is the revelation of the love of God.

3. A Revelation of His Saving Purpose. "I am come down to deliver." God came down into the bush to save His people through His servant Moses God has come down in Christ to save through the Gospel. This was a twofold deliverance: 1, To bring them out; 2, To bring them in Out of Egypt into Canaan; out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. To accomplish this great salvation our gracious God had to humble Himself; He had to come down. "Obedient unto death" (Php_2:8).

IV. A Definite Commission. "Come now, and I will send thee." The revelation of God always precedes a commission by God. The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost meant not only power to the disciples, but also a fuller revelation of the glory of Jesus. Then they went forth.

1. The Time. "Come now." Now that ye have failed in your own strength; now that ye have been brought very low during these forty years, waiting in the wilderness; now that ye have had a new and fuller vision of Myself, now that ye know the desire of My heart concerning the people.

2. The Purpose. "Bring forth My people." "They are in bondage and misery, but they are Mine. Bring them forth by declaring My will and Word to them." "Preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). He willeth not the death of any. He is to-day, through His sent ones, calling out a people for His Name.

3. The Authority. "I will send thee." In chapter Exodus 2:12 we see him going in his own name; now he has the authority and the power of God. Moses got his Pentecost at the burning bush-his power for service. Have you received this authority? There must be a yielding to His call before He sends forth in His Name. "Come, and I will send thee." THE EXCUSES OF MOSES.

Exodus 3:11-14; Exodus 4:1-16.

At the burning bush the call of God came to Moses clear and distinct, but often all is not done, even when the will of God is known and the way of action plainly indicated. We are so apt to look to ourselves for the proper feelings and fitness for the accomplishing of the good-will of God. Our Lord's greatest difficulty with His servants is to get them to believe that He is able to work in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure. Moses offered several excuses for not obeying.

I. His Own Personal Unworthiness. "Moses said unto God, Who am I that I should go?" (chap. Exodus 3:11). This language reveals a very great change in the character of Moses since he left Egypt (chap. Exodus 2:12). It is good to know our own unworthiness, as we must know it when, like Moses, we are brought face to face with God and His great work, but it is bad to make that an excuse for receiving the grace and honour He is offering us. If we as Christian workers valued the full importance of the work given us to do we would be more sensible of our own unfitness for it and more ready to confess it. But notice how God in His great grace meets this objection. "Certainly I will be with you." Just as if God was saying to him, "You say, 'who am I, ' but it is not 'who you are, ' but 'Who I am. ' I am with you, let that suffice." "All power is given unto Me. Go ye" (Matthew 28:18-19). When Moses opened his mouth wide, saying, "What shall I say unto them?" God filled it with, "I am that I am." Herein lies the secret of successful testimony for God: (1) He hath sent me; (2) His Word is in me; (3) His presence is with me;(4) He is Almighty.

II. The Incredulity of the People. "Moses answered, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice" (chap. Exodus 4:1). He seems to have forgotten what we so often forget, that God had taken into account all the natural reluctance and hardness of the human heart. They will not hearken unto you; but if you are filled with the Holy Ghost they will be compelled to hearken to the God who is in you. It is not you this dark, ungodly age needs; it is the light that is in you. "Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt lose its savour (power of the Spirit), it is good for nothing" (Matthew 5:13).

How did the Lord meet this second excuse of Moses? As He met the first, with a further manifestation of His own fulness. He gave him a threefold assurance in the rod, the hand, and the water (chap. Exodus 4:2-9). The-

1. Rod Turned into a Serpent. The sign of His overcoming power, by bringing terrible judgments upon those who oppose His will.

2. Leprous Hand Healed. The sign of His restoring power. He was able to heal withered and leprous Israel, and to restore them to liberty and rest.

3. Water Turned into Blood. The sign of His transforming power, able to change the hearts and characters of those to whom He was sent. What voice has all this to us? Does it not remind us of the power that still belongs to the Gospel of the blessed God-power to overcome by conviction, power to heal diseases, power to transform lives. The Gospel is the power of God to every one

that believeth.

III. The Infirmities of His Body. "O my Lord, I am not eloquent. I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue" (Exodus 4:10). Rapid and eloquent speech may have much influence with natural men, but the still, small voice was not heard in the storm or the earthquake. The power of God is something different from mere fluency of speech (1 Corinthians 4:19). Note how the Lord answered this objection, "Who made man's mouth? Have not I, the Lord?" God knew all about his physical infirmity, and was willing and able to make His strength perfect in weakness. It is not our infirmities but our unbelief that hinder us in the service of God. God has chosen the weak things. He suggests further-

IV. The Unwillingness of His Mind. "He said, O my Lord, send, I pray Thee, by the hand; Thou wilt send" (Exodus 3:13). As much as to say, "Send any one else, only don't ask me to do the speaking." This reads like a timid refusal to do everything God was asking him to do. The divine reply to this last denial was sharp and final. His anger was kindled, and He said, "Here is Aaron, thy brother. I know that he can speak well; he shall be thy spokesman." The unwillingness of Moses does not turn God aside from His purpose. If one instrument proves unfit He selects another; but Moses has lost the honour that would have been his if he had not been so slow of heart to believe. Is there any sphere of service in which you or I have become a castaway for the same reason? Would we rather have a spokesman than be a mouthpiece? Let us walk worthy of God. THE SURRENDER OF MOSES.

Exodus 4:16-31.

Moses, as a servant of God, was slow to believe all that God was willing to do for him and to be to him. His reluctance to obey caused him to lose a great honour (Exodus 4:14). For the same reason many Christians cease to grow in grace, they fail, through unbelief, to take advantage of all the fullness offered them in Christ Jesus. This honour have all the saints.

I. His Decision Manifested. "He said to Jethro, Let me go, I pray thee" (Exodus 4:18). His mind is now fully made up to go back to Egypt, not as before, but as one sent of God. Have we not been taken out of the Egypt of this world, and are we not sent back into the world (John 17:6-18)? To obey this command Moses had to separate himself from the wilderness connection. Has our decision to sanctify ourselves been as clearly declared?

II. His Purpose Strengthened. "The Lord said unto him, Go, for all are dead which sought thy life" (Exodus 4:19). When the will is yielded up to God how graciously does He smooth the beginning of our way that our faith may be encouraged. Christian worker, God can easily remove every obstacle out of your way of accomplishing the work to which He hath called you. Only believe, and they will be as dead men.

III. His Journey Pursued. "Moses took his wife and his sons, and he returned into the land of Egypt" (Exodus 4:20). His great commission he carried in his heart still as a secret. Who would believe that he was going to deliver all the children of Israel out of the mighty hand of the despotic Pharaoh. Where is the man who is doing a great work for God who has not gone through experiences of soul of which he dare not speak? All his possessions were on an ass, but the rod of God was in his hand. Poor in this world, but rich in faith. Hold fast the rod of His promise.

IV. His Work Explained. "The Lord said unto Moses, See that thou do all these wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand, and say, Israel is my son, let my son go that he may serve Me" (Exodus 4:22-23). The thought here is this: As we go in by faith on the Word of God His mind will be more fully revealed to us. By simple obedience we grow in grace and in the knowledge of God. Let us see that we use the gifts and opportunities the Master has put within our reach.

V. His Progress Arrested. "The Lord met him, and sought to kill him.... So He let him go" (Exodus 4:24-26). This is very singular language, and indicates some severe dealing that God had with Moses. Had he been refusing to circumcise his son merely to please his wife? Was the hand of sickness laid on him, so that he was nigh unto death? And did he then remember his sin and folly? In any case, the man who would be mightily used of God must not fail in the little secret things of his own house. When all was put right "He let him go."

VI. His Heart Cheered. "The Lord said to Aaron, Go to the wilderness and meet Moses; and he went and kissed him" (Exodus 4:27). It was surely a happy meeting after forty long years of separation. The good Lord plans many a sweet surprise for His weary and tired servants while in the wilderness. God knows where our Aaron brother is, and when to send us the kiss of Christian help and fellowship. The killing of God and the kissing of our true brethren in the Lord are not usually far apart.

VII. His Mission Declared. "Moses and Aaron went, and Aaron spoke all the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses" (Exodus 4:29-31). What a story they had for the poor oppressed people of Israel! It was to them the Gospel of God. How was the good news received?

1. They Believed. "God hath commanded men everywhere to repent" and believe the Gospel (Acts 17:31). Every true servant of God has such a message for the downtrodden slaves of sin. Alas, that so few believe it!

2. They Bowed. The bowing of the head may indicate the yielding up of the will. This should always accompany faith in the Gospel of Christ.

3. They Worshipped. Adoration and thanksgiving well becomes those who have been favoured with such a great salvation. Bless the Lord, O my soul! "By grace are ye saved through faith, though not of yourself, it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

TEMPTED AND TRIED.

Exodus 5.

Like Nehemiah, Moses meets with many unexpected difficulties in seeking to fulfil the task given him of God. Who has ever achieved great things for Him without having overcome bitter and desperate opposition? This chapter is full of deep and practical teaching. Let us try and gather up the facts under the following points.

I. A Great Demand. "Let My people go" (Exodus 5:1). This peremptory claim declares to us that God would have His people (1) Saved, (2) Separated, (3) Serving. It was not enough that they should be taught, they must be emancipated. Jesus Christ came not only to teach, but to "give His life a ransom" (Matthew 20:28).

II. An Unyielding Enemy. "I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go" (Exodus 5:2). Instead of letting them go their bondage and their burdens are increased. Pharaoh, like the god of this world, never yields anything except when it is going to profit himself. Satan always adds to the burden of those who have an eye to deliverance. The devil will always resist the claims of the people of God, till, like Pharaoh, he is overwhelmed in the deep, "the lake of fire" (Revelation 19:20).

III. A Vain Effort. "The officers of the children of Israel cried unto Pharaoh" (Exodus 5:15). His answer was, "Ye are idle, ye are idle." This was a well-meant but foolish and presumptuous attempt to take the matter of their deliverance in their own hands, ignoring Moses and Aaron, the God-appointed intercessors. Perhaps they hoped to compromise with the heartless tyrant; they may have thought that Moses and Aaron were just asking too much. Ah, man is so ready in the pride of his heart to dictate or to modify the claims of God. Leave your deliverance in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ the divinely appointed deliverer. He is "mighty to save" (Isaiah 63:1).

IV. A Heart-piercing Charge. The officers met Moses and Aaron after their feeble attempt to help themselves, and charged them as being the cause of this greater misery coming upon them (Exodus 5:21). Do you know experimentally what this means? Then you have indeed been made a partaker of the suffering of Christ. Faithfulness to God often brings blame from the poor sin-convicted but mind-blinded worldling.

V. A Noble Example. How did Moses act under this most unjust imputation? "Moses returned unto the Lord" (Exodus 5:22). Having been stung to the quick, he un-burdens his heavy heart to the Lord his God. His words reveal a state of intense perplexity. "Why is it that Thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Thy Name he hath done evil to this people. Neither hast Thou delivered Thy people at all" (Exodus 5:22-23). We do not look for too much when we expect God to do all that He hath promised. Moses had been preaching that God was about to deliver them, but instead of liberty the furnace of their affliction was made the hotter. What a trial to faith! Oh, how often appearances seem to contradict the promise! Be not faithless, but believing; the darkest hour is the hour before daybreak. So it was here. Now we have-

VI. A Soul-inspiring Answer. Chapter Exodus 6:1 tells us that, "Then the Lord said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do." God's now had come, just at the heels of man's why? All the resources of Omnipotence are now called into action for the fulfilment of the divine word. Perplexed soul, tarry in God's almighty now; wait on the Lord. With regard to salvation, God's now has already come. "Behold, now is the accepted time" (2 Corinthians 6:2). All the resources of grace and truth are presently in action through His Son Jesus Christ. "Now shalt thou see what I will do." Write these wonderful words across the life and death of God's redeeming Son. Have you seen all that the love and power of God has done for you in and through Him?

PHARAOH: A TYPE OF THE DEVIL.

Exodus 5-10. The King of Egypt, like the god of this world, finds his greatest difficulties in connection with the people of God. He looks upon them as a source of great danger to his kingdom. His chief object is to blind the minds, burden the hearts, and destroy the lives of those who oppose him. Like the devil- I. His Enmity is Inveterate. It is of long standing (Genesis 3:15). Such fire and water can never unite. He-

1. Denies the Lord. "Who is the Lord that I should obey Him" (Exodus 5:2). The great adversary of souls knows nothing of obedience, he may be compelled, but there is no willing submission. What is true of Satan is true also of all those under his power. "The carnal mind is enmity against God, is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Children of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2).

2. Despises the Message. He called it "vain words" (Exodus 5:9). Yet they were the words of the living God, a message of mercy and deliverance to his crushed and downtrodden subjects. But it is always so, "the preaching of the Cross (redemption) is to them that perish, foolishness." "Yea, hath God said," is still a favourite dodge of the devil. If he can only get men to depreciate the Gospel of Christ he knows that they will remain under his slavish rule.

3. Oppresses with Burdens. The straw is denied, yet the full tale of bricks is demanded (Exodus 5:17-18). This is truly devilish. Paul was once caught in the meshes of this net, for he said, "I thought that I should do many things." He tried to kill the spirit of liberty by multiplying the works of the law.

4. Remains Unchanged. In Pharaoh's case the professions of repentance were frequent, but the tears of repentance were never seen; his heart, like Satan's, remained unchanged and unchangeable. The devil cannot improve; like Pharaoh he will perish in the flood while in the act of persecuting the redeemed of the Lord (Revelation 20:10).

II. His Devices are Cunning. We are not ignorant of his devices. If he cannot succeed with open scorn and oppression he will try the secret snare of compromise. Observe his manner-

1. Go and sacrifice IN THE LAND (chap. Exodus 8:25). He offers them liberty to sacrifice to God if they kept within the land under his rule. This means: Be Christians if you will, but don't cast off the yoke of darkness; don't break the link of your connection with sin. The devil will allow us to sacrifice to God if we only remain his slaves. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). His next device is-

2. Go, only NOT VERY FAR AWAY (Exodus 8:28). As much as: If you must go beyond the boundary of my kingdom I will let you go if you don't go so far away as to be out of sight. Alas, that so many seem to have accepted this condition, and try to live the Christian life with their eyes on Egypt. "Remember Lot's wife" (Luke 17:32). The dividing line should be as emphatic as death and resurrection (Romans 6:8). Are you an out of sight Christian, having escaped the corruption that is in the world. There is no getting within sight of Canaan until we get beyond the sight of Egypt. He went a step further, and said-

3. Go, ye that are MEN (chap. Exodus 10:11). Save yourselves, but leave your wives and children behind. Entire separation is what Pharaoh and the devil dreads. He knew that they would not go too far, or remain away, who had left their families in Egypt. Such half-hearted service never does the kingdom of Satan much damage. Household salvation is a most alarming doctrine to the prince of darkness. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31). "The promise is to you, and to your children" (Acts 2:39).

4. Go, but LEAVE YOUR FLOCKS (chap. Exodus 10:24). To leave their flocks meant to serve their God without a sacrifice. When the devil cannot possibly hinder you from going out of his kingdom, how he does seek to mar and murder your influence for good. The Israelites could not

serve their God acceptably without personal sacrifice. No more can we. If the adversary can get between us and the sacrifice separation and God-pleasing service will be impossible. How many to-day, in this matter, have gone the way of Cain in offering to God a service that has not been consecrated by blood. Let our answer to these wiles of the devil be the answer of Moses, the servant of God, "Not a hoof shall be left behind" (Exodus 10:26). THE GOSPEL OF MOSES.

Exodus 6:1-8.

The Lord said unto Moses, "Now shalt thou see what I will do." The time of Israel's deliverance was at hand. Moses is sent to his brethren with a sevenfold message from the Lord. He had a glorious Gospel to preach, a full-orbed sun of hope for the wretched, helpless, bond-slaves. A magnificent picture of the Gospel of Christ made infallably sure by the seven "I wills" of Jehovah. In these glad tidings of salvation proclaimed by Moses there was-

I. Rest from their Burdens. "I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians" (Exodus 6:6). Rest was much needed. Making bricks without straw was a hard and constant task. In the service of sin there is no rest. The Gospel of God, which comes to us through Jesus Christ, offers relief from the burden of sin and guilt, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Rest in His forgiving love, rest in the calm of His gracious heart.

II. Deliverance from the Power of the Enemy. "I will rid you out of their bondage" (Exodus 6:6). There is no other escape from the thraldom of sin and Satan but through the intervention of almighty power and grace. "He hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son" (Colossians 1:13). Delivered out of the hand of our enemies. The grace of God is not to give us patience and contentment in the house of bondage, the grace of God bringeth salvation.

III. Redemption with Great Judgments. "I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments" (Exodus 6:6). Judgment and redemption are closely linked together in the saving work of God. Ere Israel could go out of Egypt the judgments of God had to be poured out upon Egypt. Before the offering could be effectual death had to take place. Ere Christ could save from the curse of the law He had to become "a curse for us" (Galatians 3:13).

IV. God's Claim on His Own. "I will take you to Me for a people" (Exodus 6:7). Possession is the end of redemption, "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price" (1 Corinthians 6:20). We are "redeemed from the curse of the law that we might receive the promise of the Spirit" (Galatians 3:13-14). He has through Christ taken us to Himself, that we might be kept by His power and used for His glory; taken to Him that we might abide with Him and in Him.

V. God's Assurance to His Own. "I will be to you a God" (Exodus 6:7). The sweet thought here is that of mutual surrender. We yield ourselves up entirely to His claim to be all His own. He yields Himself, as God, into the lives of His believing people. The life-giving and life-sustaining sap of the vine is yielded up to the abiding and receptive branch. The willing and obedient members of the body will have the wisdom and controlling power of the head. Be wholly for God, and God will be wholly for you.

VI. The Promise of Continued Guidance. "I will bring you in unto the land" (Exodus 6:8). He not only saves, but is willing to guide the saved ones on to the end. He knows the way best suited for

our education and growth in grace. "Commit thy way to the Lord" (Psalms 37:5). He will direct thy steps. In the "Pilgrim's Progress" the soft, easy path led into darkness, and into the castle of Giant Despair.

VII. The Promise of a Great Possession. "I will give it you for a heritage" (Exodus 6:8). All God's pilgrims have a grand inheritance before them. "In my Father's house are many abiding places, I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2-3). I will give it you.

"O weary pilgrim, lift your head, For God in His own words hath said That joy cometh in the morning!"

WARNED OF COMING JUDGMENT.

Exodus 9:17-26.

Plague after plague had been threatened, and plague after plague had come, but the plague of sin in the human heart still hardens it into resistance against the loud-knocking judgments of God. The evidence of God's existence and power is not enough to convince men of sin and righteousness. We have here- I. A Threatened Judgment. "To-morrow I will cause it to rain a grievous hail" (Exodus 9:18).

1. It was Sure. "I will." His I wills of judgment are as sure as His I wills of mercy. There is wrath to come, we must flee from it. "Because there is wrath, beware" (Job 36:18).

2. It was Coming Soon. "To-morrow." There was no time for trifling or questioning, only time to escape for their life. The time is short. Life is but a brief day, the to-morrow of eternity is at hand. "The Judge standeth at the door" (James 5:9).

II. An Earnest Entreaty. "Send therefore now, and gather all that thou hast in the field" (Exodus 9:19). The judgment of God must come, but here the mercy of God is revealed in offering them a way of escape. They were urged-

1. To Seek Refuge. The cattle and servants were to be "brought home." The messengers fled over the fields crying, "Come home, or you will perish." What a picture of the Gospel invitation! Come home to God, and be at peace with Him ere judgment overtake you. "I flee to Thee to hide me" (Psalms 143:9). Oh, prodigal child, come home, come home.

2. To Seek Refuge at Once. "Send therefore now." Go out and compel them to come in. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). Let God's now be yours.

III. The Obedience of Faith. "He that feared the word of the Lord made his servants flee into the houses" (Exodus 9:20). It was a great mercy to them that God did give them a day of grace. All that believed the message accepted the opportunity and fled for refuge to the hope set before them. So they were saved by grace through faith. There was nothing wonderful about their faith. It came by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. God has spoken; accept His Word as truth and act accordingly. "The Name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and are safe" (Proverbs 18:10).

IV. The Disregard of Unbelief. "He that regarded not the word of the Lord left all in the field. And the hail smote all that was in the field" (Exodus 9:25). Their unbelief led to indifference, and their indifference secure a their destruction. They could not enter into the house of refuge because of their unbelief. Unbelief bars God out of the reckoning, and the sinner into the place of ruin. Abraham believed God, and went out. Noah believed God, and went in. Joshua believed God, and went on. Enoch believed God, and went home. It is worthy of note that in the Greek the same word is used for unbelief and disobedience. All deliberate unbelief is rebellion against the will and word of the Lord. "He that believeth not shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). THE SHELTERING BLOOD.

Exodus 12:1-33.

The story of the first Passover is just an early edition of the Gospel of Christ. The order of teaching in this chapter is very much the same as we have in the first ten verses of Romans 5. There is a well-trodden path of thought running through this portion of the King's garden, but the flowers and spices are as beautiful and fragrant as ever. Let us praise God for the perennial freshness of His Holy Word. The first thought is a solemn one. All God's foundations go deep down.

I. Condemnation. "I will smite all the firstborn in the land" (Exodus 12:12). The sentence of death was passed upon all the firstborn. All were condemned already. There was no difference here between Jew or Egyptian. This is the condition of all men under the law, they are under the curse, the sentence of death is already passed upon all, for that "all have sinned" (Romans 3:23).

II. Substitution. "Ye shall take every man a lamb, a lamb for an house" (Exodus 12:3). Every condemned one needed a lamb to redeem him from death. Either the firstborn or an innocent substitute must die. This was God's method, there was no escape from it. The Lord Jesus Christ is the divinely appointed Lamb (John 1:29). If ye believe not ye shall die in your sins. "Christ our Passover sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7).

III. Appropriation. "Ye shall take the blood,... and it shall be a token upon the houses where ye are" (Exodus 12:7-12). The death of the lamb availed them nothing until the blood was applied. The individual soul is not saved by the death of Christ upon the Cross, but by the personal acceptance and appropriation of that death as the alone ground of our justification before God. Only when the blood was on the door posts was it between the firstborn and the avenger. By faith we lift up the sacrifice of Christ between our guilty souls and a sin-avenging God.

IV. Confirmation. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Exodus 12:13). When Jehovah passed down through Egypt that night He was not looking for Israelites or Egyptians, but for the blood of the lamb. The precious blood of Christ is ever before His eye, although we, like the Israelite, may see it not. The blood made them safe, the promise made them sure.

V. Purification. "Even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses" (Exodus 12:15). Leaven as typical of secret and hidden sin must be put away (1 Corinthians 5:7-8), and put away on the first day. The blood without not only justifies, but also leads to cleansing within. "Having therefore these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit" (2 Corinthians 7:1). "He gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people" (Titus 2:14). "Now are ye clean through the Word" (John 15:3).

VI. Resignation. "None of you shall go out until the morning" (Exodus 12:22). Until the Lord passed by in judgment they must abide, calmly resting behind the sheltering blood. In so doing they had quietness, confidence, and strength (Isaiah 30:15). Where else can we hide till the calamities be overpast? There is no safety for us outside the blood-sprinkled house of refuge. In patience possess your souls with regard to the judgments that are quickly coming upon the earth. "When I see the blood I will pass over you" (Exodus 12:13). Dear as the apple of His eye His blood-bought people are.

VII. Separation. "Pharaoh said, Rise up, go, take your flocks, and be gone" (Exodus 12:31-32). After the blood had been shed and applied the Israelites had no difficulty in getting out from among them. All God's redeemed ones are to be separated unto Him. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and I will receive you" (2 Corinthians 6:17). If the atmosphere is to receive the eagle and bare it up it most cast itself entirely on it. Entire renunciation of the world and self prepares us for the entire and perfect salvation of God. Leave all and ye shall possess all. "He that loseth his life shall save it" (Matthew 10:39).

LED BY THE LORD.

Exodus 13:16-22; Exodus 13:14.

The invisible God led the children of Israel as His own people by the visible, moving, guiding, cloudy pillar. So the Holy Ghost does as really lead us now through the pillar of the Word. As God made the pillar a sheltering cloud and a shining fire, so the Holy Spirit makes the Word to every believer a place of refuge and a guiding lamp. Those led by the Lord-

I. Have been Delivered by the Lord. "The Lord brought us forth out of Egypt" (Exodus 13:16). Not rebels but sons are led by the Spirit. While under the dominion of sin we are in "the house of bondage." We must be freed by His blood before we can become "a kingdom of priests unto God" (Revelation 1:5-6). "Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9).

II. Should Unwaveringly Follow. "God led them not through the land of the Philistines, although that was near, but through the way of the wilderness" (Exodus 13:17-18). It is comparatively easy for us to follow the Lord when we are led the near way, the way we expected to go, but faith is more severely tested when the way leads us round about, and that through a wilderness. When He leads us let us be assured it is the right way. It may be through the wilderness of adverse circumstances, bodily affliction, or bereavement (Psalms 107:7).

III. Shall Follow in an Orderly Manner. The children of Israel went up by five in a rank out of Egypt" (Exodus 13:18, margin). They went out following the Lord as an orderly, armed host. Can there be anything else than, harmonious regularity when the Lord leads, and when all are alike willing to follow Him. From whence cometh divisions (1 Cor. 1). Out of the depths of our proud, carnal, self-seeking minds. "I am of Paul, I of Apollos, Is Christ divided?" (1 Corinthians 1:12-13). Holy Spirit, lead Thou me on.

IV. Will Walk in the Light. "The Lord went before them to lead the way by a pillar of fire to give them light by night" (Exodus 13:21). God in the pillar led them, sheltered them, satisfied them with bread, and in the wilderness darkness shone upon them. Jesus said, "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). The light of God's presence still

shines out upon His people in the darkness of this wilderness world through the holy pillar of His Word. "Walk in His light." "Follow on to know."

V. Will be Pursued by the Enemy. "And Pharaoh pursued after the children of Israel" (chap. 14:8, 9). He said, "They are entangled in the land" (chap. Exodus 14:3). They are crazy, and don't know where they are going. Such weak-minded people will be an easy prey. Yes, when we are led by the Lord we appear fools in the eyes of the worldly-wise. As soon as Christ was led by the Spirit He was tempted of the devil. If any man will live godly he must suffer persecution. It is only after we have escaped out of the kingdom of darkness that we are pursued by the devices and rulers of the darkness of this world. "Woe unto you when all speak well of you" (Luke 6:26).

VI. Shall see the Salvation of the Lord. "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace" (chap. Exodus 14:13-14). The victory is to be one of faith. This is the weapon of our warfare, fight the good fight of faith. "Your strength is to sit still" (Isaiah 30:7). "Put on the whole armour of God that ye may be able to stand, and having done all, stand, stand therefore" (Ephesians 6:11-14). The great wrestling struggle of faith is that we should be able, in the face of all opposing forces, just to keep our standing in Christ Jesus, where we are complete. Stand still, trust on, and ye shall see the salvation of God. The Lord shall fight for you, He shall make a way through the deep, and thou shalt glorify Him.

VII. Shall Sing the Song of Triumph. "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song" (chap. Exodus 15:1). A Red Sea often rolls between our sorrows and our songs. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psalms 30:5). "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you, and thou shalt glorify Me" (Psalms 50:15). The song of praise will surely follow the restful trust of faith. Think of David's words, "I will not give sleep to mine eyes, nor slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the Lord" (Psalms 132:4-5). Have we found out a place for the Lord in all the plans, purposes, and affairs of our lives? Make room for Him, and your songs of victory will never cease. THE NEW WAY.

Exodus 14. In following the Lord the Israelites were led into the wilderness. The first strivings of the Holy Spirit is to lead the soul into a true sense of its utter emptiness and barrenness that it may become capable of enjoying the riches of divine grace. "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty" (Isaiah 44:3). Notice their-

I. Helpless Condition. "They are entangled in the land, the wilderness has shut them in" (Exodus 14:3). They have been led between Pi-hahiroth and Baal-zephon like a convicted sinner without hope, shut up between the impassable crags of a broken law and the sinking swamps of human inability. Has God made a mistake in leading them into such a trap? No wonder the enemy says, seeing their plight, "God hath forsaken him; persecute and take him, for there is none to deliver" (Psalms 71:11).

II. Despairing Cry. "Pharaoh drew nigh, and they were sore afraid, and cried unto the Lord" (Exodus 14:10). Those entangled by the guiding Spirit of conviction are shut up to faith (2 Chronicles 20:12). All earthly help and hope must be cut off to make room for the deliverance of the Lord. It was when the disciples were utterly helpless in the storm the Lord rebuked the winds. Salvation is near when the despairing cry is raised.

III. Precious Privilege. "Fear not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord" (Exodus 14:13). He is a present help in time of trouble. He knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation. This salvation was not of works-"The Lord shall fight for you." It was not of words-"Ye shall hold your peace" (Exodus 14:14). The busybodies mentioned in Romans 10:4 did not succeed in lifting one foot out of the miry clay. Jesus paid it all. Your strength is to sit still.

IV. Miraculous Deliverance. "The Lord made the sea dry land" (Exodus 14:21). This new way of salvation was all of God's making. It required Almighty power to roll the difficulties back and leave a free and open way of escape for the weary, tangled feet of men. What a picture of the great saving work of our Redeemer King! Through the vail of His flesh He hath consecrated for us a new and living way (Hebrews 10:20). Let us draw near. This way was not only made by the Lord, but you will note that it had to be maintained till every redeemed one was saved. Jesus is the Way. Not only the Waymaker. Himself we need every step. "I am the Way" (John 14:6).

V. Saving Faith. "Go forward" (Exodus 14:15). "They went into the midst of the sea" (Exodus 14:22). It is not enough to know there is a way, to see to it, or even to praise and magnify the wisdom and power of Him who made it; it must be entered or the enemy of souls will overtake and destroy. Go forward, only believe these watery walls of judgment, so dark and ominous, cannot overflow you. "There is therefore no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). Alas, that there are so many of whom it may be said, "They cannot enter in because of unbelief."

VI. Almighty Protection. "The angel of God,... the pillar of cloud, came between" (Exodus 14:19-20). Those who walk in God's ways will be kept by God's power (Psalms 37:24). The pillar of His presence between us and our foes is a strong guarantee of safety. The light of the pillar was hid from the Egyptians. Solemn thought, "If our Gospel be hid it is hid to them that are lost" (2 Corinthians 4:3). There is a darkness that thickens into "the blackness of darkness forever" (Jude 1:13).

VII. Triumphant Song. "I will sing unto the Lord" (chap. Exodus 15:1). It is surely suggestive that in this song there are three "Thine's," ten "Thou's," and eleven "Thy's," but no "Me's." "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory" (Psalms 115:1). "Thanks be unto God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57). The way of life, through the open sea of our Redeemer's sufferings, leads to the song of victory. "I heard a great voice of much people in Heaven, saying, Alleluia! Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are His judgments" (Revelation 19:1-2). THE SONG OF MOSES.

Exodus 15:1-2. This is the first song on record, and blessed be God, it is a Song of salvation. Henceforth and for ever singing shall have a chief place in the service of God. The sentimental songs of the world are deceitful nymphs which steal away the adoration and praise that should rise only to God. Salvation and song, like the Siamese twins, go together With the work of Luther, Wesley, and Moody came streams of new songs of praise. "Then sang Moses this song" (Exodus 15:1). The causes lie behind. Let us look back and consider this song as-

I. A Song of Redemption. They had been redeemed by blood out of Egypt, as a house of bondage. Delivered by the great power of God. All true praise has its source in the redeeming power of Christ's Cross. Out of the depths of His infinite love and mercy comes this keynote of our first song unto God, and we shall sing in the same key in Heaven. "Unto Him who hath loved us, and

washed us, and redeemed us to God by His own blood" (Revelation 1:5).

II. A Song of Victory. In looking back they saw their enemies buried in the depths of the sea, where all our sins are cast. Our sins, like blood-thirsty Egyptians, were hotly pursuing us, and when there was no hand to help us He made bare His arm and wrought for us a great deliverance. Ours is a victory over sin, over the world, over death and the grave. He "giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57). They saw them again no more.

III. A Song of Praise. "Moses sung this song unto the Lord." This was no mere exhibition of musical skill, but a pouring forth of the heart's gratitude and thankfulness unto God. He had led them out, He had brought them through, He had overwhelmed their united foe. He deserves the praise, and He shall have it, and no stranger shall intermeddle with it. Trust Him at all times, and pour out your heart before Him.

IV. A Song of Testimony. Notice the "my's" in Exodus 15:2. There is a clear and decided, ring about this. "The Lord is my Shepherd." When a certain young lady said, "I wish I could trust my mother's God," she was bearing a good testimony both to her mother and her mother's God, although she herself had no personal acquaintance with Him. The sweetest music of earth is like the croaking of frogs compared with the deep, sweet melody of a heart at peace in God. "My God, I will praise Thee" (Psalms 118:28).

V. A Song of Dedication. "I will prepare Him an habitation" (Exodus 15:2). Moses decided to build Him a house, a resting-place among the people. This is natural, if God has taken us in, surely we should take Him in. If He has given us a habitation in Himself we ought to provide Him a habitation in our hearts. Are we not the "habitation of God through the Spirit?" (Ephesians 2:22). Is it not His intense desire to "dwell in us and walk in us?" (2 Corinthians 6:16). Did not Jesus say, "If a man love Me we will come and make our abode with him?" (John 14:23). He has gone to prepare a place for us, let us now prepare a place for Him, and let that place be the throne of your heart.

VI. A United Song. Then sang Moses and the children of Israel. "They differed in many things, but they agreed in ascribing salvation to the Lord." "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so" (Psalms 107:2) and do so. There may be as many different shades of Christians as there were colours in Joseph's coat, but the sleeve need not say to the collar, "I have no need of you." All one in Christ, saved by the same blood, justified by the same God, and sanctified by the same Spirit, singing the same song. Let us praise God.

VII. A Song on the Other Side of the Sea. After the Egyptians had been overwhelmed in the deep. The destruction of the wicked will not hinder the song of the saved. The rushing together of the waves of judgment seem to send up a deep and solemn Hallelujah. In the Revelation (chap. Exodus 15:3) we hear the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb blending in one. On the other side we, too, shall sing the new song with a fresh and fuller meaning. A song that shall ring through the highest Heaven and down through the eternal ages with gathering power and sweetness. "Praise ye the Lord!" THE HEALING TREE.

Exodus 15:22-25.

There is sometimes not much between our songs and our sorrows. In Exodus 15:1 they sing a new song unto the Lord; in Exodus 15:24 they murmur against Him. Immediately after Christ had

received the baptism of the Holy Spirit He was assailed by the tempting devil. The Marahs and the Elims are not far apart (Exodus 15:27). After the joyful song of victory comes the bitter experience of Marah. Faith will be tried, faith must be tried. God forbid that the bitter things of life should only stir up within us the murmuring heart of unbelief. As long as the pillar cloud of His presence is with us every unpalatable cup can be sweetened. There is a power in the "Tree of Life," the Cross of Christ, sufficient to transform and transfigure all the Marahs in our everyday life. But we have here a very great and real need. "They could not drink of the waters, for they were bitter" (Exodus 15:23). The people murmured, saying, "What shall we drink? Where shall we find satisfaction? Who shall show us the good?" Here is the language of needy, disappointed souls. Their name is legion. Moses does not join the murmurers, but "cries unto the Lord." Happy, victorious soul, who has learned to pray instead of to grumble. Now see how the remedy is provided, how God in wisdom and mercy and power meets all their need. Have we not here in type the Gospel of the Cross? It was-

I. A Tree. "The Lord showed him a tree" (Exodus 15:25). There was a tree in the garden of Eden, but defended by a sword of flame. The fruit of this tree of life man could not pluck. There is another tree that was first laid on Christ, then Christ was nailed to it. "He bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24). The fruit of this tree of life is now within the reach of all.

II. A Tree Pointed Out by the Lord. "The Lord showed him a tree" (Exodus 15:25). No man could have found this tree had not the Lord revealed it. Jesus Christ is the gift and revelation of God. "The only begotten of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John 1:18). "Jesus Christ set forth to be a propitiation for our sins" (Romans 3:25). The Father pointed Him out at Jordan, when He said, "This is My beloved Son." "No man knoweth the Son but the Father, and he to whom the Father will reveal Him" (Matthew 11:27).

III. A Tree Revealed in Answer to Prayer. "Moses cried unto the Lord, and He showed him a tree" (Exodus 15:25). The Lord Jesus Christ has been revealed by God in answer to the deep cry of human need. For the outcast and desolate Hagar the well was pointed out (Genesis 21:19). It was when Abraham had the knife uplifted over the beloved Isaac that God showed him a ram in the thicket (Genesis 22:13). It is to sin smitten, soul-convicted sinners Christ the Saviour is revealed. "What must I do to be saved?" He showed me Jesus.

IV. A Tree Near at Hand. From the construction of the words we infer that it was growing or lying near by. God's remedies are always at hand. The tree of life is not afar off, "the Word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth" (Romans 10:8). But, alas, it is so often true that there is one standing among you whom ye know not. We think of Mary saying, "Tell me where thou hast laid Him," knowing not that this was He. And of the man who was born blind to whom Jesus said, "It is He that talketh with thee".

V. A Tree Accepted and Applied. Moses took the tree and "cast it into the waters" (Exodus 15:25). The divinely appointed remedy must be brought into contact with the polluted and bitter waters of life. Man does not need to provide the cure, he has but to take it and apply it. The poor, withered woman touched Him and was healed. The healing power is not in our faith, but in the Christ whom we trust. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the children of God" (John 1:12).

VI. A Tree that Made Bitter Sweet. "The waters were made sweet" (Exodus 15:25). The unwholesome mass was changed. The waters that could do no good were immediately made useful. Let Christ in and the bitter pool of the heart will be sweetened and its waters made to gladden the souls of others. The power of Christ's Cross transforms all trials into blessings. This is a tree that will not rot. When the shepherds came and saw the Babe in the manger "they returned, glorifying and praising God" (Luke 2:20). They went back to their work with lives sweetened with the power of the glorious Gospel.

MANNA-THE GIFT OF GOD.

Exodus 16.

"This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat" (Exodus 16:15). In the sixth chapter of John's Gospel Jesus taught that "He was the Bread of Life." There is no difficulty in seeing Jesus in this type. The Lord give us hungry hearts for this heavenly bread.

I. The Place and Time of the Gift. The place was the "wilderness of sin" (Exodus 16:1). The time was while they were murmuring against the servants of God (Exodus 16:2). What a true picture of man's position and character when Jesus Christ came! In the wilderness of sin and exhibiting the nature of a sinner, "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Sin always leads into a wilderness, the wilderness brings a wretchedness and misery out of which God alone can deliver.

II. The Nature of the Gift. "Manna" (meaning "What is it?") "for they knew not what it was" (Exodus 16:15). It was their life in a mystery. Type of the Incarnation. "Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16). My flesh, He said, is meat indeed! They could not perhaps explain or understand the formation of the manna, but this was not necessary to be saved from death by it. We don't read, "O criticise and see, "but "Taste and see that the Lord is good."

III. The Bestower of the Gift. "This is the bread which the Lord hath given you" (Exodus 16:15). They could not purchase this gift, they were not asked to pay for it. It was the gift of God. "God so loved the world that He gave His Son." Like the manna, Christ was given to show forth the glory of the Lord (Exodus 16:7). The glory of His grace and mercy and saving power is seen in the coming and mission of His Son. "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift" (2 Corinthians 9:15).

IV. The Purpose of the Gift. "Ye shall be filled with bread and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God" (Exodus 16:12). They were in danger of dying through starvation. The manna came to save them from death and to satisfy them to the full. It brought to them a "full salvation." The Jews have a saying that "the manna tasted to every man as he pleased." Every man who tastes cf Christ will find that He is exactly what he needs. The precious Saviour is always palatable to a hungry sinner. See here also the oneness of believers, "They did all eat the same spiritual meat" (1 Corinthians 10:3). We are to know God, because He fills us with bread from Heaven.

V. This Gift was Continuous. "A certain rate every day" (Exodus 16:4). They gathered it every morning. The manna saved them, and the same mysterious manna kept them alive day by day. It was indeed a Heaven-provided daily salvation. All this we have in Jesus our Lord. He is "able to save to the uttermost," to the end, all that come unto God by Him. We live by faith in the Son of God. In Jesus Christ there is for every believer a "certain rate every day." Has He not taught us to

expect this by putting this petition in our mouths, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11).

VI. How the Gift was Revealed. "When the dew that lay was gone up, behold, a small round thing" (Exodus 16:14). It appears that the manna came with the dew, and that the two were inseparably connected, but not more so than Christ and the Holy Spirit, of which the dew is a most fitting emblem. As the dew went up it, as it were, unveiled the manna before the eyes of Israel. So by the moving of the Holy Spirit is Jesus Christ revealed to needy souls as the Bread of Life. "He shall receive of Mine, and show it unto you" (John 16:15).

VII. The Memorial of this Gift. "Take a pot, put Manna therein, and lay it up before the Lord" (Exodus 16:33). The manna in the golden pot before the Lord speaks to us of Him who came down from Heaven to give life, but who now glorified in the presence of His Father, a memorial, as it were, of grace and salvation. This memorial in the pot was also for the instruction of their children, "that they may see the bread wherewith I fed you." This holy memorial is beautifully and perfectly perpetuated in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. The bread and wine are the memorials of His life yielded up for our salvation. Here we, as the children's children of the early isciples of our Lord, see in figure the bread by which they were fed from Heaven. "Evermore give us this bread" (John 6:34).

BREAD FROM HEAVEN.

Exodus 16.

There is unsearchable riches in this chapter, because it is so full of Jesus Christ. Like Him, the manna was: (1) Divine in its origin; (2) Indispensable; (3) Undeserved; (4) Suitable; (5) Sufficient; (6) Satisfying; (7) Free. Taking a look at the whole chapter, we observe the-

I. Depravity of Man. "They murmured against Moses" (Exodus 16:2), "Against the Lord" (Exodus 16:7). Consider what He had done for them. Like the prodigal they loved the gifts more than the giver. "The whole head is sick, the whole heart faint, there is no soundness" (Isaiah 1:5-6).

II. Mercy of God. "I will rain bread from Heaven for you" (Exodus 16:4). Amazing grace, "rain" bread upon murmurers! Why not rain fire and brimstone? Grace delights to pour blessing upon the undeserving (Romans 5:8). "He delighteth in Mercy." His own arm hath brought us salvation. "God is love," and out from the depths of His own infinite goodness comes the stream of saving power. From Heaven the bread of life must come. This thing is not manufactured on earth.

III. Abundance of Supply. "An omer for every man" (Exodus 16:16). The manna which fell from Heaven was sufficient for every man in the wilderness. In Christ Jesus, as the gift of God, there is enough for every man. "He tasted death for every man" (Hebrews 2:9). His atoning blood is sufficient for "the whole world" (1 John 2:2). Yes, "an omer for every man." What are we doing to carry to every sick and heathen man his omer of Heaven's blessing? As in the miracle of loaves, so with the bread of life. After multitudes have been filled it will be found in the resurrection that there was much more to spare. The atonement of Christ, like the "fragments that remain," will have a tale to tell.

IV. Need of Appropriation. "They gathered it" (Exodus 16:21). The Manna was rained from Heaven, but it was not poured down their throats. (1) It had to be gathered. God has freely given His Son up to the death for us all, but that gift must be definitely received (John 1:12). (2) They

gathered it every morning. It was daily bread, Christ must be daily trusted. (3) They gathered according to their eating. Some were able to receive more of it than others. "According to your faith so shall it be unto you" (Matthew 9:29). Remember the blessedness of the hunger in Matthew 5:6.

V. Disappointment of Unbelief. "Some went on the seventh day to gather, and found none" (Exodus 16:27). It is the height of madness to expect to find the gift of God when God says it shall not be found (Exodus 16:25). The children of these infidel Israelites are still among us, who hope for salvation after the day of grace is gone". There is a time that is too late (Matthew 25:12; Luke 16:25). "Behold, now is the accepted time. "

VI. Life of Faith. "They did eat manna until they came to Canaan" (Exodus 16:35). The bread that saved them was the bread that kept them alive during all their wilderness journey. "I am the Living Bread (life-giving): he that believeth on (or receiveth) Me shall never die" (John 6:35). They believed that to-morrow's bread would come with to-morrow's need. "God is faithful that hath promised." "My grace is sufficient for thee." "Because He lives we shall live." "Only believe." THE SMITTEN ROCK.

Exodus 17:1-7.

Paul says, "That Rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:4). So the type is clear. This was a rock in a wilderness, Christ is a rock in a weary land (Isaiah 32:2). A rock speaks of shelter, safety, durability, strength. A careful examination of this portion reveals- I. A Condition of Desperate Need.

1. They Dwelt in a Barren Place. "There was no water" (Exodus 17:1). This world of itself can never supply the wants of a human soul. All its cisterns are broken. Separated from the Cross of Christ, our abode is in "waste places." The rebellious dwell in a dry land (Psalms 68:6).

2. Their Souls were Thirsty. "The people thirsted" (Exodus 17:3). When the thirst came the barrenness of the land was felt. When the Spirit of conviction and dearth takes possession of the soul, then the emptiness of the world's pleasure wells is realised. This water of satisfaction cannot be got by digging) such work is worthless. Blessed are they that thirst after righteousness.

II. An Unexpected Source of Supply. "There shall come out water" (Exodus 17:6).

1. It Came from a Rock. Worldly wisdom could not by searching find out this method. Men can more easily expect fire from a rock. "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth" (John 1:46). My ways are not as your ways, saith the Lord (Isaiah 55:8).

2. It Came from a God-possessed Rock. "I will stand upon the rock" (Exodus 17:6). Pause and think of this. How very suggestive of the great Incarnation. God was in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:19). The rock in Horeb of itself could do nothing, but God in the rock could do anything. The rock represents the human nature of the Lord Jesus, God on the rock, His divine power and Godhead. The source of our salvation is in God, the channel of communication is Jesus. He is "both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36).

III. An Unlikely Means Used.

1. The Rock was to be Smitten. "Thou shalt smite the rock" (Exodus 17:6). This thought never originated in the heart of man, that salvation could be brought forth by smiting the anointed of God. "But He was wounded for our transgressions, with His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). The sword must awake against the man that was God's fellow. Oh, worship the Lord!

2. The Rock was to be Smitten with a Rod. "Thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand" (Exodus 17:5). This was the rod of judgment that turned the river into blood, and the sign of God's authority and power. "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief" (Isaiah 53:10). Concerning the sufferings of Christ we may truly say, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes" (Psalms 118:23).

IV. A Merciful Provision Made.

1. The Supply was Abundant. "The waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed" (Psalms 78:18-20). "They did all drink the same spiritual drink." When Christ, our Rock, was smitten, "forthwith came there out blood and water," emblems of a full salvation, atonement, and cleansing. "We have redemption through His blood," and cleansing through the washing of the Word. "Whosoever will may come and take of the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17).

2. The Supply was Free. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye" (Isaiah 55:1). It was "without money and without price." Thirst is the only condition, but it is indispensable to the enjoyment of the God-given waters of salvation. The apostle declares that the spiritual rock "followed them." The Salvation of God in Christ is not only perfect in its character, but continuous in its application. The power of His atoning blood still follows the generations of men. Let us thank God that this saving rock has followed us. It is following you-drink and live! THE HOLY WAR.

Exodus 17:8-16.

If, like the children of Israel, we have been delivered from bondage and separated unto God, we may also expect to be attacked by the enemy (John 15:20). The hindermost and weak and feeble ones are sure to suffer first (Deuteronomy 25:18). Borderland Christians get much buffeting; beware of the lusts that lie in ambush (1 Samuel 15:2), the Diabolonians, as Bunyan calls the lusts that lodge in wall (flesh) of Man-soul. They are the sworn enemies of the Spirit of Christ. As an illustration of the Christian's spiritual conflict, let us notice- I. Amalek, or, the Pilgrim's Foe. Well may we ask-

1. Who was He? Amalek has not a very honourable pedigree. He is the offspring of Esau, the brother of Jacob (closely connected), who sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, "being carnal," and so is a type of the flesh. Amalek, like that which is carnal, was the first of the nations, but, like the flesh, he is doomed to perish (Numbers 24:20)." That which is bora of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6).

2. When Came He? He did not annoy them till they got to Rephidim (resting places), and had drank of the smitten rock. "That Rock was Christ." The Christless know nothing about the conflict between flesh and spirit, the world loves its own. The onslaught took place while Israel was resting. The unguarded moments of inactivity are fit opportunities for the Amalek lusts of the flesh.

II. Joshua, or the Fight of Faith. The lusts which war against the soul are overcome through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 7:25).

1. The Means of Faith. "Joshua chose out men" (Exodus 17:9). Faith must have something to work by-faith which worketh by love. The believers' chosen ones are the Blood, the Spirit, and the Word. These are the Christian's "three mighties." Put on the whole armour of God, take the shield of faith.

2. The Work of Faith. "Joshua went out and fought" (Exodus 17:10). Hope waits, love submits, faith actively presses on, it is the aggressive grace that attacks and wins the fight. "Fight the good fight of faith" (1 Timothy 6:12). "I will show thee my faith by my works" (James 2:18).

III. Moses, or the Spirit of Prayer. Every "over-comer" constantly maintains a twofold attitude, the upward and the outward.

1. Towards God. There is the steady, uplifted hands of unwavering faith (1 John 5:4). It is the upward look of the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man. This holy privilege and power is within the reach of all, who, like Moses, stands on the hill-top of communion with God.

2. Toward the Enemy. There must be fearless and unyielding determination. While the hands were uplifted Joshua prevailed. The source of overcoming power is in God. It is communicated to and through those who are in living sympathetic touch with Him. "If ye abide in Me, and My word abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done" (John 15:7). "When I cry unto Thee, then shalt mine enemies turn back" (Psalms 56:9).

IV. Aaron and Hur, or the Promises of God. How often the precious promises of God have acted the part of Aaron and Hur to our feeble intercessions.

1. The Promises are Strong. "They stayed up his hands" (Exodus 17:12). The supplicating hands of Moses soon grow weary. The time of definite prayer is a testing time. It is here we feel most intensely our utter weakness and the need of supporting promises. "Take with you words," the succouring, unfailing words of Him who cannot lie. Lean your arm of feeble prayer upon His sure Word of promise.

2. The Promises are Steady. "And his hands were steady" (Exodus 17:12). Unsteady hands will not receive much from the Lord (James 1:6-7). The promises of God never tremble. We may have weary and shaky hands, but we have an unshaking God who fainteth not, neither is weary (Isaiah 40:28-29). "He giveth power to the faint." "Uphold me with Thy free Spirit." Steady and sure wins the day. God's promise to Abraham wrought in him unstaggering faith. Keep steadily trusting and thy God will keep steadily conquering. "I will trust and not be afraid" (Isaiah 12:2). THE WORK OF GOD.

Exodus 19:4-8.

"Power and might are in Thine hand,

Thou savest e'en the ' burning brand.'

Largely doth Thy grace expand-

Thanks that we this understand.

Bring us, Lord, to Thy good land,

Make Thy Church a holy band.

Telling out Thy love's demand."

"The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad." While Moses was on the mount with God he was instructed to remind the Israelites of the great deliverance He had wrought for them, and of their obligation to Him. We frequently need this reminder. Let us look again then at what the Lord hath done, and think of our privileges and responsibilities.

I. The Power of the Enemy is Broken. "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians" (Exodus 19:4). They were overthrown in the depths of the sea. "Ye shall see them no more." The power of the world, the flesh, and the devil, are all overthrown for us in Christ Jesus. He hath made us more than conquerors-stand still and see.

II. The Way of Deliverance. The Lord says, "I bear you on eagle's wings" (Exodus 19:4). Thus they escaped by-

1. An Highway. The path of the eagle is beyond the reach of man. God's way of salvation is above and beyond the thoughts of men. It is as high as Heaven. What can we do but trust.

2. A Quick Way. The flight of the eagle is swift, like an arrow. There are a great many immediates and straight-ways connected with the life-work of the Saviour.

3. An Easy Way. "I bare you" (Exodus 19:4). Saved by resting on the Lord, as the sheep rested on the shoulder of the shepherd (Luke 15:5).

4. A Divine Way. "I bare you" (Exodus 19:4). It was by the power of God they were borne out of Egypt. Salvation is of the Lord. The passage from death unto life is so difficult and dangerous that none but Christ can carry us through. This He does by lifting us up "far above all," the fear of man, or the power of sin.

III. The End of this Way. "I brought you unto Myself (Exodus 19:4). When the prodigal came to himself, then he came to his father. Christ gave Himself for us that He might bring us to God. What a gladsome revelation of God this is! His loving, gracious heart longs to have us to Himself that He might bless us with Himself. He has given Himself for us and to us that He Himself might have us.

IV. The Conditions of a Blessed Life. "If ye will obey My voice and keep My covenant, then" (Exodus 19:5). After we have been made nigh to God there are conditions by which this life of fellowship and nearness is to be maintained and continued. There are two here-

1. Obedience. "If ye will obey My voice" (Exodus 19:5). His voice we may continually hear through the Word. It is not a mere sound we obey, but a living, personal voice, conveying the thoughts and mind of God into our very hearts by the power of the Holy Ghost through the written Word.

2. Faithfulness. "And keep My covenant" (Exodus 19:5). If the Lord hath been pleased to make covenants with us (Deuteronomy 5:2), it ought to be our special delight to keep them. Our own covenants may be poorly made and as poorly kept, and may be just the proud boastings of our self-confidence. His covenants of grace assure the fulness of blessing.

V. The Purpose of this Great Salvation. That through our obedience and faithfulness after being brought to Himself, we might be-

1. A Peculiar Treasure. The Lord hath chosen us to be a special people unto Himself (Deuteronomy 7:6), a people peculiar for purity and good works, for character and actions (Titus 2:14). The Lord's portion is His people. How much value does the Lord set upon His blood-bought treasure? He hath sold all that He had to purchase it (Matthew 13:45-46; 2 Corinthians 8:9).

2. A Kingdom of Priests. God's people are not only precious to Him, but as royal priests they are useful. They are mediators for others, and channels through whom He may communicate His will to others who are as yet far from God. Ye see your calling, brethren, to pray men, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God, and to make intercession for transgressors. Kings and priests unto God (Exodus 19:6).

3. An Holy Nation. This may teach us the testimony that the Church as a whole ought to bear for God. "They shall call them the holy people, the redeemed of the Lord" (Isaiah 62:12). The Temple of God is holy, which ye are (1 Corinthians 3:17).

VI. The Vow of Consecrated Lives. "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" (Exodus 19:8). Let it be the language of our trusting, trembling hearts. By His grace we will (1 Corinthians 29:5). THE GIVING OF THE LAW.

Exodus 19; 20. The prophetic and priestly character of Moses as a type of Christ comes out very clearly here. As a prophet He tells the people "words which the Lord commanded" (chap. Exodus 19:7). As a priest He tells the "words of the people unto the Lord" (Exodus 19:9). As a prophet Christ reveals to us the will of God, as a priest He makes intercession for us. The giving of the law was accompanied with all the solemn symbols of its terrible, yet holy character (chap. Exodus 19:16). The giving of the Spirit at Pentecost was also accompanied with the signs that ought to characterise this present dispensation (Acts 2:4). Both dispensations have a special ministry. The law was given to reveal sin (Romans 7:7), the Spirit came to reveal the Saviour and give dominion over sin. Look at the order-

I. The Solemn Promise. "The people answered, All that the Lord hath promised we will do" (chap. Exodus 19:8). What an outburst of self-conceit and ignorance! Until the greatness and holiness of God is seen, and the exceeding sinfulness of sin felt, man is ever ready to make his empty promises to God. The young ruler is a typical case (Mark 10:17-22).

II. The Divine Purpose. "Lo, I come" (chap. Exodus 19:9). "To prove you" (chap. Exodus 20:20). The people had agreed to do His will, now He comes to prove them. Those who would be saved by their work have a severe and fiery trial to undergo. They must meet God as a righteous Judge, not as a merciful Father. "The law is holy, just, and good," a perfect standard. It is the divine measure whereby the character of man is proved and tested. It is the fan in the hand of God the Spirit that separates the chaff from the wheat with infallible rectitude. The law, like a fan, cannot show mercy. It sifts, proves, justifies, or condemns. It is an officer to drive us into the school of Christ.

III. The Needful Preparation. "Be ye ready, for the Lord will come, whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death" (chap. Exodus 19:11-12). The Lord was coming to prove them; a note of warning was given that much preparation was needed. "Prepare to meet thy God" (Amos 4:12). Holy, holy, holy is the Lord. If one but touch the mount he shall die. "He that offendeth in one point is guilty of all" (James 2:10). Only touch a forbidden thing and the sentence of death is passed

upon you. Because sin (not sins) has entered the world death has entered. "The soul that sinneth it shall die." How can a man be just with God? Never "by the deeds of the law" (Romans 3:20).

IV. The Awful Presence. "The Lord came down" (chap. Exodus 19:16-20). His coming by the law is heralded by a sevenfold, or perfect expression of His terribleness. "Thunder, lightning, cloud, fire, smoke, quaking, trumpet." There is nothing here to encourage, attract, or pacify. Such is His character as the Judge. Here we have no blood of atonement, so there is no hope for man this way. Alas, for the bloodless theology of the present day (Hebrews 9:22). Who shall be able to stand when He appeareth? "Our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29).

V. The Effect Produced.

1. They were appalled. "They removed and stood afar off" (chap. Exodus 20:18). This was all the nearness their good works could bring them. "Who is able to stand before this Holy Lord God?" (1 Samuel 6:20), said the men of Bethshemesh. None without a Mediator. No man can come unto the Father but by Me. To approach God apart from the Cross of redemption is to come unto "fire and to blackness and darkness and tempest" (Hebrews 12:18).

2. They Desired a Mediator. "They said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and let not God speak with us lest we die" (chap. Exodus 20:19). The need of a Mediator is felt when sin is known (Job 9:30-33). The terrors of Sinai reveal the need of Calvary. Here is a mount that we must touch or die. "There is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5).

VI. The New Way. "An altar shalt thou make,... and I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee" (chap. Exodus 20:24). Two kinds of sacrifices are named: "Burnt-offerings" and "Peace-offerings." Christ is both; through the altar of His Cross He offered Himself unto God as a whole burnt-offering, that He might make peace through the blood of His Cross. God is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. There I will meet you, and I will bless you. Jesus said, "I am the Way" (John 14:6). God's eyes and heart are there perpetually (1 Kings 9:3). "By the deeds of the law shall no man be justified." "By grace are ye saved." The fiery fingers of the law points to the peace-speaking blood of atonement. "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in Thy sight" (Matthew 11:26). THE BONDAGE OF LOVE.

Exodus 21:1-6.

The coming down of God on Sinai, in the covenant of the law, brought no offered year of release to the slaves of sin. There was a trumpet, but not a jubilee one; when it sounded they stood trembling afar off. The year of jubilee speaks of spiritual freedom and rest, and is also prophetic of the coming Millennial Age. This incident before us very aptly illustrates the self-will blindness and suicidal choice of those who prefer to remain in bondage to their old master, sin, than to accept the freedom offered and declared by the jubilee trumpet of the Gospel of Christ, saying, "I love my master, and will not go free." If the ear of such is bored with the awl of eternal slavery they have themselves to blame. They love to have it so. Sin is a master, and many love him, with such a love, too, that constrains to wholehearted service. But looked at in another way we might see here a picture of- I. The Helpless Sinner's Privileges. He was-

1. Bought. "If thou buy an Hebrew" (Exodus 21:2). The bought one represents one who could do nothing for himself. Only the helpless poor are purchased as slaves. Such were some of us, but

"ye are bought with a price" (1 Peter 1:19). Oh, such a price, the precious blood of Christ!

2. Bought to Serve. "Six years he shall serve" (Exodus 21:2). The master must have some return for his outlay. Be not unprofitable servants, "Ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God (who hath given the Ransom) in your body and your spirit, which are His" (1 Corinthians 6:20). "Ye were the servants of sin, but now, being free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (Romans 6:18).

3. Set at Liberty. "He shall go free for nothing" (Exodus 21:2). In this service there comes a glorious freedom, a blessed rest in His yoke (Matthew 11:29). The jubilee trumpet has special reference to bond-servants. The Lord Jesus Christ in His Gospel offers full liberty to His bond-slaves. "Whom the Son makes free are free indeed." "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free" (Galatians 5:1). We note next- II. The Devoted Servant's Choice. It was-

1. A Choice of Continual Service. "I will not go free" (Exodus 21:5). He had a will, but he used it to show forth his delight in his master's will. He used his liberty by taking the liberty to show that he preferred active bondage to idle freedom. I will not, he says, have the freedom that would separate me from my master's work. "Go thou and do likewise." "Go to the ant thou sluggard" (Proverbs 6:6).

2. A Choice Constrained by Love. "I love my master" (Exodus 21:5). Those who have had six years' experience of the service and fellowship of Christ will not desire to leave Him in the seventh. The love of Christ constraineth us. "I love my children." The children we may have begotten in the faith form another link of connection with the master. Every convert, through our instrumentality should lead us into closer touch with the Lord for their sakes. I love my children and will not go free.

3. A Choice Implying Entire Consecration. "Then his master shall bore his ear, and he shall serve him for ever" (Exodus 21:6). The bored ear declared a willing and unalterable separation for the master's use. Our Lord Himself, constrained by love to His Father, says, "I delight to do Thy will; mine ear hast Thou opened" {pierced, R.V., margin) (Psalms 40:6-7). His ear was pierced with an awl of perfection and eternal devotion to His Father's business. The disciple is to follow his Master. Him only shalt thou serve (1 Samuel 7:3).

Take my love, my Lord, I pour

At thy feet its treasure store;

Take myself, and I will be,

Ever, only, all for Thee. THE ANGEL SAVIOUR.

Exodus 23:20-25.

We may well interpret this angel as the Son of God, for the work here attributed to Him is beautifully typical of the great work accomplished by Jesus Christ our Saviour. "The angel of His presence saved them, in His love; and in His pity He redeemed them" (Isaiah 63:9).

I. The Saviour. See how his character accords with that of Christ.

1. He was from Heaven. "An angel" (Exodus 23:20). No man can redeem his brother; deliverance must come from above. God alone could find a ransom.

2. He was Sent by God. "I send an angel" (Exodus 23:20). The messenger of God who delighted to do His will. God sent His Son to bless us. Sent in love (John 3:16).

3. He Bore the Name of God. "For My Name is in Him" (Exodus 23:21). His Name was called the wonderful, the Mighty God. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself," and manifesting Himself in and through the body of the Lord Jesus (1 Timothy 3:16).

4. He Had Power to Forgive Sins. If you provoke Him He will not pardon your transgressions (Exodus 23:21), implying that He could forgive such. This angel had the right to forgive, because he acted for and in the Name of God. "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins" (Mark 2:10). This authority He also received of the Father.

II. The Salvation. This salvation was great and wonderful, worthy of the God who preached this glorious Gospel. The Gospel of God contains His great and precious promises.

1. To Deliver Us From Our Enemies. "I will cut them off" (Exodus 23:23). Our enemies, sins and lusts, had a firm grip of us, but He cut them off. He alone can break the bonds that bind us to the foe.

2. To Bring Us Out. "to bring thee into the place" (Exodus 23:20). Out "from the power of darkness into the Kingdom of His dear Son" (Colossians 1:13). Out and in.

3. To Keep Us in the Way (Exodus 23:20). He is not only able to deliver, but also to keep us from falling out of the way. It is so easy to fall out by the way unless we continue to watch and pray. Jesus says, "I am the Way," "Abide in Me." (John 14:6).

4. To Bless our Common Mercies. "He shall bless thy bread and thy water" (Exodus 23:25). With this blessing in our basket and in our store (Deuteronomy 28:5) we may truly experience that "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is" (1 Timothy 4:8).

5. To Deliver Us From Sickness. "I will take sickness away from the midst of thee" (Exodus 23:25). "He bore our sins." Is it not also written, "Himself bare our sicknesses?" (Matthew 8:17). "According to your faith be it unto you."

6. To go Before Us. I send an angel before thee (Exodus 23:23). The Good Shepherd goeth before His sheep. He has gone before us through the valley of the shadows of this present life, through the portals of the tomb, through the experience of resurrection, and through the heavens into the Father's presence. "Follow Me."

7. To Prepare a Place for Us. "To bring thee into the place which I have prepared" (Exodus 23:20). Canaan, like the many mansions in the Father's house, was prepared for a prepared people. "I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:1-3).

III. The Saved. In the presence of such a Saviour, and in the enjoyment of such a salvation, let us ask. What are the responsibilities of the saved?

1. Walk Humbly. "Beware of Him" (Exodus 23:21). These are solemn words of warning. Let us never forget the high and holy dignity of Him who died for us. "Fear God." Let not familiarity ripen into presumption. "Walk humbly with thy God" (Micah 6:8).

2. Obey Fully. "Beware of Him, and obey His voice" (Exodus 23:21). "One is your Master, even Christ" (Matthew 23:10). Hear the still small voice of your Angel Redeemer in His Word, and by His Holy Spirit. "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it" (John 2:5). "By faith Abraham obeyed" (Deuteronomy 18:19).

3. Trust Continually. "Provoke Him not" (Exodus 23:21). How often has He been provoked through our unbelief (Numbers 14:11). Oh, these God provoking doubts of ours, how they assert themselves when circumstances seem dark and tangled! Like Jacob we lament, "All these things are against me" (Genesis 42:36), while God in mercy is busy planning for our good.

4. Stand Firmly. "Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor do after their works" (Exodus 23:24). We are all so ready to bow to the gods of this world, and to do after the habits and customs of the ungodly. "Be ye separate, saith the Lord" (2 Corinthians 6:17). That ye may be able to stand, "Put on the whole armour of God" (Ephesians 6:11).

5. Serve Faithfully. "Ye shall serve the Lord your God" (Exodus 23:25). What a privilege to serve Him before whom angels fall and adore! "It is written, Him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:10). "This is the work of God that ye believe" "Ye serve the Lord Christ." Be faithful unto death.

BEHOLD THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT.

Exodus 24:1-8.

"Behold the blood of the covenant." These words, uttered by Moses as he sprinkled the people with the crimson life-stream, forcibly remind us of John's "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). A covenent is a bargain between two parties, something that comes in between as a ground of agreement and a bond of perpetual union. This thought is beautifully expressed in Exodus 12, "The blood shall be to you for a token." This was man's side. "When I see the blood." This was the divine side. It was covenant blood. Such is the Blood of His Cross. "Reconciled through the death of His Son." "This cup is the New Testament (covenant) in my blood, drink ye all of it" (Luke 22:20), and be one, even as "I and My Father are one." We shall now observe-

I. When this Blood was Shed. As with the death of Christ, so with the sacrifice here, there is much in the circumstances. It was-

1. After God was Honoured. "Come up unto the Lord and worship" (Exodus 24:1). Before the Cross was readied Christ had this testimony, that He pleased God (Matthew 3:15). Moses came near the Lord, while the others worshipped "afar off." Jesus worshipped in the Holy of Holies.

2. After the Word of the Lord was Revealed. "Moses told the people all the words of the Lord" (Exodus 24:4). Christ did not die until He had finished the work and declared the words the Father gave Him. "I have given them the words which Thou gavest Me" (John 17:8). The Way was made plain before the sun went down.

3. After an Altar had Been Built. And Moses builded an altar. The Cross appeared before the sacrifice was made. "And He bearing His Cross." A fixed altar suggests the determinate counsel of God. There "they crucified Him" (John 19:18).

II. What this Blood Signifies. Sacrifice, and this-

1. Implies Sin. Sin, like a man's shadow, is only seen in the light. Sin is the dominating element in the character of fallen human nature. Man is a sinner. "Without God" (Ephesians 2:12).

2. Implies Substitution. The offerings and sacrifices were unto the Lord, and in behalf of the people. "He was wounded for our transgressions." "He suffered for us." The sacrifices were first the Lord's by right, then allowed for the people, and again accepted by Him on the altar. A perfect type of Him who was the Lamb of God, given for us and accepted again through death in our stead.

3. Implies Salvation. Isaac was saved when the ram took his place on the altar (Genesis 22:13). He "gave Himself for me." "All that believe are justified" (Acts 13:39).

III. Where this Blood was Sprinkled. It was-

1. Sprinkled on the Altar. "Moses took half of the blood and sprinkled it on the altar" (Exodus 24:6). The altar represents the claims of God's holiness and justice. Before the people could be blessed His righteousness must be satisfied. Before the sinner can be saved Christ must offer Himself without spot unto God. The halving of the blood between the altar and the people indicate the double character of the sacrifice of Christ. He both fulfils the law and makes peace. In doing the Father's will He provides redemption for man. In Him every attribute of God is satisfied and every need of man fully met. "Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness!" (Psalms 107:8).

2. Sprinkled on the People. "Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you." The blood on the people signified-

1. Redemption. They had come into personal contact with the life ("the life is in the blood") that had been offered to God for them. All the value of the sacrifice, as in His sight, is now imputed to them. "We have redemption through His Blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Ephesians 1:7). It signifies also-

2. Reconciliation. It was the blood of the covenant. "How much more shall the Blood of Christ" (Hebrews 9:14). We are "made nigh by the Blood" (Ephesians 2:13). It implies-

3. Obligation. "All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient" (v. 7). Be faithful unto death. This covenant, like the way of salvation, is all of grace and cannot fail. Through these immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, we have a strong consolation who have laid hold on this hope set before us. "The God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect to do His will" (Hebrews 13:20-21). THE ARK OF THE COVENANT. Or, The Person and Work of Christ.

Study I. THE CHARACTER AND USE OF THE ARK.

Exodus 25:9-22.

The first vessel God instructed Moses to make was the Ark. All the others were of no value apart from it. As the symbol of Jehovah's presence, all must take their relative value from it. What is the Church without the Christ but a Tabernacle without an Ark, a system without a sun, a body without a soul? What the Ark was to the Israelites Christ ought to be to us-an ever-present, all-sufficient, solemn, and divine reality; a source of blessing that never failed when rightly approached. Let us look at the Ark, then, as a type of Christ, "Emmanuel, God with us" (Matthew 1:23).

I. The Origin of the Ark, or the Revelation of Christ. Jehovah Himself revealed the plan and pattern of the Ark to Moses (Exodus 25:10-22). The whole scheme was divinely originated and divinely revealed. So the holy men of old who lived in the mount with God, it was given to testify of Christ as "He that should come." "God spake in times past by the prophets" (Hebrews 1:1). Man, apart from revelation, cannot find out God. "Search the Scriptures, for they are they which testify of Me" (John 5:39). The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is a telescopic view of Christ, a vision of the pattern on the mount. They have told us beforehand that when it is come to pass we might believe.

II. The Materials of the Ark, or the Character of Christ. "Make an Ark of shittim wood, and thou shalt overlay it with pure gold" (Exodus 25:10-11). The incorruptible wood and the pure gold remind us at once of the pure humanity and glorious divinity of our blessed Lord- two natures as distinct as wood and gold, yet mysteriously united in one person. Unitarianism is put to shame, even in the types. The wood grown in the earth represents Christ as our kinsman, "bone of our bone." The gold speaks of Him as God's fellow: "I and My Father are one" (John 10:30). It is the gold of His divinity that gives power and preciousness, glory and beauty, to the wood of His humanity. Incorruptible humanity alone could never stand in the sinner's stead. Christ is divinely fitted to represent both God and man. Man needs one to represent him to God. This is what the Ark taught; this is what Christ does.

III. The Anointing of the Ark, or the Baptism of Christ. "Thou shalt make an oil of holy ointment. . . And thou shalt anoint the Ark" (Exodus 30:25-26). The holy oil consecrated the Ark of God's appointed purpose, set it apart for its special mission. The holy oil represents the Holy Spirit, which comes forth from God the Father to consecrate and fit for service. This holy oil was not to be poured upon man's flesh (Exodus 30:31-32). The old man, or selfish life, is not to be sanctified, but put off. At the banks of Jordan Christ, the Ark of our testimony, received His holy anointing, and was publicly set apart for His holy mission. So He could say, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me," to preach, to heal, to deliver, to recover, and to set at liberty. This the Ark did for Israel; and this the Christ of God does for us.

IV. The Contents of the Ark, or the Obedience of Christ. "And he put the testimony (law) into the Ark... And put the mercy-seat above" (Exodus 40:20). The broken law, which could only minister death, was here covered in the presence of God. And covered with a "seat of mercy." What a blessing! Man could not keep the law, but the Ark could. Christ alone could say, "Thy Jaw is within My heart" (Psalms 40:8). In Him, as our Ark, the broken law is shut up, covered in mercy. By His Cross He took it "out of the way" (Colossians 2:14). Looking up into His Father's face, he could say without fear, "I have finished the work Thou gavest Me to do" (John 17:4). The righteous demands of God are all fully met in Him. Here God rests as He did of old, on the mercy-seat between the cherubims, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17).

V. The Purpose of the Ark, or the Atonement of Christ: "There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from between the two cherubim, which are upon the Ark" (Exodus 25:22). The Ark was the place of meeting, and the medium of communion. This is what Christ, through His atoning death, becomes to all who believe. In Him we meet with God in mercy; through Him we have fellowship and communion. Christ, as the mercy-seat between God and a broken law, is the only way of acceptance before God. "No man can come unto the Father but by Me" (John 14:6). There can be no communion without propitiation. "He is the propitiation" (1 John 2:2). "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement" (Romans 5:11). "God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19).

VI. The Position of the Ark, or the Intercession of Christ. "Thou shalt put the Ark in the most holy place" (Exodus 26:34). The Ark stood continually in the immediate presence of God on Israel's behalf. The mercy-seat made continual intercession for them. Although unseen within the veil, Christ, our Ark, has sat down on high. In the Holy of Holies He ever liveth to make continual intercession for us. Though now we see Him not- the Heavens having received Him out of our sight-yet the Blood speaketh. What a comfort to know that the law which was against us is completely covered for us in the Holy of Holies, and that on this mercy-seat God delights to dwell and to give gifts unto men, even the rebellious!

VII. The Sprinkling of the Ark, or the Appropriation of Christ. "And he shall take of the blood, and sprinkle it upon the mercy-seat, and before the mercy seat" (Leviticus 16:14). The blood of the sin-offering was put upon the lid of the Ark, thus connecting mercy with the sacrifice for sin. The virtue of the Ark within the veil could only be received by virtue of the blood shed without the camp, teaching us that Christ's mediatorial work can only be appreciated by those who believe and appropriate His sacrificial. Reconciliation and peace with God can only be enjoyed on the ground of atoning blood. To come before God without the blood was death. Solemn warning to those who lightly esteem it. The blood upon the mercy-seat secures our acceptance before God; the blood before it secures our standing with God.

Study II. THE VARIOUS POSITIONS OF THE ARK. In considering the different positions in which we find the Ark, we might look at them as typical of some of the relationships Christ sustains towards His people.

I. The Ark as the Guide of Israel, or Christ Leading His People. "The Ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them" (Numbers 10:33). The Ark was to them an infallible guide. It went on before "to search out a resting-place for them." Christ, the Good Shepherd, goeth before His sheep. He leadeth them into green pastures, He hath sought and found a resting-place for His people, for "He maketh them to lie down" (Psa. 23). Christ, our Ark, leads into rest before He leads into service. He says, "Come unto Me," before He says, "Take My yoke" (Matthew 11:28-29).

II. The Ark in the Midst of Israel, or Christ Upholding His People. When the camp was pitched the Ark stood in the midst. All the strength of Israel lay in the Ark as the token of God's power. Just as the branches are upheld by the vine, so were the twelve tribes upheld by the Ark. So is the Church upheld by Christ. He Himself is the candlestick; we, as believers, are the branches. "He walketh in the midst of seven golden candlesticks" (Revelation 2:1). He is the strength of His people. "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved" (Psalms 46:5).

III. The Ark in the River of Jordan, or Christ the Surety of His People. "And the priests that bare the Ark stood in the midst of the Jordan until all the people were passed clean over" (Joshua 3:17). The Ark was their surety in the river. God's pledge of salvation. While Christ, the Ark of our surety, rests upon the throne of grace the river of judgment will be held back. So that whosoever will may pass clean over into the land of promise. "Behold, now is the accepted time." As soon as the Ark removed the floods came. "When Christ shall rise up the door will be shut" (Luke 13:24-25).

IV. The Ark at the Walls of Jericho, or Christ Overcoming for His People. "So the Ark of the Lord compassed the city, and the wall fell down flat" (Joshua 6:11-20). All took their place according to the position of the Ark. When the Church of Christ does this nothing shall be impossible. They trumpeted with all their might, but they trusted not in their trumpets, but in the Ark, as the token of Jehovah's power. Men may find a pleasure in trumpeting (preaching) who have no real faith in the power of Christ's presence to overcome, but such blowing will gain no victory. They may shout till they are black in the face, but no wall will be overturned.

V. The Ark on the New Cart, or Christ desiring His People. "Make a new cart, and lay the Ark of the Lord upon it, and see if it goeth up by the way of His own coast, and the kine took the straight way" (1 Samuel 6:7-12). Although Israel had previously sinned, yet the Ark of the Lord seeks the straight way back to His people. So does the heart of Christ yearn for His right place among His people, which sin and unbelief had robbed Him of, "While the Ark was away the glory of Israel had departed" (1 Samuel 4:22). If the Lord is not with us "Ichabod" may be written on all we do. But the Lord taketh pleasure in His people. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock" (Revelation 3:20).

VI. The Ark in the House of Obed-edom, or Christ Blessing His People. "The Ark continued in the house of Obed-edom, and the Lord blessed Obed-edom and all his household" (2 Samuel 6:11). The Holy One (Ark) that stood within the veil now rests within the threshold of a home. He who inhabiteth Eternity also dwells in the heart of the humble and contrite one (Isaiah 57:15). Wherever Christ is received blessing is given. Some were afraid to receive the Ark. But as many as received Him received power and blessing (John 1:12). Some had no room for the Ark. Have you any room for Jesus in your heart or in your home?

VII. The Ark in the Tent of David, or Christ a Pilgrim with His People. "So they brought the Ark of God, and set it in the midst of the tent that David had pitched for it" (1 Chronicles 16:1). The tent is the abode of the pilgrim. The Ark in the tent may be symbolic of Christ sojourneying with His people as pilgrims and strangers on the earth. David, as a man of war, was only permitted to build for the Ark a tent. The present condition of the Church is one of warfare and pilgrimage. The Lord, therefore, as a pilgrim with His people, has no fixed abode.

VIII. The Ark in the Temple of Solomon, or Christ Resting with His People. "And they brought up the Ark of the Lord, and drew out the staves" (1 Kings 8). The house of glory has been finished. The reign of peace has come. Now the staves of the Ark are drawn out, signifying that its wanderings are now ended, and that it has found at last its resting-place. Surely the days of Millennial peace and glory are here suggested, when the whole earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord (Habakkuk 2:14), and when "He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied" (Isaiah 53:11),

IX. The Ark between Ebal and Gerizim, or Christ Judging His People. In Joshua 8:33-34 we see six tribes on Mount Gerizim to bless, and six tribes on Mount Ebal to curse, and the Ark standing between (see also Deut. 27 and 28). The blessing and the cursing were according to all that was written in the Book. By the Word of the Lord are they judged. We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. Our works will either stand on Ebal or Gerizim to be burned or blessed (1 Corinthians 3:13). Perhaps we have also here in type Matthew 25:32-46, where we see the cursed on the one hand, the blessed on the other, and Jesus in the midst.

Study III. THE POWER OF THE PRESENCE OF THE ARK. In looking at the power of the Ark in its various connections, we wish to see Jesus and the power of His presence when brought into contact with Him.

I. The Presence of the Ark is the Hope of the Humble. "Joshua rent His clothes, and fell upon his face before the Ark of the Lord" (Joshua 7:6). Israel had fled before the men of Ai, defeated because of secret sin. This bows Joshua to the earth, humbled and helpless before the Lord. Secret sin is the cause of much of our failure in service for God. If we did realise, like Joshua, the dishonour such failures bring to Christ, we would be oftener on our face before Him. Although the enemy has at times got an advantage over us, what a comfort to know that He hath said, "Lo, I am with you," and that "'All power is given unto Me" (Matthew 28:18-20).

II. The Presence of the Ark is the Glory of Israel. "The glory is departed from Israel, for the Ark of God is taken" (1 Samuel 4:22). Israel without the Ark is as a flock without a shepherd, salt without savour, a body without a soul. What is more useless than savourless salt? Who is more helpless than a powerless Christian? (Judges 16:20). The presence of Christ is the glory of His Church. The Church, or the believer, will live and shine and triumph just in the proportion that Christ is living and shining in them. He will not give His glory to another.

III. The Presence of the Ark is the Downfall of Heathenism. "Dagon fell upon his face before the Ark, and his head and his hands were cut off" (1 Samuel 5:4). No other god is able to stand in the presence of Christ, our Ark. All the powers of this world must yet fall prostrate and broken before Him, whose Name is above every name. Bring the living Christ face to face with heathenism, and it will fall headless and handless at His feet. There is no other remedy. There may be Dagons in the heart that exalt themselves against God, such as pride, worldliness, bad temper. Let Christ step on to the throne of the heart and these will fall down.

IV. The Presence of the Ark is the Perplexing of its Enemies. "What shall we do with the Ark (1 Samuel 5:8)? "What shall we do to the Ark (chap 1 Samuel 6:2)? Pilate said, "What shall I do then with Jesus?" and the scribes and Pharisees communed one with another what they might do to Jesus" (Luke 6:11). They agreed, like the Philistines, to send Him away. They besought Him that He would depart out of their coasts. When Christ, by His Spirit and Word, comes before the hearts of sinners there is perplexity still. "What must I do?" Either there is submission and acceptance, or resistance and rejection.

V. The Presence of the Ark is the Rebuking of the Presumptuous. "The men of Beth-shemesh looked into the Ark. And He smote of the people 50,000" (1 Samuel 6:19). To lift the lid of the Ark was to remove that which covered the broken law, and so expose themselves to the "ministry of death." Such must be the doom of all who presumptuously set aside the atonement of Christ (1

John 2:2). "Uzzah rashly put forth his hand to the Ark of God, and God smote him for his error" (2 Samuel 6:6). The warning had been given. "They shall not touch any holy thing lest they die" (Numbers 4:15). The Ark, as the symbol of Jehovah's strength, does not need the hand of man to steady it. Eli trembled for the Ark, and fell down dead (1 Samuel 4:18). Unbelief makes many tremble for the cause of Christ. What presumption to have thrown a rope to Christ while He walked on the sea! Some wise men in these days seem more concerned about saving Christ than getting men saved by Him. Yes, they are anxious lest the sun should get blown away with the winds.

VI. The Presence of the Ark is the Joy of God's People. "So David and all Israel brought up the Ark of the Lord with shoutings. And David danced before the Lord with all his might" (2 Samuel 6:15-16). The manifest presence of Christ always brings gladness to the hearts of God's people; and such joy is sure to provoke the sneer of the ungodly, just as the daughter of Saul mocked David. If David danced with joy when he thought of all that is meant by "the Ark with us," how much more might we when we think of all that is meant by "Christ in us."

VII. The Absence of the Ark is the Defeat of God's People. "They presumed to go up, nevertheless the Ark of the Lord departed not out of the camp" (Numbers 14:44). They went without the Ark, and were smitten before the enemy. If we go in our own strength the same consequences will follow. Every Christless effort is a failure in the sight of God, although it be rewarded with the praise of men. "Without Me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). It is quite possible for a "special effort" to win souls- to be nothing but a fair show of the flesh. Peter toiled all night in a Christless boat and "caught nothing" (Luke 5:5), but when he had the Master with him he had good success. THE ATONEMENT MONEY.

Exodus 30:11-16.

It is interesting to note that this money, given by the people as an "atonement for their souls," went to form the foundation of the Tabernacle, so that the Tabernacle, as the House of God, literally stood upon the price of souls- Redemption. The Church of God to-day has no other standing. This "half shekel" is a figure of the precious Blood of Christ, by which we have been ransomed for God (1 Peter 1:18-19). Observe that-

I. All alike needed a Ransom. "Every man" (Exodus 30:12). In relation to God all are alike, there is no difference, for all have sinned. Birth, wealth, position, education, reformation will not avail to commend one more than another. God's Word has settled this. Every man must bring a ransom (Hebrews 9:22).

II. The Ransom Price was Divinely Fixed. "Half a shekel" (Exodus 30:13), saith the Lord, neither more nor less. God does not leave it to man to say how much he will give for his soul. Such could only minister to his vanity. Man is so ignorant of himself and of the terrible nature of sin that it is not in him to mention what the ransom should be. "Deliver from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom" (Job 33:24). Where? In His own bosom, in the Person of His Son (John 3:16). "My Beloved Son." This is the price fixed by Jehovah before the world was created.

III. The Ransom was Divinely Judged. "After the shekel of the sanctuary" (Exodus 30:13). Each half shekel brought as atonement money must be after the perfect standard of holiness. The atonement money must be up to the weight of the sanctuary shekel, up to the righteous demands of a holy law. The Lord Jesus Christ, as our Ransom, was tested and judged by the perfect law of

righteousness. He was up to the sanctuary standard (Matthew 17:5).

IV. The Ransom was alike for All. "The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less" (Exodus 30:15). God has but one price for souls, "The precious Blood of Christ." Neither more nor less. Not the blood and your prayers, gifts or good works, nothing must be added to the Blood of His Cross, nothing can be taken from it. "He gave Himself a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:6). Those who preach a bloodless Gospel are blocking the way of sinners to God. It matters not what culture or criticism may say, His Word stands unalterable. "Neither more nor less."

V. The Ransom had to be Personally Presented. Every man shall give (Exodus 30:14). Salvation is a personal and individual matter. No one can "redeem his brother" (Psalms 49:7). The testimony of Moses had to be believed, the price taken, and definitely brought to God for a very special and definite purpose. So the Word of the Gospel must be believed, Christ personally and consciously accepted (John 1:12), and offered to God as the only but God-pleasing ransom. Neither is there salvation in any other Name. Jesus paid it all. "It is finished."

VI. The Ransom was the only Ground of Acceptance. It did not matter what a man might bring; if he did not bring the appointed "half shekel" he could not be accepted, he could not be a ransomed soul. A man was not accepted because he was rich or poor, learned or illiterate, good or bad, but because he presented the atonement money. This was the only condition, and all who brought it became partakers of the redemption, irrespective of caste or character. Here the rich and poor meet together, the Lord alone is the Saviour of all. "He that believeth not is condemned already" (John 3:18).

VII. The Ransomed were Expected to Serve. "They were to go forth to war" (Numbers 1:45). We are delivered that we might "serve Him all the days of our life" (Luke 1:74-75). Saved to serve (Acts 27:23). "Freely ye have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8). Having been ransomed at such a price, let us therefore glorify God in our bodies and spirits, which are His. The ransomed of the Lord who go out to fight shall return with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. The battle is the Lord's, thy God shall fight for thee. "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so" (Psalms 107:2). THE ANOINTING OIL.

Exodus 30:22-33.

This holy anointing oil is a striking emblem of the Holy Spirit, the uses to which it is put clearly indicate the emphatic symbolic character. Dr. Kurtz reminds us that the Orientals used oil for three very definite purposes: (1) In anointing the body. (2) In preparation of food. (3) For giving light in their lamps. So the Holy Spirit gives freshness to the body, strength for the heart and soul, and brightness of life for a testimony to others. May He who never speaks of Himself guide us into the truth about Himself! Concerning this oil, it was-

I. Holy. "An holy anointing oil" (Exodus 30:31). This was its distinguishing and essential characteristic, because its chief purpose was to sanctify and set apart for the service cf God. The Spirit is constantly spoken of as "Holy," the Comforter who is the "Holy Ghost." The Spirit is not more holy than the Father or the Son, but His great mission is to make holy by coming into contact with that which has been consecrated to God. "Be ye holy, for I am holy" (Leviticus 20:26).

II. Claimed by the Lord. "This shall be an holy anointing oil unto Me" (Exodus 30:31). The holy oil was itself the seal of Jehovah, everything it touched it sanctified. It was the voice of God asserting his authority. It was the hand of God that laid hold on and separated the vessels for His use. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. He acts for Him, carrying out His will in the Church, as the House of God. He is the gift of both Father and Son (John 14:26).

III. Put upon Aaron and his Sons. Aaron is a type of Christ, and his sons of believers in Christ who are the sons of God. Our Aaron received His anointing at Jordan, the sons at Pentecost. It was the same oil that was poured on both. So we are baptised by the same Spirit that came upon the Lamb of God, and for the same purpose, that we might "minister unto the Lord." "Because ye are sons God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts" (Galatians 4:6). How closely connected Aaron and his sons were as to privileges and service! Are we the worthy sons of such a Father? This holy anointing oil is for every son. It is a great heritage (1 John 2:27). Have you claimed this portion?

IV. Used to Sanctify the Vessels. "Thou shalt anoint all the vessels... and sanctify them, that they may be most holy" (Exodus 30:26-29). Every separate article, and every thing connected with each, was touched and separated by the holy oil, the table and all his vessels. Surely the teaching here is plain. As vessels, if we would be made meet for the Master's use, all our belongings and connections must be yielded over to Him who hath called and cleansed us. Our wills, affections, desires, thoughts, all under the control of the Holy anointing, all recognised as belonging to God.

V. Not Put Upon Man's Flesh. "Upon man's flesh shall it not be poured" (Exodus 30:32). Only upon the pure white mitre of the priest could it be poured, not upon flesh. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." The Holy Ghost does not by His coming to us, or in us, ever sanctify the flesh. The flesh is to be crucified; its works are to be mortified, not sanctified. The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and so cannot be used by the Spirit. The pride and selfishness of the carnal mind will never have an unction from the Holy One. "Upon man's flesh it shall not be poured." This holy anointing will never be given for our own glory. The spirit has come to glorify Christ (John 16:14), if we are not willing and ready to glorify Christ in our lives we cannot have the communion of the Holy Ghost. His presence is power.

VI. Not to be put upon Strangers (Exodus 30:33). The strangers were all those outside the priesthood, those who were not sons. Every son, no matter how poor or ignorant, could have the holy anointing. No other could. And no amount of professional sanctity would avail in its stead. This was a privilege inherited by birth. "Born not of the will of the flesh, but of God" (John 1:13). We are first made children, then heirs.

VII. Not to be Imitated. "Whosoever compoundeth any like it shall be cut off" (Exodus 30:33). It is impossible for us to imitate the workings of the Holy Ghost without bringing upon our spirits the separating blight of death. "God is not mocked." There is an inscrutable something about those anointed with the Holy Spirit that no learning, eloquence, or earnestness can produce. There is a fire of enthusiasm that is not of God, a false fire, the "old man's" unholy imitation of the anointing of God. No zeal can manufacture this, no penance can purchase it. It is the gift of God. "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John 20:22). THE PROMISE OF HIS PRESENCE.

Exodus 33:12-16.

A great promise from a great and faithful prince is a great and precious privilege. Let our God but speak, and His Word will infallibly be fulfilled. "He has given us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these we might be made partakers of the divine nature." The 1000 promises of our bankrupt human nature are of no value. "My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest." Let us inquire-

I. How this Promise was Sought. "Moses saith unto the Lord, See, thou hast said, Bring up this people " (Exodus 33:12). The promise was sought then in the face of a great commission. How could he "bring up this people" without the powerful, guiding presence of the subduing God. It has been often said that "God's biddings are His enablings." His presence is always associated with His commands and demands. We may confidently ask and expect His all-sufficiency to meet our every need in doing His will (2 Corinthians 9:8).

II. What this Promise Offered. "My presence shall go with thee" (Exodus 33:14). Who is able to unpack all the treasures contained in this casket? The treasures of earth and ocean may be exhausted, but all the demands and needs of a redeeming humanity will never in time or eternity be able to diminish in any degree the riches herein contained. And this promise is yours, "Lo, I am with you alway" (Matthew 28:20). This presence can only be made real to us by the indwelling Spirit of God, just as the sun's presence or influence is made real to us through the medium of the atmosphere. Grieve the Holy Spirit and you close the door against the gracious presence. As the glory filled the Holy Place so may His presence fill our souls!

III. When this Promise was Given. It was given in answer to a cry and desire that was infinitely pleasing to God. Moses prayed, "Show me Thy glory that I may know Thee. "Those who seek to know Him "shall know Him and rejoice." He delights to manifest Himself to such eager, honest, devoted souls. The pure in heart shall see God. He shall pour water upon him that is thirsty. How often we cry for blessing instead of for God. God Himself is to be the joy of our hearts. The way into the fullness of blessing is not by seeking blessing, but by seeking God. Show me that I may know Thee. "This is life eternal to know Thee" (John 17:3), and not only life, but love, joy, peace, and power.

IV. What this Promise Brought. If the presence of an earthly potentate creates and manifests such distinctions among men, surely we may expect that the presence of God will also bring distinguishing marks. His presence gives the-

1. Evidence of Grace. "It shall be known that thy people have found grace in that thou goest with us" (Exodus 33:16). Walking in the enjoyment of His presence implies that we may live on the fullness of His grace. Sweet thought, His presence means abounding grace. His grace is made sufficient for us, while His presence is going with us.

2. Assurance of Rest. "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest" (Exodus 33:14). Rest for every inch of the way, and in every circumstance of life. His presence gives rest as the presence of the sun gives light, or as the vine gives the sap to the indwelling branch, or better still, as the presence of the mother gives comfort to the sick child. "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." Abide with Me, and your rest will abide. "I will fear no evil for Thou art with me." His presence gives rest- (1) From the power of sin.

(2) From the fear of man.

(3) From the cares of the world.

(4) From the anxieties of service (Matthew 11:29).

3. Power of Separation. "Thou goest with us, so shall we be separated" (Exodus 33:16). His presence with them separated them from the land of Egypt and from the house of bondage. His presence with Abraham separated him from Ur of the Chaldees, from his kindred, from his father's house (Genesis 12:1). The holy oil-symbol of the presence of God the Holy Ghost-separated Aaron and his sons for the service of the Lord. The presence of God with us, by the Holy Spirit, will separate us from the life and thoughts of the world, from the dominion of Satan, and the tyranny of self. His presence separates. If we will not come out and be separate from the unclean then we must part with the presence. "How can two walk together except they be agreed." THE PRAYER OF MOSES; Or, the Servant's Need.

Exodus 33:12-23.

Those called of God like Moses, to be ambassadors for Him among a perverse people, have need, like Moses, to be the "meekest of men." Although the treasure is great the vessel is but earthen (2 Corinthians 4:7). In this prayer there are four God-honouring requests- I. That the Guidance of God might be Given.

"Show me now Thy way" (Exodus 33:13). All who have had close dealings with God feel the need of being led by the Spirit. Moses asks this favour for two reasons-

1. That I May Know Thee. Still hungering, after all he knew of Him (Exodus 24:18). Paul had the same longings (Php_3:10). "We shall know if we follow on to know" (Hosea 6:3).

2. That I May Find Grace. While Ruth followed in the field of Boaz she found "handfuls on purpose." "When I sent you, lacked ye anything?" They answered, "Nothing" (Luke 22:35; Psalms 65:11).

II. That the Presence of God might be Known.

"If Thy presence go not." God has said, "My presence shall go." And in the strength of this promise Moses wished to go. His presence secures-

1. Fellowship and Rest. "Go with thee, and give thee rest" (Exodus 33:14). This is not fellowship with a fancy, but with the living God (1 John 1:3). And the rest is so real that Moses speaks of it as being "carried up" underneath the everlasting arms.

2. Protection and Victory. His presence is the protecting pillar of His people (Exodus 14:20). The apple tree, under which they sit with great delight (Son_2:3). The pledge of success and victory (Hebrews 13:5-6).

III. That the Power of God might be Manifest.

"Wherein shall it be known." The savour proves the salt (Matthew 5:13). If the presence of God is with us it will be known by its-

1. Separating Power. "So shall we be separated." God and the world are not agreed. How can they walk together? (2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Hebrews 9:24-26).

2. Convicting Power. The separated life condemns the world (Hebrews 11:17). The presence of God convicts the guilty (Acts 2:37; Acts 7:54).

IV. That the Glory of God might be Seen. "Show me Thy glory" (Exodus 33:18). "Show me Thy way" leads to "Show me Thy glory." This request God answered with a twofold promise. He promised-

1. The Sight of His Character. "I will make My goodness pass before thee." His glory is His goodness (compare Exodus 33:19-22). In Christ we see the glory of His grace (John 1:17) passing before us. "Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness!" (Psalms 107:8).

2. The Shelter of His Hand. "I will cover thee with My hand." None feel the need of covering more than those who behold His glory (Isaiah 6:5). In the cleft of the rock Moses had this vision. So in the wounded Christ is the glory of God's goodness seen (2 Corinthians 5:19). His glory has been seen in the face of Moses-veiled; in the face of Jesus- revealed; in the face of Stephen-imparted (Exodus 34:29; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Acts 6:15). "Show me thy glory." THE TRANSFIGURED FACE.

Exodus 34:29-35.

There are many who covet the shining face, but who dread and shrink from the soul discipline necessary to produce it. Moses prayed, "Show me Thy glory," and behold, "the skin of his face shone." Does this request not reveal a heart sickness at the glory of this world, and soul-hunger for the glory that satisfieth for ever more? It is an acknowledgment that God only can show His glory. Those who know best the way of God, and who have seen most of His glory, are most anxious to "know His way (chap. Exodus 33:13), and to see His beauty.

I. The Cause of this Shining. "He was with the Lord forty days and forty nights" (Exodus 34:28). Who could spend forty days of unbroken fellowship with God without being transformed into His likeness? Some diamonds after being exposed to the light can retain their brightness, and emit light in the darkness. Moses desired to see His glory. God said, "I will make My goodness pass before thee." While he gazed on His goodness his soul was transfigured, and the glory of it shone in his face. At the Cross of Christ we see the glory of His goodness. Have we taken it in? Does it shine out in our lives? The glory without is the result of fullness within.

II. The Place where the Glory Appeared. "The skin of his face" (Exodus 34:29). The light of God's countenance shone in the countenance of His servant. A well-known missionary in China got the name of Mr. Gloryface because his countenance beamed with a heavenly light. The face shone indicating that the whole character of Moses was to bear testimony to his divine mission. The face is the index of the man, the expression of an inner life and disposition. In the face of Jesus we see the glory of God. Does the world see in our face the evidence that we are made partakers of the divine nature? (2 Corinthians 3:18).

III. The Effect of this Glory had-

1. On Others. "They were afraid to come nigh him" (Exodus 34:30). When He that is glorious in holiness manifests Himself through the consecrated life of His servant, the ungodly are rebuked and alarmed, they are afraid to come nigh. A Christ-like look has often made the sinner blush. Men of the world fear holiness as the serpent does fire.

2. On Himself. "Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone" (Exodus 34:29). His was unconscious shining. As the old negro said, "I can't help it, de light of de Cross makes me shine." "Moses was very meek" (Numbers 12:3), and God made him very mighty. "Uzziah was marvellously helped till he was strong" (2 Chronicles 25:15). The soul that is fully accepted with, and for God will be beautified, and will exercise a holy unconscious influence over others. No human art can paint this glory, no earthly alchemy will ever change the natural into the divine. In the secret of His presence alone can this power be had, this shining must first begin in the heart (2 Corinthians 4:6).

IV. The Glory was Veiled before the People. "Till Moses had done speaking with them he put a veil on his face" (Exodus 34:33). There is much that belongs to the Christian that is easily and joyfully carried that others cannot bear. Those who walk in the light of His face have often experiences of the deeper things of God that have to be veiled from the weak eyes of carnal believers. There arc truths and experiences that can only be revealed to those who are able to bear them. Besides, God may give us blessings and revelations that are not to be communicated to others, "Unspeakable things which it is not possible for a man to utter" (2 Corinthians 12:4).

V. The Glory was Unveiled before the Lord. "When Moses went in before the Lord he took the veil off" (Exodus 34:34). Blessed be His Name, we can always with open countenance behold Him. He perfectly understands the hidden thoughts of the heart. We can talk with Him freely of those things that others cannot see or look on. If the Lord has in mercy given us light which even our fellow Christians cannot yet appreciate, so that it has to be partly veiled, let us beware of coming before the Lord of Light and Glory with the veil on, as if He did not appreciate to the full our new and heavenly experience. "Arise, shine, for thy light is come" (Isaiah 60:1). In the mount of communion it shall be seen and imparted.

CONSECRATION AND ITS RESULTS.

Exodus 40:33-38.

The Tabernacle is a type of the body of Christ (Hebrews 9:11), the sacrifices prefigure His shed blood. In that it was the habitation of God, it is also a figure of our body which is the temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Corinthians 6:19). In these verses we have a golden chain of holy connections.

I. There was the Yielding up of all to God. "They reared up... and set up. So Moses finished the work" (Exodus 40:33). Everything made and prepared for the Tabernacle was now set in its place. Putting every vessel and hanging in their places just meant the giving up of all to God. Many things had been in their own hands for preparation. Now all was handed over as belonging to the Lord. This is the first step to a consecrated life. Yield to Him what is His own. "Yourselves, ye are not your own." "Present yourselves" (Romans 12:1).

II. The Claiming of all by God. "The cloud covered the tent" (Exodus 40:34). This cloud was the symbol of Jehovah's presence. When it covered or rested on the tent it was the assurance to Israel that what had been offered was now accepted and sealed for His use. God demands our all- for what have we that we have not received?-and when our all is sealed to Him our all is accepted by Him, and the seal of the Spirit's presence is as surely given, although we may not yet be conscious of it. "He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him," and also able to use it (Romans 6:13).

III. The Filling. "The glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle" (Exodus 40:34). The order is perfect: surrender, acceptance, possession. The disciples were completely surrendered to the will of God when they waited in the upper room, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. The Tabernacle was filled before it was used. Stephen was a man full of faith and the Holy Ghost. "I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord" (Micah 3:8). The filling of the tent with the glory was the consecration of it on the divine side. We can give-or yield-God alone can consecrate by the filling. To be filled with the Holy Ghost is to be consecrated in the truest and fullest sense. "Be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18).

IV. The Result which Followed the Filling.

1. The Exclusion of Man. "Moses was not able to enter because the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle" (Exodus 40:35). Man's place is outside when God comes in. Self must stand back when the Holy Spirit fills. There is no room or place for the energy of the flesh when the power of the Holy Ghost possesses us. When Christ is enthroned within, then it is "Not I, but Christ" (Galatians 2:20). When we see His glory, then we cry, "Woe is me!"

2. The Divine Leading. The cloud which filled the house became their guide. "When the cloud was taken up, then they went onward" (Exodus 40:36). The same Spirit who fills our souls is to guide us in all the ways and will of God. There is a very vital connection between the filling and the leading (see Matthew 3:16; Matthew 4:1). The cloud was to the tent what the holy anointing is to be to us (1 John 2:27), an abiding, filling, guiding, separating presence. "He leadeth me, O blessed thought!"

3. Witness-Bearing. "The cloud of the Lord was... in the sight of all the house of Israel" (Exodus 40:38). The tent was called "the Tabernacle of Witness." It was a witness to the presence, power, and holiness of God. "Ye are My witnesses," saith the Lord. But we, like the Tabernacle, are no witness till we are filled. A house, or heart, destitute of Christ can never be a witness to Him. A withered branch bears a poor testimony to the fullness of the vine. It is God Himself in us, by the Holy Spirit, that beareth witness. "The Spirit of My Father," Jesus said, "speaketh in you" (Matthew 10:20). The early disciples of Christ were filled with the Holy Ghost before they became witnesses for Him (Acts 1:8). The branch must be filled with sap before the character of the tree can be manifested in fruit.

Leviticus

THE FIVE OFFERINGS

1. THE BURNT-OFFERING

THE DEVOTEDNESS OF CHRIST

Leviticus 1:1-9.

A study of these offerings cannot but deepen our reverence for the Word of God, and magnify our Lord and Saviour whom they represent. We should never overlook the fact that all the particulars given concerning these five offerings, which reveal so many different aspects of Christ's life and work, were given to Moses by Jehovah Himself, who knew the character of Christ and His sufferings beforehand. This burnt-offering is "an approach offering," indicating the way to God.

I. The Character of the Offering. Much depends upon its character and the manner in which it was offered.

1. It must be without blemish (Leviticus 1:3). Not only in the sight of man, but in the sight of God. Christ, as God's beloved Lamb, was without blemish and without spot (1 Peter 1:19). One sin in thought or feeling would have made Him a blemished sacrifice.

2. It must be brought to the door (Leviticus 1:3). The door of access to God has been blocked by sin. It can only be opened through suffering and sacrifice. Jesus Christ came for this purpose. Now He says, Behold I set before you an open door.

3. It must be killed before the Lord (Leviticus 1:5). A blameless life is not enough to atone for sin and remove the barrier from the door. Christ must die, and He must die before the Lord. His death was Jehovah's doing, and not man's. It pleased the Lord to bruise Him, He hath put Him to grief. Atonement has to do with God.

4. It must be laid in order upon the altar (Leviticus 1:8). Everything here must be in order, as everything is typical of Him who came to do the Father's will. The nailing of Christ, our Sacrifice, upon the Cross may be here in figure.

5. Its blood must be sprinkled (Leviticus 1:5). The blameless one becomes the lifeless one. The blood, which signifies life, must be applied both to the altar and to the heart. The sprinkled blood saved the first-born in Egypt (Exod. 12). The blood of sprinkling still speaks (Hebrews 12:24).

6. Its inwards must be washed (Leviticus 1:9). The inwards may suggest the thoughts and feelings, the intents of the heart, that must be clean before God. All was perfect in the Son of the Highest as our Passover Lamb. He could say, Thy law is within My heart, I delight to do Thy will.

7. It must all be laid upon the altar (Leviticus 1:9). All was given to God, He offered Himself wholly and acceptable. A sweet savour unto the Lord (Ephesians 5:2).

II. Some things about the Offerer. We learn from this that-

1. An approach-offering was needed. Because of sin man has forfeited all right and fitness to approach God. Jesus is the Way.

2. This offering was to be voluntary (Leviticus 1:3). Our "own voluntary will" is responsible for our accepting or rejecting God's great offering for our sins. "Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life."

3. There must be personal identification (Leviticus 1:4). "He shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt-offering." This is the touch of appropriation, it is the touch of faith, the leaning of a believing heart.

4. The offerer was accepted in the offering. "And it shall be accepted for him, to make atonement for him." He hath made us accepted in the Beloved (Ephesians 1:6). Glorious Gospel, that by our acceptance of His offering we are made acceptable unto God. Justified freely from all things.

5. This privilege is offered to all. "If any man" (Leviticus 1:2). This is a wide door opened by the infinite mercy of God. Salvation, by the offering of Christ, is brought within the reach of every man who has heard the tidings. He is the propitiation for the whole world.

2. THE MEAT-OFFERING.

THE PERSONAL CHARACTER OF CHRIST.

Leviticus 2:1-16.

There was no blood-shedding in this offering, signifying that the thought of suffering is not connected with it. We have here in type the character and real moral worth of Jesus as the Son of God. In looking at this offering we observe that it was-

1. Of fine flour (Leviticus 2:1). Flour is a product of earth, and may refer to the kinship of Christ with man. It was fine flour. Though He was truly human He was entirely free from the bran of carnal-mindedness. There was no defect, no coarseness of passion or feeling, all was perfectly even and sincere.

2. Mingled with oil (Leviticus 2:4). Oil is an emblem of the Holy Spirit. As the flour was mingled with oil, so the presence and power of the Holy Ghost permeated every act and thought of the Saviour. The process of mingling the human and the divine is a great mystery. Great is the mystery of Godliness.

3. Anointed with oil. "He shall pour oil upon it" (Leviticus 2:1). Oil in it and oil on it suggest the twofold truth of the indwelling and the anointing. The Holy Spirit in us for guidance and teaching, on us for power and service. The Holy Spirit was in Christ from His birth, it was on Him after His baptism at Jordan. So He is in us from our new birth, and on us from the day of our entire consecration to the service of God.

4. Covered with frankincense (Leviticus 2:2-16). The frankincense was "a sweet savour unto the Lord," and speaks of the satisfaction God finds in a Spirit-possessed and Spirit-anointed life. The life of Jesus was lived in and by the power of the Holy Ghost, and so it was well pleasing in His

sight.

5. Baken in the oven. The green ears of corn were dried by the fire and beaten out (Leviticus 2:14). The fire and the beating are most suggestive emblems of the sufferings of Him who was the Holy One, yet the "Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief." He passed through the oven of fiery heat in the garden of Gethsemane. The Shepherd was sorely smitten, He was made a perfect meat-offering through suffering." Ours were the pangs He bore."

6. To have no leaven or honey (Leviticus 2:11). Leaven as a type of sin represents the secret workings of deceit and corruption. Honey may symbolise the flattery and applause of men. Jesus Christ was unmoved either by the one or the other. There was no guile in His mouth, He could say, "I am the Truth."

7. Seasoned with salt (Leviticus 2:13). Salt has a pungent, preserving influence, something opposed to corruption. Such is the effect of the truth as revealed in Jesus upon those who come into contact with it. The everlasting covenant and the unfailing faithfulness of Christ to the will of God the Father is doubtless taught by the salt. He abideth faithful. Have salt in yourselves.

8. Offered unto the Lord (Leviticus 2:2). Flour, oil, frankincense, these three, body, soul, and spirit, all presented to the Lord, and accepted by Him. This is the "approach-offering." Through Jesus Christ we have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Present yourselves (Romans 12:1-2).

9. Food for the offerer (Leviticus 2:10). A portion of this offering was given to Aaron and his sons. "It was most holy." It was the Bread of God and also of man. It takes the most holy to satisfy the heart of God and the soul of man. It became the food of the offerer only after he had offered it to God. Christ can only satisfy our souls as we present Him to God as our Substitute, and plead the merit of His precious Name. God will not have us to feast our souls on less than that which has brought infinite satisfaction to His own heart.

3. THE PEACE-OFFERING.

FELLOWSHIP THROUGH CHRIST.

Leviticus 3.

In the peace-offering we may see Jesus as the Way; in the meat-offering Jesus as the Truth; in the burnt-offering Jesus as the Life. In this chapter the peace-offering is brought before us in three aspects.

1. The Ox (Leviticus 3:1).

2. The Lamb (Leviticus 3:7).

3. The Goat (Leviticus 3:12). As the ox, Christ was strong and patient; as the lamb, meek and gentle; as the goat, despised and rejected. Or these three offerings may represent three different degrees of appreciation of the offerings of Christ by His believing people. In looking into this offering we notice that-

1. It could be male or female (Leviticus 3:1). In our fellowship with God there is neither male nor female-all one in Christ. Children of the living God.

2. It must be without blemish before the Lord (Leviticus 3:1). Whatever man may say or do concerning His Son, God must see no blemish within or without. Even a demon had to confess "Thou are the Holy One of God."

3. There must be identification. "He shall lay His hand upon the head of the offering" (Leviticus 3:2). A peacemaker must be worthy of the trust of both parties. The atoning Blood of Christ, shed for all, justifies only those who by faith identify themselves with it (Romans 5:1).

4. There must be death. "Kill it at the door" (Leviticus 3:2). If we are saved by His life, it is His life from the dead. The life of Christ before the Cross could not save, it was the evidence of His fitness to be the sinner's Substitute before God. Without shedding of blood there is no remission.

5. The blood must be sprinkled on the altar (Leviticus 3:2). The altar signifies the just claims of God. To Him atonement must be made. The propitiation or covering from sin made by the death and resurrection of Christ is wide enough for all. The blood on the altar speaks of God's acceptance of the offering.

6. This offering was made by fire (Leviticus 3:3). The fire of God's judgment has to fall upon it ere peace can come to the erring soul. He suffered for us, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. In Leviticus 3:3-5 we see that all the choice parts of the offering were laid upon the altar. The affections and energies of Christ were all toward His Father's glory.

7. It was a sweet savour unto the Lord (Leviticus 3:5). This does not mean a bare satisfaction, as if only a debt had been paid, but a sweet delight, as one receiving a great gift. God the Father will be glorified through all eternity because of His Son's obedience unto death (Isaiah 42:1).

8. The offerer had a portion of the offering (see chap. Leviticus 7:34). The breast and the shoulder were taken by the Lord and given back to the offerer. This is most significant. The breast tells us of affection, the shoulder of strength; both are given to us through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Love and power come to us by His Cross.

9. It could be eaten on the same day as it was offered (chap. Leviticus 19:5-6). Peace and soul satisfaction some at once when Christ the peace-offering is truly trusted. Instant faith brings immediate salvation.

10. It was to be eaten till the third day (chap. Leviticus 19:6). The third day points on to resurrection. We feed on the love and rest in the strength of our glorified Redeemer till the resurrection morn. The breast and the shoulder will suffice us till the day dawns and the shadows flee away, when we shall see Him as He is, and be for ever with Him. Meanwhile be thankful and adore.

4. THE SIN-OFFERING.

CHRIST OUR SUBSTITUTE.

Leviticus 4:1-12.

Sin, the sinner, and the sin-offering are all vividly before us in this chapter. Ruin and remedy might be written over it. "If a priest that is anointed do sin." Yes, it is possible even for an anointed one to sin, but, blessed be God, provision is made for such (1 John 2:1). But when religious teachers sin,

it is like the going wrong of the town clock. Others axe apt to be led astray by their example. As Trapp says, "The sins of teachers are teachers of sin." The way of life is a revelation from God. A ladder let down from Heaven. So this sin-offering may be mentioned here, because it is the lowest step of the ladder, and the first with which we as sinners have to do. Like every other sacrifice-

1. It must be blameless (Leviticus 4:3). The smallest physical deformity unfitted the ox or the lamb for the altar. The Lord Jesus was perfectly blameless in the eyes of the heart-searching God. In all His close and continuous contact with men and earthly things He remained untainted by the corruptions of lust and of the world. He could touch the uncle-in and yet be untouched with uncleanness. He was holy, harmless, separate from sinners.

2. There had to be imputation and identification (Leviticus 4:4). The offerer laid his hand on the head of the offering, identifying himself with the sins imputed to the sacrifice, and also with the sacrifice itself. The laying of our sins on Jesus is not our act, but Jehovah's. "He laid on Him the iniquity of us all. It pleased Jehovah to bruise Him." We confess our sins on Him, and by faith lay our hand of appropriation upon Him. He gave Himself for us.

3. The life must be taken. "Kill the bullock before the Lord" (Leviticus 4:4). The death of the offering had to do with Jehovah. The death of Christ was not an accident, neither was it only an example to us of patience in suffering. It was a death demanded by God. So His life was offered to God as a substitute for others. He died before the Lord. He offered Himself without spot unto God.

4. The fat was burnt on the altar (Leviticus 4:8-10). This fat was a sweet savour unto the Lord (Leviticus 4:31). The fat is frequently referred to, and occupies a prominent place in connection with the sin-offering. It may represent the riches and preciousness of Christ as God sees it all yielded up as an offering to Him on the altar of the Cross, well pleasing.

5. The body was carried outside. The whole bullock shall he carry forth without the camp and burn him (Leviticus 4:12). Human reason of itself would never have suggested a change of procedure like this. Why should this offering be burnt outside the camp, and not on the altar like the others? Because it is typical of Him who was made a curse for us, and who suffered without the gate (Hebrews 13:11-12), and from whom the Father's face for a season had to be turned away (Matthew 27:46). God cannot look upon sin, but He looks with compassion on the sinner.

6. The blood must be sprinkled. "The priest shall sprinkle of the blood seven times before the Lord" (Leviticus 4:6). The order in which the blood was sprinkled is sublimely beautiful, and perfectly consistent with the way of salvation as taught in the New Testament. It was sprinkled-(1) Before the Lord. (2) Before the vail. (3) On the altar of incense. (4) Then all that was left was poured out at the bottom of the altar of burnt-offering. The priest sprinkled the blood on his way out, not as he was going in on this instance, teaching us that the way has been made from God out to sinful men. Salvation is of the Lord. But on our approach to God we meet the poured out blood, first of all at the altar, which maketh atonement for the soul. Typical of Him who poured out His soul unto death on the Cross of Calvary- 1. At the Altar of Sacrifice we have atonement.

2. At the Altar of Incense we have intercession.

3. The blood before the vail speaks of access.

4. The blood sprinkled seven times before the Lord indicates a perfect standing in His presence. Thus we have boldness to enter into the Holiest by the Blood of Jesus. Let us draw near (Hebrews 10:19-22).

7. The blessed results. The acceptance by God of the blood of the sin-offering brings within the reach of every believer-

1. The forgiveness of sin. As concerning his sin, it shall be forgiven him (Leviticus 4:26). Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin (Romans 4:7-8). It is a blood-bought pardon.

2. The assurance of this forgiveness. "It shall." This is the promise of Him who knows the full value of the Blood of His own beloved Son. We are saved by His Blood, and assured by His Word. In the blood-shedding and blood-sprinkling of God's own Son there is provision made for the sins of ignorance (Leviticus 4:2), as well as for the sins that come to our knowledge (Leviticus 4:28). "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

5. THE TRESPASS-OFFERING.

THE ADAPTATION OF CHRIST'S WORK TO THE SINNER'S NEED.

Leviticus 5; 6:1-7.

The voice of the trespass-offering to man is: "He hath certainly trespassed against the Lord" (Leviticus 5:19). In connection with this offering individual sins rather than persons are prominently dealt with. Let us look at-

I. The need. "All we like sheep have gone astray." So a trespass -offering is needed. The sins mentioned here are cardinal ones, and prove that all have sinned.

1. The sin of silence when we ought to speak (Leviticus 5:1). Every privilege of witnessing for the truth that is neglected brings guilt. Silence may be sometimes golden, but it may also be criminal. Silence gives consent. How often do we Christians indulge in this guilty silence for Christ because of the fear of man? "I say unto you, Fear God."

2. The sin of defilement through unclean associations. "If a soul touch any unclean thing," &c. (Leviticus 5:2-3). The hands and the feet may touch things unclean without incurring moral pollution, but not so with the soul. It is our fellowship with the unclean that corrupts the life. Even the touch of sympathy and desire will bring defilement and condemnation.

3. The sin of ignorance, in breaking the commands of the Lord. "If a soul commit any of these things which are forbidden, though he wist it not, yet is he guilty" (Leviticus 5:17). Neither our reason nor our conscience determine what is sin, but the Word of God. Inadvertence or negligence on our part to the revealed will of God is in itself sinful. Although Paul says he was forgiven because he did it ignorantly (1 Timothy 1:13), yet forgiveness was needed all the same. To say I am not conscious of sin does not imply that I am free from guilt (Psalms 19:12).

4. The sin of defrauding our fellowmen (chap. Leviticus 6:1-2). All sin is against God. He holds the man guilty who deceives in any way his neighbour. The apostle realised this when he said, "I am debtor both to the Jew and to the Greek," &c. Defraud no man. How much owest thou?

II. The provision. The variety of the offerings allowed, according to the poverty of the guilty offerers, reveals the adaptability and all-sufficiency of the sacrifice to the need of all. The expense of the offering was reduced to the "tenth part of an ephah of fine flour" (Leviticus 5:7-11). A handful of flour was within the reach of the poorest. The grace of God which bringeth salvation to all men hath appeared. No matter how poor the offerers may be, the full value and power of the sacrifice was imputed to them. Our faith may be weak, poor indeed, but it lays hold on a strong Redeemer, the mighty to save. We may have but a poor estimate of the worth of Christ as our trespass-offering, and yet be as perfectly forgiven as those who are rich in faith, giving glory to God. There are no degrees in our justification before Him. All these various offerings represent the one sacrifice for the trespasses of the people. Associated with it we have these thoughts-

1. Substitution. In every case the offering was for the offerer. "Christ loved us, and gave Himself for us" (Ephesians 5:2). He died for our sins.

2. Restoration (chap. Leviticus 6:1-2). Our Lord Jesus Christ, by the offering of Himself, has restored that which sin and unbelief had taken away. Surely if we are dependent upon the trespass-offering for our restoration unto God we shall willingly restore to our fellowmen what we have fraudulently taken away from them. Freely ye have received, freely give.

3. Compensation. "He shall make amends, and add the fifth part" (Leviticus 5:16). We are to give compensation to our brother man for loss through our acts, because there is in this offering as a type of Christ, not only the payment of a debt, but in a deep, unfathomable sense, the full compensating of God for loss sustained through the ruin of man by sin. Hallelujah, what a Saviour! The death of Christ has made amends unto God for our guilt, and added the "fifth part" of a glorious Church to the eternal praise of His holy Name.

III. The condition. The provision made by the trespass-offering availed nothing where there was no-

1. Confession. "He shall confess that he hath sinned in that thing" (Leviticus 5:5). That thing implies that the confession must come down to particular things. The trespass-offering deals with these, and may have special reference to the sins of the backslider, which must be confessed in detail before restoration can come. Then there must be- 2. Acceptance. He must be willing to accept God's only way of deliverance from guilt, and be obedient to His Word.

IV. The promise. "And it shall be forgiven him" (Leviticus 5:10). This verse contains a double promise, giving a double assurance.

1. Atonement made for him. The priest shall make an atonement for him. This work is outside of the offerer. This Christ has done for us (Romans 5:11).

2. Forgiveness extended to him. Justified freely by His grace. "Through this Man (Christ) is offered unto you the forgiveness of sins" (Acts 13:38).

AARON AND HIS SONS.

Leviticus 8.

Aaron and his sons very fitly represent Christ and His servants.

1. They were called with him: "Take Aaron and his sons with him."

2. They were related by birth, "sons." So we have been called in Christ, and born from above.

3. They were identical in dress (Leviticus 8:13). The righteousness of God which clothed our great High Priest is upon all that believe.

4. They were associated in service (Leviticus 8:27). We are co-workers together with Him.

5. They received the same anointing (Leviticus 8:30). Baptised with the same spirit. Aaron's sons were all servants.

Let us see in this chapter how they were made meet for their holy work. They were-

1. Washed. "Moses washed them with water" (Leviticus 8:6). They did not even wash themselves. Wash Thou me, and I shall be whiter than the snow. Before the washing comes the stripping. All pride and self-sufficiency laid aside (Acts 2:37). He loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own Blood.

2. Clothed. "Moses put coats upon them" (Leviticus 8:13). It is suggested to us that this also was done for them. Adam and Eve were reckoned naked until God made coats of skin and covered them (Genesis 3:21). The wedding garment was not bought, it was put on as a gift. Covered with the robe of His righteousness.

3. Girded. "Moses girded them with girdles." The girdle speaks of service. The putting on of the girdle was their call to a life of activity in the work of the Lord (John 13:4). Let your loins be girded. Ye serve the Lord Christ. The girdle of many of God's people seem to hang very loosely-off and on.

4. Separated. "Moses put the blood upon their ears, hands, feet, and upon the altar" (Leviticus 8:24). Indicating that, as the ear, hand, and foot were connected by the blood with the altar, they were separated for God. The blood-tipped members are as much the property of God as the altar is. The blood on the ear, &c., meant the same as the blood on the altar. God always claims for Himself those whom He hath washed, clothed, and girded (Hebrews 13:12).

5. Supplied. "The offering was put upon his sons' hands" (Leviticus 8:26-27). The separated one is sure to get his hands filled with and for service. He never sends us a warfare on our own charges. This is the true thought of consecration. Cleansed and clothed, and the hands filled with acceptable offerings unto God. Who then is willing to fill his hands this day? (see 1 Chronicles 29:5, margin). No man, saith the Lord, shall come before Me empty handed. Empty-handed service is the cause of so much failure in Christian work.

6. Anointed. "Moses took the anointing oil and sanctified his sons and his sons' garments" (Leviticus 8:30). This anointing oil is doubtless typical of the Holy Spirit, and teaches us the secret of holiness, how the garments of our outer everyday life may be "Holiness unto the Lord." To be holy is to be whole within (Romans 8:29), and blameless without. This anointing answers to Pentecost after the atoning and cleansing Blood of the Cross. Have you received this same anointing which teacheth you all things? (1 John 2:27).

7. Commissioned. "Therefore shall ye keep the charge of the Lord" (Leviticus 8:35). The charge of the Lord is: "Preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). Ye shall be witnesses unto Me. We have been saved to serve (Acts 9:15-16). In keeping this charge the sons of Aaron had to be obedient to the moving of the Pillar of Cloud (Numbers 9:19). "A charge to keep I have." "Lord, as Thou art able to keep that which I have committed unto Thee, may I be enabled to keep that which Thou hast committed unto me." THE GLORY OF THE LORD.

Leviticus 9.

We have seen that in the previous chapters there is much said about various offerings and sacrifices, all of which indicate, in one way or other, the opening up of a way whereby man as a sinner may approach God and find His favour. What could be more graciously beautiful than the promise of God's glory revealed after all the sacrifices have been made, and that this revelation of Himself should be associated with the eighth day? (Leviticus 9:1). The eighth day is always the beginning, or the first day of a new week, and so brings us into remembrance of the resurrection day of our Lord and Saviour, and of the manifestation of His glory, the glory of His power, after the great sacrifice had been made.

1. The glorious promise. "The glory of the Lord shall appear unto you" (Leviticus 9:6). It has always been His desire to manifest Himself to man, and that man should know Him. For this great end Christ came. He could say, "The glory which Thou hast given Me, I have given them." This glory includes the glory of His long-suffering mercy and self-sacrificing love.

2. The needful preparation. Before the Lord in His glory could appear the people must have for themselves-

1. A Holy Mediator. Aaron as a priest must first make an atonement for himself (Leviticus 9:7). He who would come between God and man must himself be accepted by God. Christ is our Priest, ordained for men in things pertaining to God (Hebrews 5:1-3).

2. A Perfect Sacrifice. It is not without due significance that the four special sacrifices aforementioned (chaps. 1, 2, 3, 4) should all be offered on that day in which the Lord was to appear (Leviticus 9:1-4). As we have already observed, all these offerings taken together present one full view of the perfect moral character and precious atoning death of God's beloved Son. The glory of God can only be revealed to those who have a true appreciation of the Saviour's sufferings. I beseech of thee show me Thy glory.

3. The grand result. This may be summed up in the following expressive words-

1. Blessing. "Aaron lifted up his hands, and blessed them" (Leviticus 9:22). This implied the consciousness of forgiveness. Accepted through the offering. Hath He not blessed us with all blessing in the heavenlies in Christ?

2. Glory. "The glory of the Lord appeared unto all the people" (Leviticus 9:23). This also shall be our portion when He appears. We shall see Him as He is, and we shall be glorified together. We have got the blessing now through His great atoning death; we shall see this glory when we are changed and translated into His presence.

3. Judgment. "There came a fire out from the Lord," &c. This consuming fire coming out in the presence of the people suggests the terrible judgment of God, whether it falls on the altar or on the sinner. Our God, the God of glory, is also a consuming fire. This is the judgment that will come upon the wicked whom He shall destroy with the brightness of His coming (2 Thessalonians 2:8). Solemn words-think of them.

4. Adoration. "All the people fell on their faces" (Leviticus 9:24). What could be more fitting? As the glory of His power is manifested we can only bow our faces and worship. Salvation through Christ leads to being glorified together. The glory of His grace and justice leads to the shout of praise and the bowing down of an adoring heart (2 Chronicles 7:1-3). Let us each ask, Has the Lord respect unto my offering?

NADAB AND ABIHU.

Leviticus 10:1-5.

Miracles are not sufficient to convince men of sin, and to put them in a right attitude for worshipping God acceptably. Nadab and his priestly brother had just a little ago seen the glory of God, and the miraculous fire falling from Heaven consuming the sacrifice upon the altar, and would be among those who reverently bowed and worshipped (see chap. 9), yet because of their pride and irreverence they were smitten with judgment. Surely there is a solemn warning here for all the people of God. We notice- 1. A great privilege. They were the "sons of Aaron." They had a-

1. Godly father. To be the son of a saint is a priceless boon, but a man may be the son of a divine and yet be the servant of the devil.

2. Religious upbringing. From their infancy they were familiar with holy things, and had been trained up in the admonition of the Lord.

3. Good profession. They were recognised by others as the servants of God. It is possible to bear the name of Christian, to take part in Christian work, and yet in spirit to know not the holiness of God or the awfulness of sin.

2. A presumptuous act. "They offered strange fire before the Lord." They-

1. Offered fire of their own making. This the Lord had forbidden (Leviticus 10:1). Their offering was like the prayer of the Pharisee (Luke 18:11), or like the sacrifice of Cain. Only a manifestation of self-conceit and rebellion.

2. Rejected the gift of God. The fire that burned on the altar was the gift of God. This they should have used, but this they despised (chap. Leviticus 16:12). How much better are those who seek the favour of God on the ground of their own goodness, and utterly reject Christ as the gift of God? They seek to establish their own righteousness, but have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.

3. An unexpected doom. "There went out fire from the Lord and devoured them." Waxen professors have need to beware of the fire. They-

1. Perished at the hand of Him whom they professed to serve. This is an early version of the story of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5). Not zeal without knowledge so much as presumption without

fear.

2. Perished by that which they rejected. Fire from the Lord. The rejected stone shall grind to powder (Luke 20:17-18). Christ Jesus, the gift of God, is now appointed Judge of all. To reject Him now as offered to us on the altar of the Cross will be to meet Him then as a consuming fire.

4. A solemn sight. They died before the Lord. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord." They-

1. Were carried out. They were able of themselves to go in, but unable of themselves to come out. There is no atonement for the sin of presumption (Numbers 15:30). He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck shall perish without remedy.

2. Were carried out in their coats. Their priestly garbs did not protect them. Coats of profession will not save. "I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the holy" (Ecclesiastes 8:10). The man who builds his house on the sand is sure to perish on the ruin of it, If our religion is only in our coats it will certainly be buried with us.

5. An important lesson. It is the gracious purpose of God to be-

1. Sanctified in us. "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh Me." Sanctify therefore the Lord in your heart, for He looketh not upon the outward appearance, but upon the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. The pure in heart shall see God.

2. Glorified through us. "Before the people will I be glorified." It is ours to be still and know that He is God, that He may be exalted among the heathen (Psalms 46:10). Let us magnify the Lord together. Glorify Thou Thy Son in me.

YE SHALL BE HOLY.

Leviticus 11

Holiness, or separation from the unclean, is the burden of this chapter. After a full atonement has been made, and the Lord has revealed Himself to His people, as we have seen in chapter 9, it surely becomes His redeemed ones to be imitators of God as dear children (Ephesians 5:1). This is the desire of His heart, "Ye shall be holy, for I am holy." We cannot be followers of the Holy One and take pleasure in those things which are unclean in His sight. We shall look at-

1. The warning given. "They are unclean to you, they are an abomination unto you." Other people may eat of those unclean animals, but it shall not be so with you. Ye are My people, redeemed by blood, and separated for My Name's glory, so your manner of living must not be after the indiscriminating fashion of the ungodly. The lesson for us is plain.

2. The distinctions made. God Himself distinguishes what is clean or unclean for His people. The clean animals are known by their feet and mouth, they part the hoof and chew the cud. What God hath cleansed, that call not common or unclean (Acts 10:12). The feet and mouth marks point to our walk and word as evidence of our being clean before the Lord. Many professing Christians are sorely troubled with the "foot and mouth disease," they delight not to walk in His ways or to speak in His Name. "All fowls (flying things) that creep shall be an abomination unto you" (Leviticus 11:20). All those who have power to rise up into the heavenly places, and who spend their time in crawling on the earth, are in an unclean state, and are abominable in the sight of God. "I would

that thou wert cold or hot; because thou art neither cold nor hot I will spue thee out of My mouth" (Revelation 3:15-16). "Thou shalt not eat or become a partaker of any abominable thing" (Deuteronomy 14:3). Those gifted with the wings of faith become unclean when they get among the "creeping things."

3. The reasons urged. There are several powerful arguments here given why we as God's redeemed people should live a separated life. Because of-

1. His sovereign claim over us. "I am the Lord your God" (Leviticus 11:44). This is a blessed revelation indeed. "I am your God." Did not the risen Saviour say, "I ascend unto My Father and your Father, unto My God and your God?" When ye pray, say, "Our Father."

2. What He hath done for us. "I am the Lord that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 11:45). We have been delivered out of the hand of our enemies that we might serve Him without fear in holiness (Luke 1:74-75). Redeemed by His Blood, and the dominion of sin over us and in us broken up.

3. His immaculate character. "I am holy" (Leviticus 11:45). He is perfect in holiness. The wholeness of His character is eternally and unchangeably complete in all His attributes and works.

4. Our relationship to Him. "I am your God, ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy" (Leviticus 11:45). "Ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves" (Leviticus 11:44). How can two walk together except they be agreed? "What communion hath light with darkness? Ye are the temple of the living God. As God hath said I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves, and perfect holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 6:14-18). THE CLEANSING OF THE LEPER.

Leviticus 13; 14:1.

Leprosy, as a type, brings out the terrible nature of sin. Its seat is deep down, not only in the head where it appears, but in the hidden man of the heart. Making the whole life barren and unfruitful, like the spring at Jericho (2 Kings 2:19). Sin, like leprosy, afflicts the person himself, the garments he wears, and the house where he lives. These aptly suggest spirit, soul, and body- 1. The inner person, of the heart.

2. The outer garments, of the life.

3. The common house, of our daily associations. Let us look at the disease and the cure- 1. The character of the disease. "It is a plague of leprosy." It-

1. Makes unclean.. He is a leprous man, he is unclean (chap. Leviticus 13:44). One spot was enough to make him utterly unclean. Sin is such an awful thing that to offend in one point is to be guilty of all. If we have not continued in all things we are under the curse (Galatians 3:10). If the disease was only skin deep it was not reckoned uncleanness. Infirmities are not sins.

2. Brings judgment. "The priest shall pronounce him utterly unclean" (chap. Leviticus 13:44). Condemnation came by the Word of God's representative. He that believeth not is condemned already. From the judgment of the priest there was no appeal. God's pronouncement is always associated with sin. No man can alter it.

3. Brings separation. "He shall dwell alone without the camp" (chap. Leviticus 13:46). Outside the camp meant outside the sphere of Divine fellowship. As long as he is a leper he can have no communion with God or His people (Ephesians 2:12). Uncleanness of heart unfits for the enjoyment of His presence. The pure in heart shall see God. What a picture of one dead in sin, dead while he lives, dead to God, dead to the enjoyment of holy things, dead to a life of usefulness!

2. It must be confessed. There were four things by which a leper was known, and which reveal the true condition of a sinner before God. His- 1. Clothes were rent. This indicated misery and nakedness.

2. Head was bare. He was defenceless and exposed. No covering from the vengeance of a burning sun.

3. Lip was covered. Indicating that his breath was polluted, and that his mouth was stopped as far as self-justification was concerned.

4. Cry was "UNCLEAN." The priest pronounced him unclean. He believed him, and confessed that it was true. He accepted his condemnation and took his proper place. Go thou and do likewise.

3. The manner of restoration. As the leprosy shows the sin, so the way of restoration reveals the Divine method of salvation. Note the various acts. The-

1. Out-going of the priest. "The priest shall go forth" (chap. Leviticus 14:3). The leper cannot come in, so the mediator goes out. The sinner cannot of himself find his way back into the presence of God, but Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, went forth to seek and to save. The Shepherd goes out to seek the lost sheep.

2. Offering made. "Then shall the priest command to take for him two birds" (chap. Leviticus 14:4-6). The priest goes forth, then the sacrifice is made. Christ came out from the presence of the Father, then gave Himself a ransom for all. The killing of the one bird, and the dipping of the other in its blood, and letting it fly to the heavens is sublimely typical of Christ's death and resurrection, and of His ascending into Heaven by His own Blood. A new and living way.

3. Sprinkling of the blood. "He shall sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from the leprosy seven times" (chap. Leviticus 14:7). The leper must come into personal contact with the sacrifice made for him. The blood denotes the value of the life offered; this being sprinkled by the priest signifies that the application of Christ's death to the sinner is God's work. I will sprinkle you, and ye shall be clean. He who imputed our sins to Christ can alone impute righteousness to us.

4. Word of the priest. "The priest shall pronounce him clean." He alone who pronounced the leper unclean can pronounce him clean. He who condemns the unbeliever, justifies the believer in Jesus. It is God that justifieth. When the poor leper had the justifying word of the priest, it mattered nothing to him what the opinions of others or his own feelings were.

5. Personal cleansing. "He that is cleansed shall wash his clothes and shave off his hair," &c. (chap. Leviticus 14:8). The cleansing through the Blood of Jesus should lead us to put away all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. Those justified before God by faith should justify themselves by their works.

6. Restoration. "After that he shall come into the camp" (chap. Leviticus 14:8). After what? After the sprinkling, the washing, and the shaving. It is our uncleanness that keeps us out of the camp of communion. What fellowship hath light with darkness? When cleansed from sin there is nothing to hinder our drawing nigh unto God.

7. Consecration (Leviticus 13:14-18). The blood and the oil put upon the ear, hand, and foot betoken redemption and consecration. After the blood of atonement (the work of Christ) comes the oil of anointing, the work of the Holy Spirit. That which was bought by the blood is claimed by the Holy Spirit. The rest of the oil was put upon his head (Leviticus 13:29). Indicating that the cleansed one should also have the poured out Spirit upon him. The tongues of fire sat upon each of them (Acts 2:3). THE DAY OF ATONEMENT.

THE WORK OF CHRIST.

Leviticus 16.

The Day of Atonement was Israel's great day. All the vessels and services derived their value from it. It was the most solemn day in all the year to the high priest. The day of Christ's humiliation was the most solemn day in all the history of His eternal existence. In Leviticus 16:30 we have the key to the whole chapter. There is- 1. The work: "an atonement for you."

2. The worker: "the priest."

3. The time: "on that day."

4. The purpose: "make you clean before the Lord." This great day was the-

1. Day of needful humiliation. The garments of glory and beauty had to be laid aside for the plain "holy linen coat" (Leviticus 16:4). He could not represent the people before God until atonement was made. Christ made Himself of no reputation (see Php_2:7-8). Though in the form of a servant, his character was as "holy linen" (Hebrews 7:26).

2. Day of special sacrifice (Leviticus 16:5-11). The priest had first to offer a sacrifice for himself. His own standing had to be secured before God. Christ being the Son, needed not this (Hebrews 7:27). The two goats constituted one offering, representing the two aspects of Christ's death. The one went up (margin 9), the other went away (Leviticus 16:12; John 1:29)-atonement and substitution.

3. Day of solemn imputation. "Aaron shall confess all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat" (Leviticus 16:21-22). The goat became a curse for them (Galatians 3:13), was led into a land not inhabited (Mark 15:34), bearing their iniquities in its body (1 Peter 2:24; Isa. 53).

4. Day of nearness to God (Leviticus 16:12-15). On that day the vail was opened. Christ's death removed the last barrier (Luke 23:45). The way into the holiest is now manifest (Hebrews 9:8). The blood was sprinkled upon and before the mercy-seat, signifying-(1) a complete acceptance; (2) a

secure standing (Ephesians 1:6-7).

5. Day of real affliction. "This shall be a statute for ever, ye shall afflict your souls" (Leviticus 16:29). Sin is no trifle, neither is atonement. Frivolous hearts will always treat it lightly. The awful atonement must be accepted with convicted and broken hearts (John 16:8; Acts 2:37).

6. Day of perfect rest. "Ye shall do no work at all" (Leviticus 16:29; see chap. Leviticus 23:30). On the day of atonement the priest did all the work. Jesus did it all (John 19:30). Proud man would fain do something to help himself to God, but that something can only bring death (Ephesians 2:8).

7. Day of blessed experience. "Clean from all your sins before the Lord" (Leviticus 16:30). It is ours to accept by faith what He has done, this brings salvation (Acts 13:39). And to believe what He hath said, this brings assurance (1 John 5:13). If the death of Christ has not made us clean before the Lord it has availed us nothing (John 13:8).

HOLY LIVING.

Leviticus 19.

"O Lord, I bare an aching heart, Ease me of sin, whate'er tho smart; Without, within, I would be pure, Lord, hear my cry! Lord, work my cure! I know not all I ask in this, But give, O give me holiness." For the purpose of practical holiness Christ's sermon on the Mount is not more direct and suitable than the teaching we have in the message recorded in this chapter. It opens with that oft-repeated demand, "Ye shall be holy," coupled with that ever gracious revelation, "For I the Lord your God am holy" The holy life is the most useful of all lives, the holy man is the most practical of all men. In this portion we have brought before us- 1. The characteristics of a holy life. Here are the features of a holy man. He-

1. Honours his father and mother (Leviticus 19:3). A very needful suggestion to young converts. It has been said that "Piety begins at home." While it should not remain there, yet our Christian character will have little influence if it has not first of all been rooted in the home life.

2. Has nothing to do with idols (Leviticus 19:4). Nothing is allowed to take the place of God in his affections. He seeks first the kingdom of God, and has more real joy in the presence of God than in company with any one else. As dearly beloved ones, they flee from idolatry (1 Corinthians 10:14).

3. Makes his sacrifices willingly (Leviticus 19:5). He willingly suffers loss for Christ's sake, he delights to do the will of God at any cost. What may be a great hardship to others is a joy to him.

4. Remembers the poor (Leviticus 19:9-10). He follows the example of his Master, and preaches the Gospel to the poor. He also realizes that the poor have a claim on his possessions, and that he is but a steward of the mercies of God.

5. Deals honestly with his fellowmen (Leviticus 19:11). Even if his business does not succeed he will rather suffer than lie or defraud a neighbour He carries a just balance in his conscience, and will not be guilty of a dishonest silence. His service is not mere eye service.

6. Will not dishonour the Name of God (Leviticus 19:12). He is more jealous for the Name of his God than for his own He is willing rather to be made of no reputation than that the honour of his

Lord and Master should be tarnished

7. Considers his servants (Leviticus 19:13) Wages are paid when due, and paid in a manner that makes the receiver feel that it is a pleasure for him to pay them.

8. Will not take advantage of a weaker brother (Leviticus 19:14). It is so natural to be impatient with the deaf, with those whose faculties of apprehension may be dull, and by our unguarded walk to put a stumbling block in the way of those whose eyesight may not be quite so clear as ours. He remembers (Deuteronomy 27:18).

9. Is impartial in his manner. His interest in the Lord's poor ones is just as great as in those who occupy the chief seats in the public sanctuary. The impartial love of God is in his heart. He fears God and honours all men.

10. Is no tale-bearer (Leviticus 19:16). The gossip that must enter his ear finds its grave there. Being of a faithful spirit he conceals the matter (Proverbs 11:13). He knows that the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity, so he bridles it.

11. Rebukes the erring in love (Leviticus 19:17). There is no hate in his heart to any brother, or to any mortal. Such murderous feelings have no place in him. Yet at times he speaks sharply, and is faithful in rebuking sin, because he loves the truth and the erring one (2 Timothy 2:4).

12. Does not avenge, or keep up a grudge (Leviticus 19:18). He does not recompense evil, but waits on the Lord (Proverbs 20:22). He leaves vengeance to whom it belongs (Romans 12:19), and by the grace of God is enabled to bear no grudge to his enemies.

13. Distinguishes between things that differ (Leviticus 19:19). He does not practise the mingling of diverse kinds. He knows that he cannot serve God and mammon, and that light and darkness will not mix, and that there is no concord between Christ and Belial (2 Corinthians 6:14-16).

14. Disregards unholy methods (Leviticus 19:31). For success in the work of God he depends entirely upon the power and wisdom of the Spirit of God. He has no faith in the familiar spirits of men or of devils, and will not trust the wizardly methods of ungodly worldlings.

2. The great incentive of a holy life. Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy (Leviticus 19:1). I Jehovah your God am holy. Therefore- 1. Ye shall be holy. "Walk worthy of God in all well-pleasing" (Colossians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:12).

2. My grace is sufficient for thee. "My God shall supply all your need" (Php_4:19).

3. Fear not in the time of trial. "Lo, I am with you alway" (Matthew 28:20).

4. Serve with gladness. "Ye shall receive a reward" (1 Corinthians 3:14) 5. Be imitators of God (Ephesians 5:1, rv.) "I in them, and thou in Me" (John 17:23) CHARACTERISTICS OF A SON OF AARON.

Leviticus 21. The priesthood of all believers is beautifully and clearly taught in the sons of Israel's High Priest. Being born of God into the privilege of sonship, they have this liberty of access into His presence as priests. In this chapter we observe some of the marks which distinguish a son of Aaron. Let us see whether we as sons and priests bear these distinctions or not. He is-

1. A chief man among the people (v 4). Not an ordinary man, his birth has separated him from the common herd of humanity. He is acknowledged by all as belonging to a different family, being connected with their great high priest Does our relationship to Christ, the great High Priest, so lift us up into such holy dignity as to be noted among the people as "chief men?" "A man of God."

2. Not distinguished by bodily marks (Leviticus 21:5). The priests of Rome in this, as in many other things, contradict Scripture by making baldness upon their heads. The marks of a child of God are deeper down in the meekness and lowliness of Christ. "My sheep hear My voice, they know Me, and I give unto them eternal life" (John 10:27-28).

3. One who offers the bread of God (Leviticus 21:8). This may refer to the shew bread that was given to God, and claimed by Him as "His bread," and afterwards given by Him to the priest. So the priest is represented as giving to God that which satisfied Him. Then He satisfies the priest with bread, the bread of God. Then as priests we may, through our ministry, give to God that which is the bread of satisfaction.

4. Anointed with oil (Leviticus 21:10-12). The crown of the holy oil of his God is upon him. The anointing oil is an emblem of the Holy Spirit. To be baptised with the Holy Spirit is to be crowned with honour and glory. How many of God's sons and priests are as yet uncrowned because they have not (through their unbelief) received this crowning blessing (Acts 1:8). Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? (Acts 19:2). The crown tells of a kingly priesthood.

5. Free from profane associations (Leviticus 21:13-15). Being a separated man, what may be expedient in the case of others is not allowable in his. His life is not governed by his own will, tastes, or feelings, but by the Word of God. The purpose of the great High Priest is the ruling motive of his life. "I delight to do Thy will, O God, Thy law is within my heart" (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

6. Without visible blemish (Leviticus 21:17-21). Of course the blemishes here referred to are physical, but suggest certain moral and physical defects that prevent men from having fellowship with God. Unbelief and cold-heartedness are terrible blemishes, those that come to God with them are only mocking Him. A blemished offering He will not accept, it must be perfect to be accepted (Leviticus 22:21). He has made provision whereby the man of God may be perfect (2 Timothy 3:17). That implies being in a perfect condition to offer acceptable service unto God. This is a perfection within the reach of every Christian (2 Corinthians 13:9). We are living a blemished life if we are not so perfect. Be ye therefore perfect and entire, wanting nothing (James 1:4).

7. One who eats the bread of God (Leviticus 21:22). His soul is satisfied with God's provision. He feasts on holy things which no stranger can receive (Leviticus 22:10). Once we were strangers and foreigners, but now fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God (Ephesians 2:19). Fellow-priests, are we living up to our holy and blessed calling?

HOLY THINGS FOR HOLY ONES.

Leviticus 22:1-16.

As Aaron is a type of Christ, so his sons represent all who are born of God. All God's sons are priests, although all do not live up to their priestly privileges. These "holy things," so frequently referred to in this chapter (twelve times), are fit and proper emblems of the "spiritual things" freely

given us of God, but only fully enjoyed by those who are wholly yielded to God. These "holy things" are God's provision for His holy ones.

There are several important lessons we might learn from what is said about them. That-

1. Dealing with holy things in an unholy fashion brings death (Leviticus 22:3). The unclean cannot pass over this holy way. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:14) From the worldly-wise and the self-complacent these things are hidden, and our gracious Lord thanked the Father that it was so. The swinish soul cannot appreciate angels' food. Let us take care how we handle spiritual things lest we eat and drink judgment unto ourselves, thus making the Gospel a savour of death.

2. The unclean cannot eat holy things. "He shall not eat of the holy things until he be clean" (Leviticus 22:4). We must be cleansed from sin before we can have any appetite or capacity for the enjoyment of heavenly and spiritual things. He will not cast His pearls before swine. Holiness and uncleanness are opposites. He that loveth the darkness hateth the light.

3. Holy things are the food of the holy. "He shall eat the holy things because it is his food" (Leviticus 22:7). The holy man can find no food in the mere pleasures of the world, the things that enchant the ungodly have no attraction for him; his heart is set on heavenly things. Communion with God is to him more delightful than his daily food, and the salvation of sinners more precious than silver or gold.

4. No stranger or hired servant could eat these holy things (Leviticus 22:10). The stranger represents those who know not God, who have not believed in His Son. The hired servant denotes that class of professing Christians who desire to make gain out of godliness, who serve the Lord for personal profit. Such religious mercenaries have their reward, but they never taste the holy things.

5. Those bought by the priest, or born into his house, could eat of the holy things (Leviticus 22:11). To be bought or born into the priestly family gave the right to these holy privileges. Bought by the blood of Christ, and born of God, brings us into the family of God, and gives us the right and fitness for the enjoyment of the unsearchable riches of Christ, those holy things so freely given us of God.

6. Unholy relationships disqualify for eating these holy things (Leviticus 22:12). An unequal yoke often destroys the appetite for spiritual things. The priest's daughter had a right by birth, but she disqualified herself by marrying a stranger. We may be Christians by a new birth, and yet through our worldly and sinful associations be quite unfit to receive the things of Christ as revealed by the Holy Spirit. But by returning to the Father's house the privilege was restored (Luke 15:18).

7. Eating holy things unwittingly did not profit (Leviticus 22:14). It is quite possible to read and speak of those great and precious holy things and yet be an utter stranger to the power of them. The truth may be on the heart and never become assimilated with the life, not being mixed with faith. A man is only unwittingly dealing with the exceeding great and precious promises of Christ until he proves them, by a personal faith, in his own soul (Psalms 19:12). THE FREEWILL OFFERING.

Leviticus 22:17-25.

The redeemed of the Lord have many opportunities of showing their love for the Lord by then freewill offerings to Him. The Lord loveth a cheerful giver. Being saved by grace, this grace should find expression in spontaneous acts of sacrifice and thankfulness. Freely ye have received, freely give. Note here that such offerings-

1. Are "expected by the Lord" (Leviticus 22:18.) Not that He needs the gift, but He much desires that condition of heart and mind that chooses to acknowledge Him in this way. The apostle James says, "I will show you my faith by my works." Our love to God may be manifested in the same way.

2. Must be "laid on the altar" (Leviticus 22:18). Being burnt-offerings they were put on the great brazen altar outside the holy place. This altar speaks to us of the Cross of Christ by which we and our offerings are made acceptable to God. Even a freewill offering is not pleasing to Jehovah apart from the person and work of His Son Jesus Christ. The gifts of the ungodly, even for the work of the Church, cannot be said to be laid on the altar. Freewill offerings to men, but not to God. The love of Christ is not the constraining motive.

3. Could be made by "any one" in Israel. "Whosoever he be in Israel" (Leviticus 22:18). A man had to be numbered with the people of God before a freewill offering could be accepted. No one has a free will until he becomes a Son of God through redeeming grace. Till then sin has dominion over the whole nature, being under the law (Romans 6:14). Until we are freed from sin by the power of Christ our offerings never reach the altar.

4. Must be made "willingly." "Ye shall offer at your own will" (Leviticus 22:19). It cannot be a freewill offering unless it is made willingly, not grudgingly, or of necessity. When God gave His Son up to the death for us, He gave Him willingly. Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as unto the Lord. The Lord looketh upon the heart.

5. Must be "without blemish." That which hath a blemish "shall not be acceptable for you" (Leviticus 22:20). Many offer to God what they would not give to an earthly friend, bad money and bad manners. God hath given to us His Firstborn and His Best, and shall we offer Him the blind, the lame, and the worthless? Odd coppers and spare moments may be given with a free will, but they just reveal the small place the Lord has in such hearts and lives. Yield yourselves unto God.

6. Must be "perfect to be accepted" (Leviticus 22:21). We must see that we are not giving to God because it is not perfect. Perfection is of course a relative term, what may be perfect for one may be far from being perfect in another. The poor widow's two mites (one farthing) made a perfect offering, your penny may be an insult. Giving as the Lord hath prospered us, with a willing mind, this is good and acceptable in His sight. Freely ye have received, freely give.

SEVEN LINKS IN THE CHAIN OF GRACE.

Leviticus 22:31-33.

"I am the Lord." These words occur three times in these three verses, and are as the three seals of the Triune God, set upon these great and precious truths. It is refreshing and assuring to our souls to find how frequently Jehovah reminds them that it was He who brought them out of Egypt God can never forget the great salvation accomplished for His people, and is constantly reminding them that He who saved them was still with them and for them. He who gave up His Son for us, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things. We need often to be reminded of this. The

different links in this chain of golden grace are-

1. Revelation. "I am the Lord." If God is to be known He must reveal Himself. No man by searching can find out God. This revelation of Himself we have in Christ Jesus. When Philip said to Jesus, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us," Jesus answered, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? he that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father. The Father that dwelleth in Me He doeth the works." What a revelation! Have you heard and seen the invisible God in the words and life of Jesus?

2. Salvation. "Brought you out of the land of Egypt." Egypt was the place of bondage, misery, and fruitless toil. Type of the world and our former state. In their helplessness He pitied, and by His great power at the hand of Moses He brought them out. Translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son. Saved by grace.

3. Adaptation. "I brought you out to be your God." Do we in any measure apprehend the infinite goodness of God as revealed in these few words. He has delivered us from the oppression of sin that He might manifest Himself in all the fulness of His grace and glory unto us. We are to be to Him a people taken out by Himself, and He is to be to us a God (Exodus 6:7). As our God, He pledges Himself to adapt the riches of His grace and every attribute of His character to our daily needs, and to the enriching of our lives for the glory of His own Name. I have brought you out to be your God. Bless the Lord, O my soul!

4. Sanctification. "I am the Lord which hallow you." This hallowing or setting apart for Himself is part of the great salvation. The Israelites were not saved out of Egypt merely to escape the cruel lash of the taskmaster, but that they might be a people unto Himself. We have not been saved by Christ merely to be delivered out of the hands of our enemies, but that we might serve Him without fear in holiness all the days of our life (Luke 1:74-75). I am the Lord which hallow you. Sanctification is the Lord's work. Jesus Christ is made of God unto us sanctification (1 Corinthians 1:30).

5. Representation. "I will be hallowed among the children of Israel." The holiness of God is to be seen in the holiness of His people. Are we faithful and true representatives of the character of our Lord and Saviour? As the temple of the living God He desires to dwell in us and walk in us (2 Corinthians 6:16). If He is to be hallowed among His people it becomes us to be imitators of God as dear children (Ephesians 5:1).

6. Prohibition. "Neither shall ye profane My Name." It is easy for those called by His Name to profane it by an unworthy walk (Colossians 1:10). All connected with our lives that is outside the temple of His holy will is profane. We profane His Name by our unbelieving prayers, by our formal lip professions, and even when we are preaching the Gospel, if it is not in the power of the Holy Spirit. Be filled with the Spirit, and ye shall not profane His holy Name, for He will work in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

7. Commission. "Therefore ye shall keep My commandments and do them" (Leviticus 22:31). Therefore, because I am your God, having redeemed you to Myself, and set you apart for the hallowing of My Name, ye shall make it your delightful business to keep My words and to do My will. Every saved and sanctified one was a commissioned one. No earthly friend knew Jesus better than His mother. Remember then her words to the servants at the marriage in Cana, "Whatsoever

He saith unto you, do it." She herself knew the blessedness of faith and obedience. THE MEMORIAL FEASTS.

SEVEN EXPERIENCES IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

Leviticus 23.

These seven feasts were seasons, or joyful solemnities, appointed by the Lord. They were holy memorial gatherings or convocations, through which as a means of grace God blessed His people. They have a deep and powerful prophetic voice. Each feast seems to point out some definite experience on the part of His people, and to denote some fresh manifestation of the riches of His grace and purpose toward them. They may also have a dispensational bearing, representing, as I think they do, the different epochs in the history of His ancient people and of the Church of God. Take a glance at them in this connection- 1. Passover. This suggests the day of Jesus Christ's humiliation and death.

2. Unleavened Bread may indicate the present-day experience of God's people as separated ones.

3. Firstfruits may point to the first resurrection at the coming of the Lord, as predicted in 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

4. Feast of Weeks, or ingathering: the restoration of the Jews, when all Israel shall be saved.

5. Trumpets: the publishing by the Jews of the Gospel of the kingdom.

6. Atonements: the final adjustment of all things to God in righteousness.

7. Tabernacles: "God in the midst of them," as when they abode in tents in the wilderness-the millennial reign. Peace on earth and good will among men.

These holy appointments by God are worthy of our closest study, as revealing the Divine programme with regard to "things to come." But we wish to view these feasts in what some might call a more practical light, as touching our individual experience. The-

1. Feast of Passover, or saved by the blood (Leviticus 23:5). It is the Lord's Passover because He passed over them who were sheltered by the sprinkled blood of the lamb in Egypt. Ye have not been redeemed with silver or gold, but with the precious Blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish (1 Peter 1:18-19). As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do show the Lord's death till He come.

2. Feast of Unleavened Bread, or cleansed by the Word (Leviticus 23:6.) This feast was held just the day after the Passover, teaching us that there is a very close relationship between redemption and cleansing. The leaven of sin and hypocrisy must be excluded from the bread of those redeemed to God by the Blood of Christ. Desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye may grow; the reading of trashy, unwholesome literature hinders the growth of many a child of God. Let not such a thing be seen in all thy quarters (Exodus 13:6-7).

3. Feast of Firstfruits, or consecrated to God (Leviticus 23:10-12), The first sheaf of the harvest presented to Jehovah is an emphatic type of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:23), who was the corn of

wheat that fell into the ground and died that He might bring forth much fruit (John 12:24). If the first-fruit be holy the lump is also holy (Romans 11:16). The redeemed from among men are the firstfruits unto God (Rev 14 4) The sheaf and the lamb were offered together (Leviticus 23:12) We a kind of firstfruits, are represented, "risen together" with Christ the Lamb of God. The sheaf represented the firstfruits of a new life, offered to God in the power of a blameless Lamb Being made alive unto God, the sheaf of our whole nature should be presented to Him as the firstfruits of a harvest of praise and honour yet to come through our faithful life for God.

4. Feast of Weeks, or the filling of the Holy Spirit (Leviticus 23:15-22). It is called the "feast of weeks" because it was held seven weeks after the Passover. It was also called Pentecost, because it was held on the fiftieth day. On this day the Holy Spirit was poured out (Acts 2:1-4). It was the harvest or ingathering feast. This was beautifully fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, for we read that "the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." Just as Pentecost followed the offering of the first-fruits, so the filling of the Holy Spirit follows the yielding up of ourselves unto God, then comes the harvesting or ingathering of precious souls. This is God's order, and there is no other successful way. As a corn of wheat we must also fall and die to sin and self if we would bring forth much fruit unto God. It would also seem from what is here stated that we are not to expect that the world will be converted or gathered in during this dispensation, for He says, "Thou shalt not make a clean riddance of the comers of thy field" (Leviticus 23:22), although the time will come when every knee shall bow to Him.

5. Feast of Trumpets, or the publishing of the Gospel (Leviticus 23:23-25). When a man has been filled with the Holy Ghost he will soon take to trumpeting the Gospel. The blowing of the trumpet was as holy a work as offering a sacrifice. It is "an holy convocation." A dead man cannot blow a trumpet, no matter how costly the instrument may be, it takes the breath of a living man to make it effectual. The spiritually dead may preach the Gospel, but there is no joyful sound from Heaven to the souls of men. The trumpet is there, but the living and life-giving breath of the Holy Spirit is absent. Alas, that so many should be content with the form without the power. Those who know the joyful sound walk in the light of His countenance (Psalms 89:15).

6. Feast of Atonements, or the final salvation (Leviticus 23:26-32). In the Hebrew the word rendered "atonement" is in the plural. This solemn season was a memorial, not only of atonement made for the people, but also for the vessels, &c., of the sanctuary. Coming as it does between the feast of trumpets and the feast of tabernacles, we are led to believe that it has reference to our perfect redemption at the resurrection of the body, the vessel of the Spirit. Even we ourselves, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope (Romans 8:22-24). We have not yet entered into this salvation, but we hope for it. The feast of atonements appointed by God makes it sure.

7. Feast of Tabernacles, or walking with God (Leviticus 23:33-43). This feast was "a solemn assembly," commemorating the time when they dwelt in booths in the wilderness, and when God dwelt in the midst of them in the cloudy pillar. Times when they literally walked with God. Has all this not a voice for us, reminding us that after the resurrection or the changing of the body (of those who are alive when the Lord comes) will come our "for ever with the Lord?" They shall walk with Me in white. Shall not that saying, then, come to pass which is written, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them?" (Revelation 21:3). Then the fruit of that handful

of corn in the earth shall shake like Lebanon (Psalms 72:16-19).

It is to us sublimely touching that it was on the last day of this feast that Jesus stood, and cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." This spake He of the Spirit which they that believe on Him should receive (John 7). To think that these seven feasts practically ended with this loving, gracious, heart-rending cry of our soul-pitying Saviour gives awful emphasis to the two great truths they contain.

1. Thirsty ones should come to Him and drink.

2. Believing ones should receive the Holy Spirit. Christ is God's great perfect feast for sinners and for saints. THE YEAR OF JUBILEE.

Leviticus 25

Every fiftieth year was to Israel a holy memorial festival It was a periodical season appointed by God for the readjustment of the social affairs of His people, and is a trumpet-toned type of the Gospel of Christ and its power to put men right with God and with one another The year of jubilee was the "accepted time" and the "day of salvation" to many in Israel. The market value of things was regulated by it (Leviticus 25:15-16) Man's dealings with man were to be ordered according to the appointments of God Business and the Gospel seem in our days to be entirely divorced. But for all that this law abides, that the real value of the things of this life depend on their relationship to Christ and His Gospel. The sound of the jubilee trumpet was the sound of-

1. Atonement. "In the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound" (Leviticus 25:9). There can be no joyful sound to sinful man apart from atoning blood. The trumpet needs a living man to blow it, and he must have God's authority before it can be a Divine message to those who hear it. Christ died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, therefore the great trumpet of atonement is being blown, and its sound reacheth unto the ends of the earth.

2. Liberty. "Ye shall proclaim liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants" (Leviticus 25:10). On the ground of Christ's atonement God proclaims liberty to every captive. The sounding of the trumpet at the lips of God's holy ones was the publishing of this glad news. This deliverance for the bond slave was immediate and complete on the hearing and believing of the tidings. The sound was for the ear, the message was for the heart (Luke 4:18).

3. Forgiveness. "If thy brother be poor, thou shalt relieve him" (Leviticus 25:35). Even the debt and poverty of a man did not hinder him from enjoying the grace of the jubilee, but made him just the more a fit subject for it. To the poor the Gospel is preached. While we were yet sinners Christ died for us, He came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance,

4. Rest. "It is a year of rest" (Leviticus 25:5). It was kept as a Sabbath unto the Lord. The Gospel of Christ proclaims rest to the weary and heavy laden (Matthew 11:28). Not rest in their works, but rest from them. It was the Sabbath of the Lord, therefore God's rest. It was, and is, an entering into His rest. Rest in the Lord (Psalms 116:7). We which have believed do enter into rest (Hebrews 4:1-3).

5. Plenty. "Ye shall eat your fill, and dwell in safety" (Leviticus 25:19). What a Gospel! Made safe in the place of plenty. Lying down in green pastures. The unsearchable riches of Christ is our holy

land of promise. Into this fulness By His grace, we who believe have been brought. All are-yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's. Be careful for nothing. Take the water of life freely.

6. Restoration. "Ye shall return every man into his possession" (Leviticus 25:13). All that was lost through failure and sin was restored through the jubilee Gospel. All that was lost in Adam is restored in Christ, and the glorious Gospel of the blessed God declares it. Made nigh by the Blood of Christ. Poor Mephibosheth heard such a Gospel and enjoyed such a restoration (2 Sam. 9). He restoreth my soul. Heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.

7. Brotherly love. "Ye shall not oppress one another, but fear the Lord thy God " (Leviticus 25:17). By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples if ye have love one to another. We must love unworthy ones as we unworthy ones have been loved, and forgive as we have been forgiven. The forgiven servant who took his fellow-worker by the throat was evidently courageous enough to deal with him face to face, but he was utterly destitute of the grace and compassion of his master (Matthew 18:28). Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Freely ye have received, freely give. Be ye imitators of God as dear children (Ephesians 5:1). THE PATH OF OBEDIENCE.

Leviticus 26:1-13.

Two paths are opened up before us in this chapter, the one of obedience and blessing, the other of disobedience and misery. The narrow and the broad way of life and destruction. In looking at the first of these we shall comment on the- 1. Characteristics of the obedient. As seen in the verses referred to above, they-

1. Will have no idols (Leviticus 26:1). No idol or image will have standing ground in their thoughts or minds. They will not bow and worship the gods of the world.

2. Reverence the appointments of God (Leviticus 26:2). They will not turn the Sabbath into a day of selfish pleasure, or the sanctuary into a theatre or showhouse, or the pulpit into a puppet box.

3. Are guided by His words (Leviticus 26:3). They walk in the statutes of the Lord, and not in the light of the sparks of their own kindling (Isaiah 50:11). To them the Word of God, like the sun, is settled in Heaven (Psalms 119:89).

4. Delight to do His will (Leviticus 26:3). The Word of God is to be kept, not as the miser keeps his gold, hoarded to be useless, but as the warrior keeps his sword. Not he that heareth, but he that doeth His sayings is wise (Matthew 7:24).

2. Blessings that accompany obedience. The path of obedience is the path of-

1. Fruitfulness. "Then I will give you rain in due season, and fruit" (Leviticus 26:4). "Then," you see this promise is conditional. Fruitfulness depends on our relationship to God, from whence all fruit is found. Out of the vine comes the fruit-producing sap into the branch. He knows when the season is due. "In due season ye shall reap" (Isaiah 44:3). The rain of His blessed Spirit from Heaven precedes the time of ingathering.

2. Peace and rest. "I will give you peace, and ye shall lie down" (Leviticus 26:6). The secret of fruitfulness and restfulness lies in being calmly obedient to His holy will. As we follow He will make and give. Instead of worry and weariness there is peace and rest (Psalms 23:2). We take His

yoke, and without any secret yearning after popularity find rest to our souls (Matthew 11:29).

3. Deliverance from evil things. "I will rid evil beasts out of the land" (Leviticus 26:6). There are many "beast-like" evils from which even the Christian needs deliverance. Strong drink, love of money, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, pride, impatience self-assertion. These Are evil beasts that are often seen in the land of God's inheritance, but from which He is able to rid us. He only can do the riddance. See the whole menagerie exhibited in Galatians 5:19-21.

4. Power to overcome. "Five of you shall chase an hundred" (Leviticus 26:7-8). In this spiritual warfare it is not a question of numbers or of experience, but of "holiness unto the Lord." It is weak but clean things God uses (1 Corinthians 1:26-31). The sword of His Word is mighty to the demolishing of every refuge of lies. "Five of you." Not many, but entirely agreed. If two of you shall agree as touching anything that ye shall ask in My Name, it shall be done.

5. Distinguishing favour. "I will have respect unto you" (Leviticus 26:9). The obedient ones have the eye of His special grace continually upon them (Romans 8:28). The Lord will make a difference, so that they need not beg or borrow the favour of the ungodly princes of this world. He hath said, so that we may boldly say, I will not fear (Hebrews 13:5-6).

6. Abundant provision. "Ye shall bring forth the old because of the new" (Leviticus 26:10). Old blessings will not be hoarded because of the number and greatness of the new. The old corn of our spiritual experiences will be liberally used because of the plentifulness of the new. This indicates a very healthy state of soul, it is the path of the just that shineth more and more. The old corn of salvation should be brought out because of the new baptism of the Holy Ghost. Let us also bring out the old corn of theology because of the new, which is broadness versus shallowness.

7. Divine fellowship. "I will walk among you" (Leviticus 26:12). His presence with us is the pledge of prosperity, progress, protection, purity, and power. That soul or life possessed by God's Holy Spirit will never fail to find delight in an obedient walk. The testimony of that life will never be silenced by terror or smitten with consumption (Leviticus 26:16). Greater is the Spirit of Christ in us than the spirit of antichrist which is in the world (1 John 4:4). THE PATH OF DISOBEDIENCE.

Leviticus 26:14-45.

As we have already seen, the blessings which follow obedience are clearly indicated in the first part of this chapter. In this division the events that follow disobedience are as emphatically pronounced. In the first we see the narrow way that leads to life; here we have the broad way that leads to destruction. Let us look then at the-

1. Evils that follow disobedience. "If ye will not hearken unto Me, and will not do these commandments," then there will be-

1. Great fearfulness. "I will appoint over you terror" (Leviticus 26:16). When a Church has begun to backslide it will soon be in terror about the collections, innovations, and everything but worldliness and sin. A soul out of fellowship with God is in terror of special evangelistic meetings. Disobedience brings cowardliness in the service of God. The fear of man brings a snare.

2. Sure decline. "I will appoint over you consumption" (Leviticus 26:16). Organs, images, paid choirs, painted windows, or popular entertainments will not check this disease. The wound is

greater than the plaster, and deeper than any unbelieving quack can reach. Disobedience as a malady is rottenness in the bones. The appearance of health and soundness may be kept up for a time, just as you may paint the face of a consumptive, while there is nothing but weakness and disorder within.

3. Unhealthy activity. This is described in Leviticus 26:16 as "the burning ague," and suggests the idea of periodical spasms of feverish effort. These spasms may sometimes take the form of "worldly concerts, Sunday evenings for the people, short sermons, popular topics," &c. Such activity in the Name of Christ resembles the breathless excitement of the dry bones in the valley of vision. Like the convulsive movements of a skeleton under the power of a galvanic battery.

4. Fruitless work. "Ye shall sow your seed in vain" (Leviticus 26:16). "Your strength shall be spent in vain" (Leviticus 26:20). There may be much earnestness, but as long as there is heart rebellion it is only like beating the air (1 Samuel 15:22). You may sow your seed as a preacher, but it will be in vain as long as your life is unconsecrated to the Lord. You are only spending your strength in vain when you are striving by your culture and eloquence to bring forth fruit unto God in the conversion of sinners, or the upbuilding of the Lord's people. Fruitbearing depends on what we are more than on what we do.

5. Slavish cowardliness. "They that hate you shall rule over you, and ye shall flee when none pursueth you" (Leviticus 26:17). To disobey God is to come under the tyranny of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Then comes the fleeing before a phantom foe, because there is an evil heart of unbelief within, a conscience not void of offence.

6. Unanswered prayer. "I will make your Heaven as iron" (Leviticus 26:19). An iron Heaven is an unyielding one. Unanswered prayer is unheard prayer. Our prayers prevail just as we and they are right with God (James 5:16). Prayers framed for the ear of men instead of the ear of the Lord of Sabaoth will never pierce an iron Heaven. If the heavens are as brass to us it is an evidence that we ourselves are not right with God.

7. Sorrowful loss. "I will send wild beasts among you, which will rob you of your children" (Leviticus 26:22). The wild beasts of infidelity, scepticism, contempt, and indifference has already robbed the disobedient Church of many of her children. A sham religion will neither save nor keep the rising generation. The cause of this lapse is not primarily the want of interest without, but the want of reality within.

8. Internal divisions. "They shall fall one upon another" (Leviticus 26:37). "Devouring one another" is about the last stage of this spiritual consumption. Empty seats, backsliding members, fault finding elders, and ironical preachers are but the natural consequences of a backsliding and disobedient Church.

2. Remedy for all this misery. It will be found in- 1. Confession (Leviticus 26:40). Not blaming one another, but every man smiting his own breast (Psalms 32:5).

2. Humiliation (Leviticus 26:41). If there is a true consciousness of sin, there will be a real rending of the heart.

3. Faith (Leviticus 26:42-45). Unwavering trust in His sure word of promise. When sin is confessed, the place of humility taken, the attitude of faith maintained, then the mighty power of

Divine grace will be displayed, the blighting curses of the disobedient life will be rolled away, and the happy fruits of obedience will speedily appear.

Numbers

THE LEVITES AS A PECULIAR PEOPLE.

Numbers 1:47-54.

The Levites were a peculiar people among the thousands of Israel. Their peculiarities, like the Christians, lay in their relationship to God Himself. To be closely associated with Him will always make us peculiar in the eyes of others. Think of their- 1. Separation. They were-

1. Not numbered with the others (Numbers 1:47). God always makes a difference between the ordinary believer and those wholly devoted to Himself.

2. Chosen by God (chap. Numbers 3:12). He took them instead of the firstborn in Israel, so that each had a representative character. Every firstborn not represented by a Levite had to be redeemed (chap. Numbers 3:46-48). Ye see your calling, brethren, ye who belong to the inner circle of His chosen ones. In Christ's stead, who is the Firstborn of every creature.

3. Given to Aaron (chap. Numbers 3:9). So are we, as His elect, given to Christ. Jesus revealed this thought when He said, "I have manifested Thy Name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world." All that the Father hath given Me shall come unto Me.

4. Claimed by God. "The Levites shall be Mine" (chap. Numbers 3:12). Peter, James, and John were the peculiar three among the Twelve, they seemed to drink most deeply of the Spirit of Jesus their Master, and so were owned by Him not so much as historians as teachers. Covet earnestly the best gifts.

2. Occupation. The work of the Levites was manifold. In these verses something of this variety is apparent. We see them as-

1. Overseers. "Thou shalt appoint the Levites over the tabernacle, over the vessels, and over all things" (Numbers 1:50). The chosen servants of God ought to take a general interest in everything connected with the work and worship of God. We must have a sympathetic concern for all that has to do with the service and honour of God.

2. Bearers. "They shall bear the tabernacle" (Numbers 1:50). The carrying of the things of the tabernacle was to them the "burden of the Lord." Not every professed follower of Christ is a burden-bearer. Paul understood this experimentally when he said, "I could wish myself accursed for my brethren's sake."

3. Ministers. "They shall minister unto Me" (Numbers 1:50). They were not the servants of the tabernacle, but of God. It is quite possible to be the willing servants of a Church, and yet not be ministering unto the Lord.

4. Demolishers. "The Levites shall take it down" (Numbers 1:51). When the pillar moved it was theirs to take the tabernacle to pieces. Those whose office it is to handle Divine things should

know how to open up and rightly divide the Word of Truth. Dissection does not mean destruction in this case.

5. Builders. "The Levites shall set it up" (Numbers 1:51). They had at times to take the house board from board, but they could and did put it up again. They were no type of those destructive critics who can only pull down, but cannot build up. Those who cannot set the things of God's house in order had better let them alone.

6. Mediators. "The Levites shall pitch round about the tabernacle that there be no wrath upon the congregation" (Numbers 1:53). According to their position they were a channel of blessing or of curse to the people. Such are they who occupy the position of public teachers of the Word and will of God. Taking our true place before God and the people we may save many from the wrath to come. Ye are the salt of the earth. Ours should be the position of devoted ones.

7. Keepers. "The Levites shall keep the charge of the tabernacle" (Numbers 1:53). They were custodians of the Lord's treasure. At their hands He required every vessel and curtain, every board, pillar, and pin. Are we as His servants faithfully keeping all that the Lord has committed unto us. Hath He not committed unto us the word of reconciliation? (2 Corinthians 5:19). Paul, almost with his dying breath, said, "O Timothy, keep what is committed to thee." "I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:6-8). THE STANDARDS OF ISRAEL.

Numbers 2. The hosts of Israel were divided by Jehovah into four camps, and every camp had its own standard. The order in which they were to march when the pillar of cloud moved was also distinctly specified by the Lord. This arrangement has doubtless a deeply moral significance. The order was neither by birth nor according to numbers. Judah, who went first, was the fourth son of Jacob, and the camp that was to go last was the second largest of all. Just as all the vessels and sacrifices were full of spiritual meaning, so the various positions in the grand march of obedience to the call of God has likewise its spiritual lessons for us who are pilgrims and sojourners with Him. Perhaps the meaning of the names of the different camps and their moral connection with one another will afford us a clue into a truth, which to us may be profitable. The-

1. Standard of Judah. Judah went first (Numbers 2:3-9). Judah means "Praise the Lord." It is surely meet that the praising camp should lead the way. Praise is perhaps the first sign of a soul truly right with God. It is only when we have apprehended our own needy and guilty state, and by faith laid hold on the mercy and all-sufficiency of Christ that we can praise the Lord with a sincere heart. Can we ever make progress in the Divine life if we have not first of all taken our stand beneath the banner of praise? Judah was made head of his brethren, and from him kings were to descend (Genesis 49:8-10). Praising Christians will always be princes among the people. The sceptre of power shall not depart from them. Praise ye the Lord.

2. Standard of Reuben. This camp came immediately after Judah. Reuben means, "Behold a son." Behold one in the full enjoyment of sonship. Reuben as a son sought to save the life of Joseph (Genesis 37:21), and offered his two sons as security for Benjamin. After praise comes the testimony of true sonship, "Behold a son. ' Who will believe that we are the sons of God if our lives are not bright with His praise? If the spirit of praise and adoration fills your heart, then may you expect others to take knowledge, saying, "Behold a son." Moreover, the great and blessed privileges of sonship can only be entered into and enjoyed by a thankful, trusting heart. Begin to

praise and your testimony as a son will be felt and acknowledged by others. It becometh the sons of God to shout for joy.

3. Standard of Ephraim (Numbers 2:18-24). Ephraim means "double fruitfulness." Abundant fruit is sure to come after praise and the perfect life of sonship. We praise not the Lord because we are not fruitful, instead of praising Him that we may be made fruitful. Under Jehoshaphat the people of Judah "began to sing and to praise," then the Lord set ambushments and gave them the victory (2 Chronicles 20:22). In our unbelief we will not bless the Lord until we see, although the Lord has said, "Believe, and thou shalt see." But the way into" double fruitfulness" lies through the full appreciation of our privileges as the sons of God. The branch must receive from the vine a branch's portion. Fruitfulness always implies fulness.

4. Standard of Dan (Numbers 2:25-31). The meaning of Dan is judging. A judge is one seated in authority. The camp of Dan "shall go hindmost" (Numbers 2:31). The privilege of judging comes last of all. Is it not written that "the saints shall judge the world?" Are they not to "reign with Christ a thousand years?" Are we not to be made kings as well as priests unto God? And is it not said that "we shall reign on the earth? Yes, after Ephraim comes Dan, after fruitfulness comes exaltation and reward (Luke 19:17).

1. As sinners. Praise Him for the great things He hath done for us.

2. As sons. Receive the great things He is offering to us.

3. As servants. Be fruitful in the work He has given us.

4. As judges. Expect the honour promised us. These four standards are also suggestive of- 1. Christ's birth, with its angelic songs.

2. Christ's life, "Behold the Man."

3. Christ's death and resurrection. Double fruitfulness.

4. Christ's coming again. Judging His people.

THREE CLASSES OF WORKERS.

Numbers 4. In the transporting of the tabernacle and all its belongings from place to place there was great division of labour. As we would think, the work of the Gershonites, looking after the curtains, &c., could have easily been done by a score of men, but for this task alone 2630 were set apart. This teaches us that no work done for God is small or trifling. The packing up of the holy vessels was done by Aaron and his sons (Numbers 4:5-15). Consecrated hands must set in order holy things. The bearers of the tabernacle and its furniture were three families of the Levites, the sons of Kohath, of Gershon, and of Merari. Their work was-

1. Varied.

1. The sons of Merari had charge of the foundation things. "Sockets, pillars, boards, bars, and pins" (Numbers 4:31-32). In setting up the tabernacle the sockets and pillars would be needed first. Foundation truths should always go first. This is the work of the evangelist. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, Jesus Christ." The silver sockets speak of redemption, because

they were made of the ransom price given for the souls of the people. (Exodus 30:15). Yes, the redeeming Blood first.

2. The sons of Gershon had charge of the uniting things. "Coverings, curtains, and hangings" (Numbers 4:24-27). The sockets and pillars may be strong, but they are naked and bare without the coverings and curtains, in fact, it was no tabernacle without the coverings. These may represent the work of the pastor, binding all together and beautifying with the coverings and hangings of order and doctrine. The coverings, &c., brought every pillar and board into union with one another. This is the work of the pastor making manifest the truth. "All one in Christ Jesus."

3. The sons of Kohath had charge of the approach things. "All the vessels of the sanctuary" (Numbers 4:15). The vessels placed in position indicate the way to God. No service could be done in the tabernacle without them. All was powerless till the work of the Kohathites was finished. This is the office of the teacher. These three gifts belong to the Church just as really as they belonged to the tabernacle. "He gave some evangelists, some pastors, and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-12). The office of a teacher is not only to expound the truth, but to do it in such a way as to lead into the very presence of God, and to maintain a holy life. Imparting the knowledge that puffeth up is not fulfilling the work of a teacher. The true spiritual teacher not only points the way, but by the power of the Holy Ghost, through the truth and a holy example, leads into it.

2. Appointed them by the Lord (Numbers 4:1-4). No man taketh this work upon him, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. Could you imagine others making other sockets, coverings, and vessels, and setting up another tabernacle. The whole thing could only be a sham and a mockery. Why? Because they would not be God's sockets, coverings, and vessels, and servants. What better are the evangelists, pastors, and teachers who ran without being sent, and who lay other foundations, and add to themselves teachers having itching ears, who will not endure sound doctrine? From such turn away. It is to His own servants the Lord delivers His goods (Matthew 25:14). Those occupying till He come, trade with His pound (Luke 19).

3. United. The Gershonites had no jealousy at all, although the sons of Merari commenced work before them, and took possession of the spot before they came. They all wrought under one guiding will, and for the honour and glory of one Lord. Their burdens were different, but their aim was one. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit, it is the same God which worketh in all" (1 Corinthians 12:4-6). They sought the good of the Lord's house always. By each one using the gift entrusted to them as stewards we show the manifold grace of God (1 Peter 4:10).

4. Rewarded. The Lord became to them their portion and inheritance (Deuteronomy 18:1-2). "I am their possession" saith the Lord (Ezekiel 44:28). Those who consecrate themselves to the work of the Lord will find their all in Him. "They that wait at the altar are partakers with the altar" (1 Corinthians 9:13). They that wait on the Lord are partakers with the Lord of His grace, mercy, and strength. "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Partakers of His life, of His work, then of His joy.

NAZARITESHIP.

A CONSECRATED LIFE.

Numbers 6:1-12.

Nazareth means separated or sanctified. Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Is there any profit in consecrating one's life to the service of the Lord? There are still many sceptics, even among the Lord's people, as to any good thing coming out of the Nazareth of a separated life. They seem to think that the better way is to sanctify the pleasures of the world instead of themselves. "O fools, and slow of heart to believe." There is much that we might learn from the vow of the Nazarite. It-

1. Was voluntary. "When either a man or woman shall separate themselves" (Numbers 6:2). The Lord does not compel us to consecrate ourselves to His service. Having saved us by His Blood, He leaves us to choose whom we will serve. But through the apostle the Holy Ghost beseeches us by the mercies of God to present our bodies a living sacrifice unto God (Romans 12:1).

2. Was entire. There can be no acceptable consecration to God that is not complete. It was a separation: 1. From all the fruit of the vine, "from the kernels to the husk" (Numbers 6:4). "Strong drink" is twice mentioned as if there were a double danger of his consecration being ruined through it. This warning is urgently needed to-day. 2. From the fashion of men. "No razor shall come upon his head" (Numbers 6:5). It is a shame for a man to have long hair (1 Corinthians 11:14), but he must just bear the shame. The separated man has nothing to be ashamed of. He will be peculiar, but he walks not as men. 3. From the presence of the dead (Numbers 6:6). The dead belong to another world, he must not pollute himself with any deadening thing. "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

3. Was unto the Lord. "All the days of his separation he is holy unto the Lord" (Numbers 6:8). It was not to make himself odd, or to be talked about among his fellowmen. He willingly gave himself that he might be wholly for the Lord. Through it was he not seeking a deeper acquaintanceship with God? Was he not acting on the principle taught in 2 Corinthians 6:17-18, "Touch not the unclean, and I will receive you and be a Father unto you?" Paul was a Nazarite unto the Gospel of God (Romans 1:1).

4. Implies an open profession. "No razor shall come upon his head." His hair was a public testimony as to his character. The Nazarite could not be hidden. The consecrated life is a light which cannot be put under a bushel. Love is an open mark by which we are known as His disciples. No Christian is ashamed of his consecration any more than a sheep is ashamed of its owner's marks. The scissors of Delilah made havoc of Samson's Nazariteship.

5. Involves great self-denial (Numbers 6:7). The fruit of the vine may be very sweet, but he must not touch it. Even if his father, or his mother, or his brother, or sister die, he cannot go near to see them or to bury them. His natural inclinations must give place to the Word of God. These things were lawful for others, but not expedient for him. The separated life means, "Not my will, but Thine be done." "If any man will follow Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross." It is a sacrifice, but it is well-pleasing unto God.

6. Meant a life of holiness. "Allthe days of his separation he is holy" (Numbers 6:8). While he lived a separated life he had this testimony, that he pleased God. Holiness then is a condition more than an attainment. Those who have separated themselves from forbidden things, and have yielded themselves into His hands to do His will are holy. When the separating vow is broken we cease to

be in a state of holiness unto the Lord. Our consecration is defiled, and our Nazarite testimony is gone. "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

7. Was easily marred. "If a man die suddenly by him, he hath denied his consecration" (Numbers 6:9-12). Coming into contact with the dead, even by accident, was enough to pollute his holiness in the sight of God. Do we realise how easily the crown of consecration honour may fall from our heads? How easily the Holy Spirit may be grieved, and the power of our testimony perish? It is in vain we go about with our unshorn locks in the sight of men, if in His holy eyes we have denied ourselves. Ichabod may be written over our lives. Take heed unto thyself (1 Timothy 4:16). THE PRIESTLY BLESSING.

Numbers 6:22-27.

Just as the blue of Heaven is bigger than the clouds of earth, so the riches of His blessing is greater than our need. But a very small cloud may hide the blue. The clouds rise from earth, and are changing and fleeting, the blue is eternal. His blessing, it maketh rich.

1. The giving of the blessing. God has always plenty to give. It was given-

1. Through a mediator. "God spake unto Moses, saying" (Numbers 6:22). Moses was to the people what Christ is to us, the medium of Divine blessing. There is none other Name under Heaven.

2. After atonement had been made (see Lev. 9). He cannot bless us until we have been reconciled through the death of His Son. We must be born of God before we can receive the children's portion. First the Blood, then the blessing.

3. Richly. The name Jehovah is repeated three times, indicating that it was the blessing of the Triune God. This threefold blessing appears in the apostolic benediction- 1. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. The love of God.

3. The communion of the Holy Ghost.

God the Father the source of it, God the Son the channel of it, God the Spirit the imparter of it. Bless the Lord, O my soul!

2. The nature of the blessing. It is infinitely deep and full. It implies-

1. Intimacy. "The Lord bless thee." It was very personal, and suggests the knowledge of individual need. He commands his blessing, even life for evermore (Psalms 133:3). He knoweth thy need.

2. Keeping. "Keep thee." What a blessing to be kept from sin, from the fear of man and the dominion of the devil. Kept in nearness to Himself and in the power of His Spirit. The Lord is thy Keeper (Psalms 121:3-5). Remember the Redeemer's prayer (John 17:11).

3. Light. "The Lord make His face to shine upon thee." The light of His face is a glorious light, we see it in the face of Jesus. David prayed, "Make Thy face to shine upon Thy servant" (Psalms 31:16). In His light we see light clearly (2 Corinthians 4:4).

4. Favour. "Be gracious unto thee." If we have the grace of God, we have within our reach the wealth of God. Having given us His Son, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who has ever used to the full the favour offered in Christ Jesus?

5. Fellowship. "The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee." His own countenance upon thee means the conscious enjoyment of His own personal presence. Blessed are all they, O Lord, that walk in the light of Thy countenance. O to have the face of God ever beaming upon us; how it would blind our eyes to the attractions and alluring things of earth.

6. Peace. "And give thee peace." Not only peace with God, this we have through atoning Blood, but the peace of God. God's own peace ruling and garrisoning our hearts, the peace of God which passeth all understanding (Php_4:6-7). "My peace I give unto you, let not your heart be troubled."

7. Likeness. "Put My Name upon the children" (Numbers 6:27). To put His Name upon us means to put His nature within us. The Name of Christ, the anointed One, is put upon us when we receive the anointing of the Holy Spirit. The filling of the Spirit is the door into the fulness of the blessing. "I will put My Name upon them, and I will bless them." Blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:3-5; Luke 24:50).

1. Jehovah the Father bless thee and keep thee.

2. Jehovah the Son make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee.

3. Jehovah the Spirit lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. THE CALL OF THE LEVITES.

Numbers 8:1-14.

"Choose Thou for me, and make Thy choosing mine,

Whate'er Thy love may unto me assign;

What work for Thee to do, where shall I go?

O my Lord, order Thou, I do not know;

I fear to choose self-pleasing scenes and things-

Choose for me, Lord, and give the peace it brings." The Levites were the descendants of Levi, and were chosen by the Lord, instead of the firstborn, to do the service of the sanctuary. Let us look at what they were-

1. By nature. When the dying Jacob called his sons together to leave his last message with them he characterised Simeon and Levi as "cruel and self-willed" (Genesis 49:5-7). The best of saints God can make out of such rough and unpromising material. Such were some of us. "Walking according to the course of the world" (Ephesians 2:2). While we were yet sinners Christ died for us. He came not to call the righteous.

2. By grace. The same grace of God which brought salvation to us appeared unto them. By grace they were saved through faith. They were-

1. Called. "Take the Levites from among the children of Israel" (Numbers 8:6). They were outcalled from among the others as every Christian is. The calling out of the Church of God may be here prefigured. "The men which Thou hast given Me out of the world." The elect according to grace.

2. Cleansed. "And cleanse them" (Numbers 8:6). "Such were some of you, but ye are washed" (1 Corinthians 6:11). Washing implies uncleanness. It is the first necessity to fellowship and service. This washing was done for them (Hebrews 9:13-14).

3. Sanctified. "Let them shave all their flesh, and let them wash their clothes, and make themselves clean" (Numbers 8:7). After we have been cleansed by the Blood of Christ, and justified freely by His grace, we are called upon to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh. Shave off every unbecoming habit, and wash the spots of the world out of the clothes of our daily life, and walk worthy of the Lord, in all well-pleasing.

4. Atoned for. "Make an atonement for the Levites" (Numbers 8:12). Here they were taught that it was through substitution that the grace of God and the privileges of the believer comes. A sin-offering must be made, and could only be made through the sacrifice of life. Christ gave Himself for us, His soul was made an offering for sin (Isaiah 53:10).

5. Consecrated. "Set the Levites and offer them an offering unto the Lord" (Numbers 8:13). After an offering had been presented to God for them, they themselves had to be presented to Him. Having been redeemed by His Blood, we are called upon to yield ourselves unto God (Romans 12:1-2). Ye are not your own for ye are bought with a price.

6. Owned by the Lord. "The Levites shall be Mine." They were His by choice, by grace and by blood; by love, favour, and life. A threefold cord not easily broken. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? Chosen by the grace of the Father, redeemed by the Blood of the Son, claimed by the power of the Spirit. They shall be Mine. They shall be My sons to love Me, My servants to serve Me, My saints to worship Me.

THIRTY DAYS OF GRACE.

Numbers 9:6-14.

In this chapter we see grace upon grace. The Passover was to be kept on the fourteenth day of the first month, but the question here is raised: If a man was not in a condition to observe that feast on the day appointed, was he to be debarred for a whole year? Some men found in this position were heard saying, "Wherefore are we kept back?" (Numbers 9:7). This was a new difficulty, and Moses deals with it as we should deal with all such when they suddenly spring up before us. He took it to the Lord. If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth to all liberally. The answer was plainly given. A special Passover feast was to be held on the fourteenth day of the second month. It was a special provision to meet a special case. Such is the riches of His grace, grace sufficient for every need.

Here the way of salvation is clearly taught.

1. Unfitness. "Certain men were defiled that they could not keep the Passover on that day" (Numbers 9:6). The cause of their unfitness to profit by the provision made by God on the fourteenth day of the first month was their uncleanness. They were not in a state to receive it.

Such was man's condition at the giving of the law-God's first provision. Being already sinners, the law could not save them, but only help to show their sinfulness. By the law is the knowledge of sin. Unbelief unfits a man from receiving the benefits of Christ's redeeming death. The defilement was of their own making.

2. Confession. "Those men said, We are denied" (Numbers 9:7). They confessed their unfitness, and sought not to justify themselves. They presented themselves as ones disqualified because of their defilement, and begged for the mercy and grace that might reach their need and satisfy their souls. The grace of God, like a river, flows down into every open crevice, or like the light of the sun, it never refuses to enter, no matter how dark or dirty the corner may be, if only there is an opening toward it. If any man open the door, I will come in to him. Confession is the opening of the door. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us" (1 John 1:9).

3. Provision. "Ye shall keep the Passover on the fourteenth day of the second month" (Numbers 9:9-11). Between the first and second Passover there were thirty days. These were days of grace. After that there was no possibility of receiving a Passover blessing for that year. This little Passover, instituted for the benefit of those who were disabled, is a beautiful little picture of the grace of God devising a plan of salvation for helpless sinful man. To help these men Moses was utterly helpless. He could only say, "Stand still, and I will hear what the Lord will command concerning you" (Numbers 9:8). Salvation is of the Lord. The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. It is suggestive that this provision of special grace was for the defiled, or the man that was "afar off" on a journey, and so could not keep the great feast of Passover. The Gospel of His grace offers cleansing to the defiled, and to bring nigh to God those who were afar off (Ephesians 2:12-13).

4. Warning. "But the man that forbeareth to keep the Passover shall be cut off from among the people" (Numbers 9:13). The Passover speaks of redemption: "Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us." To those who wilfully neglect this there is nothing for them but a fearful looking for of judgment. It is counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and doing despite unto the Spirit of grace (Hebrews 10:26-31). To despise or neglect grace is to choose death. How shall ye escape if ye neglect so great salvation?

5. Invitation. "If a stranger will keep the Passover, so shall he do" (Numbers 9:14). Any stranger sojourning with them may become a participant of the blessing of this memorable feast. As it denotes, redemption by the Blood of the Lamb is offered to all who will come into the camp. How fitting all this is, as typical of the great salvation, through the Blood of the Lamb of God. "Let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take" (Revelation 22:17). After you have come and token your part of this God-offered grace, you will be no more strangers, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God (Ephesians 2:17-19). THE HOLY CLOUD.

Numbers 9:15-23.

"He leads round, but He leads right,

All the way is in His sight;

Be it rough, or be it long,

Void of joy, or set to song,

Bringing much, or mite by mite,

He leads round, but He leads right.

He leads round, but He leads right,

Cloud by day and fire by night;

Morn by morn, let God arise,

Scattering all our enemies;

And will sing with evening light,

He leads round, but He leads right."

It did look like infinite madness that the children of Israel should be led "about by the way of the wilderness by the Red Sea." It was indeed a roundabout way, but it was the right way, for God in the pillar of cloud led them. This holy, because divinely possessed, cloud was both a standing and a moving miracle, and a witness to the stability and mobility of God's dealings with His people. No storm could shake it, yet it moved as a guiding lamp for the feet of the pilgrims. Let us think for a little of its-

1. Origin. Of how this cloud was formed we have no account. Like the body of Jesus, it had a common appearance, yet there was a great mystery about it. God was in it. It was to the Israelites the visible body of the invisible God. Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh. The flesh of Jesus Christ was the visible body in which the invisible Father spoke and wrought. "The Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works" (John 17:9-10). Know ye not that your body is the temple of God, and that God dwelleth in you?

2. Coming. "On the day that the tabernacle was reared up the cloud covered it" (Numbers 9:15). When all had been set in order, and everything yielded up for the service of God, then the cloud rested on it and took possession of it. It is so still with regard to our individual lives. When all is surrendered to Him for His glory He will find a dwelling place in us, and use us for His own Name's sake.

3. Character. "The cloud covered the tabernacle" (Numbers 9:15). This covering signified protection as well as possession. His presence is a covering presence. The same thought is here that we have in the atonement-covering. Covered by the wings of the Almighty. The Lord thy keeper, the Lord thy shade, hidden in His pavilion.

4. Significance. "The cloud covered the tent of the testimony" (Numbers 9:15). The tent, or tabernacle, was a testimony for God after it was covered with the cloud of His presence. We have only the form without the power till we are covered with the Holy Anointing One. It is His presence that makes the tent of our life a testimony for Him. Cloudless tents are very common, but very useless as witnesses for God.

5. Appearance. "The cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night" (Numbers 9:16). It had the appearance of fire until the morning (Numbers 9:15). During the absence of the sun the symbol of the Divine Presence took the likeness of fire. Is it not so now? During the absence of the

Son of God the Holy Ghost takes the appearance of tongues of fire. This holy fire during the night of this world's unbelief is indispensable until the morning of His appearing. Ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost and with fire (Acts 1:5).

6. Authority. The moving of the cloud is called "The command of the Lord" (Numbers 9:17-20). A most impressive symbol of the Holy Spirit.

1. Where it abode they abode (Numbers 9:17). Their communion with God depended on their keeping in touch with the pillar of cloud. Walk in the Spirit, and abide in Him, then your fellowship will be unbroken.

2. When it moved they moved (Numbers 9:21). As they followed the moving pillar, so we must be ready to follow the guiding Spirit. To be led by the Spirit of God is an evidence of sonship (Romans 8:14).

3. As long as it tarried they tarried (Numbers 9:22). It was not theirs to decide how long they should stay in a place. To move without the cloud was just to move into a godless condition. To go into a new sphere without the Spirit of God leading is to get into a state of spiritual powerlessness and disobedience. Christian worker, remember that the moving of the Holy Spirit is the commandment of the Lord. Grieve Him not by impatience or fearfulness. THE SILVER TRUMPETS.

THE GOSPEL OF GOD.

Numbers 10:1-10.

"Broken in heart! broken in heart!

He bindeth up our wounds;

My God, how tender is Thine art,

Thy word how sweet it sounds!

A broken heart, O trifle small

Beside the radiant skies!

Yet Thou, God, for my heart dost call,

When I myself despise " The blowing of the trumpets was, as it were, the voice of God to the people of Israel. He that hath ears to hear let him hear.

1. The trumpets, or the Gospel. Blessed are they that know the joyful sound. Note their-

1. Number. "Make thee two trumpets of silver." These two trumpets remind us of the Old and New Testaments, through which God has been pleased to speak to His people, and by which His call is still heard.

2. Nature. "Trumpets of silver." They were precious and sweet toned. The best of other books are but copper and tin compared with the Bible.

3. Unity. "Of a whole piece shalt thou make them" (Numbers 10:2). This is a most assuring characteristic of the Bible. Although both the Old and New Testaments are written by different authors at different times and circumstances, they are each of a whole piece. The One Spirit breathes through all.

2. The trumpeters, or preachers of the Gospel. "The sons of Aaron shall blow the trumpets" (Numbers 10:8). In the eighth chapter we see them-

1. Called (chap. Numbers 8:6). The first preachers of the Gospel were all called and chosen by the Master. No man can take this honour to himself (Romans 10:15).

2. Purified (chap. Numbers 8:7). They must be clean that bear the vessels of the Lord.

3. Consecrated (chap. Numbers 8:10). His choosing us should be followed with our complete self-abnegation for His sake. "I have chosen you and ordained you."

4. Commissioned (chap. Numbers 8:15). "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." This is the trumpeter's great commission.

3. The trumpeting, or preaching of the Gospel. No matter how good the trumpet may be, it takes the breath of a living man to sound it. The preaching of the Gospel in the power of the Holy Ghost is the voice and call of God to the hearer. There may be a great noise where there is no voice or message from Heaven. The blowing of these silver trumpets had various degrees of significance. Through them we hear the following calls-

1. Atonement. "Ye shall blow with the trumpets over the sacrifices" (Numbers 10:10). How important this is. The preaching that is not connected with the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ is not the preaching that He bids. It is vain blowing apart from the reconciling Blood of the Lamb.

2. Invitation. "When ye shall blow with them, all the assembly shall assemble themselves at the door" (Numbers 10:3). Thus the trumpet call invited to the "door of the tabernacle." So the Gospel invitation is to all, and that they all might come to Him who is the Door of the sheep and the Way to the Father. "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). "Unto you, O men, I call."

3. Progress. "When ye blow an alarm then the camps shall go forward" (Numbers 10:5). The call of the Gospel is not only to salvation, but to advancement in the knowledge of God and growth in grace. "I press on toward the mark," says the apostle of the Gentiles. This note of the Gospel trumpet is greatly needed to-day. Let us go forward in a fresh consecration of ourselves, and in a new faith in God. Launch out into the deep.

4. Conflict. "If you go to war ye shall blow an alarm, and ye shall be saved from your enemies" (Numbers 10:9). With the progress of indifference and scepticism should come this sounding of the alarm, that we may "be remembered before the Lord," and fight the good fight of faith. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand. To us the armour of God means being invested by Christ. "Abide in Me."

5. Gladness. "Also in the day of your gladness ye shall blow with the trumpets" (Numbers 10:10). It is a blessed work to preach the Gospel with a glad heart. The joy of the Lord is your strength. The weakness of many Gospel trumpeters is that they have no real gladness in the service of God.

Their gladness comes when their work for Christ is over for the day. The testimony of such can only be as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. The power of love is lacking. Restore unto us the joy of Thy salvation.

"The trumpet of Christ ne'er sounds a retreat,

All bloodless His battles, yet by blood made meet:

Or be it danger, or be it defeat.

The trumpet of Christ ne'er sounds a retreat." A PILGRIM'S INVITATION.

Numbers 10:29-32.

"The past now lies behind us,

On it be pardon seal'd;

The present is around us,

The future unrevealed.

Or long, or short our lives be,

We place us in Thy hand;

O Jesus, guide and guard us

Unto Thy blessed Land."

Moses said to Hobab, his father-in-law, who had come from Median to visit him in the wilderness, "We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, ' I will give it you.' Come thou with us, and we will do thee good." Those who by faith see that city whose Builder and Maker is God desire others to come and share the blessedness. The Christian life, as a pilgrimage, may be aptly illustrated from this incident as we see them-

1. Pilgrims. "We are journeying." 1. Where from? From the house of bondage, from the slavery of sin and the dominion of the devil, from a life of misery and fruitlessness. 2. Where through? Through the wilderness of this world, still lying in the lap of the wicked one. The experience of each individual pilgrim may be vastly different, but all going on.

2. Pilgrims journeying to a land of promise. The Christian's land of promise is Christ Himself. All the promises of God are in Him. The Holy Spirit takes the things of Christ and shows them unto us. May our spiritual life grow up and journey on into an ever increasing likeness to Him, whom having not seen, yet we love. Heirs together with Christ. "I go to prepare a place for you."

3. Pilgrims animated by faith. "The Lord said, I will give it you." They believe His word and press on. The way may be rough or smooth, their feelings may be happy or wretched, but His word of assurance changeth not. We walk by faith, not by sight. Believe, and thou shalt see. Faith is the evidence of things not seen. By faith Abraham sojourned (Hebrews 11:8-9).

4. Pilgrims anxious for others to come with them.

"Come thou with us." This is a day of glad tidings, we do not well if we hold our peace (2 Kings 7:8-10). The coming of others into the joy of salvation does not curtail but enlarges our own inheritance of blessing. There are many like Hobab, who are only friendly visitors, they attend Church, &c., but are not decided followers of the Lord. Bid them come. That Church or Christian is in a sad condition that has ceased to say, Come. "Let him that heareth say, Come" (Revelation 22:17).

5. Pilgrims willing to help others. "We will do thee good." The Christian Church is a brotherhood, a family, the "Household of God. "O how attractive it would be to those sin-sick, miserable, heart-broken onlookers if they could but see the love of God yearning in us for their good. It takes the love of Christ so to constrain us.

6. Pilgrims willing to be helped by others. "Thou mayest be to us instead of eyes." Hobab had an intimate geographical knowledge of the whole country that might have been helpful to the strangers. Many men of the world might be a great help to the Church if only brought into full sympathy with the Lord and His people. In seeking to win souls for Christ let us not attempt to belittle the gifts of those who may not yet see as we do. It may be helpful to point out to them, as Moses did, how their attainments and experiences could be helpful to the cause of God, and thus attain their highest value.

7. Pilgrims who often meet with refusals. "He said, I will not go, but I will depart to mine own land." Mine own land is often preferred to God's land of promise. Mine own little plot, self, to the great kingdom of our God and His Christ. The excuses for not going are very numerous and varied: "I don't like your company," "I intend to go some day, but not now," "I would go if So-and-so would go with me," "I am afraid that I could not hold on," "I am satisfied where I am," "I have married a wife, &c., I cannot come." Well, we arc going whether you come or not. THE ARK OF THE COVENANT.

Numbers 10:33-36.

It is of the Lord's mercy that we should have any visible token of His great spiritual presence with His people. Look at its- 1. Character. It was-

1. An ark. A small box, roughly speaking about four feet long, two feet wide, and two feet deep, made of shittim wood (incorruptible), and overlaid with pure gold. Type of Christ in His twofold nature, incorruptible humanity and pure divinity. The ark, like Christ, kept the law and covered up all its requirements. Its lid, like the work of Christ, forming a seat of mercy for Jehovah in His dealings with the people.

2. The ark of the covenant. Because the law, God's covenant with the people, which they had broken, was here safely kept and greatly honoured. Then His covenant with them was in the ark, now His covenant with us is in Christ. All have sinned, but all that the Father hath given Him shall come to Him. The honour of God is safe in the keeping of His beloved Son.

2. Position. "It went before them." While it rested it stood right in the midst of the camp, when it moved it went before them. The Good Shepherd goeth before His sheep (John 10:3-4). He hath gone before us through death into resurrection, "a three days' journey," from the mount of the broken law into the resurrection life. "The ark went before them in a three days' journey." The first day-yielding up all to God. The second day- death of self. The third day-rising in newness of life. 1.

Consecration. 2. Crucifixion. 3. Resurrection.

3. Purpose. "To search out a resting place." Divine wisdom was needed to search out a resting place for man. Man by searching could never find this out. Christ's great self-sacrificing work was the searching out and the finding of a place where we can rest in peace before God. A resting place is man's great need. Weary, heavy-laden soul, here is a place where ye can be relieved of your burdens, the place called Calvary. Come unto Me, and I will give you rest. Enter into My rest (Hebrews 4:5). Where the ark rested they rested. Where Christ has rested in the Father's word and will here also we can find rest unto our souls.

4. Power. "When the ark set forward Moses said, Rise up, Lord. When it rested he said, Return O Lord" (Numbers 10:35-36). The ark was the symbol of-

1. The presence of God. Without His presence it was only so much dead weight. What are all our forms of worship without the power? (Hebrews 13:5-6).

2. Victory. "Let thine enemies be scattered." When Christ, the ark of His strength, is with us the power of the enemy is broken. Greater is He that is with us than all that can be against us.

3. Blessing. "There I will commune with you" (Exodus 25:22). Resting where He rested means fellowship with Him and with one another." My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." Abiding with the ark the pillar of cloud overshadowed them (Numbers 10:34). ' Blessed with protection and with provision, for the manna accompanied the cloud. In His presence is fulness of joy, both now and evermore. THE GRAVES OF LUST.

Numbers 11.

"The scene was more beautiful far to my eye

Than if day in its pride had array'd it;

The land breeze blew mild, and the azure-arched sky

Looked pure as the Spirit that made it.

A murmur arose, as I silently gazed

On the shadowy waves' playful motion,

From the dim distant isle till the beacon-fire blazed

Like a star in the midst of the ocean." The grave of a sinner is always nearer than he thinks. When the mixed multitude began to lust it was the breaking open of the chasm of destruction. The fire of the Lord burning among them (Numbers 11:3) is the blazing of a beacon-fire for us. The steps from the place of privilege down to the pit of doom may be very few (Numbers 16:32).

1. The sin of lusting. Unforbidden desires after forbidden things. Observe-

1. Who they were. "Mixed multitude" (Numbers 11:4). A crowd of different peoples and tongues among the Israelites. Mixing with the world of ungodliness is sure to lead to lusting after the things of the world. While in the world we are to be kept from the evil of it (John 17:15).

2. When they lusted. "We remember the fish, &c., which we did eat in Egypt" (Numbers 11:5). Thinking about the pleasures of the world will ripen into lusting when spiritual things are not so precious as before. "Hearken unto Me, and eat ye that which is good." "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it" (Psalms 81:10-13).

2. The effect of lusting. Longing for the things of Egypt created in them-

1. A loathing toward God's provision. "Now our soul is dried away, there is nothing at all beside this manna" (Numbers 11:6). Although the manna from Heaven had saved their lives, it now becomes a thing despised as dry and common. When the gifts of God (Christ and His Word) become dry and uninteresting it is a powerful evidence that the heart is not right with God. Love of the world makes many cold. The manna tasted like fresh oil (Numbers 11:8). The Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit is always fresh.

2. A discouraging of God's servant. "Moses said, they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh to eat. I am not able to bear this people alone" (chapter Numbers 11:15). The great honour put upon Moses by the Lord is now felt to be a burden. God's servants are but human, and the worldliness of professing Christians makes their high position burdensome at times. Perhaps it was a little weakness on the part of Moses, for the meekest man on earth may at times fail (chap. Numbers 12:3). But that does not lessen the guilt of those grumblers that so grieved him. Mercy is given to the one, while judgment is meted out to the other.

3. The promise of God. He promises in answer to prayer-

1. To relieve the burden of His servant. "I will take of the Spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them, and they shall bear the burden with thee" (Numbers 11:16-17). Although seventy men were added to share the responsibilities of oversight it does not appear that any addition of spiritual power was given. No more was needed, because the spirit of wisdom and power given to Moses was enough. But note that every man added had to be endued with the Spirit. "Tarry until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).

2. To grant the petition of the rebels. "Ye shall eat flesh until it come out at your nostrils and be loathsome unto you" (Numbers 11:18-20). God's blessings will never be meted out to suit the palate of lust. They got what they asked to such a degree that it became a curse. Those who lust after gold or pleasure may get and get to such an extent that they are devoured by them. The answer of their own prayers punish them. We may have good cause in eternity to praise God for unanswered prayers.

4. The terrible consequences.

1. The wrath of God. "While the flesh was between their teeth the wrath of the Lord was kindled" (Numbers 11:33). Having abundance of good things in this life is no evidence of the grace of God (Luke 16:25). It would appear from Psalms 78:30-31 that many of them had grown fat eating the flesh of lust, but their fatness only marked them for the slaughter. My soul, grieve not at the prosperity of the wicked. Let me be now and ever satisfied with Christ, the true bread from Heaven.

2. The graves of lust. They called the name of the place Kibroth-hattaavah (graves of the lust). Every unholy lust is the digging of a grave. Lust brings forth sin, and sin when it is finished bringeth

forth death. The grave is God's appointed place for lust. The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, let it be crucified and buried with Christ. May the grave of Jesus become also the Kibroth-hattaavah of the flesh.

SPIRIT-POSSESSED MEN.

Numbers 11:24-30.

"O Comforter, the Holy Ghost! Before Thee mortal may not boast; I grasp Thy Name of Paraclete, But find Thee strong as well as sweet; But more-Thy presence felt so near, The eyes of faith makes bright and clear; My glad heart bursts into song, By Thy presence still kept strong." The Lord does not deal with all in the same way. Moses prayed that he might be relieved from the "burden of all the people," and the Lord granted him according to his request (Numbers 11:11-17). Paul prayed that the thorn in the flesh might be taken away, but instead of that he got grace sufficient to bear it (2 Corinthians 12:7-10), and to glory in it. In the one case Moses was the loser (Numbers 11:17), in the other Paul was the gainer. Let us take good heed how we treat our thorns and our burdens. From this portion we may learn-

1. The possibilities of a believer's life. On Moses there rested a spiritual influence enough for seventy men (Numbers 11:24-25). Is there any limit as to the measure of wisdom and power God is able to communicate to a meek and faithful servant? The Spirit was given to Christ, our great High Priest, without measure, so that this holy anointing oil might flow down to the skirts of His garments-the whole body of His people.

2. Spirit-possessed men are separated men.

"Gather the seventy and set them round about the tabernacle" (Numbers 11:24). These men were called out, set aside, and their names written (Numbers 11:26) before the Holy Spirit was put upon them. The one hundred and twenty in the upper room were separated and set aside for this definite purpose before they were all filled with the Spirit. Come ye yourselves apart at God's bidding, and ye shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you.

3. There are degrees of Spirit filling. "The Lord took the Spirit that was upon Moses, and gave unto the elders" (Numbers 11:25). After this Moses would not have the same measure of the Spirit upon him. This was not needed, because he had not the same amount of work to do. The measure of our Spirit-filling depends much upon the measure of our faith and service for the Lord. The Lord does not give His penny to idlers in the market place. Carey's motto was good, "Attempt much for God, and expect much from God."

4. Spirit-possessed men cannot be hid. "Eldad and Medad prophesied in the camp, and there ran a young man and told Moses" (Numbers 11:26-27). The power of the Holy Spirit is fire from Heaven, it cannot be hid. If it is put under a bushel, then so much the worse for the bushel. Christ could not be hid. When He lives in us by the Holy Ghost there is no hiding of Him. When those who have hitherto been dumb for Christ begin to prophesy it is sure to create some excitement. "There ran a young man and said Eldad and Medad do prophesy." There is nothing like the mighty power of the Holy Spirit to make young men run, and to waken them up out of the sloth of spiritual indifference. When a man gets endued with the Spirit his life will tell.

5. Spirit-possessed men are not to be hindered.

"Joshua said, my lord Moses forbids them; Moses said, Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets" (Numbers 11:28-29). Perhaps Joshua himself was that young man who was so suddenly startled by this innovation as to run with the tidings of it. Such men are needed, and Moses' gladness at the hearing of it shows the largeness and meekness of his unenvious heart. Every Spirit-filled man rejoices in others being endued with power from on high for Christ and His kingdom's sake. "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets," as all might be (1 Corinthians 14:5). The Holy Ghost has been given that every believer might have this power, and the command is, "Be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18).

JEALOUSY AMONG THE LORD'S SERVANTS.

Numbers 12.

"Save me, O my God, from fretting,

Sin of all other sins begetting;

Grant that I may understand

All is 'neath Thy ruling hand.

Save me, O my God, from fretting,

Subtle weaver of sin's netting;

Others may be great, I low,

Grace give to Thy will to bow."

Jealousy is cruel as the grave. It is a sad sight to see the Lord's people looking on one another with the self-conceited eyes of envy. Godliness with contentment is great gain. See here its-

1. Origin. "Because Moses had married an Ethiopian woman" (Numbers 12:1). In this connection it is significant that Miriam's name is mentioned first, as she doubtless first kindled this fire of sedition. The Ethiopian woman being raised to a place of great honour seemed to stir up her envy. Does it make us fretful when some brother of low degree is lifted into prominence in the cause of Christ? Are we more ready to find fault than bless God for it?

2. Form. "Hath the Lord spoken only by Moses? hath He not spoken also by us?" (Numbers 12:2). This was a question as to the receiving of the favour of God, and their fitness to take the lead in His word. When there is pride and discontent in the heart it will soon break out in faultfinding. Am I not the servant of God as well as he? A sparrow is under the same care as an angel, but their character and the purpose of their lives are very different. A geologist knows the difference between granite and sandstone, so may any schoolboy, but that does not make him a geologist.

3. Subject. "They spake against Moses. Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which are upon the face of the earth" (Numbers 12:3). Moses makes no attempt to vindicate his own name. He is conscious that his commission is from God, and he leaves Him to deal with the offenders. What can be more cruel than jealousy? It is so terribly soul-blinding that it will charge the meekest men on earth with vanity and presumption. Dissatisfied and envious Christian workers are not infrequently found throwing such stones at those who are more used of God than

they are. Take heed to yourself.

4. Treatment. "The Lord spake suddenly unto Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, Come out ye three, and hear now My words" (Numbers 12:4-8). Suddenly the Lord appears for the defence of His servant Moses. He honours and justifies him before their faces as more than an ordinary prophet, as one to whom He could speak mouth to mouth and face to face (Exodus 33:11). God will always compensate His tried servants for their faithful silence. The way into open reward is through a shut door (Matthew 6:6).

5. Guilt. "The anger of the Lord was kindled against them" (Numbers 12:9). Those who are jealous of others in the Lord's work should be reminded that they have a jealous God to deal with (Nahum 1:2). He will avenge the wrongs done to those who abide in the secret of His presence. The Lord looketh upon the heart. Is thy heart right with God in this respect? Be sure this sin will find you out.

6. Results. The evidence of His wrath upon them is seen in that it-

1. Produced uncleanness. "Miriam became leprous" (Numbers 12:10). The sin of the heart soon manifested itself in outward uncleanness. Fault-finders and backbiters will soon be found outside the service of God. When Christian workers become envious and ambitious, look out for an outbreak.

2. Interrupted fellowship. "Let her be shut out from the camp seven days" (Numbers 12:14). The spirit of jealousy quickly withers up the spirit of communion. It is an uncleanness within that unfits for fellowship with God and with His people. This is a law that is unalterable. The lack of brotherly love grieves the Holy Ghost, and so the spirit of prayer and worship is lost, and the soul has to go outside the enjoyment of all holy things. Beware how ye speak about the Lord's servants. This is a solemn question asked by Jehovah, "Were ye not afraid to speak against My servant?" (Numbers 12:8). To his own master he stands or falls.

3. Hindered progress. "The people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again" (Numbers 12:15). The whole camp was kept back through her sin. Those who sin in the high places of the Church are great hindrances to the advancement of the cause of Christ. One fly may spoil the ointment, one Achan may cause defeat to the whole army of God, one sin will hinder growth in grace, mar the testimony, and make the life unfruitful. "Search me, O God, and try me, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalms 139:23). THE FOLLY OF UNBELIEF.

Numbers 13 and 14. The carnal mind is enmity against God, and until the mind is changed toward God His grace and faithfulness will never be appreciated. They may spy the beautiful land, but it is only with blinded eyes. They may hear of its goodness and glory, but only with deaf ears. Until the heart is right with God all is wrong. Unbelief toward God as naturally flows out of the carnal heart as waters down the hill. No amount of evidence in itself (for the Israelites had abundance) will ever change the human mind. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth." Unbelief-

1. Measures difficulties by human strength. "We be not able, for they are stronger than we" (Numbers 13:31). "Grasshoppers in their sight" (Numbers 13:33). Those who go to work without God have only an arm of flesh to lean on, in face of terrible obstacles in the way to their possessing Divine blessings. How can a helpless sinner ever overcome all the giants of evil within,

and all the walls of habit that has been built about them? Measure these by your own powers, and well may you say, "We be not able" (Numbers 13:31). It is good when the sinner makes this confession, but sad when Christians do. There are high blessings in God's Word offered to His people: perpetual peace, joy, strength, victory. Like Nehemiah we must measure all difficulties with "the God of Heaven." "Lo, I am with you always."

2. Makes void the Word of God. They said "It is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof" (chap. Numbers 13:32). God had said that it was "A good land and a large, flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:8). Here is a contradiction. Unbelief always contradicts God, because it can only judge by appearance. "He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar." God's Word promises pardon, peace, paradise to all that believe on Jesus. But the unbelieving heart thinks that the religion of Jesus Christ eateth up the subjects of it, because worldly pleasures are no more sought after. God says "Look and live." Unbelief says "Work and live." God's Word says wisdom's (Christ's) ways are ways of pleasantness. Unbelief says we would need to give up all pleasure to walk in them (Hebrews 4:2).

3. Despises the provision of God. "They brought up a slander upon the land" (chap. Numbers 14:36). "Yea they despised the pleasant land, they believed not His Word" (Psalms 106:24). The good and fruitful land was God's provision for them, but they saw no beauty in it to desire it. Christ and His precious promises are God's provision for the sinner, yet how often He is slandered and despised, wounded also in the house of His friends. You bring a slander upon the land when you profess to be a Christian, and walk not accordingly. You despise the pleasant land when you trust more to your own goodness than to Christ. You reject God's provision when you pray to be excused (Luke 14:18).

4. Dishonours God Himself. "And the Lord said, How long will it be ere they believe Me?" (chap. Numbers 14:11). When Eve believed the serpent she discredited the Lord. When you believe your own evil heart you disbelieve God. What hath God done for them? "He had forgiven them from Egypt until now" (Numbers 13:9), been gracious to them all the way, still they doubt His sure Word of promise. What has God done for you? Where are many that used to trouble you? Has He not been gracious to you from the cradle? What are you doing now? Rebelling, disowning, and dishonouring. Unbelief drove the nails into His hands and feet. Unbelief pierced His heart. If you are despising His mercy you are crucifying Him afresh. What dishonour to doubt Him that cannot lie. "He that sinneth against Me wrongeth his own soul" (Proverbs 8:34).

5. Is the source of sin and sorrow. "And all the people wept and murmured" (chap. Numbers 14:1-4). How readily man believes an evil report, how slow to let "God be true." Those who disbelieve God will weep and wail. Unbelief excludes God, and so prefers darkness to light, sorrow and misery to peace and joy. Have faith in God, and He will wipe away all sad tears. Unbelief shuts out the guiding Spirit, and cries, "Make us a captain" (Numbers 14:4). O how foolish when man refuses to be blessed of God! Jesus said to the disciples, "Why are ye sad?" Just because they "believed not the Scriptures." Why so much sadness in the world? Because God is not believed. The young man went away sorrowful. These shall go away into everlasting punishment. Beware of false reporters.

6. Presumes to succeed without God. "They presumed to go up, nevertheless the ark of the Lord departed not" (Numbers 14:40-45). The foolish virgins came knocking when the door was shut.

Samson said "I will go and shake myself, and he wist not that the Lord was departed from him" (Judges 16:20). I called and ye refused, now I will laugh at your calamity. This is the presumption of almost every unbelieving sinner; they hope to get the blessed possession in the end, although they do not believe God's Word. But if they will not take salvation in God's way they will never possess it in their own. Some went to gather manna on the seventh day and found none (Exodus 16:27). Too late.

7. Incurs the sentence of death. "As I live, saith the Lord, your carcases shall fall in this wilderness" (chap. Numbers 14:28-29). How awfully solemn. "He that believeth not shall not see life," &c. (John 3:36). "The day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." They could not enter in because of unbelief. Take heed lest ye fall after the same example of unbelief. "He that believeth not shall be damned." God is merciful, but God is not to be trifled with. The punishment of the unbelieving is as certain as the blessedness of the believing (Matthew 25:46). THE TRIUMPHS OF FAITH.

Numbers 13 and 14.

If we believe that God hath spoken, then we should believe all He says. But, alas! this is not so. Many say they believe the Bible to be all it pretends to be, and yet how few of its offers are accepted, how few of its promises believed. "I will show you my faith by my works." Can you show me yours without them? Without faith it is impossible to please God. God is better pleased with faith than works. In truth, faith is a work. "This is the work of God that ye believe." We notice here seven actions of faith. It-

1. Confirms the promise of God. "We came to the land, and surely it floweth with milk and honey" (chap. Numbers 13:27). This is just what God had said about it. "Faith sets to its seal that God is true." Those who prove His Word will find it faithful. God promises peace in believing, and also rest. If you cannot say that you have found these you dare not say you believe God, else you make Him a liar. The submissive will and God's Word can never differ, they are always and altogether at one. Although our experience has not yet attained, faith must ever keep far ahead of experience. When Christ is believed, God is honoured, because the soul being justified justifies God.

2. Exhibits the proofs of God's faithfulness. "They went and showed them the fruit of the land" (chap. Numbers 13:26). They brought into the wilderness (Numbers 13:3) that which the wilderness could not produce. Every believer ought to manifest to the world fruits that are contrary to it. When they saw the boldness of Peter and John they acknowledged that they had been with Jesus. Every believer's life ought to be a witness to the truth of God's Word. The grace of God can turn barrenness into marvellous fruitfulness. Every Christian whose life manifests the fruits of God's promises condemns the unbelieving. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Galatians 5:22). These make a wonderful cluster from the heavenly Eshcol, but, alas 1 how few seem to carry them.

3. Advocates present possession. "Let us go up at once and possess it" (chap. Numbers 13:30). Unbelief always puts off for a more convenient season. If God has made us a promise, why should that promise not be ours at once? God's desire that we should possess it is seen in the promise He makes. This is the promise which He hath promised- eternal life, present possession. Lay hold of it at once. He promises rest from labour, and rest in labour (Matthew 11:28-29). Not only in

Heaven, but now. Are you enjoying it? If not, go up at once and possess it. The land of promise is there before you. If you have faith you will possess. Faith values the present, because it knows future blessedness depends upon it.

4. Laments the folly of unbelief. "Joshua and Caleb rent their clothes" (chap. Numbers 14:6). Jesus who had all power to save, weeps over impenitent Jerusalem. When a man has discovered the infinite grace of God the unbelief of others seems awful madness. Those whose eyes are opened to spiritual and eternal things are those whose eyes must often weep for others. Those whose hearts have been broken by the love of God will have their hearts often pierced by those who despise Him. Only those who believe God can know the folly and sin of doubting Him. When faith is low sorrow for sin will be shallow, whether in the Church or the individual. If we had the faith of Christ, then we would have somewhat of His sympathy.

5. Rests exclusively in the Lord. "If the Lord delight in us, then He will bring us into the land, and the Lord is with us, fear them not" (chap. Numbers 14:8-9). Faith does not overlook the difficulties (chap. Numbers 13:28), but contrasts them with the promise and power of Jehovah. Unbelief excludes God in its reasonings. Faith says is anything too hard for Him. Those who trust in Him have sure success, for they have: 1. His pleasure: "delight in us." 2. His promise: "He will bring us." 3. His presence: "with us." 4. His power: "He is able." Here we see how the bewildered sinner may have deliverance, not by looking at the great sins, or evil habits, or other huge obstacles, but by accepting His promise and leaving all to Him. By faith Abraham obeyed, by faith Peter walked on the sea, by grace are ye saved through faith.

6. Follows God always and everywhere. "Caleb hath followed Me fully" (chap. Numbers 14:24). God ever justifies fully, and always, and everywhere, those who continually trust in Him. This is the life of faith. Faith in God is an act, but it is the act of a once sealed fountain broken open and flowing on continually, and rejoicing to flow, and reckoning this the work of its existence. It mattered nothing to Caleb how numerous the giants, or how high the walls. His heart was stayed on God. We need fear no evil if indeed we can say "He leadeth me." Those who follow fully will suffer persecution-"stone them" (Numbers 13:10), "burn them" (three Hebrew youths), "crucify Him." But greater is He that is for us.

7. Inherits the promises. "Him will I bring into the land" (Numbers 14:24). This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Such are not sent empty away, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." "He that honoureth Me I will honour." Faith accepts the promises which are the title deeds of Heaven offered by God to bankrupt sinners. There is much land yet to be possessed -"high lands," "sunny lands," "happy lands." "Believe, and thou shalt see." Here is a sunny slope on the hillside of spiritual privilege. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee." In Psalm 37 five of Canaan's happy fields are promised to the faithful followers (Psalms 37:3-4, Psalms 37:5, Psalms 37:7, Psalms 37:11, Psalms 37:34). God is faithful. THE SIN OF PRESUMPTION.

Numbers 14:39-45.

"Deep is the sea, and deep is Hell, but pride mineth deeper;

It is coiled as a poisonous worm about the foundations of the soul.

If thou expose it in thy motives, and track in thy springs of thought,

Complacent in its own detection, it will seem indignant virtue."

It has been said that "Wise men presume nothing, but hope for the best; presumption is hope out of her wits." In this portion of Scripture we have a solemn example of the foolhardiness of attempting to do work for the Lord without His presence with us.

1. Who they were.

1. Pilgrims from Egypt who had been saved by the power of God.

2. Followers of the Divine pillar, who had again and again witnessed the wonder working of Him who dwelt therein.

3. Murmurers who had refused to accept the report of the two faithful spies, and who desired to make themselves a captain and return to Egypt (Numbers 14:4).

2. What they did. When they heard that the Lord had, because of their unbelief, sentenced them to forty years wanderings in the wilderness (Numbers 14:34), they said, "Lo, we be here, and we will go up." In doing so they went-

1. Against the Word of God. "Wherefore do ye now trespass? It shall not prosper" (Numbers 14:41). What was their duty and privilege yesterday becomes disobedience to-day. God had said, "In this wilderness they shall die." They said, "We will go up." But now it was in their own strength. Vain effort.

2. Presuming on the past mercies of God. "Lo, we be here." We have been preserved and brought through to this point. "We will go up." It is in vain we lean on past favours and experiences when by our sin we have grieved the Holy Ghost. Murmuring is sure to lead to failure.

3. Without the presence of God. "They presumed to go up, nevertheless the ark of the Lord departed not out of the camp" (Numbers 14:44). If we go contrary to God's Word we must go without His presence. Without Me ye can do nothing. The Lord is with you while you be with Him in His will and purposes (2 Chronicles 15:2). Except Thy presence go with us, carry us not up hence.

4. Thinking that a formal confession would satisfy God. "We will go up, for we have sinned" (Numbers 14:40). Confession without the submission of the will to the mind of God is ardent hypocrisy. Sin may be felt, yet not forsaken. Unless the moth has been hopelessly scorched with the flame at its first contact it will seek it again.

3. What they experienced. "The Amalekites came down and smote them, and discomfited them" (Numbers 14:45). In their self-confident effort they only gained for themselves-

1. Disappointment. They did not reach the place which the Lord had promised. They had built their hopes on a foundation of sand.

2. Defeat. The enemy overcame them. The foes of the soul are numerous and powerful. He that trusteth his own heart is a fool. Without the armour of God we cannot withstand the wiles of the devil.

3. Disgrace. I use this word advisedly, "Out of favour." Conscious of having lost the favour and presence of God. This is a most alarming discovery to a true child of God. Out of favour with God means also dishonoured among men. Miserable backslider.

4. Death. Many were smitten. In a spiritual sense presumption is always accompanied by the smiting blight of death. Pride goeth before a fall. "Uzziah was marvellously helped till he was strong"-strong in self-confidence. The wages of the sin of self-trust is death to all fruitfulness for Christ.

4. What they teach us. These things which happened to them are ensamples to us (1 Corinthians 10:11). There is here a solemn warning to the-

1. Christian worker. Beware of godless effort, of hoping to succeed in Christ's work without the presence and power of the Holy Spirit with you and in you. Except the Lord build the city they labour in vain who build it.

2. Self-righteous. Beware of seeking the heavenly inheritance, the land of promise, without first making sure that God is with you by His Word and promise.

3. Formalist. Beware of trusting formal prayers and confessions while the revealed will of God stands opposed to your character and purposes (Numbers 14:41-42).

4. Procrastinating. Beware of depending on a late repentance. Those Israelites found that the eleventh hour for them was too late. Their last effort was a fatal one. The ark did not always rest in Jordan. If one thief was saved at the eleventh hour, the other perished. Here again, "Beware of the sin of presumption." For this sin there was no sacrifice appointed (Hebrews 6:4-6). THE DESTRUCTION OF KORAH AND HIS COMPANY.

Numbers 16.

"When Thou seest passion in me burn,

Upon me, Lord, Thy meek face turn;

Such vision, giving me of faith,

So touching me with Thy soft breath

That I shall not impatient be,

But find myself conformed to Thee."

Pride goeth before a fall. When envy enters the heart it soon becomes a hotbed for the rank weeds of discontent, impatience, and presumption.

1. See the sinners. The three leaders of this rebellion against Moses and Aaron the saint of the Lord (Psalms 106:16) were Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; their followers were 250 princes, famous men of renown. Great men are not always wise. The voice of the people is frequently the voice of the devil. Korah seems to have been the ringleader. His name means Ice, and he answers to his name. Only a man with an icy, cold heart and frozen feelings could have acted such an ungracious part toward the "meekest man on the face of the earth." Where love is thin faults are thick. When

professing Christian workers become icy in their manner, you may soon expect them leading the opposition. Such icebergs are a terrible danger to Gospel ships.

2. See their sin. It was very great, and was the growth of time, as all great sins are. A backslider is one who is sliding back, slowly it may be, but surely, into the mire of open sin. The down grade from uncharitableness leads to the engulfing of the whole character in the pit of iniquity. Its-

1. Root was unbelief. They had ceased to believe that Moses and Aaron were still the special representatives among the congregation. Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief. Begin to doubt God's will, and you begin to fall.

2. Branch was envy. "Wherefore lift ye up yourselves above the congregation?" (Numbers 16:3). The Lord had lifted Moses and Aaron up, but it was they that were lifting themselves up. It was Socrates who said, "Envy is the daughter of pride, the beginner of secret sedition, and the perpetual tormentor of virtue." This witness is true.

3. Blossom was presumption. "Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them" (Numbers 16:3). As if all the people were as gracious and saintly as Moses and Aaron. Their sin is ripening. There is a growing blindness to the good in others, and to their own sinfulness.

4. Fruit was death. Lust bringeth forth sin, and sin brings forth death, just as surely as night follows day.

3. See them separated. "Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them" (Numbers 16:21-24). It is an ominous sign when the representatives of a government are called out from among a nation. The calling out of Lot meant the destruction of Sodom. The calling up of the Church indicates coming judgments (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Jeremiah 51:6; Revelation 18:4). This separating reminds us that-

1. There are two classes. Those for God and those against Him. The wheat and the tares, growing together now, but must finally be separated.

2. A separation is needed. God will not judge the righteous with the wicked. Before God could accomplish His purpose with Sodom Lot had to be dragged outside. Separation is needed now if we, as the followers of Christ, would escape the judgment of the world through lust (2 Corinthians 6:17).

3. God is righteous. In calling for a separation He shows His special regard for His own. "Come out of her, My people." Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? None perish that trust in Him.

4. See them swallowed up. "The earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up" (Numbers 16:31-35). The means of vengeance are always at the hand of God. The powerful opposition is easily overcome when the arm of God is made bare. The judgment of these gainsayers (Jude 1:11) was-

1. Unexpected. "The ground clave asunder that was under them" (Numbers 16:31). Their foundation gave way. They have no standing in the judgment (Psalms 1:5). Only the ground between them and the pit, instead of the promise of God.

2. Sudden. "They went down alive into the pit" (Numbers 16:33). He that hardeneth his neck, having been often reproved, shall suddenly perish, and that without remedy. They say, Peace, peace, then suddenly destruction cometh.

3. Complete. "They, and all that appertained to them, went down" (Numbers 16:33). God's destroying work is as perfect as His saving work. "How shall ye escape if ye neglect so great salvation?" THE ROD THAT BUDDED.

Numbers 17.

"O Lord, my God, Thou changest not,

Nor deed of kindness e'er doth blot;

I, too, through Thy so tender ruth,

Have come to know this precious truth.

Thy heaviest rod upon me laid,

To bud and blossom Thou hast made;

And still Thy rod, like growing thing,

Fragrance and fruit from Thee doth bring." The rod that budded is a most delightful type of the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. In His calling. Like this rod He was set apart, and the name of the High Priest put upon Him.

2. In His life. Like this rod He was common in appearance, no beauty to be desired, a root out of a dry ground.

3. In His death. Like Aaron's rod, He was laid up with others. "On either side one, and Jesus in the midst." Lifted up on the Cross, and also for the judgment of God.

4. In His resurrection. Like the rod He budded and blossomed and brought forth fruit.

5. In His ascension. Like the rod He is laid up again before the Lord for a testimony. He is in the presence of God for us.

There are other lessons that might be learned from this most fruitful theme, truths applicable to the Christian life and testimony, for as He is, so are we. The story of the occasion of these rods may be read in the preceding chapter, in the rebellion of Korah and his company against Moses and Aaron. See here the-

1. Demand of God. "Take twelve rods, write thou every man's name upon his rod, and lay them up, where I will meet with you" (Numbers 17:1-3).

1. This is a call for representatives. Every rod represented a tribe. Is our Lord not pressing His demand to-day for representatives when the Korahs and the princes of the world are challenging the ministry and power of the Gospel?

2. Each representative had to be entirely yielded up. Each rod was to be "laid up before the testimony" (Numbers 17:4). Put in the holy place, in front of the vail. Those who would have the Divine impersonation stamped upon them must be wholly yielded up to Him. Not every one that saith Lord, Lord, shall enter into the fulness of blessing exhibited in Aaron's rod.

2. Evidence of being chosen of God. The chosen of God will always be self-evident. "Behold the rod of Aaron budded, blossomed, and yielded almonds" (Numbers 17:8). This thing was done in secret, but it could not remain a secret. Light and life manifest themselves. This evidence was twofold.

1. Life. This life was the gift of God. The gift of God is eternal life. If we have been made alive unto God, then we may be assured that we are the called of God, as was Aaron. Partakers of the Divine nature.

2. Fruitfulness. "It yielded almonds." Fruit is the evidence of abundance of life. If we have been born again like the rod of Aaron, whose natural life had died and given place to his new life, it is that we might bring forth fruit unto God. Did not our Lord say "I have chosen you and ordained you to bring forth fruit," and that like the fruit on this rod, "your fruit should remain?" (John 15:16). But you say only one out of the twelve yielded up rods were chosen. Yes. But which was chosen? The one with the High Priest's name on it (Numbers 17:3). It does not matter by what name you consecrate yourself, if it is not in the Name of Jesus Christ, the Great High Priest, the evidences of God's choice will not be seen in your life. Put His Name upon your life, and lay it up before Him for His honour and glory, and as surely as Aaron's rod budded will your life bud and blossom and yield fruit. But note further- 3. Position of testimony for God. It was to be-

1. Kept in His presence. "The Lord said, Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony to be kept" (Numbers 17:10). If its life and fruitfulness are to remain, it must be kept in nearness to Him who is the source of its life and fruitfulness. The application of this is simple, yet sublime. The branch cannot bear fruit of itself, no more can ye, except ye abide in Me (John 15:1-6). The secret of abiding fruitfulness is being kept in nearness to the life-giving One. In His presence is fulness of joy.

2. As a witness. "To be kept for a token against the rebels" (Numbers 17:10). It is so with the living Christ now before the throne of God (Acts 17:30-31). It is so with every spiritually resurrected soul. They are witnesses against the rebels who believe not the word of the Gospel. The believer's life, like the works of Noah, are intended to condemn the world (Hebrews 11:7). As this living and fruitful rod was an evidence that God had chosen Aaron, so the life of the Christian is a token to the ungodly world that the Father hath sent His Son to save it (John 17:21). Kept in His presence for the enjoyment of His love, kept there for a witness to the power of His grace. He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him.

AARON AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF CHRIST

Numbers 18.

"I seek retreat from all this empty noise,

Mere human words, in books that have no end;

In the one Book supreme I still rejoice,

O Lord, more mighty fire-touch'd preachers send!

Send seers who know Thy voice and follow Thee

To height and depth, not sham'd of Jesus' Blood.

O give us, Lord, these more and more to see,

Thy words still their predestin'd heavenly food." In Aaron we have a deeply impressive type of the priestly character of our Lord and Saviour. Like Christ he-

1. Was sent of God as a Revealer. His name means "Enlightener." He was chosen by God to speak out His mind and will in the ears of Pharaoh. It was of him the Lord said, "I know that he can speak well" (Exodus 4:14). Christ came to reveal the Father's will. He could speak well. "Never man spake like this Man." I am the Light of the world.

2. Had charge of all the holy things. "I have given thee charge of Mine offerings, and of all the hallowed things" (Numbers 18:8). Christ indeed had charge of the offering and all the hallowed things of God. He came to give Himself an offering and a sacrifice to God. All things are now in His hand, because He is the Son of Man. The keys of Heaven, earth, and Hell are hanging at His girdle.

3. Had a special anointing. "Unto thee have I given them because of the anointing" (Numbers 18:8). "This precious ointment-symbol of the Holy Spirit-was poured upon his head, and ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, and went down to the skirts of his garments" (Psa. 133). This running down of the holy oil indicates an overflowing measure of fulness. The Holy Ghost was given to Christ without measure, and because of this anointing the Lord was able to finish the work given Him to do. He lived and moved and had His being in the Holy Spirit as the Man Christ Jesus.

4. Had the privilege of eating in the holy place. "In, the holy of holies shalt thou eat it" (Numbers 18:10, Heb.). He had meat to eat that others knew nothing of and could not enjoy. In the secret place of God's holy presence His soul was abundantly satisfied. "I delight to do Thy will, O God." My meat and My drink is to do the will of Him that sent Me. This is holy food, eaten in the most holy place. O my soul, as one hidden with Christ in God dost thou feed on this hidden manna? The finest of the wheat is found in the secret of His presence.

5. Redeemed the unclean. "The firstborn of man, and the firstling of unclean beasts, shalt thou surely redeem" (Numbers 18:15). It is most significant that man is classed with unclean beasts in need of redemption. The cow or sheep were reckoned holy, not needing to be redeemed (Numbers 18:17). Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. It was not an example the unclean needed, but a Redeemer. Redeemed with the precious Blood of Christ (Ephesians 1:7).

6. Had many servants given him. "Behold, I have taken the Levites; to you they are given as a gift for the Lord" (Numbers 18:6). The Levites were given to Aaron by the Lord as co-workers together with him for the Lord. Many have also been given to Christ by the Father as the fruit of His sufferings, and as co-workers for the honour of His great Name. "Holy Father, keep through Thine

own Name those whom Thou hast given Me" (John 17:11).

7. Had his seed blessed in him. "The holy things I have given thee, and to thy seed with thee, in a covenant of salt for ever" (Numbers 18:19). All spiritual blessings are ours in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:3). "He shall see His seed, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands. He shall see the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied" (Isaiah 53:10-11). Of His fulness have all we received, and ye are complete in Him (Colossians 2:10). Having delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? (Romans 8:32).

8. Found his part in God Himself. "The Lord spake unto Aaron, saying, I am thy part and thine inheritance" (Numbers 18:20). Like Aaron Christ had no earthly inheritance among the people. Not where to lay His head, although He was Heir of all. "This is the heir, come let us kill Him." Like Mary, having chosen the better part, the best part was given Him. To our Lord, the Father Himself, was His exceeding great reward. Glorify Thou Me with Thine own self (John 17:5). The Lord is my portion saith my soul. Choose the better part, that shall never be taken from you (Psalms 73:26). THE RED HEIFER.

Numbers 19. The ordinance of the heifer was appointed by God (Numbers 19:2). Like the plan of salvation it doubtless would be misunderstood by many. The offering must be according to the mind of God. He Himself appoints it. Jesus Christ, the great Sacrifice, was also, after God's own heart, "The Lamb of God." God only has the right to say what and how much He will accept as an atonement for man, or as a cleansing for the defiled. It is not a question of how much a man will give, but what will God accept. His terms are alone just. The whole scene shows us Christ and His salvation.

1. The sacrifice, or the character of Christ. "The heifer was to be without spot or blemish, and one upon which never came yoke" (Numbers 19:2). Christ offered Himself without spot unto God, and as a Lamb without blemish (1 Peter 1:19). Men tried to find a blemish in God's Lamb that they might reject Him, yea they rejected the "Holy One" and "the Just, "although they found no fault in the Man. Man in the pride of his heart still tries to get God in a fault. The yoke speaks of the curse. "Cursed is the ground for thy sake." But the yoke of sin never was on Him as a bondage. Sin never fettered His life, though sorrow often filled His heart.

There must be no leaven in the meat-offering. He "was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Hebrews 7:26).

2. The slaying, or the death of Christ. "Bring her without the camp and slay her" (Numbers 19:3). Without spot, and yet without the camp, seems strange. Holy, yet treated as unclean. As a substitute it must be dealt with as vile, yet to be accepted of God it must be intrinsically spotless and blameless. So was it with Christ, without spot, yet treated as the vilest, slain without the gate as the chief of sinners. He was despised and rejected of men. God was well pleased with Him, yet He hid His face from Him without the city. The great truth here is substitution, the just One suffering for the unjust to bring us to God.

3. The consuming, or the offering of Christ. "Burn the heifer, her skin, her flesh, and her blood" (Numbers 19:5). All must be consumed, and all that was burnt was given to and accepted by God. It was a whole burnt-offering, yet in the place of the sin-offering, wholly devoted to God. Here we see Christ offering Himself, every part and power of His being are all laid down, and all accepted

by God. Sometimes the offerings were flayed (skinned), typifying outward imperfection. But Christ's outward and inward life were all pure, and all given to God. We fail in thought, word, and deed, but He faileth not. "The cedar, hyssop, and scarlet were cast into the burning" (Numbers 19:6), implying that the greatest (cedar), the smallest (hyssop), and vilest (scarlet) may be accepted in this offering.

4. The ashes, or the virtues of Christ. The ashes were to be gathered and laid up in a clean place: "It shall be kept, it is a purification for sin" (Numbers 19:9). The ashes were all that remained. The clean place may have a reference to the "new tomb" in which Jesus was laid. They are spoken of in the singular: it. The result of Christ's death is one whole "purification for sin," the alone remedy, divinely appointed, and on the ground of death. These ashes were to be kept, set apart for the unclean. What a gracious provision, what good news for the defiled and unclean! So God is still keeping mercy for thousands.

5. The denied, or the need of Christ. "He that toucheth the dead shall be unclean" (Numbers 19:11). Death is the work of sin. Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Therefore a touch was, and is, enough to make a man unclean in the sight of God. If a man touches the work of sin he has become unclean. He that offendeth in one point is guilty of all. Who has not touched or come in contact with the fruit of sin? This uncleanness must be met with by the ashes, the fruit of the death of the holy One. All have sinned, all need the purifying merits of Christ's death. Only the defiled had any claim upon the ashes; only sinners have claim on the Saviour. Your uncleanness is your warrant to come to the fountain opened.

6. The sprinkling, or the acceptance of Christ.

"The ashes and running water shall be put in a vessel, and sprinkled upon him that touched" (Numbers 19:17-18). The slaying of the sacrifice or the keeping of the ashes was not enough, there must be contact, and that through the water of the Word. The Spirit takes the things of Christ, and shows them, and applies them. The unclean must have faith in the ashes, or in the God who appointed them, or he would not receive them. So must there be faith in the finished work of Christ. The sprinkling is the imparting to the sprinkled all that the ashes mean-righteousness, acceptance, and cleansing from all sin The running water may represent the moving of the Spirit through the Word, revealing and applying the great salvation.

7. The unbelieving, or the neglecters of Christ.

"But the man that shall not purify himself shall be cut off" (Numbers 19:20). And that man will have himself to blame for it. The effectual provision is free and within the reach of all. In despising or neglecting the ashes he despises God, and "cut off" from all communion and hope will be the doom of every Christ neglecter. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" Nothing that defileth shall enter in. The unwashed would defile Heaven. The neglecters are "cut off" equally the same as the rejecters, and the "cutting off" is but the consequence of natural unfitness. "All that believe are justified from all things" (Acts 13:39). THE SIN OF MOSES, AND ITS FRUITS.

Numbers 20:1-13.

"Speak gently to an erring one, E'en if a deed of shame be done; For else you but exasperate, Perchance turn anger into hate."

Let him that is without sin cast the first stone. Judge not that ye be not judged. Troubles seem to come in crowds. In this chapter three sad events are recorded: 1, The death of Miriam (Numbers 20:1). 2, The transgression of Moses (Numbers 20:12). 3, The stripping of Aaron (Numbers 20:28). Three results of unbelief. With respect to Moses we shall look at- 1. The circumstances connected with his sin-

1. The place. Back to Kadesh where they had been thirty-nine years ago when they sent to spy the land, where many doubted and brought the doom of forty years wanderings upon them. Beware of old sins and barren places in your experience.

2. The condition of the people. Discontented and faultfinding. "They chode with Moses," and murmured against the providence of God (Numbers 20:3-5). This is always a source of intense trial to the faithful man of God.

3. The humility of Moses. "Moses and Aaron fell upon their faces" (Numbers 20:6). Not as before the people, but before the Lord, and His glory appeared unto them, and a way of deliverance was revealed. "Thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock" (Numbers 20:8). Moses could not make the water, but at his bidding it was to come.

2. The nature of his sin. "Thou shalt speak unto the rock (Numbers 20:8). This was his commission, but instead of speaking he smote the rock twice (Numbers 20:11). When water was to be brought from the rock the first time, God commanded Moses to smite the rock (Exodus 17:6). That Rock was Christ (1 Corinthians 10:4), and so in the purpose of God He could only be smitten once, "He suffered once." Further blessing or fresh outpourings of His fulness comes to us by asking: "Speak ye unto the Rock." We have here an incidental evidence of the carefulness of Jehovah about those things which were typical of His coming Son. The teaching in the types is the teaching of the Holy Ghost. These things are spiritually discerned. In this sin of the servant of God there was-

1. Disobedience. God said speak, but he smote, and that twice over, as if there were impatience also in the act. Perhaps he was allowing himself to be guided more by his past experience than by the fresh Word of God. This is always a danger to the servants of Christ. The means used and blessed yesterday may not be the God-appointed means to-day. Wait on the Lord.

2. Selfish passion. "Hear now, ye rebels." It is quite true that they were rebels, but calling them such names in these circumstances did not improve matters. His spirit was provoked, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips (Psalms 106:33). The best of men are but men at the best. The meekest man on the earth was not proof against pride. Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

3. Presumption. "Must we fetch you water out of the rock" (Numbers 20:10). It is very grieving to God when we seek our own glory while doing His work. Note how different it was with Peter and John in connection with the healing of the lame man mentioned in Acts 3:12. "Do you wish me to show you the way of salvation?" said a preacher to an anxious soul. Such me's are apt to be magnified by the seeker so as to hide the Master. Without Me you can do nothing. It is the Spirit that quickeneth.

There are two things that we must not forget in dealing with the sin of Moses: (1) That he himself tells us of it. He does not seek to hide from the eyes of others his own failings. For the glory of God and our good it is recorded. (2) That his failure through unbelief (Numbers 20:12) did not alter the faithfulness of God. "The water came out abundantly" (Numbers 20:11). The unbelief of some does not make the faith of God of none effect. As Christians we all come short of what we might be, but He abideth faithful. Bless His Name.

3. The fruit of his sin. It-

1. Dishonoured the Lord. "Because ye believed Me not, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel" (Numbers 20:12). The Lord's Name is profaned by the unbelief and self-glorying acts of His people. "I will be sanctified in you before the heathen" (Ezekiel 20:41).

2. Shut him out of the promised possession. "Therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them" (Numbers 20:12). Servant of God, one sin may shut you out of the enjoyment of a great privilege, one small cloud may hide from your gaze all the blue of Heaven. This is why many of the Lord's people are hindered from entering into the fulness of blessing and power in their service for Christ, there is sin in the camp. They could not enter in because of unbelief.

3. Is a solemn warning to us. Boast not thyself. It is possible to be calm and clear like the placid pool, and yet not be clean at the bottom, so that when the stone of slander or calumny is suddenly cast in the whole may become polluted. Cleanse Thou me from secret faults, and keep me in the hollow of Thy hand. THE DEATH OF AARON, PREFIGURING THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

Numbers 20:23-29.

On seeing a butterfly just escaping from its chrysalis an anonymous writer has said:

"Why lovely insect dost thou stand,

And wave thy quivering wing;

As half afraid thou wert aloft

On fields of air to spring?

But now has reach'd thy slender form

A sunbeam warm and bright,

And instant thou hast upward sprung

Towards the source of light." The Christian never dies, 'tis only a rising up to the source of his life and being, lost in the brightness of His presence. Aaron in his calling and priestly character is a well-known and full-orbed type of Jesus Christ our Great High Priest. It is just what we might expect that he who resembled our Lord so closely in his life and work would also be like Him in the cause and manner of His death. Aaron's death was like Christ's, in that-

1. He knew of it beforehand. The Lord revealed to Aaron that he was to be gathered to his people (Numbers 20:23-24). Jesus knew the time and manner of His death long beforehand. Even the

prophets had spoken of it. "My time is not yet." He came not to be ministered unto, but to give His life a ransom. On the mount of glory they spake of His decease (Luke 9:31).

2. It was sudden. Aaron went up Mount Hor for the purpose of dying. No time of sickness is hinted at. It would seem as if he had been cut off suddenly. "The Messiah shall be cut off." "They marvelled that He was dead already." The soldiers expected Him to linger on for a while in His dying, but reproach broke His heart (Psa. 60 20).

3. It was because of sin. Aaron was cut of! from entering the promised land "because he rebelled against My Word" (Numbers 20:24). Sin was imputed to him, and for sin he died. Christ died for sin, but not His own. The Lord laid upon Him the iniquity of us all. He bore our sins in His own body, in His very soul, which was exceedingly sorrowful even unto death, and which He poured out as an offering for sin.

4. He murmured not in prospect of it. It is most significant that through all this trying time Aaron's voice is never heard. Like the great Antitype he opened not his mouth. He for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross. No murmur ever escaped the lips or ever found conception in the heart of Jesus. Nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done.

5. He died on a mount. "Take Aaron and his son and bring them up unto Mount Hor" (Numbers 20:25). It was to him a solemn climb, leaving all others behind him, to see their faces no more on earth. Jesus set His face like a flint to go up to Jerusalem, although He knew it was to accomplish the decease referred to by Moses and Elijah on the mount of transfiguration. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up. A handful of corn on the top of Mount Calvary, destined to fill the whole earth (Psalms 72:16).

6. He was stripped. "Moses stripped Aaron of his garments" (Numbers 20:28). Christ also was stripped, and even to His shame. "They parted My garments among them, and for My vesture did they cast lots." This they did that the Scripture might be fulfilled, both in type and prophecy.

7. Two were with him in his death. There were only three on that mount when Aaron died, one that was exalted through his death and one who was not (Numbers 20:28). On Mount Calvary, when Jesus died, there were other two with Him, Jesus in the midst, and on either side one. One was also blessed and exalted through His death: "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." It may not be lawful to compare the other unbelieving thief to Moses, but, like Moses, he was shut out because of unbelief (Numbers 20:12).

8. His work was continued after he was gone.

"His garments were put upon Eleazar his son" (Numbers 20:28). His son perpetuated the work begun by his father, and this by the commandment of the Lord. Aaron's mantle fell on Eleazar, as afterwards the mantle of Elijah fell on Elisha, and as further down the course of time the Spirit that possessed the Lord Jesus Christ fell upon His heirs in the upper room that they might continue the priestly work of intercession after His departure. He hath made us kings and priests unto God. Eleazar, the son of Aaron, ministered in his stead (Deuteronomy 10:6). We beseech you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God. This is our priestly work. May the holy anointing be upon us for it. THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

Numbers 21:1-9.

"THE soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way." Those who follow the Lord because they know it right, but love Him not, are sure to grow weary. A rebellious heart makes it hard to follow. Sin always causes the compassing instead of going straight up to possession. It is the walk of life that brings out what we really are. Dissatisfaction is sure to lead to rebellion. If the heart is not satisfied in God it will wander elsewhere. Backsliders, beware. Notice three things about Israel- 1. Their sin. It was threefold. It was a sin against-

1. God Himself. They spake against God (Numbers 21:5). All sin is against God. We speak against God when we grumble about His providence, when we refuse to submit willingly to His workings. We speak against God when we show more sympathy for the worldling than the Christian, more interest in the things of this life than the life to come. When we prefer the pleasure of the flesh to the profit of the soul. He that is not for Me is against Me.

2. The servant of God. They spake against Moses (Numbers 21:5). Those who hate Christ cannot love His people. "They persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." It is not desirable that we should be well spoken of by those who speak against our God. The measure of our oneness with Him will be the measure of our suffering for Him. If the blessings of Christ fall upon us because of our identity with Him, why not His reproaches. If I am spoken against by those who speak against Christ they bare witness that I am like Christ.

3. The provision of God. "Our soul loatheth this light bread" (Numbers 21:5). The heart that is at enmity with God will loathe His bread. Christ is His bread for the world, but the world does loathe Him as light bread, just fit for children and sick people, but not for strong men in the battle of life. Many in their pride treat Christ as not sufficient for them, they want something else, and thus despise the provision of the grace of God.

2. Their sorrow. This sorrow that worketh repentance is seen in their-

1. Confession. They came and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord" (Numbers 21:7). True sorrow will lead to true confession. There is little hope for the sinner until he makes this confession, "Father I have sinned." When sin is seen as against the Lord it makes it exceeding sinful, and when this is believed confession comes easy and natural. For a man to believe that he is a sinner against God, and not to confess his guilt, is just proving his determined enmity against Him.

2. Petition. "Pray unto the Lord." The despised servant now becomes the intercessor. The persecuted becomes the pleader for the persecutors. In the evil day they send for Daniel. The way of access is still through Him who is our Leader and Commander. Without being asked the Lord Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them." Stephen also made intercession for the transgressors. When men are truly sensible of their guilt, then are they conscious of their need of a Mediator.

3. Affliction. It was only when the Lord sent serpents among them (Numbers 21:6) that they came to themselves. The rags and poverty of the prodigal made him think of his father's home. The fiery serpents of trial and trouble have brought many to confession, when these have been sent of God. But the venom of the old serpent's bite has gone deeper down than this, into the veins and arteries of a sinful humanity. Man is a poisoned being, his moral nature even at its best is a polluted and a condemned thing. For this there is but one remedy. Regeneration. Christ crucified.

3. Their salvation. It was-

1. Divinely appointed. The Lord said, "Make thee a serpent," &c. (Numbers 21:8). This provision, like the incarnation and death of Christ, could never have been suggested by man. Man can invent no remedy for sin any more than the condemned criminal could invent a plan whereby the law can be set aside and himself justified. He that condemns must justify. Salvation is of the Lord. By a serpent they have been bitten, by one in the form of a serpent they must be healed. Through man came death, by man also came the justification of life. The Man Christ Jesus who was made in the likeness of sinful flesh.

2. Divinely suitable. "Set it upon a pole and every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live" (Numbers 21:8). This serpent was lifted up for every bitten one. It was within the reach of all. The means of application was possessed by all that had eyes to look. If they had eyes that could see the tents and the hills, then with the same eyes could they see their salvation. If men have faith to believe in others, then with that same faith they can believe unto salvation. Christ has been lifted up high above every one else as the Friend and Saviour of men. "Look unto Me, and be ye saved" (Isaiah 45:22).

3. Divinely effectual. "Any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived" (Numbers 21:9). None looked in vain. None perish that trust in Him. "Any man." It mattered not how many serpents had bitten him or how few; it mattered not whether he was rich or poor, the promise of God was, "He that looketh shall live." The same God has said, "He that believeth in Him hath everlasting life." And this salvation is as real to-day as the serpent-healing of old. It is not the means that saves, but the God of salvation. They believed God and looked, and He healed all their diseases.

"Rejoice, rejoice, O all the earth,

And break forth now with holy mirth;

The serpent old is now, death-wounded.

Hell's kingdom, lo! Christ's Cross confounded;

"Whoever" is the embracing word,

And Thou to it stand'st true, O Lord."

BALAAM'S PARABLE.

THE PRIVILEGES OF GOD'S PEOPLE.

Numbers 23:18-24.

It is rather a puzzle to grasp the character of Balaam; his moral nature looks like a tangled skein. He reminds one of Bunyan's Mr. Face-both-ways. He seems to be typical of those who have a great deal of spiritual knowledge, but who are more of a hindrance than a help in the Lord's work; large-headed but cold-hearted professors, who talk much religion, but who keep company with the ungodly (chap. Numbers 31:8). God may use the mouth of a Balaam just as He may use the mouth of his ass. He who can make an ass to speak may make a false prophet to discern wondrous things, and to say much that is most true and precious, although they themselves are

utter aliens to the experience of them. This second parable of Balaam's opens with a clear vindication of the faithfulness of God. "God is not a man that he should lie." Then he sees the people of God as a-

1. Forgiven people. "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob" (Numbers 23:21). Blessed are they whose sins are forgiven (Romans 4:7-8). Your sins are forgiven for His Name's sake (1 John 2:12). It is God who justifieth (Romans 8:33).

2. Delivered people. "God brought them out of Egypt" (Numbers 23:22). Out of the house of bondage, out from the rule of Pharaoh. He hath saved us from the wrath to come (1 Thessalonians 1:10); from the power of darkness (Colossians 1:13); from sin (Romans 6:18); from this present evil world (Galatians 1:4).

3. Joyful people. "God is with them, and the shout of a king is among them" (Numbers 23:21). Well may we be joyful in our King. All power in Heaven and earth is His, and He hath said, Lo, I am with you alway. Rejoice in His presence, in His light and love, in His power and faithfulness. It will be well with the cause of Christ when the ungodly hear the shout of the King of Glory in the midst of His people. When the Gospel is preached in the power of the Holy Spirit there will be heard the unmistakable shout of the invisible but ever-present King of Saints.

4. Protected people. "There is no enchantment against Jacob" (Numbers 23:23). The character of God's people is proof against all gossiping conjurers. The well-springs of the Christian's life and enjoyments cannot be poisoned by the enemy. They live in the presence of Him who will not listen to the envious talebearer. Miriam and Aaron may speak against Moses, but it is only to their own hurt. His goodness is great to them that fear Him (Psalms 31:19).

5. Witnessing people. "It shall be said of Israel, What hath God wrought?" (Numbers 23:23). Their separated life was a witness for God. The riches of His grace is seen in His kindness towards us. In turning our captivity He hath filled our mouth with laughter and our tongue with singing. What hath God wrought? He hath done great things for us whereof we are glad (Psalms 126:1-3).

6. Courageous people. "Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion" (Numbers 23:24). This fearless king of beasts is the chosen emblem of Christian courage. There are many who crouch as a lion, but few who rise up for the truth as it is in Jesus, and spring upon those evils which are robbing the Church of her life and power. Men after John Bunyan's Mr. Great-Heart are much needed at the front (Proverbs 30:29-30).

7. Victorious people. "He shall not lie down until he eat of the prey" (Numbers 23:24). Behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed, and the lion's whelp shall share the spoil (Genesis 49:9). We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Let not thy soul lie down to rest until ye eat the joy of victory over all your sins and over all your circumstances. All His own shall yet be "more than conquerors" (Romans 8:37).

SEEING BUT NOT POSSESSING.

Numbers 27:12-17.

"As the sunshine in the clouds, As the foam-bells in the floods, As the fragrance in the flower, As the dew-mown grass's dower; Thou dost, Lord, in love assuage Trouble's sorest, keenest edge." The keen edge was taken off Moses' disappointment when God in love gave him a sight of the land into which he was hindered from entering because of the sin he committed in rebelling against the Word of the Lord. Moses, as representing the law, could not bring the people into the promised land. What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God hath accomplished in the sending of His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh (Romans 8:3). The law was given by Moses, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. We shall take note of his-

1. Assuring vision. "The Lord said unto Moses, Get thee up into Mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given" (Numbers 27:12). If Moses could not enter the land, he had his faith confirmed by sight that the good and pleasant land was there. It was-

1. A land of blessing. Often spoken of, but as yet unpossessed, and typical of the exceeding great and precious promises given us in Christ Jesus, of which many Christians have heard much, but how few have taken full possession.

2. A land beyond. Moses saw it from Mount Abarim. Abarim means regions beyond. He had a very clear and greatly enlarged vision afterwards from the top of Pisgah (Deuteronomy 34:1-3). O how great are the "regions beyond" of Christian possibilities in the present life. Truly the land is great, but God was the Giver. All are yours, and ye are Christ's (1 Corinthians 3:22-23).

2. Melancholy failure. "When thou hast seen it thou shalt be gathered unto thy people, for ye rebelled against My commandment" (Numbers 27:13-14). He failed because of-

1. Unbelief. He rebelled against His word by smiting the rock instead of speaking to it (Numbers 20:8-12). How often in spirit have we done this same thing? The Lord has said only believe, but we have imagined that something more was needed, some worldly wisdom or fleshly energy to give emphasis to His word. Our smiting instead of speaking only serves to reveal our unbelief. There are many blessings into which we cannot enter because of unbelief.

2. God-usurping pride. God charges him with refusing "to sanctify Me before their eyes" (Numbers 27:14). Moses said, "Shall we fetch water from the rock for you?" For the moment he stepped into the place of the Lord, and robbed Him of His honour before the eyes of the people. All pride and self-exaltation is an attempt to dethrone the Lord. Self-interest will always shut out the Lord from the enjoyments of the fuller Christian life. Ponder deeply the words of our Lord when He said, "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes" (Matthew 11:25).

3. Magnanimous action. "Moses said, Let the Lord set a man over this congregation, which may lead them, and bring them in" (Numbers 27:15-17). If he cannot enter into the land himself he is most anxious that the others should. He is intensely desirous that his successor should be more successful in this matter than himself. This prayer of his reveals-

1. An entire submission to the will of God. No grumble escapes his lips. If the honour of leading the people into the possession offered them is not to be his,then "Good is the will of the Lord." He did not fall into that other common sin of getting huffy, a plague that sometimes breaks out among Christian workers, affecting both preachers and people alike.

2. A deep interest in the people of God. He would be thankful to know that others were to inherit more than himself, if the Lord was to be glorified in it. In the good land of promise, the unsearchable riches of Christ, freely given us in Him, there is enough to make a satisfying lot for every child of God. O that all Christian leaders were as anxious as looses to see the people of God entering into their inheritance in the Lord. But, like Moses, we must first at least see the land for ourselves before we can be really concerned about the enriching of the children of God with the fulness that is in Christ for them. Yet blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A HEAVEN-SENT LEADER.

Numbers 27:18-23.

"Workman after workman dies,

This Thy Church, Lord, sorely tries,

As in tears she stricken stands,

Sadly missing "vanished hands,"

Wills strenuous, and brave hearts

Ever ready to take their parts.

O God, wilt fresh trust us give?

Workmen die, but Thou dost live;

In deepest desolation

Thou Thy work dost carry on."

Moses has just had intimation of his removal through death, and the Lord singles out Joshua as the one who was to take his place and fill up his part. God buries His workmen but carries on His work. There are some things mentioned here in connection with the call of Joshua that might help us to search our hearts as preachers or teachers of the Word of God, and to see whether we as the servants of the Lord are after this Divine order. He was-

1. Called by the Lord. The Lord said, "Take thee Joshua, and lay thine hand upon him" (Numbers 27:18). This position was not his own choosing until the mind of God was unmistakably plain. It is His to thrust out labourers into the field. Pray ye the Lord of the harvest.

2. Filled with the Spirit. He was doubtless one of the seventy who shared the Spirit of power that rested on Moses (Numbers 11:17). But by the laying on of the hands of Moses he was filled with the spirit of wisdom (Deuteronomy 34:9). All Christians have a measure of the Spirit, but all are not filled with the Spirit. In the times of the old dispensation all did not get the offer of this filling, but now God wishes none to be without it. "Be ye filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18).

3. Honoured by the Lord's representative. "Thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him" (Numbers 27:20). The honour which God put upon Moses was shared by him. This honour have all the saints. Did not a greater than Moses say, "The glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given them?" (John 17:22). The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. Endued with the power of the Holy

Spirit is the token that we are in the true apostolic succession.

4. Accepted by the Lord's people. "That all the congregation may be obedient" (Numbers 27:20). They answered Joshua, saying, "According as we hearkened unto Moses, so will we hearken unto you" (Joshua 1:16-17). The power of God by the Spirit means having authority, and such authority that the children of God will recognise as from above. When a man speaks in the power of the Holy Ghost others will be conscious that they are hearkening to the Divine voice. As they would listen to Jesus, so will they listen to such.

5. Guided by Divine light. "He shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him, after the judgment of Urim before the Lord" (Numbers 27:21). The Urim signifies "lights," and denotes the wisdom that comes from above (1 Samuel 28:6). He was emphatically "taught of God." This is another mark of a Heaven-sent teacher; he does not depend on the wisdom of men. He is frequently found consulting the Urim of the Holy Scriptures. The strength of his yeas and nays comes from these. His difficulties and all perplexing problems are settled in the light of this Urim.

6. Successful in his work. "They shall come in, both he and all the children of Israel with him" (Numbers 27:21). He was called and empowered to bring the people into the land of promise, and he brought them in without fail. His promise was fulfilled. "As I was with Moses, so will I be with thee" (Joshua 3:7). His presence always secures success. If God is to work in us and through us that which is pleasing in His sight, then we must in spirit, soul, and body be perfectly yielded up to Him. The secret of true and lasting success lies in His will being done in us. There is no higher attainment than this, and it may be yours, and yours continuously. A CALL FOR UNITED EFFORT.

Numbers 32:1-33.

"O Lord, whome'er Thy grace has blessed,

Causing Thy Name to be confessed;

Wilt Thou not quicken them to see

That each one service owes to Thee?

Enkindle in each heart such flame

As shall consume all coward shame.

The time is short, and life is flying,

And all around us souls are dying;

Stir up, O Lord, each heart and will,

And with Thine own compassion fill." The children of Reuben and the children of Gad sought their inheritance on this side of Jordan. But Moses said, Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here? (Numbers 32:6). From this chapter we may learn that-

1. All the Lord's people have a common cause. Though there were twelve tribes, yet were they all brethren (Numbers 32:6). The weakening or strengthening of one was the weakening or strengthening of the whole. So is it in the cause of our Lord and Saviour. "I have called you friends." "Are ye not all brethren?" Ought not each one to be interested in whatever concerns the kingdom of God?

2. Putting self-interest first is a great danger to the Lord's work. "The Reubenites said, Let this land be given thy servants for a possession, and bring us not over Jordan" (Numbers 32:1-5). They saw that the land of Jazer and Gilead was just such as they wanted, so they desired there and then to settle down and let the others look out for themselves. It is a melancholy sight to see Christians settling down in the knowledge of salvation, or in the enjoyment of the doctrine of the higher Christian life, and falling out of the ranks of aggressive workers.

3. Selfish interest discourages others. "Wherefore discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land?" (Numbers 32:7). There are different ways by which we may discourage our brethren in the pursuit of a deeper and more enlarged experience of the fulness of God in Christ. We may do it by bringing a slander on this good land through our own unbelief and poverty-stricken lives as Christians, or by magnifying the difficulties in the way of entering into the possession of it (Deuteronomy 1:22-28), or by our own self-complacent indifference to their spiritual growth in grace.

4. Seeking the good of others is helping on the cause of God. "Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here?" (Numbers 32:6). It is a great privilege to be able to help our brethren into their rightful inheritance in Christ. In these present days there is an intense longing in the hearts of multitudes of the Lord's people for an enlargement of the coasts of their spiritual experience. It is a question if ever there was a time when there was a more crying need for pure Bible teaching. There may be much sermon preaching without the commanding power of the revealed mind of God as contained in the Scripture of truth. As the days go on it may be that teachers of the Word will be in greater demand than evangelists.

5. Doing nothing is a sin against the Lord. "If ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the Lord, and be sure your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23). The sin of idleness, or of neglecting to do our part in the great campaign of the Church's work, is a sin against the Lord that will be sure to find us out. It betrays itself in cowardliness, indifference, worldliness, and finally in open sin. Why stand ye here all the day idle? Do you say no man hath hired us? Hath not the Lord hired you in purchasing you with His Blood?

6. Devotion to the interests of the kingdom of God secures present blessing. "If ye will go armed before the Lord until He hath driven out His enemies, this land shall be your possession" (Numbers 32:20-22). The sons of Reuben and of Gad were to have their possession this side of Jordan on condition that they passed over and helped their brethren into their lot of inheritance. The reason why many Christians have not entered into a soul-satisfying portion in this present life is because they have ceased to help others. There is no class of the disciples of Jesus so happy as the workers. Those workers, of course, who are not seeking now their own, but the good of others at the command of the Lord. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2).

"Pleasure is only half pleasure unshared,

O, forth then, my brother, share thine!

Pleasure when shared is a treasure prepared,

Excelling aught drawn from the mine."

HOW TO INHERIT GOD'S LAND OF PROMISE.

Numbers 33:50-56.

"The way is long by which I hie,

Flags my spirit wearily;

Let Thy gracious hand me grasp,

Let my trembling hand Thine clasp;

We are tired, my heart and I,

Ah! but, Jesus, Thou art nigh." As the children of Israel were often "discouraged because of the way," so there are still many who are weary and tired seeking the better land of promise offered in Jesus Christ His Son. It is a land of rest and refreshing that can only be entered into by faith. Let us think again of-

1. The character of the land. The land of Canaan is not so much a type of Heaven as it is of our present inheritance in Christ Jesus. It was-

1. A land of plenty. "The Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land. A land of brooks, of fountains, and depths. A land of wheat, barley, and vines, of oil, olive, and honey. A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack anything in it" (Deuteronomy 8:7-9). What a figurative description of the fulness of Christ! O the depths of His riches (Php_4:19).

2. A God-given land. "The land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Deuteronomy 8:10). "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." He has given us His Son, and in Him all the riches of His grace. The unsearchable riches of Christ. What a gift! "All are yours, and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (1 Corinthians 3:23).

3. A land offered to all His people. The land of promise was for every Israelite. There was in it an ample portion for every individual. There is enough in Christ for every Christian, yea, for every creature under Heaven. Whosoever will may take the water of life freely.

2. The way to possess the land. There had to be-

1. A believing of the promise. It is called the land of promise. The promise of God had to be accepted, His word must be trusted. This is the promise which He hath promised us, eternal life, and this life is in His Son. This is the work of God that ye believe. They could not enter in because of unbelief.

2. An entering into it. The land could not be inherited by them until they were in it. They had to claim it with their feet (Joshua 1:3). We must be in Christ before we can become heirs of God. We

are accepted in Christ, and here Christ is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Ye are complete in Him, perfectly filled up, abundantly satisfied. "The Lord is my portion," saith my soul. He is the lot of mine inheritance. My cup runneth over (Psalms 16:5; Psalms 23:6).

3. A driving out of the enemy. "Then shall ye drive out all the inhabitants of the land" (Numbers 33:52-53). The enemies that would hinder our souls from entering into the full possession of our inheritance in Christ are very numerous and subtle, often feigning to be friendly. No quarter was to be given. Every native had to be driven out. Every thought must be brought into captivity to Christ, and every desire of the flesh subdued.

3. The warning against failure.

1. Failure is possible. "If ye will not drive out the inhabitants" (Numbers 33:55). It is to be feared that multitudes of the Lord's people fail here. They enter the land, that is, they accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour, but they fail to drive out the old man with his lusts.

2. Compromise is dangerous. "Those which ye let remain shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides" (Numbers 33:55). The enemy must have no place in the camp of the saints. Give no heed to the reasoning of the carnal mind, let not your eye spare them. These questionable things that at times act as thorns in the conscience, bringing discomfort, or as pricks in the eye, hindering from seeing things in their true light, drive them out. Bring out the Agags. Compromising with the evil within, or with the world without, mars the soul from enjoying its possessions in Christ.

3. Disobedience is fatal. "If ye will not drive them out, moreover it shall come to pass that I shall do unto you as I thought to do unto them" (Numbers 33:56). That is, if you will not put away every evil thing out of your life, and be obedient to the word and will of the Lord after you have come to Him for justification and life, the joy of salvation and the blessings that are in Christ will lose all their preciousness and attractiveness to you. You will be driven out of the enjoyment of spiritual things in heavenly places. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. If ye be willing and obedient ye shall eat the good of the land, but if ye refuse and rebel ye shall be devoured. THE CITIES OF REFUGE.

Numbers 35.

"The child that to its mother clings Lies not all safely on her breast Till she her arms around it flings, Sweetly caressing and caressed. Ev'n so, my God, Thy mighty arms, Not aught of mine, shield me from harms."

Doubtless the apostle had these cities of refuge in his mind when he wrote these words in Hebrews 6: "We have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." So the cities of refuge are typical of the hope set before us in Jesus Christ. "A man shall be an hiding place." As such they were-

1. Appointed by God. "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying," &c. (Numbers 35:1). Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour (Acts 5:31). "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." A prophet chosen out of the people.

2. In charge of the Levites (Numbers 35:6). The Levites had charge of the holy things in connection with the worship of God, and may represent the ambassadors for Christ, into whose

hands the Gospel of salvation has been committed, as taught in 2 Corinthians 5:20.

3. Set apart for manslayers. "Which ye shall appoint for the manslayers" (Numbers 35:6). O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself-a manslayer. The man who commits sin is a manslayer. All have sinned, all are in need of a place of refuge. How many are killing themselves unwittingly?

4. To be entered in haste. "That he may flee thither" (Numbers 35:6). There is great danger in delay. Death may overtake the sinner before he reaches the refuge that is in Christ. Escape for thy life. Behold, now is the accepted time. I flee to Thee to hide me.

5. A protection against a lawful avenger. "Cities for refuge from the avenger" (Numbers 35:12). The avenger of the murdered one had the authority of God to kill the murderer outside the cities of refuge. The avenger fitly represents the law, which cannot save, but has power to kill. By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified.

6. In convenient places. "Three cities on this side of Jordan, and three in the land of Canaan" (Numbers 35:14). Within easy reach of all, and were located in conspicuous spots, so that they might be easily seen at the distance. The Gospel of Christ is to be preached to every creature. "Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets, she crieth in the chief places of concourse" (Proverbs 1:20-26). "Behold the Lamb of God" (John 1:29).

7. Open for all. "For every one that killeth any person" (Numbers 35:15). The stranger as well as the children of Israel had the privilege of the refuge. The salvation of Christ is offered to all. There is room enough in this atoning death for every guilty, trusting soul. If any man thirst let him come unto Me. By Me if any man enter in he shall be saved.

8. For all those who were sorry for their deeds.

These cities afforded no shelter to the wilful murderer. "He shall surely be put to death" (Numbers 35:16). They were appointed for those who had killed unawares, and the man who had killed his neighbour unawares would certainly be a very sorrowful man. The death of Christ, apart from repentance and faith, cannot shelter the guilty soul. Repent, and believe the Gospel.

9. Places of justice and judgment. "The congregation shall judge between the slayer and the avenger of blood, according to these judgments" (Numbers 35:24). There is a very solemn thought here. To become our refuge Christ must take our place. The just judgments of God were meted out to Him, and the question of sin eternally settled. So that He is now a just God and a Saviour. "I have betrothed thee unto Me in righteousness" (Hosea 2:19).

10. Abiding places for the slayer. "He shall abide in it unto the death of the high priest." This is a precious thought. The life of the slayer who had fled to the city for refuge Was henceforth connected with the life of the high priest, who was anointed with the holy oil (Numbers 35:25). As long as the high priest lived, he lived in the place of safety. As long as Christ our Great High Priest lives, we shall live by Him. Because I live, ye shall live also. Abide in Me. The language of David is very beautiful in this connection. "Abide thou with me, fear not; for he that seeketh my-life, seeketh thy life; but with me thou shalt be in safeguard" (1 Samuel 22:23).

Deuteronomy

FORWARD.

"Ye have compassed this mountain long enough"

(Deuteronomy 2:1-7).

"I will trust, and not be afraid,

Be it in light, or be it in shade;

The enemy visible and strong,

Or creeping stealthily along;

O! by Thy grace I shall be bold,

If that Thy grace doth me enfold." As pilgrims and strangers on the earth there are two dangers to which we are ever exposed, that of sitting at ease in our present comfortable condition, or of rushing impatiently into new spheres and circumstances. Commit thy way unto the Lord, and He shall direct thy paths. Consider-

I. The Arrest. "Ye have compassed this mountain long enough. " The mountain they had been compassing was not for them, "no, riot a foot breadth" (Deuteronomy 2:5). There were other possessions waiting on them.

It is a blessed thing to be saved from the wrath to come, but it is a miserable thing never to get beyond that. Are there not many of the Lord's people to whom it might be said with regard to their spiritual experience, "Ye have compassed this mountain long enough?" Press on toward the mark of your high calling in Christ Jesus.

II. The Command. "Turn you northward. " The good land of promise lay stretched away northward. They were to set their faces toward all that had been freely given them by God. Christian pilgrim, remember the man with the muck rake in Bunyan's allegory. See that your neck is not allowed to stiffen looking only at the things of earth and sense. "Turn you northward. " Look up and expect the fulfilment of His exceeding great and precious promises in your daily experience. Instead of the muck of earth look for the crown of glory.

III. The Warning. "Ye are to pass through the coast of your brethren, the children of Esau; meddle not with them" (Deuteronomy 2:4-5). Mount Seir had been given to Esau to possess it (Joshua 24:4). When God blesses His people He does it righteously, even in the presence of the ungodly. We have a just God and a Saviour. In the face of an assembled universe this will be manifestly so. It was not the Lord, but one of Job's miserable comforters who declared that "The heavens are not clean in His sight. "

IV. The Reminder. Just as we are the Lord's remembrancers so He is ours. In verse seven they are reminded of His-

1. Favour. "The Lord thy God hath blessed thee in all the works of thy hand. " His favour always means blessing. The grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men hath appeared. His favour is better than the best of a mere earthly life.

2. Wisdom. "He knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness. " He is mindful of us. He knoweth the way that we take. Our Lord Jesus Christ was tempted in all points like as we are, and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Yes, He knows thy walking, whither it is through great shadows of trial and suffering, or along the sunny path of painless prosperity. So that you may fearlessly say-

"Where He may lead I'll follow,

My trust in Him repose,

And every hour in perfect peace,

I'll sing, He knows, He knows. "

3. Presence. "The Lord thy God hath been with thee." Have we no evidence in the past that the Lord our God hath been with us? Will His faithfulness fail toward us in the future? Be encouraged, O soul, if thy heart seeks His honour and His Name's glory. He cannot deny Himself. He would be denying Himself and robbing His Word of its power and glory if His presence failed the humble, childlike, believing spirit. He hath been with thee; He will bless thee still.

4. Sufficiency. "Thou hast lacked nothing. " "When I sent you, lacked ye anything?" And they answered, "Nothing" (Luke 22:35). Out of Heaven and from the flinty rock the God of all grace satisfied their needs. There may be many things we want, but we shall lack no good thing when He is with us. My God shall supply all your need. Many a time they murmured in the wilderness, but the Lord their God declares that they lacked nothing. We are rich indeed when we have what He wishes us to have, whatever that may be. "Be content with such things as ye have, for He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5). A SOLEMN CHARGE.

Deuteronomy 4:1-9.

"Thy words rule men a statute ne'er have ruled,

Not penalty but conscience gives them power;

Men find out soon or late themselves befooled,

And bruised and broken seek Thy Spirit's dower.

How have Thy words up-flamed as into swords,

How have they gone straight to the world's great heart,

How freedom thence has fetched her battle words,

How Thy word-pictures glorified all art. "

"O Israel, thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you" (Deuteronomy 4:1-2). This is a very clear evidence of inspiration. The statutes and judgments taught by Moses were the authoritative words of God. As Newberry points out, the I's of Moses here are emphatic in the Hebrew. He speaks in God's stead. This Paul declares in writing to the Hebrews (chap. Deuteronomy 1:1). This solemn charge to keep the words of God comes loudly and urgently upon us to-day. Several reasons are given for this.

I. Because they are Powerful. They-

1. Bring Life. "Do them, that ye may live" (Deuteronomy 4:1). Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. The words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life, begotten by the incorruptible Word of God.

2. Secure an Inheritance. "That ye may go in and possess. " It is by laying hold of His promise that the soul enters into the possession of the inheritance provided and offered. "Thy Word was found, and I did eat it, and it became the joy and rejoicing of my heart. " The hungry one must eat to be satisfied.

II. Because they are Perfect (Deuteronomy 4:2). Nothing is to be-

1. Added. "Ye shall not add unto the Word. " The Law (Word) of the Lord is perfect. It is finished. We can no more add to the revelation of God than we can add to the finished work of Christ or the work of Creation, although man in his pride makes many attempts. We presume to add to the grace of God when we go about seeking to establish our own righteousness. "Add thou not unto His words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar, for every word of God is pure" (Proverbs 30:5-6).

2. Diminished. "Neither shall ye diminish aught from it. " "If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life" (Revelation 22:19). The Scriptures of truth cannot be broken, so that no repair is ever needed. To add or to diminish is only to mar the perfect Man of our counsel.

III. Because they are Precious (Deuteronomy 4:4-9). Precious because they are-

1. Unfailing. "Ye that did cleave unto the Lord your God are alive every one of you this day. " Joshua and Caleb did trust the Word of the Lord, and they were living witnesses to His unfailing faithfulness (Numbers 26:65). The living Christ is the eternal Word. He will not fail thee; be not faithless.

2. Enlightening. "Keep them, for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations. " "The Word of the Lord makes wise the simple" (Psalms 19:7). Apart from it, Israel would sink down to the level of the heathen nations around them. If His Word does not abide in us we, too, will fall back into a savourless state, good for nothing, or like a fruitless branch.

3. Comforting. "What nation is there so great who hath God so nigh unto them?" etc. (Deuteronomy 4:7). Israel as a redeemed people were distinguished for the nearness to which God came to them. This nearness was only enjoyed when they walked in obedience to His Word (2 Samuel 7:23). "The Lord is nigh unto all that call upon Him in truth" (Psalms 145:18). All who have believed are made nigh through the blood of Christ. His nearness is the distinguishing mark

of all who live in the power of the Spirit of truth. The more we are like Christ, the more near will He be.

4. Ennobling. "What nation is there so great that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law?" (Deuteronomy 4:8). What soul is there so great that hath the words of the living God dwelling richly within? His words are more to be desired than gold Moreover, in keeping of them there is great reward (Psalms 19:9-11). They do no iniquity that walk in His ways (Psalms 119:3). The incorruptible Word in the heart will beautify the whole character as the seed in the earth when it springs up beautifies the whole field with a comeliness not its own, yet not separate from it.

5. Enduring. "Take to thyself and teach them to thy sons, and thy sons' sons" (Deuteronomy 4:9). The words of God are enduring for us, and will be as effectual to our believing children and our children's children. Timothy knew the Scripture from his youth, and we need not wonder at it, when love for the Word of God dwelt in Eunice his mother and in Lois his grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5). The Word of the Lord endureth for ever. It has an enduring purity, suitability, influence, and faithfulness. "He that heareth My Word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life" (John 5:24). Believest thou this?

"A charge to keep I have,

A God to glorify,

A never failing Word to trust

That lifts me to the sky. "

BACKSLIDING: ITS CAUSE AND CURE.

Deuteronomy 4:23-31.

"My Lord, I covet not the breath

Of grand renown,

But rather that which lies beneath

A blood-bought crown.

Fain would I hold, if but small cup,

To thirsty lips,

Fain would I shine but to light up

Some soul's eclipse. "

Whatever occupies the chief place in our hearts and lives takes the place of God and becomes our god. We are constantly in danger, as Israel was, of allowing visible things to usurp the place of the Eternal One, whom we see not. When the Lord spake out of the midst of the fire in Horeb no manner of similitude was seen (Deuteronomy 4:15). One of the reasons given is, "For the Lord thy God is a jealous God" (Deuteronomy 4:24). Jealous of our faith, and the adoration of our hearts. Backsliding is always manifested by preferring some earthly thing to the Lord.

I. The Cause. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. They are here warned beforehand of how they may retrograde from a God-pleasing life. Circumstances may change, but in principle the causes are still the same.

1. Forgetfulness. "Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God" (Deuteronomy 4:23). Forgetting God's Word and forsaking the secret place of prayer. It is so easy to forget our own spiritual need amidst the rush of everyday life. Take heed to yourselves. To forget His promise is to lean on a paralysed arm of flesh.

2. False Worship. "Take heed lest ye make you a likeness of anything which the Lord thy God hath forbidden" (Deuteronomy 4:23). Forbidden images are sure to appear in the minds and thoughts of those who forget God, and the horror of it lies in this, that they are self-made; the deliberate work of a Christ-doubting soul.

3. Self-Corruption. "Ye shall corrupt yourselves" (Deuteronomy 4:25). When we turn away from the light we turn into darkness. When we cease to live by faith on the Son of God we begin to corrupt like a member severed from the body.

II. The Effect. Backsliding in heart will soon show itself in the life. There will be-

1. Dispossession. "Ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land" (Deuteronomy 4:26). Their days in the land and their enjoyment of it would not be prolonged if they turned from following the Lord. It is altogether impossible for any soul to enjoy the inheritance in Christ and to prolong their fellowship with Him who has departed from the Lord in their heart. As a matter of experience they shall soon be utterly cut off.

2. Division. "The Lord shall scatter you, " etc. (Deuteronomy 4:27). They were to be scattered among the nations and left few in number. Individual backsliding is always accompanied with division and separation. When they are not of us they will go out from us. When the Lord is dethroned from His true place in the midst of His people schism takes place in the Body of Christ-His Church.

3. Weakness. "Ye shall be few among the heathen" (Deuteronomy 4:27). Few in the midst of the heathen means terrible weakness and helplessness. Robbed of their aggressive power and distinguishing glory as the people of God, instead of a conquering army they become the slaves of their own lust and pride. What a picture of a backsliding Church, crying out about its fewness in number in the midst of an overwhelming and ever growing heathenism. This melancholy situation is doubtless the result of unfaithfulness to God.

III. The Cure. Thank God, that although we may have turned away from Him He has still left the door of restoration open.

1. Confess. "For the Lord thy God is a merciful God, He will not forget the covenant which He sware" (Deuteronomy 4:31). This declaration of His mercifulness and faithfulness in not forgetting His covenant is a powerful plea for those who have forgotten His covenant to confess their sins that they might be forgiven. If we confess, He is faithful and just to forgive and to cleanse.

2. Seek. "If from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find Him" (Deuteronomy 4:29). But note that it is Himself that must be sought. It is Himself that we need. After our Lord rose

from the dead He showed them Himself. What else could satisfy their troubled souls and meet all their need. Seek Him, and seek Him from thence, from just where you are, in all your false worship, divisions, and helpless weakness, and bondage. O backsliding Church, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in Me is thy help. Return, O wanderer.

3. Obey. "Thou shalt turn unto the Lord thy God, and be obedient unto His voice" (Deuteronomy 4:30). This is our security, to hold fast the Word of God. Giving heed to other voices can only lead into shame and hopeless failure. The mighty power of Jesus Christ lay in His obedience to the Father's voice and will, and shall it be otherwise with His disciples? To obey is better than sacrifice. This is My beloved Son. Hear ye Him.

DELIVERANCE AND TESTIMONY.

Deuteronomy 6:21-25.

"How long, O Lord, how long,

Until shall burst the song?

The throne of evil shattered,

The hosts of hell all scattered;

Heaven here on earth begun,

Thy will by all men done,

How long, O Lord, how long?" This great groaning earth still needs deliverance as much as ever Israel did out of the furnace of affliction and the house of bondage (Romans 8:22-23). Every Israelite was enjoined to bear testimony to his inquiring son of all that the Lord had done for them. From the statements here put into his mouth we learn much of what this great salvation was. We learn from it- I. The Need of Deliverance. While in Egypt they were-

1. Exiles. They were at that time "afar off" from the holy city of divine fellowship. Ye who sometimes were afar off are now made nigh by the blood of Jesus. Exiled from the enjoyment of the grace of God implies bondage to the world and sin.

2. Slaves. "We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt" (Deuteronomy 6:21). Burdened and oppressed under a thankless and loveless master, ever striving in vain to please an irreconcilable enemy, Such were some of us, led captive by the devil at his will.

II. The Manner of Deliverance. It was-

1. Of the Lord. "The Lord brought us out of Egypt" (Deuteronomy 6:21). It was not their own devising, neither was it after their own thoughts. It was a new thing, like the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Every saved one has to confess, like Jonah, that "salvation is of the Lord. "

2. Through a Man. Moses was called and ordained for this great work, away in the back part of the desert of Midian, while he stood by the burning bush. The Man, Christ Jesus, was also called of God, away in the back part of eternity, as He stood by the burning glory of the presence of the Holy One, when He laid help Upon One that was mighty.

3. By Almighty Power. "He brought us out with a mighty hand" (Deuteronomy 6:21). When the Lord makes bare His holy arm to smite His enemies and set His people free, who shall be able to resist? The arm of His redeeming power has been made bare in Jesus Christ, who is mighty to save.

4. Wonderful. "The Lord showed signs and wonders" (Deuteronomy 6:22). There were many wonders associated with the emancipation of Israel from Egypt. There were not only the signs in Egypt, but the great "Red Sea" wonder that separated them from the house of bondage. Every conversion from sin to God is a wonder. A supernatural deliverance.

5. Complete. "The Lord brought us out" (Deuteronomy 6:21). They were not partly out of Egypt and partly in the wilderness. "Not a hoof was left behind. " The salvation of God implies the salvation of the whole man, spirit, soul, and body. When our head and heart have been taken out of the horrible pit our feel also will be lifted out of the miry clay (Psalms 40:2).

6. With Judgments. "Signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt and upon Pharaoh" (Deuteronomy 6:22). In the salvation of Israel both Egypt and Pharaoh, its king, come under the judgments of God. In the crucifixion and death of Christ (which means the salvation of God) both the world and the prince of this world have been judged. All who obey not the call of God's sovereign grace will assuredly come under the terrible plagues of the righteous judgments of the Almighty.

7. Twofold. "He brought us out, that He might bring us in," etc. (Deuteronomy 6:23). He brought them out of Egypt that He might bring them into Canaan. He brings us out of the kingdom of darkness that He might bring us into the kingdom of His dear Son. Out of bondage and poverty into the liberty and wealth of sonship. Out of the weakness of self-effort into the power of the Holy Ghost. To get in we must get out. But we may be out and yet not in.

III. The Responsibilities of the Delivered. To seek-

1. The Good that Comes Through Holy Fear. "Fear the Lord our God, for our good always" (Deuteronomy 6:24). It is still true that spiritual riches and honour belong to those who humbly fear the Lord (Proverbs 22:4). Fearing to grieve the Spirit of God will secure the unceasing good of His comforting presence, and maintain a conscience void of offence.

2. The Righteousness that Comes Through Implicit Obedience. "It shall be our righteousness if we do all these commandments" (Deuteronomy 6:24). "If ye love Me, keep My commandments. " Our tightness with God in our daily life depends on our walking day by day in the light of His Word. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him.

COMMANDMENTS FOR CANAAN.

Deuteronomy 6. The first three verses of this chapter give us the secret of a happy, fruitful, satisfied life. "He that doeth these sayings of Mine shall be likened unto a wise man" (Matthew 7:24). We have here then-

I. A Solemn Declaration. "The Lord our God is one Lord" (Deuteronomy 6:4). This is His glorious and fearful Name (chap. Deuteronomy 28:58). "I and My Father are one" (John 14:9).

II. An Absorbing Attitude. "Thou shalt love the Lord with all thine heart, soul, and might" (Deuteronomy 6:5). If the Lord absorbs the affections there will be no more room for self or the world. No provision for the flesh (Php_1:21).

III. A Gracious Responsibility (Deuteronomy 6:6-9). When the Lord is loved His words will be treasured, thought of, talked, written, lived (Psalms 1:2; Job 23:12).

IV. An Unmerited Possession (Deuteronomy 6:10-11). The inheritance of the saints, present or future, is not the fruit of their own labour, but the outcome of infinite grace (Ephesians 3:16-19).

V. A Needful Reminder. "Beware lest thou forget the Lord which brought thee out of bondage" (Deuteronomy 6:12). It will preserve our sympathies for the unsaved to remember that "such were some of us" (1 Corinthians 6:11).

VI. A Conditional Promise. "Do that which is right in the sight of the Lord that it may be well with thee" (Deuteronomy 6:18). "Walk before God" (Genesis 17:1). Behave as in the presence of God (Matthew 23:8).

VII. An Expected Testimony (Deuteronomy 6:21-25). "Thou shalt say," etc. Their testimony, like ours, consisted of- 1. A Confession of their past condition. "Bondmen in Egypt" (Deuteronomy 6:21).

2. An Acknowledgment of the Lord's righteous judgments against sin (Deuteronomy 6:22).

3. A Declaration of His power to save "from thence" (Deuteronomy 6:23).

4. An Assurance of His faithfulness to His Word "that He might bring us in" (Deuteronomy 6:23).

5. A Warning against the sin of unbelief (Deuteronomy 6:24).

6. An Encouragement to implicit obedience (Deuteronomy 6:25).

PRIVILEGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

Deuteronomy 7. In this chapter we have, as it were, the pomegranates of promise and the bells of warning hanging from the robe of our great High-Priest. Let us note- I. The Privileges of the Lord's People. They are-

1. Chosen. "The Lord thy God hath chosen thee" (Deuteronomy 7:6). Chosen in Christ (Ephesians 1:4). According to God's purpose (Romans 8:28; 1 Peter 1:2-9).

2. Redeemed. "The Lord redeemed you out of Egypt" (Deuteronomy 7:8). Redeemed by blood (1 Peter 1:18-19). From the curse of the law (Galatians 3:13). To God (Revelation 5:9).

3. Assured. "Know that thy God is the faithful God" (Deuteronomy 7:9). He is faithful that has promised. "These things have I written that ye may know" (John 5:13).

4. Favoured. "Blessed above all people" (Deuteronomy 7:14). They have light in their dwelling (Exodus 10:23). All the wheels of providence work together for their good (Romans 8:28).

5. Preserved. "The Lord will put none of the diseases of Egypt upon thee" (Deuteronomy 7:15). The diseases of Egypt were the fruits of unbelief (Exodus 9:14; Hebrews 12:6-7).

6. Honoured. "The Lord thy God is among you" (Deuteronomy 7:21). "I will dwell in them, and walk in them" (2 Corinthians 6:16). And Christ dwells in our hearts by faith (Ephesians 3:17).

7. Powerful. "No man shall be able to stand before thee" (Deuteronomy 7:24). Stephen, being full of the Holy Ghost, "they were not able to resist the Spirit by which he spake" (Acts 6:10; Micah 3:8; Acts 1:8).

II. The Responsibilities of the Lord's People.

There must be-

1. No Compromising with the Enemy. "Make no covenant with them," etc. (Deuteronomy 7:2-3). "Be not unequally yoked" (2 Corinthians 6:14). Beware of the modern Gibeonites (Joshua 9:6; see Exodus 10:24-26).

2. No Connivance at False Worship. "Ye shall destroy their altars," etc. (Deuteronomy 7:5). The Christian faith is iconoclastic. Earnestly contend for it. It was when the Ark was set by Dagon that Dagon fell (1 Samuel 5:2-3; John 12:32).

3. No Swerving from the Divine Command. "Thou shalt keep the commandments which I command thee" (Deuteronomy 7:11-12). Notice the connection between Christ's "commandments," "sayings," or "words," and love in John 14:21, John 14:24, John 14:31; John 15:9-17.

4. No Fearing the Face of Man. "Thou shalt not be afraid of them" (Deuteronomy 7:18). The fear of man ensnares our liberty (Genesis 12:12) and grieves the Spirit. Have the boldness of Peter and John (Acts 4:19-20).

5. No Coveting the Riches of the World. "Thou shalt not desire their silver or gold" (Deuteronomy 7:25-26). Paul coveted no man's silver (Acts 20:33). How many have erred from the faith through this? (1 Timothy 6:10). Covet earnestly the best gifts (1 Corinthians 12:31). THE DIVINE PURPOSE IN TRIAL.

Deuteronomy 8:2-6.

"When my sense of safety pales,

Show Thy nail-marked hand in mine.

When my sense of comfort fails,

Place my trembling hand in Thine.

I held of Thee, Thee holding.

Thy strong love me enfolding. "

Although "trials make the promise sweet," yet to the people of God suffering has its mystery as well as sin. Abraham suffered, being sorely tried not because of his disobedience or unbelief, but because of his faith (Gen. 22). So the "afterwards" yielded peaceful fruits. If we cannot see the wisdom of His hand in affliction we can trust the love of His heart. While the Israelites were in the wilderness it was to them verily a time of trial.

I. The Nature of it. It was-

1. Long. "These forty years" (Deuteronomy 8:2). Our Lord fasted forty days, and was tempted of the devil. "These forty years" remind us of the patience of God. He can afford to wait. The great wheels of the divine purpose move slowly but surely.

2. Severe. "Suffered thee to hunger" (Deuteronomy 8:3). God could easily have prevented this, but He suffered it. It is good for us at times to feel the pinch of need (2 Corinthians 12:8-9).

3. The Result of Unbelief. "They could not enter in because of unbelief" (Hebrews 3:19). Unbelief always disinherits from the enjoyment of the promise. The name of those who profess to be the followers of Christ and who, like these wanderers, live an aimless life is legion. Doubting the Word of God, they cease to be warriors for God.

4. Under His Leading. "The Lord thy God led thee" (Deuteronomy 8:2). Blessed be His holy Name for this. Although we may fail to lay hold of all that He in His mercy has provided for us, yet will He not forsake those whom He hath redeemed. He abideth faithful.

II. The Blessings enjoyed while in it.

1. Bread from Heaven. "He fed thee with manna" (Deuteronomy 8:3). During the covenanting struggle, in what were called "the killing times," one woman declared that "she got more good out of one verse of the Bible now than she used to get out of a chapter before. "

2. Their Clothing Preserved. "Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee" (Deuteronomy 8:4). It is wonderful how far a very little will go when the blessing of God is on it (Matthew 16:9). The robe of God's righteousness which adorns every blood-bought pilgrim never gets the worse for the wear. The clothes suggest the outward appearance of our daily life.

3. Their Feet Kept. "Neither did thy foot swell these forty years" (Deuteronomy 8:4). He is able also to preserve the feet of His saints in their going out and in their coming in (Psalms 121:8). This implies preserved ability to walk in His ways and to witness for Him. It is when we turn aside from the Lord's way that the feet of faith fail and we begin to limp.

4. His Presence with Them. "The Lord thy God led thee" (Deuteronomy 8:2). It was while in the furnace of affliction that the three Hebrews proved the preserving presence of their God. If they were chastised, they are reminded that the rod was in the hand of their redeeming God (Deuteronomy 8:5). "Why can ye not trust God?" said a wife to her alarmed husband the other night when a terrific storm was shaking the house and making the tiles fly off the roof. "Lo, I am with you alway" (Hebrews 12:5-6).

III. The Purpose of it. God has a purpose (Romans 8:28), and that purpose is as big as the universe, and as definite as the light of truth. To Israel it was threefold-

1. To Humble Thee (Deuteronomy 8:2). Those who walk humbly with their God will love mercy and do justly. The haughty head of pride is ever ready to lift itself up to the grieving of the gentle Spirit of God, who delights to dwell with the contrite and humble in heart. To be humbled is a great mercy, as it puts the soul in a better position for the enjoyment of hidden heavenly things.

2. To Prove Thee. "To know what is in thine heart" (Deuteronomy 8:2). The furnace of trial is intended to make manifest the real inner character. Did not the Lord say to Abraham, after he had been severely tested, "Now I know that thou fearest God?" (Genesis 22:12). We would never have heard of the "patience of Job" but for the fiery trials. Faint not, then, at the rebuke of the Lord. Whom He loveth He "chasteneth" (Deuteronomy 8:5).

3. To Teach Thee. "To make thee know that man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord" (Deuteronomy 8:3). What the manna was to the Israelites the Word of God should be to us-"bread from Heaven," "angels' food," "the living bread. " Evermore give us this bread. The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. In closing His testimony regarding Himself as the "Bread" our Lord connects the bread with the words of truth, saying, "The words that I speak unto you are spirit and life" (John 6:63). If affliction and adversity make us realise our vital need of His Word it will be as the opening of a living fountain of water to a parched soul. This is the cup of the New Testament, drink ye all of it.

WILDERNESS EXPERIENCES.

Deuteronomy 8.

"There are those who walk in gloom,

But there are those who walk in light;

There are those tempted, overcome,

But victors as well in the fight.

Shine or shade, vanquished or winning,

By Thy grace shield us from sinning. "

If we were half as anxious to be saved from sin as we are to be kept from sorrow it would be a wholesome fear. This chapter is very rich in suggestive thought. The great cardinal blessings that should characterise every Christian life are here indicated.

There are four blessings mentioned in the first verse as the result of obedience. (1) Life: "Ye may live. " (2) Fruitfulness: "Multiply. " (3) Progress: "Go in. " (4) Possession: "Possess the land. " The Christian life is-

I. A Life Under the Guidance of God. "The Lord thy God led thee" (Deuteronomy 8:2). He led them in the pillar of cloud and fire. The fiery cloud was to them what the Word of God is to us-spirit and power. The Holy Ghost shall guide you into all truth (John 16:13). As many as are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God.

II. A Life of Humility before God. "Thy God led thee to humble thee" (Deuteronomy 8:2). We would never of ourselves choose the self-humbling path. To be humbled is just to be put into that position in which God Himself can find more room in our lives. The process of proving is always painful, but profitable. It is to bring out what is in our hearts that we may be in God's sight either approved or condemned (Genesis 22:12; 2 Chron. 31, 32).

III. A Life Sustained from God. "He fed thee with manna" (Deuteronomy 8:3). "He brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint" (Deuteronomy 8:15). The sustenance of their life was as miraculous as their salvation. "The Bread of God is He which cometh down from Heaven and giveth life unto the world" (John 6). Christ not only saves but satisfies (Php_4:19). If any man eat this bread he shall live for ever. The Word was God, and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.

IV. A Life of Dependence on God. "By every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God doth man live" (Deuteronomy 8:3). Words are for the hearing of faith. We live by faith on the Son of God. "Thy words were found, and I did cat them" (Jeremiah 15:16). There is in the Word of God that which exactly suits every spiritual constitution. "They did all eat the same spiritual meat. " Lord, to whom can we go? Thou only hast the words of eternal life.

V. A Life of Hope in God. In Deuteronomy 8:7-9 there is given a description of the good land that lay before them, so that they were to forget the things that were behind, and Dress on to the better things before. "Press on that ye may obtain" (Php_3:12-14) and receive the end of your faith, even the salvation of souls (1 Peter 1:9) (Alford). We hope in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the hope of His coming that not only leads to the salvation of others, but also to the purification of ourselves (1 John 3:3).

VI. A Life of Praise to God. "When thou art full, then shalt thou bless the Lord thy God" (Deuteronomy 8:10). The Lord would have us to praise Him with a full heart. The lean are sure to cry out about their leanness (Isaiah 24:16). They cannot glory in their infirmities. It is the satisfied that bless the Lord (Psalms 103:1-5). He that eateth to the Lord will be sure to give thanks (Romans 14:6). The hungry soul cries: Lord bless me. The satisfied soul says: Lord, I bless Thee. Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.

VII. A Life Empowered by God. "The Lord thy God giveth thee power to get wealth" (Deuteronomy 8:18). In saving His people out of the poverty of Egypt; in sustaining them in a waste, howling wilderness; in leading them into the land of promise and of plenty He was giving them power to get wealth. The power, then, was that which enabled them to lay hold on, and take possession of, the fuller gifts of His grace. This power we have in the Holy Spirit, who by His sustaining and guiding presence enables us to lay hold on and enter into the possession of the fulness of the blessing in Christ Jesus our Lord. In the gift of the Spirit God has given us power to get wealth-the wealth of Christ's unsearchable riches now, and the wealth of His unspeakable glory hereafter. This blessing of the Lord it maketh rich. Why cry out about your leanness and poverty when God hath given thee power to get wealth? Buy of Me, that thou mayest be rich (Revelation 3:18). Receive ye the Holy Ghost. THE LAND OF PROMISE.

Deuteronomy 9-11.

"What He wills, I say I must;

What I must, I say I will;

He commanding, it is just

What Ho would I should fulfil.

Whilst He biddeth I believe

What He calls for He will give;

To obey Him is to live. "

Canaan may fitly represent the present inheritance of the believer, although many seem content to abide in the wilderness with the promise of "bread and water," instead of passing over into full deliverance and joyful abundance (Hebrews 3:17). From the above chapters we might learn the-

I. Character of this Possession. "It is a land watered and watched by the Lord from the beginning of the year to the end" (chap. Deuteronomy 11:10-12). And may typify the grace and fulness given us of God in Jesus Christ (John 1:16-17).

II. Difficulties to be Expected. "Nations greater and mightier than thyself" (chap. Deuteronomy 9:1-2). Paul tells us about these mightier ones in Romans 7, and also how to conquer in Romans 7:25.

III. Condition to be Remembered. "Speak not in thine heart, saying, For my righteousness the Lord hath brought me in, " etc. (chap. Deuteronomy 9:5-6). The condition of receiving the greater blessing is not our righteousness but emptiness (Isaiah 40:29).

IV. Attitudes to be Maintained. In chapter Romans 10:12 they are exhorted: (l). To fear; (2) to walk; (3) to love; (4) to serve; (5) to keep; and in chapter Romans 11:22 (6) to cleave (see 2 Peter 1:8).

V. Faith to be Exercised. "Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours" (chap. Deuteronomy 11:24). The moment the feet of faith rests on the promise the blessing is secure (Mark 11:24).

VI. Promise to be Trusted. "The Lord thy God is He which goeth before thee" (chap. Deuteronomy 9:3). I will dwell in them (2 Corinthians 6:16). It is God in us that doeth the works (John 14:10).

VII. Victory to be Gained. "None shall be able to stand before thee, " and the fear of thee shall be upon the land (chap. Deuteronomy 11:25). How does the present-day Church answer to this? (Acts 6:10; Luke 21:15). THE LORD'S REQUIREMENTS.

Deuteronomy 10:12-22.

"Broken from all other trusting,

Enfranchised from all 'former lusting; '

Thy freedman, Lord, on Thee calling,

Guard me in my dolorous falling.

Anoint my eyes with Thy own seeing,

Interpenetrate my being

That by Thee all 'apprehended, '

This weary conflict may be ended. " The secret of rest and victory lies in ceasing to struggle against the requirements of God. It was not till Jacob had yielded to the man from Heaven, at the brook Jabbok, that he became a prevailing prince. Here is a question that should come with searching power to the heart of every child of God: "What doth the Lord thy God require of thee?" (Deuteronomy 10:12). Surely such a question ought to constrain us honestly to make this inquiry: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

I. The Lord has Requirements.

1. As our Creator. "The Heaven of heavens is the Lord's, the earth also, and all that therein is" (Deuteronomy 10:14). As the creatures of His creative hand we live and move on and in the things which are God's (Psalms 24:1). What have we that we have not received? As our Maker He requires the thankful homage of our lives.

2. As our Redeemer. "He is thy God, that hath done for thee these great and terrible things, which thine eyes have seen" (Deuteronomy 10:21). In redeeming them out of the house of Egyptian bondage it was by great things in mercy for them, and terrible things in judgment against their enemies. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law. Ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and your spirit, which are His. "Him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:10).

II. What these Requirements are. "What doth the Lord thy God require of thee?" The claim is based on the fact of His saving grace. Thy God who hath done such great things for thee. He requires-

1. A Filial Fear. "Fear the Lord thy God" (Deuteronomy 10:12). Not as a slave who fears his master because of the lash, but as a loving, dutiful son fears to grieve or dishonour his father. God is our Father, but He is also Judge, and hath power to cast both soul and body into hell. "Yea, I say unto you, fear ye Him. "

2. An Obedient Walk. "To walk in all His ways" (Deuteronomy 10:12). If we would walk in His ways we must be willing to set the Lord continually before us, then our walk will be "worthy of the Lord in all well-pleasing" (Colossians 1:10). What doth the Lord require of thee but to walk humbly with thy God? (Micah 6:8).

3. An Affectionate Heart. "To love Him" (Deuteronomy 10:12). He who looketh upon the heart requires truth in the inward parts. What is more sickening and repulsive than feigned love? It is the most loathsome stage of the leprosy of sin. Mere words uttered in the ear of God will not meet the requirements of His heart concerning us. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed.

4. A Whole-hearted Service. "To serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart" (Deuteronomy 10:12). This is a divine requirement that needs to be specially urged in His Name. We are not saved merely to rejoice in salvation, but to glorify God by a life of consecrated service to Him. This service implies selling, giving, following (Mark 10:21). To the lame man Peter said, "Such as I have, I give. " Present your bodies a living sacrifice unto God. This is your reasonable service (Romans 12:1).

5. A Submissive Will. "Be no more stiff necked" (Deuteronomy 10:16). Having presented ourselves to God, as Isaac did to his father, let us be as silently submissive as he was (Gen. 22). "Behold,

here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him" (2 Samuel 15:26). The clay that remains stiff in the hands of the potter will not be fashioned into a vessel of great honour. "Not My will, but Thine be done. "

6. A Charitable Spirit. "Love ye therefore the stranger, for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Deuteronomy 10:19). This is another most salutary requirement of the Lord. It was while we were strangers and enemies that God loved us, and that His Son died for us, therefore if the love of God is in us we will have compassion on those who are out of the way. Such were some of you, but ye are washed. Having been once a stranger yourself ye should "know the heart of a stranger" (Exodus 23:9). Remember the words of the Lord Jesus as recorded in Luke 10:29-37.

7. A Tenacious Faith. "The Lord thy God,... to Him shalt thou cleave" (Deuteronomy 10:20) This is our life, cleaving to the Living One. Let our cleaving be as tenacious as the limp it on the rock, which clings the closer the more it is buffeted. "I will not let Thee go. " My heart is fixed. (Psalms 57:7). Cleaving to the Lord is the secret of strength, and such will always be brightened with His brightness. Lord to whom can we go? THE BLESSED POSSESSION.

Deuteronomy 11:10-17.

"Wilt thou, O Lord, me holier make?

Wilt Thou, O Lord, me holier keep?

The power of sin within me break,

Behold me as I troubled weep.

Lord, I go dimly, give me light,

That I may not unworthy prove;

Shield me, O shield with gentle might,

In the long patience of Thy love.

Purge and repurge me all within.

In thought and word, desire and deed;

Fain would I final conquest win,

Help me, as Thou for me didst bleed.

If the Lord cared for the land given to His people for a possession so much that His eyes were always upon it, "from the beginning of the year, even unto the end of the year," surely His caretaking eye will always be upon His own inheritance and "peculiar treasure," purchased by the blood of His own Son. Oh, how much this possession needs to "drink the rain from Heaven," and to be cleansed and purged by the power of His own presence. How often this holy land gets denied. Observe here- I. A Wonderful Assurance. Concerning the inheritance reserved for them in Canaan they are assured that-

1. It is Not Like the Old. "The land is not like the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out" (Deuteronomy 11:10). A state of liberty and plenty is never like a state of bondage and poverty. "For ye were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord" (Ephesians 5:8, R. V.). Once afar off, but now made nigh by the blood of Christ.

2. It is Not Watered by Works. "In the land of Egypt thou wateredst it with thy foot. But the land, whither ye go to possess it, drinketh water of the rain of Heaven" (Deuteronomy 11:10-11). "Watering with the foot" of course has reference to the laborious process of irrigation by which the waters of the Nile were led from place to place, or perhaps the working of a tread mill wheel for lifting up the water from the river into a cistern for watering purposes. It is a terrible task to get our inheritance refreshed while in the house of bondage; but in Christ our possession is continually refreshed by the rain of His Holy Spirit from Heaven. No self-effort is needed to make the "things freely given us of God" spring up in living beauty and reviving power before us and in us. He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass.

3. It is Watched Over by the Lord. "The eyes of the Lord are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year" (Deuteronomy 11:12). Even in midwinter, when no sign of life is visible, and when every living thing seems to have gone back to the stillness of death, and when king frost has imprisoned the earth as in iron bands. So also in the spiritual life He hath not forsaken His own, although there be no outward tokens of abundance of fresh life within. "From the beginning of the year unto the end" surely teaches us that in every season of the Christian life His carefulness over us is the same. I am the Lord, I change not (Psalms 33:18).

II. A Simple Condition. God's terms are always easy. "My yoke is easy, and My burden is light. " The condition of abiding in His possession and enjoying continual blessing is threefold-

1. Hear Him. "Ye shall hearken diligently" (Deuteronomy 11:13). Hear, and your soul shall live. "Hearken diligently unto Him, and ye shall eat that which is good, and your soul shall delight itself in fatness" (Isaiah 55:2).

2. Love Him. "Ye shall love the Lord thy God" (Deuteronomy 11:13). He not only seeks an opened ear, but also an opened heart. As His love for us gives us an entrance into His heart, so our love to Him gives Him an entrance into our hearts.

3. Serve Him. "To serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deuteronomy 11:13). All the affections of the heart and all the life and energies of the soul must go into our service if it is not to be perfunctory, fruitless, and hypocritical.

III. A Solemn Warning.

1. Against Self-Deception. "Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived" (Deuteronomy 11:16). The heart is easily deceived, just because it is naturally deceitful. One of the chief devices of the devil is to make men believe that there is no devil. "Watch ye therefore, lest ye be secretly enticed" (Job 31:27).

2. Against False Worship. "Take heed lest ye turn aside and serve other gods" (Deuteronomy 11:16). No image was to be set up in the land (Leviticus 26:1). The hearts that become deceived and turn away from God will soon have other gods set up in their own imaginations whom they will secretly worship. When Jesus Christ is dethroned in the heart some self-made god will take His

place.

3. Against Loosing the Inheritance. "Take heed lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Deuteronomy 11:17). This is a solemn truth. By allowing the heart to deceive us, by setting its affections on other than God Himself, we thereby perish from out of the practical enjoyment of the gifts of God's grace. The Lord thy God is a jealous God. Thy sin will shut up the dew of Heaven from thee (1 Kings 8:35). The rain referred to in Amos 4:7 is most suggestive of the moving of the Holy Spirit. The attitude of the heart toward God determines where the refreshing power of His presence shall come. Where His reviving Spirit does not come everything is sure to wither, so there is experimentally a perishing from off the good land. THE SECRET OF VICTORY.

Deuteronomy 11:22-25.

"Victor, yet Victim manifest,

Love to its mighty task addressed;

Victim, yet Victor-righteousness,

Suffering our fallen race to bless.

Victim, yet Victor-on the Cross,

Redeeming our stupendous loss;

Victim, yet Victor-sacrifice,

By which eternally death dies. " The Lord Jesus Christ has left us an example, how a Victim to the will of God can become the Victor in the work of God. Learn here, O soul, that there is no other way into a life of triumph in His sight. We must be vanquished by the power of the Holy Ghost before we can be overcomers in this present evil world. The battle is the Lord's, and He conquers in us. In these Scriptures indicated above, we have again before us some old words that breathe the vita) breath of life for us.

I. The Conditions.

1. A Consecrated Life. The yielded up life is here detailed in the following pointed and all-comprehensive terms (Deuteronomy 11:22). (1) "Ye shall diligently keep all these commandments. " (2) "Ye shall love the Lord your God. " (3) "Ye shall walk in all His ways. " (4) "Ye shall cleave unto Him. " The consecrated-filled up-life is one that is daily being consumed, or eaten up, of zeal for the Lord, yet a life that is also daily replenished by the indwelling Spirit of burning. This holy fire, burning on the altar of the heart, is never to go out. Yield yourselves unto God, that your members may be instruments of righteousness.

2. An Adventurous Faith. "Every place where the soles of your feet shall tread upon shall be yours" (Deuteronomy 11:24). "Faith laughs at impossibilities, and says it shall be done. " Abraham's faith was adventurous when he went out, not knowing whither he went. Every promise claimed is a promise possessed. Believe, and thou shalt see. Those who are afraid of the deep will not catch many fishes. Have the courage to "launch out. " We need pioneers in the realms of faith as well as

in the dark places of the earth, and no other field of exploration can ever yield such reward, for "every place where the sole of your feet shall tread upon shall be yours.

II. The Promises. Every promise of God rings like a dinner bell to the hungry, believing heart. They are open doors into the superabundant fulness of God, covenant bows that stretch across the dark brow of every cloud of difficulty, crowning it with glory. They are-

1. As Great as our Need. "Then the Lord will drive out all these nations from before thee" (Deuteronomy 11:23). "Then shall no man be able to stand before thee," etc. (Deuteronomy 11:25). Emphasis should be put on the first word, "then. " When they are in heart right with God, then He will magnify His Name in them by working miracles for them. This is a law in the kingdom of grace that is unalterable. Sanctify yourselves, and the Lord will do wonders. It is God's little children that are said to be overcomers (1 John 4:4). It does not matter how strong the man is who would rob us of our goods the Lord is stronger than he. Let your trust be in Him (Luke 11:21).

2. As Sure as His Word. "The Lord your God shall lay the fear of you upon all the land, as He hath said unto you" (Deuteronomy 11:25). "Prove Me, and see if I will not do it for you." "God is not a man that He should lie" (Numbers 23:19), as if no man is worthy of our trust. What are adverse circumstances in the face of His Word? (Genesis 17:15). Faith will always find it even as He hath said (Mark 14:16). Hath God not also pledged that He will not alter the thing that has gone out of His lips? (Psalms 89:34). All His promises are seasoned with the salt of eternal faithfulness. Yes, we have a sure word wherein we do well to take heed. The words that I speak unto you they are spirit and life. Believest thou this? THE PLACE WHICH THE LORD SHALL CHOOSE.

Deuteronomy 16:7, Deuteronomy 16:15, Deuteronomy 16:16.

"There is a sacred, hallowed spot.

Oft present to my eye,

By saints it ne'er can be forgot,

'Tis much-loved Calvary. "

"There is a place where Jesus sheds

The oil of gladness on our heads;

A place than all beside more sweet,

It is the blood-stained mercy-seat."

"The place which the Lord thy God shall choose. " These words occur three times in this chapter and twelve times in this book. The place called Calvary was as much the appointment of God as the occasion. Abraham and Isaac came to the place of which God had told Abraham (Genesis 22:9). God as the offended one surely has the right to choose the place where He will meet with man. Did He not say to Moses, "Thou shalt put the mercy-seat above the ark, and there I will meet with thee?" (Exodus 25:21-22). We shall look at the connections in which these words, "The place which the Lord thy God shall choose" are used as so many fingerposts pointing to the Cross of Christ. Each time the God-chosen place is referred to there seems to be associated with it some

fresh truth that reminds us of "the place called Calvary. " Holy Spirit lead us into all truth. That place is connected with-

I. His Name. "The place which the Lord your God shall choose to cause His Name to dwell there" (chap. Deuteronomy 12:11). Oh, how closely and how vitally the Name of God is associated with the Cross of Christ! God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. It is the glory of the place called Calvary that the blood shed there was the blood of God (Acts 20:28). His saving Name dwells there.

II. Burnt Offering. "In the place which the Lord shall choose, there thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings" (chap. Deuteronomy 12:14). Christ the great burnt offering was offered in the place chosen by God outside Jerusalem. He gave Himself an offering and a sacrifice to God. The burnt offering aspect of our Lord's death declares His perfectly accepted life and character by God in our stead.

III. Eating. "Thou must eat them before the Lord thy God in the place which the Lord thy God shall choose" (chap. Deuteronomy 12:18). After the sacrifice comes the feasting. In this God-fixed place the offerer was also to be fed and strengthened. The shadow of the Cross falls on this place. "Except ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man ye have no life in you. " "My flesh is meat indeed. " From the crucified One we may still hear these words: "Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat ye that which is good. "

IV. Vowing. "Thy vows thou shalt take, and go unto the place which the Lord shall choose" (chap. Deuteronomy 12:26). If at the Cross we have found a sacrifice for our sins and food for our souls, surely the next thing is a yielding of ourselves in covenant promise unto God. Let the vows made in secret be paid openly in the presence of the people, paid in the coin of true-hearted adoration and active, self-denying service.

V. A Price. "If the way be too long for thee, then thou shalt turn it (sacrifice) info money, and shalt go into the place which the Lord thy God shall choose" (chap. Deuteronomy 14:25). This worshipper brought the price of his offering in his hand to the place where God was pleased to put His name. But God's own Son hath appeared before Him for us with the price in His hand. "Ye are bought with a price" (1 Corinthians 6:20). "Ye are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. "

VI. The Passover. "At the place which the Lord thy God shall choose, there thou shalt sacrifice the Passover" (chap. Deuteronomy 16:6-7). This is another fingerpost pointing to Him who was "Christ our Passover sacrificed for us. " "When I see the blood I will pass over you. " God finds enough in the blood of His Son to enable Him righteously to pass over all who take shelter beneath it.

VII. Rejoicing. "Thou shalt rejoice in thy feast unto the Lord thy God in the place which the Lord shall choose" (chap. Deuteronomy 16:14-15). This holy rejoicing is intimately associated with the awful Cross. We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ by whom we have now received the reconciliation (Romans 5:11). Bunyan's pilgrim leaped for joy in the presence of the Cross. It is through Christ's sufferings that His own joy is imparted. "My joy I give unto you. "

VIII. Personal Appearing Before God. "Three times a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God in the place which He shall choose" (chap. Deuteronomy 16:16). Those who would

be made participants of His saving grace must present themselves personally before Him, and those who would keep themselves in the enjoyment of His favour must come often. The thought of personal consecration to God may also be here. Those saved by His grace are called upon to present themselves unto God a living sacrifice. They shall not appear before the Lord empty (see Romans 6:13).

IX. Teaching. "If there arise a matter too hard for thee, then shalt thou arise and get thee up into the place which the Lord thy God shall choose" (chap. Deuteronomy 17:8). Difficulties will arise, but light was to be found in the chosen place where His holy Name was recorded- the mercy-seat. This is a precious lesson for us. If you would be taught of God, arise, get thee up to Him, who is the great Teacher come from God. Lord, to whom can we go? Thou only hast the words of eternal life. He is made of God unto us wisdom. "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest. "

X. Service. "If a Levite shall come... with all the desire of his soul unto the place which the Lord shall choose, then he shall minister in the Name of the Lord his God" (chap. Deuteronomy 18:6-7, R. V.). This reference is beautifully applicable to our Lord and Master. Coming to Him with all the desire of the soul as a Levite (separated one) will always lead into active and acceptable service. This is the door into the holy ministry. If Christ is desired with all the soul, then the ministry will be in the Name of the Lord.

XI. The Gathering of all before the Lord. "When all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God in the place which He shall choose" (chap. Deuteronomy 31:11). This is a general appearing of men, women, and children, of all within thy gates, and forcibly reminds us of the judgment seat of Christ before which we must all appear. He will judge the world by that Man whom He hath appointed. At this great and solemn assembly the book of the law was opened (Deuteronomy 16:10). Now for instruction, but then for judgment (Revelation 20:12-15). "Be not deceived; God is not mocked" (Galatians 6:7).

CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOD-RAISED PROPHET.

Deuteronomy 18:15-22.

"On faith wings lifted up, I heard the stainless praise

Of the redeemed hosts above,

Even as it was heard on Patmos Isle by the disciple

Whom the Lord did love.

I saw, too, in the streets of shining gold that led

Up to the Lord Christ enthroned there

The glorious company of the redeemed from first

Of time, who the 'new Name' did bear.

Oh, it was such a beatific glimpse that thus to me

In my deep thought was given,

That now I walk this scarred, sin-shattered earth

As tho' already I were there in Heaven. "

Every true prophet of God is a seer. One whose eyes have been opened to see sin and redemption, God and Eternity in Eternity's own light. Such a faith vision is sure to revolutionise the life by bringing the grace of God and the glory of Heaven into it. From references in the New Testament it is very clear that the prophet spoken of here was- The Lord Jesus Christ.

1. He was raised up by God (Matthew 17:5; John 1:45; John 6:14).

2. He was taken from among His brethren (Hebrews 2:14-17).

3. He was made like unto Moses (compare Numbers 12:3; Matthew 11:29).

4. He spake the word of God (Hebrews 1:1-2; John 8:24; John 17:14).

5. His words will be required of by those who hear them (Hebrews 2:1-4; John 12:48).

6. His words come to pass (John 4:19).

Balaam was a man whose "eyes were opened," but whose heart was unchanged, for he "loved the wages of unrighteousness. " Every God-raised servant, every Spirit-ordained worker (Acts 13:2), will bear the marks of this true Prophet. He will-

I. Belong to the Brethren. "Raised up from among their brethren" (Deuteronomy 18:18). All God's prophets were taken out from among His own people. It is so still. We must be brought into the family of God, into the holy brotherhood, before we are in a position to serve. First sons, then servants.

II. Resemble the Great Prototype. "Like unto Thee" (Deuteronomy 18:18). As a prophet Jesus Christ was made like unto Moses in His lowly birth, in His princely character, and in His work as a Deliverer. So are the servants of Christ raised up like unto their Master, born of God, partakers of the divine nature, and co-workers together. He hath left us an example, that we should follow His steps (John 17:18).

III. Be Possessed by the Word of God. "I will put My words in his mouth" (Deuteronomy 18:18). His words are put in as treasure in an earthen vessel. They are put in because there is on the part of the servant a real hunger for the truth of God, and an open mouth to receive it. The words of God are living words, and burn as a fire in the bones. To receive His words is to receive His thoughts, and to know what the will of the Lord is (Isaiah 55:8-11).

IV. Fearlessly Speak the Truth. "He shall speak unto them all that I command him" (Deuteronomy 18:18). He declares the whole counsel of God, keeping back nothing. The received word has such a breaking forth power that "we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). Nothing can be more straight than rays of light. Nothing so dogmatic as truth. It is little faith that wavers; the strong in faith glorify God.

V. Speak in the Name of God. "He shall speak in My Name" (Deuteronomy 18:19). God's words and thoughts must be uttered in the Name of God. No servant is responsible for the words of his master. "It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of the Father which is in you. " When the thoughts of Christ are declared in His Name He takes the responsibility of making them effectual to the purpose whereunto they were sent; He is sufficiently jealous of His own Name to relieve the servant of any anxiety. "It shall not return unto Me void. "

VI. Be Known by his Fruits. The question is put: "How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken?" (Deuteronomy 18:21) so that they may distinguish between self-ordained and God-sent prophets. The answer is: "It the thing spoken in the Name of the Lord follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken" (Deuteronomy 18:22). There is a heart-piercing principle underneath this. We may speak in the Name of the Lord, but if the Lord hath not spoken that thing to us it will come to naught. If the message falls fruitlessly on the ears of the hearers it is an evidence that the Lord hath not spoken it. The proof of a prophet speaking in his own name was that there were no results from his testimony; the thing came not to pass. How does this apply to our work in the Name of the Lord? A prophet must needs hear before he could speak in power. The Lord give us the open ear (see John 15:15-16).

UNFIT FOR THE BATTLE.

Deuteronomy 20:1-8.

"O Lord,

Forbid that I in Thy Church be

Barren as that roadside fig tree

For ever useless. What a doom!

Lord, let it not upon me come,

But graff'd in Thee, the living Vine,

To bear 'much fruit' each day be mine. "

"The thought of being unfit for work is like to break his heart. " So said a woman lately when speaking of her aged father. What a blessing it would be if unfitness for the Lord's work created such distress of soul! Why should it not? If a man has a withered hand and not able to work we pity and help, but if he has a withered soul, and incapable of serving Christ, how few are in any way concerned. Let us learn from this portion that-

I. There is a Battle to be Fought. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12). Consider the-

1. Power of the Enemy. "Horses and chariots, a people more than thou" (Deuteronomy 20:1). The forces of evil are both numerous and formidable, they are marshalled in three great companies: the world, the flesh, and the devil. In times past we fought under the banner of the prince of darkness (Ephesians 2:2).

2. Secret of Strength. "The Lord thy God is with thee" (Deuteronomy 20:1, Deuteronomy 20:4). In this battle without the presence of the living Christ we can do nothing. The battle is not yours, but the Lord's in you. Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world (1 John 4:4). Some trust in the chariots and horses of their own strength and energy; but we will remember the Name of the Lord (Psalms 20:7; see Isaiah 31:1).

3. Word of Encouragement. "Let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble" (Deuteronomy 20:3-4). "Fear not, I am with you, be not dismayed, for I am thy God. " "We shall be more than conquerors through Him" (Romans 8:37). "Now is the prince of this world to be cast out" (John 12:31). "Be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world. "

II. There are Some who are Unfit for the Battle. Who are they?

1. Those whose work of Dedication has not been Complete. "What man is there that hath built a new house, and hath not dedicated it? let him go and return to his house" (Deuteronomy 20:5). The Lord knew that although such were coerced into the army their hearts would be in their houses. Every undedicated thing on which the heart is set will unfit for the whole-hearted service He requires. Consecrating all our possessions to God is the way to be delivered from all anxiety about them, so that they may not in any way hinder from doing the work of the Lord

2. Those who have not Tasted the Fruit of their Labour. "What man is he that hath planted a vineyard, and hath not yet eaten of it? let him go and return unto his house" (Deuteronomy 20:6). The man who had not yet reaped any fruit from his work was also disqualified. This to us is a severe test. Christians whose lives have not been fruitful at home are not likely to be fruitful abroad. The missionaries who have been most blessed in the foreign field are those who have been most successful in the home field. If as preachers we have not reaped from the planting in our own vineyards we need not expect to reap when we sow in the vineyards of others. The way to be made fit for the great aggressive work of God is to begin at home. Let him return to his house and eat the fruit of his labour there, then let him fight the battles of the Lord abroad.

3. Those who have Obligations to others Unfulfilled. "What man is there that hath betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her? let him go and return unto his house" (Deuteronomy 20:7.) The man whose whole affections are set on another, while he may be outwardly in the service of Christ, is just as guilty as the man who said "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come," his heart is absent. Any unfulfilled promise to a fellow-creature, or any uncharitable feeling to such, is enough in the sight of God to disqualify for service. Some debt, however small, may act as a fly in the ointment. First be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift of service (Matthew 5:23-24).

4. Those who are Fearful and Faint-hearted. "What man is there that is fearful and faint-hearted? let him go and return unto his house" (Deuteronomy 20:8). The language in each case is very decided, "let him go. " It will be better for him and for the cause that he should go. The fearful and the faint-hearted in the great work of God are very numerous. As it was in the days of Gideon, so is it still (Judges 7:3). But the cause of Christ does not suffer through their going. The purging of the ranks is the strengthening of the force. Three hundred consecrated souls are of more value in this battle than twenty-nine thousand seven hundred self-important doubters. The battle is the Lord's, only those who are His and for Him can fight it. THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE OBEDIENT.

Deuteronomy 28:1-14. The words of Robert Blair on "Friendship" are beautifully applicable to Him who is the Friend of sinners:

"Thou hast deserved of me Far, far beyond whatever I can pay; Oft have I proved the labours of thy love, And the warm efforts of thy gentle heart."

We are blessed with all spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus. The blessings recorded in this chapter are but figures of the true-shadows of better things to come for all those who are obedient to the will of God. Obedience is always connected with blessing, as disobedience is with the curse (chap. Deuteronomy 27:26). Luther said that "he had rather obey than work miracles. " But the obedient will work miracles-miracles of grace by the power of Him who worketh within. To obey is better than sacrifice. The obedient life will be blessed with-

I. Material Comforts. "Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store" (Deuteronomy 28:2-5). A blessed basket, like the widow's cruse, is one that is never entirely empty. Your bread and water shall be sure. "The little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked" (Romans 8:28).

II. Unfailing Protection. "The Lord shall cause thine enemies to be smitten before thy face," etc. (Deuteronomy 28:7). The Lord your God, He it is that fighteth for you, as He hath promised (Joshua 23:10). It is a true father's delight to exercise his wisdom and power in behalf of his child. How much more will your heavenly Father? The enemies of the Church, like those of the soul, are many, subtile, and mighty, but greater is He that is for us. When He works who shall hinder?

III. Prosperous Work. "The Lord shall command the blessing upon all that thou settest thine hand unto" (Deuteronomy 28:8). "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, " etc. (1 Timothy 4:8). The Christian's life is like a tree planted by rivers of water, the roots of his being lie buried in God Himself as the source of his all sufficiency, so there is unwithering prosperity (Psalms 1:3).

IV. Abiding Fellowship. "The Lord shall establish thee an holy people unto Himself" (Deuteronomy 28:9). Called by His sovereign grace, separated by His cleansing blood, established in His risen Son, reconciled unto Himself, and transformed into His own image. Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. "Built up in Him and established in the faith" (Colossians 2:7). He who hath established us in Christ is God (2 Corinthians 1:21). Every soul so established belongs to the established Church of God. Abide in Him. The gates (authorities) of hell shall not prevail against such.

V. Powerful Testimony. "All the people shall see that thou art called by the Name of the Lord" (Deuteronomy 28:10). Those called by His Name are to be ruled over by Him (Isaiah 63:19). If the Lord rules over us and in us, then the savour of His Name, as ointment, will be poured forth. The Name of the Lord upon us implies His life and character begotten in us. This is the life which is the light that lightens the path of sorrowing sinners in their search of salvation. Let your light so shine before men.

VI. Abundant Supply. "The Lord shall open unto thee His good treasure" (Deuteronomy 28:12). What a privilege to have the treasures of His infinite grace opened to us! This He hath done in the gift of His Son, and by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The things which are freely given us of God, in Christ, are abundantly plentiful, and unspeakably precious. Who shall ever be able to exhaust

the unsearchable riches of Christ? When the Lord opened for us this treasure He opened our supply for time and eternity.

"When all created streams are dried,

His fulness is the same;

I will with this be satisfied,

And glory In His Name. "

VII. Special Honour. "The Lord shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath" (Deuteronomy 28:13). This will of course be fulfilled in the latter days, when Israel, as God's ancient people, shall be restored (Isaiah 9:15; Romans 11:26), and when the peoples of the earth shall be blessed through them. But surely these words have a message to present-day believers. "Thou shalt be above only. " Your life is hid with Christ in God-"above only"-therefore set your affections on things above, and not on things which are on the earth. They are from beneath, but ye are from above. Born from above, and one with Him who is now set in the heavenlies "far above all" (Ephesians 1:20-21). This honour have all the saints.

PRECIOUS PROMISES.

Deuteronomy 30:1-10.

"None God loseth but who leaveth,

None who leaveth but God grieveth;

God grieveth by his forsaking,

Froward heart its own doom making. " To forsake God is to forsake the Fountain of Living Water, and to choose the broken cisterns of unfailing disappointment. We have no choice between the ocean fulness of God's infinite grace and the dry and barren wastes of man's vain imaginations. In these verses there are seven promises given to those who return unto the Lord and obey His voice (Deuteronomy 30:1-2). This of course implies the conversion of the soul and the consecration of the life. Two unalterable conditions by which the promises of God are received and enjoyed. They will be-

I. Delivered. "Then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity" (Deuteronomy 30:3). He will loose thy bands of iniquity and recover thy soul out of the snare of the devil (2 Timothy 2:26). He delivers from the power of darkness those who were sold under sin (Romans 7:14; 2 Corinthians 1:10; Isaiah 55:7).

II. Restored. "From thence will the Lord thy God gather thee" (Deuteronomy 30:4). He not only delivers from the dominion of Satan, and the fascinations of sin and the world, but brings home to the bosom of His own great heart of love that we might have fellowship with Himself. The prodigal in Luke 15 was delivered when he left the far country, but he was not restored until he fell into the arms of his gracious father. The love of Christ constrains us.

III. Supplied. "The Lord thy God will bring thee into the land, and He will do thee good" (Deuteronomy 30:5). These promises were of course given primarily to the children of Israel; but

all Scripture, Spirit breathed, is profitable for the man of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17). All who have been reconciled to God through the death of His Son are made heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17). What may be only a barren rock to the carnal eye will yield honey and oil to the believing heart.

IV. Chastised. "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart," etc. (Deuteronomy 30:6). A circumcised heart is one chastened and subdued, so that the whole affection of the soul is weaned from the world and self, and centred on the Lord. Chastisement is the sorrowful sign of sonship (Hebrews 12:8). It is also a positive necessity to fruit-bearing (compare Hebrews 12:10-11 with John 15:2). The stony heart must be taken away to make room for the heart of flesh that can feel the gentle touch of God (Ezekiel 36:26).

V. Defended. "The Lord thy God will put curses upon thine enemies" (Deuteronomy 30:7). What a difference there is between chastisement and condemnation (Exodus 11:7). We are not to curse our enemies, but pray for them. Vengeance is Mine, saith the Lord. Hand all your enemies over to Him. Take no thought for your life. This was how the early apostles acted. "Grant unto Thy servants that with all boldness they may speak Thy Word" (Acts 4:29). Ye are as the apple of His eye.

VI. Fruitful. "The Lord thy God will make thee plenteous in every work of thine hand" (Deuteronomy 30:9). The trees of the Lord's planting and watering are never fruitless. They nourish like the palm tree (Psalms 92:12). They take root downward and bear fruit upward, "and the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall yet again take root downward, and bear fruit upward" (2 Kings 19:30). "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone" (John 12:24). The downward (dying) process of the self-life is the strengthening of the new Christ-life upward. The best fruits are those ripened in the sunshine.

VII. Rejoiced Over. "The Lord will rejoice over thee for good" (Deuteronomy 30:9). A wise son maketh a glad father. "He will rejoice over thee with singing" (Zephaniah 3:17). Surely happy are the people who are in such a case. See how the father rejoiced over his long lost son when he returned (Luke 15:24). Oh, what a joy to know that we are a joy to Him, whose soul was exceedingly sorrowful for us. Thus His joy may remain in us, and so our joy may be full (John 15:11).

LIFE AND DEATH.

Deuteronomy 30:15-20.

"Sweet peace, where dost thou dwell? I humbly crave

Let me once know;

I sought thee in a secret cave,

And asked if peace were there;

A hollow wind did seem to answer, 'No!

Go seek elsewhere.'"

It was Douglas Jerrold who said: "I am convinced the world will get tired, at least I hope so, of this eternal guffaw about all things. " There is no apparent sign of this tiredness yet. The most sacred and solemn things are so frequently turned off with an empty giggle. But there are awful realities in life, and only madmen can afford to treat them lightly. One of the most stern facts that can assail an immortal soul is that our present choice determines our future and irrevocable weal or woe. Observe here- I. A Solemn Alternative.

1. What is it? "Life and good, death and evil" (Deuteronomy 30:15). Life or death, and their accompaniments good and evil. This good and evil must be eternally associated with life and death. This spiritual life is the everlasting favour of God, as spiritual death is the everlasting absence of such.

2. How does it come? "See I have set before thee this day," etc. (Deuteronomy 30:15). God in His infinite mercy has been pleased to set this privilege of life before us. It is set before us in the Gospel. It is brought very near: "The Word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart" (Deuteronomy 30:14). "Thy Word hath quickened me" (Psalms 119:50). "This is the Word of faith which we preach" (Romans 10:17-18).

II. A Merciful Counsel. "I call Heaven and earth to reckon this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, therefore choose life" (Deuteronomy 30:19). This is the entreaty of Moses, the man of God, who had personally proved the value and blessedness of such a choice (Hebrews 11:24-26).

1. Where is this Life? "The Lord thy God, He is thy life" (Deuteronomy 30:20). "I am come that ye might have life. " This life is in His Son. "He that hath the Son hath life" (1 John 5:12). "When Christ who is our life shall appear, " etc. (Colossians 3:3-4). This life which yields eternal good is not in us by nature, it is the gift of God (Romans 6:23).

2. How is this Life to be Had? "Choose life" (Deuteronomy 30:19). It is not by the works of the law, but by a deliberate whole-hearted consent of the will. Mary chose the better part, a part that would not be taken from her. It is not enough to hope and desire this life, the choice must be made, and life must be chosen as the one thing needful. "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve. "

III. The Blessed Results. There will be-

1. Love. "That thou mayest love the Lord," etc. (Deuteronomy 30:20). It is vain to expect that you will be able to love the Lord until you have made Him the choice of your heart. The more He is trusted the better will He be loved.

2. Obedience. "That thou mayest obey His voice. " Here again loyal-hearted obedience is the outcome of making the Lord Himself the sole object of our choice. We cannot lash ourselves into acceptable obedience. The love of Christ constraineth us.

3. Adherence. "That thou mayest cleave unto Him. " Our clinging to Him or our abiding in Him will be determined largely by the measure in which our hearts have really chosen Him as the source and strength of our lives.

4. Restfulness. "That thou mayest dwell in the land. " In Him we live, and move, and have our being (Acts 17:28). Our sufficiency is of God. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance

(Romans 11:29). Make Christ your all, and you will find your all in Him.

"My heart is fixed, Eternal God,

Fixed on Thee;

And ray eternal choice is made,

Christ for me. " THE SONG OF THE ROCK; Or, What Christ Is To His People.

Deuteronomy 32.

There are two rocks mentioned here. One represents the gods of the heathen, or the false foundations on which sin-blinded men build their vain hopes (Deuteronomy 32:37). The other speaks of Christ as our strong, unchanging Saviour. So "that their rock is not as our Rock" (Deuteronomy 32:31). "Their rock sold them" (Deuteronomy 32:30). "Our Rock saves us" (Deuteronomy 32:15). Christ, our Rock, is here represented as the-

I. Giver of Life. "The Rock begat thee" (Deuteronomy 32:18). With other religions it is only a being converted to a system. With the Christian it is a being born of God (1 John 5:1). Nothing less will suffice (John 3:3). He must quicken (Ephesians 2:1)

II. Saviour of Men. "The Rock of his salvation" (Deuteronomy 32:15). Christ's Name, works, death, resurrection, all proclaim Him a Saviour, and that to the exclusion of every one and everything else (Acts 4:12). Those who build without this Rock will be confounded (Luke 6:48-49). Their rock is only the treacherous sands of their own imaginations.

III. Source of Supply. "He made him suck honey and oil from the Rock" (Deuteronomy 32:13). The honey and the oil may speak of sweetness and refreshing, of strength and anointing, or of the grace of Christ and the power of the Holy Ghost. See the connection between Christ's death and the gift of the Spirit in Galatians 3:13-14; Galatians 4:4-6.

IV. Perfect Worker. "He is the Rock, His work is perfect" (Deuteronomy 32:4). What He begins He finishes (Php_1:6). The believer's wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption begun in Christ are perfected in Him (Colossians 2:10; Ecclesiastes 3:4). The work He had perfected for us, He wishes to perfect in us (Php_2:13).

V. Incomparable Master. "Their rock is not as our Rock" (Deuteronomy 32:31). The rocks of the ungodly fail them in the day of trial (Deuteronomy 32:30; 1 Kings 18:26). Ye serve the Lord Christ, the chiefest among ten thousand. He will never forsake you (Hebrews 13:5-6). Our Rock is immutable, all the storms of earth and time cannot move it, nor will all the ages of a coming eternity change it. A young woman lay a-dying whose father was an infidel, but whose mother was a Christian. "Now that I am dying," said the girl to her father, "shall I believe you or mother?" He answered, "Believe your mother. " Truly their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges. THE BLESSED PEOPLE.

Deuteronomy 33.

"Lord we would not always bring Thee

Plaints, and wails, and sobs, and sighs;

We would eager sing before Thee

Of our Cross-drawn ecstasies. " To "count your many blessings" is an excellent thing for driving away the clouds of dull care. This chapter begins with "This is the blessing wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel. " But what is the blessing wherewith Jesus the Son of God blesses the children of faith? The blessing then divided among the tribes may now, in a spiritual sense, be inherited by each individual believer in Christ. Surely there is enough here to make thy "cup run over. " All His saints are loved by Him, they are in His hand, they sit at His feet and receive His words (Deuteronomy 33:3). Loved, secured, rested, taught. Viewing these blessings as patterns of spiritual things, as figures of the true, and shadows of things to come, we would point out that the people of God are blessed because they are-

I. A Living People. "Let Reuben live and not die" (Deuteronomy 33:6). What Abraham prayed for Ishmael is true of every heaven-born soul, they "live before God. " They have been "quickened by the Spirit," and "raised from among the dead," and made "alive unto God. " "Because I live ye shall live also. "

II. A Praying People. "Hear, Lord, the voice of Judah, and be Thou an help to him" (Deuteronomy 33:7). So we read that Judah prevailed above his brethren (1 Chronicles 5:2). They always prevail who have God for their help. Hath He not said, "Call upon Me, and I will deliver you?"

III. An Enlightened People. "Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one (Levi), and they shall teach," etc. (Deuteronomy 33:8-10). It was with Levi as it is with the saints of God now. They teach the difference between the holy and the profane (Ezekiel 44:23). Those possessed with the lights and perfections (Urim and Thummim) that come through the gift of the Holy Spirit will be witnesses unto Him (Acts 1:8). We may have here in type what is taught in 1 John 2:17.

IV. A Protected People. "The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him, and the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between His shoulders" (Deuteronomy 33:12). The beloved of the Lord are: (1) By Him for fellowship. (2) Under Hint for safety. (3) On Him for rest. He hath loved us with an everlasting love. Beloved for the Saviour's sake (Matthew 3:17).

V. A Fruitful People (Deuteronomy 33:13-17). The blessing of Joseph is full of the precious things of Heaven-the dew, the sun, and the moon-but the crowning blessing of all is "the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush. " No wonder that Joseph was a fruitful bough, and that his branches ran over the wall. If we have the "good will of Him" who dwelt in Christ, then the "precious things of Heaven" will also be ours (1 Corinthians 3:22-23).

VI. A Sacrificing People. "They shall offer sacrifices of righteousness" (Deuteronomy 33:19). To offer to God the sacrifices that are right is to crucify the flesh with its lusts. The unrenewed heart is incapable of such offerings. The first sacrifice of righteousness we are called upon to offer is ourselves (Romans 12:1). Let the next be thanksgiving (Psalms 116:17). The constraining motive is the love of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). In yielding ourselves unto God we yield our members as instruments of righteousness unto Him (Romans 6:13).

VII. A Courageous People. "Dan is a lion's whelp" (Deuteronomy 33:22). The lion's whelp has begotten in it the lion's nature, and will grow up into the lion's image. We have been created after the image of Him who is called the "Lion of the tribe of Judah. " May we go in the fearlessness of

His strength.

VIII. A Satisfied People. "O Naphtali, satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord" (Deuteronomy 33:23). What an inheritance! To be filled with the blessing of the Lord is indeed to be satisfied with favour. This favour, which is the grace of God, is abundantly able to do this (Php_4:19). We will never be satisfied until we are full with His blessing. This grace that fills and satisfies and makes to abound to every good work is within the reach of all (see 2 Corinthians 9:8).

IX. A Happy People. "Happy art thou, O Israel" (Deuteronomy 33:29). They ought to be a happy people whom God went forth to redeem that they might be a people to Himself, and to make Him a Name that He might do for them great things and terrible (2 Samuel 7:23). Sought, redeemed, separated, used. Happy is that people that is in such a case, yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord (Psalms 144:15) THE DEATH OF MOSES.

Deuteronomy 34.

"A change from woe to joy, from earth to Heaven,

Death gives me this; it leads me calmly where

The souls that long ago from mine were riven

May meet again; death answers many a prayer.

Bright day shine on! be glad; days brighter far

Are stretched before my eyes than those of mortals are. "

-Nicoll. When Moses stood on the top of Pisgah it was not as "a trembling candidate for God's compassion," but as a servant who had found great favour with Him, as one whose work was finished before his strength and vigour were exhausted Like the law which he represented, he was set aside before his natural force was abated. There are some things about this unique departure of Moses that suggest characteristics which belong to the death of every saint. It was-

I. A Going Up. "And Moses went up to the top of Pisgah" (Deuteronomy 34:1). Going up to die. What a thought! Mounting up in spirit to the gate of Heaven that we might depart and be with Christ. "Like Enoch, he was not, for God took him. " In dying the body departs to the earth, but the spirit to God, who made it and saved it. Those who live on the hill top of communion with the Father have not far to go when the home-call comes.

II. Lonely. Moses was alone with God on the mount (Deuteronomy 34:6). With regard to the friendships of earth, every man is alone when he meets God. Over this Jordan no human hand can guide. But the dying servant of God does not feel any loss at the absence of the kinsman according to the flesh; they are so filled with the glory of His presence that they forget the things which are behind. Alone, but without any feeling of loneliness. At home with God.

III. Full of a Satisfying Vision. "The Lord showed him all the land" (Deuteronomy 34:1). This vision of the land of promise had been before him for many years, but now the Lord caused him to see it (Deuteronomy 34:4). If he did not enter into it, he did in spirit enter into the rest that comes through trusting in a faithful God. Moses is not alone in his seeming failure here. Are there not many

spiritual privileges into which we have failed to enter because of our unbelief? Yet, blessed be the God of all grace, the vision of His mercy and faithfulness in Christ will satisfy the soul while in its last pantings on earth. "I shall be satisfied when I awake in His likeness. "

IV. In the Presence of the Lord. "The Lord said unto him," etc. (chap. Deuteronomy 10:4). To die in His presence is to die into His presence, and to be for ever with the Lord. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord. Yea, saith the Spirit" (Revelation 14:13).

"It is not death to die when He is near. "

No, it is only entering into a fuller possession of the life of God. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me" (Psa. 23).

V. According to His Word. "So Moses the servant of the Lord died, according to the word of the Lord" (Deuteronomy 34:5). It is still so with the saints of God, His Word is, "He that believeth in Me shall never die. " Be it unto me according to Thy Word. "O death, where is thy sting; O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. " In His victory death is swallowed up (1 Corinthians 15:54-57).

VI. While His Faculties were Unimpared. "When he died his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated" (Deuteronomy 34:7). We have no reason to expect that physically it shall be so with us when the hour of our departure comes (Psalms 90:10). But the new man created after Christ Jesus, his eye shall not be dim, nor his force abated. "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall exchange strength, and mount up with wings as eagles" (Isaiah 40:30-31). Those who die in the Lord die in His strength. In Him the eye of our hope need never grow dim, nor the natural force of our faith ever abate.

VII. Followed by a Unique Funeral. "He buried him, but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day" (Deuteronomy 34:6). It is no real loss although no man may know where a servant of God lies buried, God knows. He superintends the funeral of every servant of His. In the resurrection not a member will be left behind. The devil contended with Michael about the body of Moses (Jude 1:9). Did he wish to claim it because Moses had killed an Egyptian, or because he had failed to sanctify the Lord in the wilderness of Zion? (Numbers 20:10-13). The body is the Lord's as well as the spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). Is the Lord not contending for our bodies even now? (Romans 12:1), and is not the devil still disputing this?

Joshua

CONDITIONS OF SUCCESS.

Joshua 1:1-9.

"Workman after workman dies,

And unfinished their work lies;

But their work is Thine, O Christ,

Thou wilt keep Thy pledged tryst.

Still Thy promise words observe,

To send workers Thee to serve;

Our God will fresh ardour give,

Workmen die, but Thou dost live. "

"After the death of Moses the Lord spake unto Joshua. " Although God buries His workmen He does not bury His work. Before Elijah is called away his mantle was cast over Elisha. The great purposes of God, begotten and nurtured in a past eternity, will not fail of their accomplishment in time. To be successful in God's work is just to fall in with His will, and to do it in His way. All that is pleasing to Him is a success. In these verses there is given us an infallible prescription for good success, or how to "do wisely" (margin),

I. An Understanding of the Purpose of God. "The Lord spake, saying, Arise, go over this Jordan" (Joshua 1:1-2). Joshua did not need to say, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" This call he could never doubt. The way for him was perfectly plain, and in the doing of it he was fully conscious that he was doing the will of God. Unless we have made our calling sure all else will be uncertain (Galatians 1:1). The next thing is, "Understand what the will of the Lord is. "

II. Faith in the Promise of God. "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon have I given you" (Joshua 1:3). All things are possible to them that believe. The land had to be claimed by their feet. Every promise claimed is an inheritance given. Believe that ye receive, and ye shall have. Are there not much land in the "heavenly places" yet unpossessed? (Isaiah 36:3; 2 Corinthians 2:14).

III. Assurance of the Presence of God. "I will be with thee; I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (Joshua 1:5). This threefold promise is to faith an inexhaustible legacy. His presence with us means all that He is in Himself for us. "Lo, I am with you, and in My Name ye shall cast out devils. " This assurance leads to boldness and victory (Daniel 3:17). Know ye not that God dwelleth in you?

IV. Courage in the Name of God. "Be strong and very courageous" (Joshua 1:7). If we believe that He is with us, then we may be bold as a lion to face the giant foe (1 Samuel 17:45). What nerved

Elijah to confront the 450 deceivers? Greater works than these shall ye do if ye believe on Him (John 14:12-14). "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might" (Ephesians 6:10). "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. "

V. Faithfulness to the Leadings of God. "Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left. " God's Word must be to us our only and infallible guide. In keeping to it there is great reward. The example of our Lord Jesus Christ should be ours. How devoted He was to the words of His Father. "The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself. " To reject His Word is to be rejected (1 Samuel 15:26). Sons of God are led by the Spirit of God.

VI. Delight in the Word of God. "Thou shalt meditate therein day and night" (Joshua 1:8). Those who really find delight in the Scriptures of truth will be like trees planted by rivers of water (Psalms 1:2), always fresh and fruitful. Those who hide His Word in their hearts will, as good men, be able to bring out good treasure (Matthew 12:35). Is it not in these hearts of ours where the Lord layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous by the working of His Holy Spirit through the Word? (Proverbs 2:6). Christ Himself is called the Word of God (Revelation 19:13).

VII. Obedience to the Will of God. It was not enough that Joshua heard the call and knew the will of God, if whole-hearted obedience and submission did not follow. The surrender of our will to God is as indispensable to spiritual life and prosperity as breathing is to the natural life. The answer the people gave to Joshua is certainly the answer we should give to our Lord and Leader: "All that thou commandest us we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us we will go" (Joshua 1:16) "Then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success" (Joshua 1:8). He who is our great Example became obedient unto death. Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it. Then shalt thou do wisely.

RAHAB.

Joshua 2:8-24.

"Bone-weary on my wretched quest,

An aching heart still longs for rest;

Dark memories my soul appal,

And old sins like to fire-sleet fall;

I lay me, Lord, at Thy Cross down,

Guilty, hell-worthy, all I own. "

Joshua sent spies to view the land, but this did in no way help the promise of God. His Word is true whether we see it or not. We walk by faith, not by sight. No one can justify Rahab's doubtful dealings with the King of Jericho (Joshua 2:3-6); but no one is an angel because they are seeking after salvation. The God of all grace knows that it is only out of the depths of darkness and guilt that any one can come into the light of life. Let him that is without the sin of pretending to be what he is not cast the first stone. Let us follow her step by step into the higher life. She-

I. Heard. "We have heard how the Lord dried up the waters of the Red Sea for you," etc. (Joshua 2:10). The tidings of God's great salvation had reached her ears. How shall they believe on Him of whom they have not heard? Tell out His wondrous doings among the people. The opening up of the Red Sea, and the opening up of the new and living way through the atoning blood of Christ, these things were not done in a corner.

II. Confessed. "As soon as we heard our hearts did melt because of you" (Joshua 2:11). The tidings of what the Lord had done for His own people broke the backbone of their pride and caused their self-confident hearts to melt like wax within them. Oh, that it were so now! She makes honest confession of her utter helplessness and hopelessness. There is no attempt at self-justification. Without strength.

III. Believed. "I know that the Lord hath given you the land" (Joshua 2:9). The terror of the Lord had fallen upon all the inhabitants of the land, but Rahab only believed. Hers was a faith produced by fear, but such faith will save as well as the faith that works through love. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord we persuade men.

IV. Prayed. "Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the Lord," etc. (Joshua 2:12). Having believed she now pleads for a place in this great deliverance that Jehovah was accomplishing for His people. It was a great request for a condemned harlot to make, but her faith made her bold. "By faith," the apostle says, "the harlot Rahab perished not" (Hebrews 11:31). Her request was not only for herself, but also for her "father's house," and even that was not all. She pleaded for an assuring evidence that her request would be granted, for she added, "and give me a true token. " There is a delightful simplicity about this sinful but anxious inquirer. An assuring token every believer may have (Hebrews 6:18). The Spirit also beareth witness with our spirit. He is the True Token.

V. Received. "The men answered her, Our life for yours, we will deal kindly and truly with thee" (Joshua 2:14). She has now received the promise. If she rested on the promise of men, surely the promise of God is greater. Faith lays hold on the Word of God. If they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead. "He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar. "

VI. Worked. "She let them down by a cord through the window" (Joshua 2:15). The apostle James fastens on this deed to prove that she was justified by her works (James 2:15). Her works justified her faith in the sight of the men she was dealing with, and justified her most nobly and perfectly too. Show me your faith without works (impossible), and I will show thee my faith by my works. Faith without the works that manifest life is dead. We are justified before God without works by faith only; but faith in God will be justified before men by works of love and kindness. Faith which worketh by love.

VII. Obeyed. The men said, "Thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window, and bring thy father and thy mother," etc. And she said, "According to your words so be it. And she bound the scarlet line in the window" (Joshua 2:18-21). The sailor believes in the wind, so he spreads his sails to the breeze. Rahab honoured her father and mother by earnestly seeking their salvation as well as her own. The life of faith is a life of simple obedience. Put all right in the home of your heart, and take refuge under the scarlet line of Christ's precious blood that ever speaketh for us. It

is a fearful thing to count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing (Hebrews 10:39). The scarlet line was to Rahab the sign of the covenant, so she bound it in the window immediately.

VIII. Triumphed. "Joshua saved Rahab, and all that she had, and she dwelt in Israel" (Joshua 6:25). She received exceeding abundantly above all that she did ask or think, for she afterwards became the wife of a prince in Israel, and the mother of Boaz, who took to wife the graceful Ruth. Thus she was brought into the honourable and glorious line of our Lord's genealogy (Matthew 1:5). All who believe are made the sons and daughters of God, brought into His family, and made partakers of the divine nature. Rahab, through her faith, was both saved and sanctified.

CROSSING THE JORDAN.

Joshua 3.

"With every wild ring mist dispersed,

In great deeps of Thy love immersed;

Holding Thee as my heart's treasure,

In love's measure without measure.

O God, keep me a child of light,

Yea, ev'n with Thine own brightness bright. " The soul that has ceased to long for a fuller experience of the riches of God has ceased to grow in grace. Every Christian will have his or her Jordan to cross before entering into the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ. In the minds of men Jordan has been always associated with death, although it is not easy to see here any connection between them. After death we enter into rest, and our works follow, but when the children of Israel crossed the Jordan their work was before them. By their own works were they to drive out the enemy and take possession of their inheritance by the power of the sword. Their salvation from Egypt was all of grace, but they entered into possession of the land of plenty through the stern works of faith. See how it came about. There was-

I. A Word of Warning. "When ye shall see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God,... then ye shall go after it. Come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go" (Joshua 3:3-4). This warning is twofold. 1. They must follow when the ark moved. The ark was the symbol of Jehovah's presence and the sign of the covenant. This is an unalterable condition of spiritual progress; we must be prepared to follow the Lord anywhere and at any time. 2. They must have a space between them and it. "About two thousand cubits by measure" (Joshua 3:4). The reason given for placing such a distance between them and the ark is, "For ye have not passed this way heretofore. " Surely this is intended to remind us that there is always a distance between the eternal I am and the creatures of but yesterday (Psalms 89:7). And also that every new path should be entered upon in entire dependence upon Him. Ye have not passed this way heretofore, therefore make sure that the ark of His guiding presence is before you.

II. A Call to Preparation. "Sanctify yourselves, for to-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you" (Joshua 3:5). It is a law in the spiritual kingdom that if God is to be glorified through us He must first be sanctified in us (Leviticus 10:3). The Holy God must have holy instruments for the

accomplishing of His wonders among men. Sanctify yourselves. Put off the old man with his deeds if you would in your inmost soul pass over into the more "abundant life" and the "greater works" of your wonder-working God.

III. A Word of Encouragement. The Lord said unto Joshua, "This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel" (Joshua 3:7). On the day that Joshua called for a sanctified people did God begin to honour Joshua. Seek the honour that cometh from God only; it maketh rich and addeth no sorrow. All human honours are like cut flowers, they soon wither in the wearing, but the honour of God crowns with everlasting reward. This diadem of divine favour is never put upon the head of those who seek it for their own glory. Begin to sanctify the Lord in your life, and God will begin to magnify you in the sight of the people. Become a prince with God, and you will have power with men.

IV. A Strange Halt. "The priests that bear the ark shall stand still in Jordan" (Joshua 3:8). Crossing the Jordan does not seem to represent the passing of a soul from time into eternity so much as the passing of a soul from a lower into a higher experience of the things of God. The ark of the covenant halted right in the river as the Lord's guarantee to His people that the mighty floods of difficulties that would hinder them from taking possession of His inheritance will be rolled back before the feet of faith (Joshua 3:13). It is surely significant that near this very spot, Belhabara (the house of passage), the feet of the Son of God rested, who is the true Ark, in whom the law was hid. And that while He stood there the clouds rolled back, and Heaven opened, and the Spirit like a dove descended upon Him. That baptism has opened up a passage for us from the wilderness experience into the milk and honey land. In this Jordan, that separates between the self-life and the Christ-life, our "Ark of the Covenant" still stands by His intercession, keeping the way open for all who by faith will enter in. Oh, that it were true of God's people now, as it was then, that "all people passed clean over" (Joshua 3:17). Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Without this mighty baptism how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?

V. An Assuring Promise. "As soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the Lord rest in the waters of Jordan, they shall stand upon an heap" (Joshua 3:13-16). "He that hath ears to hear let him hear. " Ye who have been made priests unto God, and who bear the Christ, the Ark of the Lord (Acts 9:15), be comforted and encouraged. No river of opposition whose destiny, like Jordan, is the dead Sea will ever hinder you from the enjoyment of the promises of God if in your heart you bear the Son of God. "What ailed thee,... thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back?" (Psalms 114:5). "Greater is He that is in you. "

VI. A Proof of His Presence. "Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you. He will without fail drive out from before you" (Joshua 3:10). The proof of His presence is overcoming power. The overcomer is always an inheritor (see Rev. chaps. 2 and 3). If we are not living a victorious life we may well question whether the Lord is with us. Hear the apostle's testimony, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me. " "If God be for us, who shall prevail against us?" THE MEMORIALS.

Joshua 4.

"As in the stillness of the night

I lie awake;

The hours, like birds wing weary, flight

Towards Heaven take;

And from the beating of my heart,

Untaught of art,

Fancy, from every pulse and pause,

Quaint symbols draws."

Every God-ordained memorial is a great mercy. We all are so ready to forget the great things He hath done for us. His memorials do not always appear in cairns of stones, in temples made with hands, or philanthropic institutions. Every living stone built upon Christ, the living foundation, is a memorial of His redeeming power.

I. How these Memorials were Raised.

1. By Prepared Men. "Joshua called the twelve men whom he had prepared" (Joshua 4:4). Not every one can build a memorial for the glory of God's grace. A work of personal preparation is needed by our heavenly Joshua. We must be called of God and believing.

2. By Representative Men. "Out of every tribe a man"(Joshua 4:2). It is a blessed privilege to be chosen of God to represent Him before the people, and to raise a monument to His Name. These twelve men acted for the whole nation, each one having a "stone laid upon his shoulder. " Privileged men will be burdened ones, but the burden of the Lord is not bondage (Matthew 11:29-30).

II. Where these Memorials Rested.

1. In the Midst of Jordan. "Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan, where the feet of the priests stood" (Joshua 4:9). On that very spot where the ark of the covenant rested were these memorial boulders piled. Jesus Christ, the Ark of our Covenant, went down into the Jordan of death and separation for us, and rose again. So they came up out of Jordan on the tenth day of the first month (the day on which the lamb was taken for sacrifice, Exodus 12:2-3). Now the memorials of the Last Supper still remind us of Him who stood in the midst of Jordan that we might pass clean over.

2. In the Lodging Place of Gilgal. "Those twelve stones which they took out of Jordan did Joshua pitch at Gilgal" (Joshua 4:3-20). Gilgal means the place of rolling. All their past sins and failures are now rolled away. They stand, as it were, on resurrection ground. This second testimonial has a different voice. It speaks of rest and possession as the first spoke of deliverance. These stones, taken out of the place of death, now become memorials of life and blessing, having been saved from the flood, and appointed as signs to others.

III. What these Memorials Mean. These two heaps of stones, one in Jordan and the other in Gilgal, may have been intended to teach the children of Israel what Calvary and Pentecost are intended to teach us, the salvation and sufficiency of God. These stones declared the-

1. Mercy of God. "The Lord your God dried up the waters" (Joshua 4:23). Nothing impossible with Him; He hath opened up for us a new and living way. "That ye may know the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe. "

2. Faithfulness of God. "Until everything was finished" (Joshua 4:10). He that hath begun the good work will carry it on. The angel of the Lord stood by till Joshua the high priest got everything that he needed (Zechariah 3:1-5). The Holy Spirit is able and willing to do the same for every trusting one.

3. Grace of God. As long as the priests stood in Jordan the way stood open, but when the priests came out the waters returned and overflowed (Joshua 4:18). Then the day of grace was passed, and the door shut. The grace of God that brought salvation still appears. "Behold, now is the accepted time. "

4. Love of God. "Let your children know" (Joshua 4:22). This is the language of Him who will have all men to be saved, and to come to a knowledge of the truth. "Suffer the little children to come to Me, and forbid them not. "

5. Power of God. "That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty" (Joshua 4:24). These stones are a witness to the saving power of God. They are as brands plucked out of the fire. Let all the people know it. Tell it out. "He is able to save to the uttermost. "

WHAT MEAN THESE STONES?

Joshua 4:21-24.

"Upon a bench before the door

He sits with weak and staring eyes;

He sits, and looks, for straight before

The grave that holds his daughter lies.

Dark palsied mass of sever'd rock,

Deaf, blind, and sear to sun and rain;

A shattered grave-stone's time-worn block

That only shows the name of-Jane. "

There are "sermons in stones," in mill-stones, mile-stones, and grave-stones. "What mean these stones?" might be written over the gateway of every cemetery, although God alone knows what they all do mean. According to the Lord's declaration, these twelve stones piled up at Gilgal were to teach the rising generation of Israelites what He had done for their fathers (Joshua 4:22-23). The history of these stones may be regarded as figuratively setting forth their deliverance by the power of God. Just as we might say now, What mean these Jews? or, What mean these Christians? In either case we are face to face with witnesses, with memorials of the past. What mean these stones?

I. They Speak of Bondage. Once they lay buried in the dark rolling Jordan, the floods overflowing and imprisoning them within its deep and dismal bosom. Such was Israel in Egypt, when the deep, dark waves of oppression rolled over them, and floods of persecution swept about them. Such also is the condition of every unsaved soul. They lie buried in the darkness of death, imprisoned by iniquity, and the stream of worldliness flowing over them.

II. They Speak of Helplessness. The Israelites in Egypt could no more save themselves out of the stream of Pharaoh's tyranny and bondage than these stones could lilt themselves out of the river of Jordan. They were utterly helpless. No more can ye who are accustomed to do evil. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean, or life out of a thing that is dead? There is only one who can (Ephesians 2:1). That one is not you, but God.

III. They Speak of Discovery. "God dried up the waters" (Joshua 4:23). This was God's way of bringing the stones to light. These stones would never have been found out by man had not God the Lord wrought this great and merciful work of rolling back the drowning flood. This is what He did for His people in the house of bondage. He dried up the pride and power of Pharaoh, and unbosomed from the flood of affliction those who for long lay helpless beneath the ever flowing stream of oppression and death. Yes, our God can dry up the waters that bury and conceal from His sight and favour. If these stones had feelings, what would these feelings be when the waters were turned back, and they brought suddenly into the sunlight of Heaven? Those who know the power of God in conversion know what this means; the rolling back of the dark waters of judgment, and the soul brought into the light of God's favour through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ His Son. Resurrected from the dead into a new kingdom, and now nothing between, Hallelujah! But there is here a solemn thought for those who would cover themselves from God in the waters of formalism and hypocrisy. He will suddenly dry up these water coverings. What then?

IV. They Speak of Deliverance. These twelve stones were taken out of the midst of Jordan and carried on the shoulders of prepared men (Joshua 4:4-5), and laid down in a lodging place (Joshua 4:8). What a picture of Israel's salvation and of ours! Carried out of bondage into rest and liberty on the shoulders of the Shepherd, who has come to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 15:5). His presence is a carrying presence (Exodus 33:15). He who hath delivered us from so great a death will yet deliver (2 Corinthians 1:10) out of the horrible pit on to the songful Rock (Psalms 40:2).

V. They Speak of Testimony. They are memorial stones. Signs of what the Lord hath done. Once they were buried and useless in Jordan, now they are exalted and witnesses for God. Israel was to be a witness for Him, but, alas! through iniquity her testimony soon withered. All God's called out ones are to be witnesses (Acts 1:8). Witnesses of a rolled back flood of wrath, and of the mighty uplifting and transplanting power of the grace of God. "Ye are My witnesses. " What mean these stones? "Let your children know" (Joshua 4:22).

GILGAL.

Joshua 5:1-12.

"Rest in Christ, and be at rest,

Vain elsewhere will be your quest;

The heart is made for God alone,

And restless is, as wave-washed stone,

Till it welcomes Him for guest,

Then it enters His own rest. " By welcoming the will of God Israel entered into the rest of God. Many could not enter in because of unbelief (Hebrews 3:18-19). Gilgal was the first lodging place after they crossed the Jordan. As we may expect, the first day spent in the land of promise would be very memorable. Who can forget the day of conversion when the soul for the first time tasted the fruits of salvation? Gilgal was to them-

I. A Place of Memorials. Here the twelve stones were pitched that were taken out of the midst of Jordan as witnesses to the fact that God had dried up the river. Every soul that has passed over into the kingdom of God's dear Son has many memorial stones of the goodness and power of God their Saviour.

II. A Place of Sacrifice. "They kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month." They passed over Jordan on the tenth day, and on the fourteenth they kept the passover.

Days have a meaning in the purpose of God. The lamb was taken on the tenth day and killed on the fourteenth (Exodus 12:3-6). These two days suggest chosen out by grace and passed over in mercy. This is what the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath done for all that believe.

III. A Place of Rest. Here they found a "lodging place" (chap. Joshua 4:8). The promise had been left them, and they entered into His rest (Hebrews 4:1). Let us therefore fear lest any of you should seem to come short of it. The evil heart of unbelief goes another way (Hebrews 3:12). "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest."

IV. A Place of Humiliation. "Them Joshua circumcised" (Joshua 5:5-7). The spiritual significance of this act seems to be the putting away of all confidence in the flesh (Php_3:5). The circumcised in heart can say, "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." It is needful after entering into rest through faith in Jesus Christ that we should learn experimentally that the flesh profiteth nothing in the service of God, and that we are crucified with Christ.

V. A Place of Freedom. "This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you" (Joshua 5:9). Whom the Son makes free are free indeed. The "reproach of Egypt" points back to poverty, bondage, and unbelief; but, blessed be God, He can roll the past all away. Your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more-rolled away. All that believe are justified from all things. There is freedom from guilt, from condemnation, and from the fear of man, irreproachable by the rolling away mercy of God.

VI. A Place of New Food. "They did eat the old corn of the land on the morrow" (Joshua 5:11). The old corn was something new for them, as all but Joshua and Caleb had been born in the wilderness, and had in all likelihood never tasted it before. "The old corn of God's precious promises," old, yet ever new, can only be enjoyed by those who by faith have taken possession. Here the wilderness fare (manna) ceased, thereby declaring that what is sufficient merely to preserve life is not enough for those who have the battles of the Lord to fight. Those who would witness and win souls for Christ need more than the milk of the Word, they must have the old corn,

strong meat, if they would be strong to do exploits and be more than conquerors.

STOOPING TO CONQUER.

Joshua 5:13-15.

" 'My way, not Thine,' O Lord,

It pierced me like a sword;

'Thy way, not mine,' uplifts,

And each temptation sifts.

'My way, not Thine,' misleads,

And brings forth all ill deeds;

'Thy way, not mine,' brings peace

And all its sweet release." As seen from the former part of this chapter, Gilgal has a deeply significant meaning (Joshua 5:9). When God rolls away one thing it always makes room for another. The place of blessing is often followed by the place of testing. This is what happened to Joshua as he came and stood by Jericho. It seems to us that these three verses are heavy laden with spiritual instruction to all whose ears are open. We might look at his-

I. Determination. "It came to pass when Joshua was by Jericho" (Joshua 5:13). After the trying and refreshing experiences at Gilgal he is now face to face with his great life's work as he stood "by Jericho." What are his thoughts now as he is within sight of those terrible walls? Like Nehemiah, he goes calmly to view the difficulties. "What wilt Thou have me to do?"

II. Interruption. "Behold, there stood a man over against him with a drawn sword in his hand" (Joshua 5:13). This was another crisis in the life of Joshua, such as Jacob had (Genesis 32:24), and also Balaam, but he (Balaam) failed to take advantage of it (Numbers 22:41). Such seasons as these in one form or another come in every Christian's life. Sudden interruptions, privileges, switches that may turn the force of our lives into brighter lines of blessing or shunt us into inactivity or uselessness. No man is ever the same after he has been brought face to face with the Divine One (Revelation 3:20).

III. Interrogation. "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" (Joshua 5:13). Joshua, as a man wholly devoted to the cause of God, sees but two great classes and causes. "Us and our adversaries." There is a prince who works for and in the adversaries (Ephesians 2:2), but "greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). This question might be put with profit concerning every new difficulty that may arise in our way, aye, and to every questionable thought and feeling and act, for ail will either help us or our adversaries.

IV. Revelation. "Nay, but as captain of the host of the Lord am I come" (Joshua 5:14). The Prince of Heaven does not come to take the place of a private in the army of Jehovah. If He is not leader, then He is not there. The Lord Jesus Christ is not the servant of the Church, but the Head. Perhaps as Joshua stood by Jericho he was tremblingly thinking of himself as captain of this great host, but here he learns that another must get all the responsibility, and that he is only a follower.

Have we learned this most important lesson? Have we given our Lord His true place in all our work for Him? Not I, but Christ.

V. Adoration. "Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship" (Joshua 5:14). When any one has had their eyes opened to see the grace and power of Jesus Christ, as Joshua did, they will not try to be humble, they will fall on their faces; they will not pray for the spirit of worship, but they will worship. This lowly attitude betokens entire surrender, a perfect willingness to take the place appointed him by the Captain of Salvation, who in all things and circumstances claims the pre-eminence.

VI. Petition. "What saith my Lord unto His servant" (Joshua 5:14). Those who have a humble heart will also have an open ear. It was when Abram fell on his face that God talked with him (Genesis 17:3). Daniel had his face towards the ground when he heard the voice of His words (chap. Joshua 10:9). When we have been humbled before the Lord, let us then hear what God the Lord will speak. "Learn of Me, for I am lowly in heart."

VII. Submission. "The Captain of the Lord's host said, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy, and Joshua did so" (Joshua 5:15). Every place is holy where the Holy One is. Taking off the shoe had much the same meaning as taking off the hat has now. It was an act that indicated reverence (Exodus 3:5). The high priest ministered before the Lord with naked feet. If in olden times they cast off their shoes who stood before the messenger of God, what shall they do now in whom God by His Holy Spirit dwells? Surely this, that the whole inner man be laid naked and bare before His Holy presence. Such an attitude of soul will always honour God and gain victories for Him (see chap. Joshua 6:27). He stooped and conquered. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." THE FALL OF JERICHO.

Joshua 6.

"Faith is a courier swift and sure, who will carry us to the absent."

-Madam de Jasparin. The terror of the Lord had fallen upon the Canaanites on hearing what the Lord had done. Joshua believed God, and He overcame. All really holy men are a terror to the ungodly. Those who live only for God will have a power for Him that the wisdom and strength of the world cannot resist (Joshua 6:1). All human defences melt in the powerful presence of the Holy Ghost. Power for testimony is oneness with God, witness the life of Jesus Christ. It was easy for Joshua to overcome, just because he trusted in God, who goeth before in the spirit of conviction, showing to the enemy their utter weakness in the presence of the Almighty. We shall notice three leading thoughts in this chapter- I. A Doomed City, or the Sinner's State. It was-

1. Under the Curse of God. "The city shall be accursed" (Joshua 6:17). The sentence of death had been passed upon it forty years ago (Exodus 23:27-28), although then they were glorying in their strength, ignorant of their condition in the sight of God, just as many still are insensible of their state. Their doom "was as surely fixed when they were rejoicing as when they were trembling. The Scriptures hath concluded all under sin, and so under the curse of a broken law. The sentence of death has already passed upon all men, for that all have sinned (Romans 5:12).

2. Straitly Shut Up (Joshua 6:1). If it had been straitly shut up by God as Noah was shut up in the ark, then they might have laughed the Israelites to scorn. When He shutteth no man can open, but

they shut themselves up against God. He that covereth his sins shall not prosper. This is characteristic of the vain effort of proud, defiant sinners, shutting themselves within the walls of their own righteousness. Every mouth must be shut up.

3. Quickly Brought Down. "The wall fell flat" (Joshua 6:20). Their only refuge failed, and great was the fall of it. What is the value of a refuge that will not stand the day of trial? It is like a rotten ship in a storm. These great walls, the work of their own hands, were all their confidence (Isaiah 28:17). Such hopes will only make ashamed.

II. A Strange Assault, or the Victory of Faith (Hebrews 11:30). The means appointed by God are often foolishness with man. But the believing heart delights to obey. The means appointed were the-

1. Compassing of the City (Joshua 6:3). Here we see the measure of faith. Paul says: "By faith the walls of Jericho fell." They must have had great faith; their faith as well as their feet must compass the city. Our faith also must compass the object of desire if we would possess it. "According to your faith," etc. It is in the compassing that the faith is tried, for nothing is seen but huge walls of difficulty. Nothing is felt but human inability. But these only make the trusting heart more confident in God.

2. Blowing of the Trumpets (Joshua 6:4). Here we see the means of faith. The means faith uses are far different from the inventions of the carnal mind. They are the simple, seemingly weak, things of God; but they are the weapons, not of doubt or experiment, but of faith. The sling and the stone would be no use to Saul, but they are mighty in the hand of David. The trumpet of the Gospel must be blown in faith if the victory is to be won. The holy lips of the priests alone were to blow. Holy men must still speak, being moved by the Holy Ghost.

3. Carrying of the Ark (Joshua 6:6). Here we see the object of faith. The ark, the symbol of Jehovah's presence. All was arranged according to the ark. What confidence! The Ark that divided Jordan is coming. Their faith would not be in their blowing or marching, and yet if they do not march the ark does not follow. So our faith must look up to Him who has said, "Lo, I am with you alway," and press on with the compassing and the blowing.

4. Shouting of the People (Joshua 6:20). Here we see the expectation of faith. This is not the work of the priests alone, but of all the people (Joshua 6:5). Through what has been done faith has been increased in the hearts of all Israel. Now all are trusting and expecting, and all shout the downfall and the victory. Why so few great victories for God? Because so few expect. So few join in the shout. Oh, how much blowing there is in these days of much preaching, but how little shouting among the people.

III. A Family Spared, or the Great Salvation (Joshua 6:25). "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not" (Hebrews 11:31). Notice that she-

1. Believed. "I know that the Lord hath given you the land; ... for the Lord your God, He is God" (chap. Joshua 2:9, Joshua 2:11). She hid the message as well as the messengers. Her old beliefs and prejudices were cast aside. She heard and believed (Joshua 6:2, Joshua 6:11). "Who hath believed our report, to whom is the arm (power) of the Lord revealed." He that believeth shall be saved.

2. Obeyed. "She bound the scarlet line in the window" (chap. Joshua 2:21). Her faith was justified in the sight of men by her works. She hid the messengers and exposed the line (James 2:25). "Faith without works is dead." By the scarlet cord she is to be justified or condemned. Is the crimson blood between you and the approaching vengeance, which must come upon all who obey not the Gospel? When I see the line (blood) I will pass over you.

3. Testified. She not only saved herself, but "all that she had" (Joshua 6:23). How she would persuade them we know not, but drowning ones will catch at a straw; the hope might seem vain, but the honour of Joshua was at stake. The name of the Lord is a strong tower. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." "Behold, now is the accepted time;" not when the walls are fallen flat. "Come thou and all thy house into the ark." THE FAILURE AT AI; Or, THE POWER OF SECRET SIN.

Joshua 7.

"Shine on, thou bright beacon, unclouded and free,

From thy high place of calmness o'er life's troubled sea.

But, barque of eternity, where art thou now?

The wild waters shriek o'er each plunge of thy prow,

On the world's dreary ocean, thus shattered and tossed-

Thou, lone One, shine on, 'If I lose Thee, I'm lost.' " The fall of Jericho was followed by the temporary fall of Israel. We have much need to beware of the dangers of success. When Uzziah was strong his heart was lifted up to his destruction (2 Chronicles 26:16). The seed of pride and self-confidence is often sown in the joyful but unguarded hour of victory, or amidst the dangerous applause of men. There are still Achan desires lurking in the heart, just waiting a chance to enrich themselves with the things that are to be wholly devoted to God (chap. Joshua 6:17, margin). Sin always brings failure. To lose fellowship with Christ is to lose all power for testimony for Him. There are two intensely solemn thoughts here- I. The Shameful Defeat of Israel, or the Believer's Failure. It was-

1. Unexpected. They said: "Let not all the people go up" (chap. 3). They were very confident of success, but very ignorant of their own condition in the sight of God. Confidence and earnestness in a Christian worker will never stand in the stead of holiness. Our power lies not even in our past experiences. Is thy heart right with God? Even unexpected failure has its tap-root of evil somewhere.

2. Complete. "They fled before the men of Ai" (Joshua 7:4). Why did they flee? Because the Lord was not with them. There is none so helpless as the Samsons when their strength is gone. The man whose strength God alone is must ever be a helpless object without Him (John 15:5). But ask them: Do you believe God is with you? They say: Yes. Look how He helped at Jericho. But the past is not the present. All our efforts will be as completely abortive unless the presence and power of God is in it. We don't win the victory simply because we are Christians any more than the children of Israel did because they were Israelites. We must be Christians after the holy mind and will of God if we would be overcomers.

3. Humbling. "O Lord, what shall I say?" etc. (Joshua 7:8). Israel's failure brings dishonour upon Israel's God. How keenly our failures should cut us to the heart when we know that by them our Master is dishonoured. How we should bow our heads to the dust, confounded and ashamed, saying, like Joshua, "O Lord, what shall I say?" etc. If past failure does not bring humbling and self-searching before God we will never find out the true source of power. Those who expect failure are never humbled because of it, and by them the Lord is not magnified in the sight of the people. He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

4. Needful. "Wherefore liest thou upon thy face? Israel hath sinned. Neither will I be with you except ye take away the accursed thing" (Joshua 7:10-13). Many are mourning over their failure who have more need to mourn over their sin. The Lord cannot use us at times because of secret sin. Although we may be ignorant of it, God is not. He cannot treat sin lightly because we don't realise it. If they had not failed here they would just have gone on in their sin. God can have no fellowship with unrighteousness. The accursed thing must be taken away or His presence will be taken away. Our failures should set us also a searching of the tent of our heart. "Search me, O God!"

II. The Sin of Achan, or the Sinner's Doom. His history is very short and very sad. Four thoughts include all. His-

1. Desire. "I saw, then I coveted them" (Joshua 7:21). Sin often begins with a look. Eve saw the fruit. Lot saw the well watered plains. Ahaz saw an altar and copied it (2 Kings 16:10). But Achan's sin lay not in seeing the gold, etc., perhaps he could not help that, but he "coveted them." He loved the forbidden gain, until desire moved his hand. The pleasures of sin will always attract the more when one looks on them with a desire. Christians have much need to watch their hearts. Certain circumstances might bring ruinous results if every thought is not led captive to Christ.

2. Disobedience. "He took of the accursed thing" (Joshua 7:1). God had warned them in any wise to keep themselves free from the accursed (devoted) thing (chap. Joshua 6:18). He sinned willingly, not ignorantly. The fact that he hid the goods proves that he was conscious of his wrongdoing. Just as many still willingly disobey God by preferring the world to Christ, and ofttimes keeping up the appearance of godliness to deceive men. Achan's hypocrisy is not uncommon in these days, even among professedly workers for Christ. Although the Lord has clearly said, "Love not the world," alas, how much of it is hid in the heart!

3. Detection. "And Achan was taken" (Joshua 7:18). Be sure your sin will find you out, whether you be saint or sinner, Christian or not. Amongst all the thousands of Israel he was found out, because nothing is hid from the eye of God, with whom every sinner has to do. How solemn the discovery, exposed to the eyes of all the people, and every hidden thing brought to light. What a forecast of the Great Judgment! He that covereth his sins shall not prosper.

4. Destruction. "And all Israel stoned him with stones" (Joshua 7:25). There was no way of escape. How shall ye escape? What a contrast between Rahab's house and Achan's. The one saved, the other lost (chap. Joshua 6:25). The faith of the one and the disobedience of the other made all the difference. As parents, are you acting the part of Rahab or Achan? What will the end be, salvation or destruction? There is sin in the camp. "Is it in me, Lord?" What the law could not do God can now accomplish through the sending forth of His Son. THE ALTAR ON MOUNT EBAL.

Joshua 8:30-35.

"Strength divine, He will not wield,

High and deep His woe's tide swelled;

No one near His Lord to shield?

Only one-and him 'compelled.'

How human, O Christ, Thou wast,

Fainting, falling in the street;

Yet the 'work' on Thee was cast,

Came from Thee flawless, complete." The altar on Mount Ebal is the fulfilment of God's command (Deuteronomy 27:2-8) and a foreshadowing of the Cross of Christ. The great coming event, the death of the Son of God, casts its shadow before. The whole scene before us is most impressive and suggestive. "Open Thou mine eyes to behold wondrous things out of Thy law."

I. The Mount of Ebal, or the Place of Curse. Ebal was right in the centre of the land, and here they were commanded to put the curse (Deuteronomy 11:29). Ebal means "stony," or "heap of barrenness." It may be a figure of what Jerusalem was to become in after years, or of a stony heart and a barren life. In both cases the curse has come because of unbelief (Galatians 3:10).

II. The Altar cf Sacrifice, or the Cross of Christ. "Then Joshua built an altar unto the Lord God of Israel, in Mount Ebal" (Joshua 8:30). It is sublimely suggestive that the altar was built in the place where the curse was put; this is the thought that we have in Galatians 3:13, "Christ being made a curse for us." This altar was made of "whole stones, over which no man hath lift up any iron" (Joshua 8:31). The warning given was, "If thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it" (Exodus 20:25). In the making of atonement there is absolutely no allowance for the work of man. All man's cutting and carving only pollutes the saving grace of God. Unhewn stones were stones prepared and finished by God. As Ruskin said, "God alone can finish." The altar of Christ's Cross raised in the place of the curse, and the offering of Himself unto God for us is a divinely finished work, and finished with materials of His own forming. Modern hewers attempting to improve this only mar and pollute, while they betray their ignorance and unbelief. The altar was for God, and never was intended for an ornament; it was an awful necessity.

III. The Law of Moses, or the Word of God. "And he wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses" (Joshua 8:32). These plastered stones, on which the law was written, were different from the altar stones (Deuteronomy 17:2-8). Where the altar was built there the law was declared. With the Cross of Christ comes the revelation of the Word and will of God. The pillar of truth stands by the altar of the Cross. Surely the law of the Lord has a new meaning in the presence of the altar of the Lord. The altar declares atonement for the sin of a broken law. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." "The words that I speak unto you are spirit and life."

IV. The Ark of the Covenant, or Jesus in the Midst. "And all Israel stood on this side, and on that side the ark; half of them over against Mount Gerizim, and half of them over against Mount Ebal"

(Joshua 8:33). The ark of the covenant, as the symbol of God's presence standing between the cursing and the blessing, seems like a foreshadowing of that solemn scene recorded in Matthew 25:31-46. "Before Him shall be gathered all nations. He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." As surely as the unfailing covenant of Jehovah was in the ark, so surely shall His Word in Christ be fulfilled. Jesus Christ is the divinely appointed Man, by whom He will judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17:31).

V. The Twofold Purpose, or Blessing and Cursing. "He read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings" (Joshua 8:34). All the words of the law were read, all the blessings and all the cursings were pronounced and justified. There was no neutral condition possible. In the presence of God we are either blessed or cursed. To be unblessed is to be accursed. The only alternative to life is death (Deuteronomy 30:19). Salvation or condemnation. All the threatenings as well as the promises of God will be read out in literal fulfilment on that day when the judgment is set. THE ANXIOUS GIBEONITES.

Joshua 9.

Two sins were committed in connection with the Gibeonites. 1. Joshua judged according to his own wisdom instead of asking of God (Joshua 9:14, margin), and so made a league with them, contrary to the command of God. Let us beware of being flattered into disobedience. 2. The Gibeonites came with a false pretext. They did evil that good may come. Had they been humble and honest like Rahab they might have been saved all the same. Rahab was greatly exalted (Matthew 1:5). They were greatly humbled (Joshua 9:23). But laying aside the faults let us look at some of the facts in their life as illustrating the way of grace and salvation. We see them-

I. Greatly Alarmed (Joshua 9:9-10). And no wonder, when they believed that they were all under the condemnation of God, and that the sentence of death was passed upon them (Romans 3:23). They were sore afraid (Joshua 9:24), just because they believed. The devil believes and trembles. The false peace of the sinner is founded on the sands of "I don't believe it." It is impossible for a man to believe God's Word and remain unaffected thereby. Oh, that many had this deep sense of their own state before God! What concern, anxiety, sleeplessness, and sorrow it would create! Visit Gibeon, converse with the citizens, price their articles. What a change has come over the whole city, just such a change as comes into the heart when the conscience is truly convicted of sin.

II. Pleading for Salvation. "Make ye a league with us" (Joshua 9:6). We have not to do just now with the way they came, but with the object of their coming. They wanted saving grace. They were convinced that on this lay their only hope. Resistance was useless. When sinners are awakened they deeply feel that mercy is their chiefest need. Self-justification is out of the question. Their only refuge is in the grace of God (Ephesians 2:8). They said, "Make a league with us." They wanted the promise of Joshua as a guarantee of safety. This is what our Joshua gives to all that come to Him, so that they are assured of salvation, and can rest, like the Gibeonites, on the word of Him who will not lie. Go not away without the promise. What the Gibeonites feigned we can say in truth. "We be come from a far country" (Joshua 9:6), like the prodigal in Luke's Gospel.

III. Graciously Reconciled. "Joshua made peace, and made a league with them to let them live" (Joshua 9:15). He might in justice have condemned them. He had the power and authority for it,

but he let them live. It was purely a permission of grace; moreover, there was added to the peace the oath of confirmation, which is the end of strife (Hebrews 6:16). Three things stand out in connection with this reconciliation: (1) The Acceptance, (2) The Covenant, (3) The Oath. The sinner in coming to Jesus is accepted through mercy. Then he enters into the covenant (or league) of grace, and then the seal of the promise of God makes the engagement eternally secure (Ephesians 1:13).

IV. Wholly Consecrated. They said, "We are in thy hand, as it seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, do" (Joshua 9:25). The effect of grace is not to make them proud and defiant. How beautiful when the soul, melted down by the mercy and love of God, yields so sweetly to its great Deliverer! This is the language of consecration: Thou hast saved us, we are Thine, just do Thy will in us and with us. We owe our life to Thee, it is Thine own, Thy will be done. This is the pure effect of the grace of God when truly enjoyed. If His love has not constrained you to yield all to Him it must be little of the love that you enjoy.

V. Actively Engaged. "Joshua made them hewers of wood and drawers of water" (Joshua 9:27). We must not only be humble and submissive, but willing and active. It is very humbling work they get to do. Some are willing, like Naaman, to do some great thing, but it is in doing the little things that our true character is seen. If we profess to be very humble God is sure to try us with some lowly service. But the true heart finds nothing too mean that is His will. An angel would sweep a street as heartily as proclaim "Time to be no more," if sent. We have been saved to serve (Luke 1:74). Hewers of wood for the altar and drawers of water for the laver are still in great demand.

VI. Bitterly Despised. "Come and help me to smite Gibeon, for it hath made peace with Joshua" (Chron. Joshua 10:4). They were hated because of their peaceful connection with Joshua. They were despised for His sake (John 15:19). Those who have made peace with Jesus fare no better now. The world still hates the Christ of God as much as ever, but He shall gain the victory. Some are ashamed to confess their league with Jesus lest they should be despised by men. The Gibeonites did not seek to hide it, they rejoiced in it. What cowards, to be ashamed of being at peace with God!

VII. Mightily Protected. In the day of trouble and threatening danger they send unto Joshua, saying, "Come up quickly, and save us, and help us" (chap. Joshua 10:6). What a friend they have in Joshua! He is able to save them to the uttermost. Their saviour becomes their protector. Is our Saviour less to us? The sun and moon stood still upon Gibeon, that the victory might be complete. What honour is now put upon the trusting Gibeonites! They call on Joshua, and he conquers for them. They looked unto him and were lightened. He put their enemies under his feet (Joshua 9:24). The Church of God, like Gibeon, seems about to be crushed with surrounding enemies, but He who is the Saviour King shall suddenly come (Joshua 9:9). Is your soul like this city, ready to perish? Let your cry be to the all-conquering Jesus. These Gibeonites who had taken the place of strangers now claim the privileges of servants. Their petition is, "Slack not thy hand from thy servants; come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us." Their prayer was speedily answered. "And shall not God avenge His own elect? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily" (Luke 18:7-8; 2 Chronicles 16:9).

CALEB.

Joshua 14:6-15.

"What is the end of fame? 'Tis but to fill

A certain portion of uncertain paper;

Some liken it to climbing up a hill,

Whose summit, like all hills, is lost in vapour;

For this men write, speak, preach, and heroes kill,

And bards burn what they call 'the midnight taper."

-Byron.

If the worldling's fame ends only in the blinding mists, it is not so with the man of God, for the "path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more until the perfect day." The name Caleb means wholehearted. In his character he was true to his name, and his fame is still spread abroad as sweet ointment poured forth. His career did not end in the cold vapour of disappointment, like that of the half-hearted Balaam. He "followed God fully," and was rewarded abundantly. Here is a revelation of- I. His Character. He was-

1. Honest. He says, "When Moses sent me to espy out the land, I brought him word again as it was in my heart" (Joshua 14:7). His heart was right with God, so he spoke out what was in it. Solomon saith, "The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth" (Proverbs 16:23). The man with his heart so fixed, trusting in the Lord, is not afraid of evil tidings (Psalms 112:7-8). The hypocrite is a man without heart. "The pure in heart shall see God."

2. Charitable. "Nevertheless my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt" (Joshua 14:8). Although his companions in the search brought back an evil report, which discouraged the people, dishonoured God, and belied his own testimony, still he speaks of them as "my brethren." Charity suffereth long, and is kind; is not easily provoked. Moses cried, "Ye rebels!" and so his tongue hindered his feet from entering the land.

3. Devoted. "I followed the Lord my God" (Joshua 14:8). Caleb had another spirit within him (Numbers 14:24). He followed the Lord his God exactly in the way in which we should follow Him. By accepting His will, trusting His Word, casting himself into His revealed purpose, and fearlessly standing in the strength of it. As Luther said, "I cannot do otherwise, so help me God." And God did help.

II. His Faith. He-

1. Recalls the Promise. "Moses sware on that day, saying, Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance" (Joshua 14:9). "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). Unbelief has a very short memory, but faith remembers the Word of the Lord.

2. Believes the Word. The promise of God (Numbers 14:24) is not only remembered, but trusted. All along he had been making it the rod and staff of his comfort. Let it be ours also through faith to look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. "We walk by faith, not

by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7).

3. Claims the Blessing. "Now therefore give me this mountain whereof the Lord spake in that day" (Joshua 14:12). The conditions had been fulfilled, and he would enter "now therefore" right into the possession of it. This is not presumption, it is the courage of an honest faith in God that wins His smile, that secures His favour, and gains that crowning benediction-a satisfied soul. Put in your claim. "Now therefore give me this blessing whereof the Lord hath spoken." Remember His promise, believe it, claim the fulfilment of it. "Be it unto me according to Thy Word."

III. His Testimony. "I am going to preach Jesus," said one man to another on his way to a meeting. "I trust the Lord will be with you," replied his friend. "Well, if He is not I shall speak well of Him behind His back," was his happy answer. Caleb speaks well of God. He testifies to-

1. God's Faithfulness. "Behold, the Lord hath kept me these forty and five years" (Joshua 14:10). Kept through these terrible forty years in the wilderness. Kept by the power of God, while the whole multitude melted away through unbelief. Kept by the power of God through faith unto this salvation now revealed and enjoyed. He is faithful. Testify according to the proportion of your faith.

2. God's Goodness. "I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me" (Joshua 14:11). If the joy of the Lord is our strength there is no reason why the lapse of time should weaken it. Those who lose their first love will also lose their first strength. The trees of the Lord's planting and nurturing are always full of sap. Healthy, fruitbearing trees are a good testimony to the wisdom and carefulness of the gardener. A strong, healthy Christian is a continual witness to the riches and goodness of his Lord and Saviour.

3. God's Power. "If so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out" (Joshua 14:12). This testimony is true. Our ability to gain the victory over our enemies lies not in our wisdom or strength, but in His presence with us. Caleb knew that God alone could gird him with strength sufficient to break the bow of steel (Psalms 18:32-34). "Through God we shall do valiantly, for He it is that shall tread down our enemies" (Psalms 60:12). "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57). It is not surprising to find that after such a testimony as this Joshua blessed Caleb and gave him the inheritance (Joshua 14:13). "Blessed are all they that trust in Him."

OTHNIEL'S PRIZE.

Joshua 15:16-19.

"Anoint our eyes that we below

The walk of faith, not sight, may know;

Midst fiercest storms Hope's anchor cast,

And still in love our Lord hold fast.

Faith! that clings unto the Cross;

Hope! that looks beyond the sky;

Love! that counts all things but loss,

To win the bliss that is on high."-Grosart.

Othniel's dare and doing to win the hand of Achsah, the daughter of Caleb, is a beautiful and unique little episode in the taking of the cities of Canaan. It would be perfectly absurd to imagine that an honourable God-following man like Caleb would offer his daughter to any man who might happen to be the first to scramble over the walls of Debir. A man that could smite this fortified city, and take it, could only be the man that could take command of an army and lead them to victory. That worthy man was Othniel, the brother of Caleb. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine." So we are quite warranted to look for doctrine even here, "that the man of God may be furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16). We always accept this statement of the apostle as a divine license to seek spiritual teaching from historical events.

I. The Hero Mentioned, or the Character of Christ. The name of Othniel is significant, the "Lion of God," or the "Strength of God." This was no misnomer, for in after years when the children of Israel got into bondage, and cried unto the Lord, He raised up this same Othniel as a deliverer to them (Judges 3:9). Jesus Christ, like Othniel, is the "Strength of God," sent forth as a Deliverer for His people. The Lion of the tribe of Judah. If I speak of strength, lo, He is strong, He travels in the greatness of His strength, and is mighty to save.

II. The Task Accomplished, or the Work of Christ (Joshua 15:16-17). Othniel's mission was to smite and to take, and he finished the work on which he set his heart to do. The taking of Kirjath-sepher would doubtless cause him much effort and agony; but, like the Son of God, he set his face like a flint to go up. The work of Jesus Christ was also to smite and to take. He smote the devil with the weapon of the Word, and spoiled principalities and powers, triumphing over them (Luke 4:1-12; Colossians 2:15), and took the helpless prey from the hand of the mighty, making them prisoners of grace (Luke 11:21-22; 2 Corinthians 1:9-10). In capturing the citadel of the human heart He has still to smile with the spirit of conviction before He can take it as an habitation for Himself.

III. The Reward Offered, or the Bride of Christ. Caleb said, "He that smiteth and taketh it, to him will I give my daughter to wife" (Joshua 15:16). It was a battle for a bride. The work of conquering the land was a God-given work; the reward offered in Achsah was a reward of love, reverence, and service. What a suggestive picture of the Church, as the Lamb's wife, the reward given Him by God for His work, and passion, and victory! Purchased at the sacrifice of His own blood. "He loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, that He might present it to Himself" (Ephesians 5:25-27). Caleb's daughter was married to him who had fought and conquered for her. This is also our privilege, as sons and daughters have we been given by God to Him, who lived, and loved, and died, and conquered for us (John 17:6). Are we acting the part of a true wife by giving Him the love of our hearts and the service of our lives? It is expected of the wife that "she reverence her husband" (Ephesians 5:33).

IV. The Dowry Given, or the Christian's Portion. "And he gave her the upper springs, and the nether springs" (Joshua 15:19). She asked for springs of water, and she received them. A spring was a great inheritance in these days. To possess springs in the hills and springs in the valleys was to be the heir of an everlasting source of wealth. These springs are perennial emblems of the believer's portion in Christ. Since we have the honour of being part of the bride of Christ, let us, like Achsah, go in for the springs that are freely given us of God. Springs for the hills and springs

for the valleys of our daily life. Every promise of God to us is an unfailing spring of refreshing and comfort. If thou knowest the gift of God, ask of Him, and He will give you a spring of living water that shall be in you, springing up everlastingly (John 4:10-14). It is the delight of the Lamb now to lead us unto these living fountains of water (Revelation 7:17). Every child of God may have his or her dowry of living springs. All is yours, for ye are Christ's. "Covet earnestly the best gifts" (1 Corinthians 12:31). In the upper springs we have the promise of supply for all our spiritual need, in the nether springs the promise of supply for all our temporal need. "My God shall supply all your need." "All my springs are in Thee" (Psalms 87:7). THE CITIES OF REFUGE; Or, CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRIST AS A SAVIOUR

Joshua 20.

"I am safe, for Christ holds me;

Comforted, for I hold Him;

Saviour, O thus let it be,

When my dying eyes are dim;

I held of Thee, Thee holding, Thy strong love me enfolding."

It takes all the cities of refuge to form a perfect type of the "Man who is an hiding-place from the storm and a covert from the tempest." Observe the- I. Nature of their Appointment. It was-

1. Divine. The Lord said: "Appoint out for you cities of refuge." These cities then were sanctified, or set apart for their sakes, according to the will of God. They undoubtedly point to Christ (Hebrews 6:18), who for our sakes sanctified (set apart) Himself, according to the will of God. It surely would be a consolation to the refugee when he entered the city to know that he was in God's appointed shelter. So we may have strong consolation who have fled for refuge. There is no safety but in being where and what God would have us to be.

2. Merciful. They had respect specially to the murderer. How gracious is the Lord to think of such, and make provision for all who truly felt their need of present mercy and righteous protection! These each city afforded, these each sinner sorely needs, and this is what we find in Jesus. Mercy to pardon, grace to help, and the power of justice to protect. He is the Justifier of every one that believes in Jesus. As guilty sinners we need more than mere shelter, we need righteous justification, and Christ is all this.

II. Significance of their Names. In looking over the meaning of the names of these cities one is struck with the distinctive characteristic of each, as showing forth some particular feature of the character of Christ, and when taken as a whole illustrating the sufficiency of Christ as a Refuge to meet all our need and the need of all.

1. Kedesh (holy place). A Refuge for the Unclean. The holiness of Jesus and the sinfulness of man are at once suggested here. None of these truths can be denied, both are alike clearly taught in Scripture. The holiness of Jesus Christ becomes the hope of the unclean. Only that which is clean can cleanse. The unrighteous can only find refuge in the righteousness of God. Christ's finished work affords a holy hiding-place, for there only are the unclean made holy. There is no cleansing

for the unclean apart from the fountain opened for sin (Zechariah 13:1).

2. Shechem (shoulder). A Refuge for the Weary. The lost sheep found both safety and rest upon the Shepherd's shoulders (Matthew 11:28; Luke 15:5). He is a Saviour, and a strong one. "The government is upon His shoulders." We can find no rest in ruling ourselves, but the weary can find rest under His government. When we trust we lean not only on His merit, but also on His almightiness, or rather His almighty merit. When on the shoulder the strength of the carrier is beneath us. What a refuge for the weary child is the shoulder of its loving father! Christ has borne our burden upon His shoulder, as Samson carried the gates of Gaza.

3. Hebron (fellowship). A Refuge for the Homeless. Man is spiritually a homeless wanderer, like Noah's dove. Outside the ark, no rest, no fellowship, no safety. The homeless prodigal found a refuge in the father's house and in the father's fellowship. "Let us eat," etc. Jesus Christ is the only Hebron for the soul. No fellowship with the Father but through Him (1 John 1:3). This is not the refuge of a lonely prison, but in the bosom of a loving and beloved one. What a refuge the sailor's home is from a dangerous voyage, or the family ingle to a benighted and bewildered pilgrim. So Jesus is to the soul a refuge of love and communion (John 17:21).

4. Bezer (stronghold). A Refuge for the Helpless. Man is not only a sinner, he is also helplessly sinful. In the case of the manslayer there was to be no such thing as self-protection, so is it with us as sinners. We are "without strength." The Name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous fleeth into it and are safe. Flee from the justice of God into the mercy of God. The mercy of God in Christ is a stronghold that can never give way. No matter how helpless you are, here you are eternally safe. Jesus is the only Bezer, all other hiding-places will fail and fall like the walls of Jericho, though straitly shut up (Matthew 7:27).

5. Ramoth (exalted). A Refuge for the Hopeless. By nature we are not only without strength, but without hope in the world (Ephesians 2:12). Those who hope in the world have no hope. We must hope out of the world. He is our Hope, exalted at the Father's right hand with a name above every name, high and lifted up. Jesus is our Ramoth. If you are downcast, and feeling yourself hopeless in the world, look up. Jesus is a Refuge for you. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw." Flee to Him to hide you, then you are exalted with Him. No mountain could save from the flood; those saved were lifted up in the ark. He is the Ark of hope.

6. Golan (separated). A Refuge for the Tempted. Many Christians are tempted much in the world because they tamper much with the world; they have not fled to Jesus as their city of separation. They have not become exiles with Him, and for His sake. Although He says, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and I will receive you," yet they flee not, and the tempter often overtakes them. He separated Himself for our sakes, that He might succour the tempted. Golan is the last city mentioned. Separation from the world unto God is about the last refuge that is sought after. Jesus must be our All in All if we would be perfectly sheltered from the curse, the world, the flesh, and the devil. Being enfolded with the arms of His almighty power, and resting on the bosom of His infinite love, we can sing with a restful, joyful heart, "God is our Refuge and our Strength." From these names we may also learn that in Christ we have: (1) Holiness, (2) Rest, (3) Fellowship, (4) Safety, (5) Exaltation, (6) Separation.

HOW TO POSSESS AND KEEP POSSESSION.

Joshua 23:1-13.

"The disciples were bow'd by stress of their toll,

The Master was touch'd, and with gracious smile

Said, 'Come to the desert and rest awhile.' "

It is ever the longing of Christ's gracious heart to give His beloved ones rest (Matthew 6:28-29). Joshua was about to enter into his rest after a long, busy, and faithful life for God, being now "old and stricken in age," and in these verses we have what may be regarded as his dying testimony, and, as we might expect, the predominant features of his noble life are "strong in death." It is a blessed sight to see early faith ripening into such God-glorifying fortitude. From his last message to Israel we may learn how to get into our possessions, and the conditions on which they may be kept.

I. How this Possession was Secured. There was-

1. A Past Deliverance. "As a people they were saved out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage. The power that held them as bondslaves had to be broken before they could even set their faces toward the possessions reserved for them in Canaan. So with us, we had to be delivered from the guilt and power of sin ere we could set our hearts on things above.

2. A Present Deliverance. "The Lord had to fight for them even while in the land" (Joshua 23:3). There were many enemies that sought to hinder them from enjoying their possessions. But the Lord was able to deliver them from them all. There is also a present deliverance needed by all who have been saved from the bondage of sin and the wrath to come. The world, the flesh, and the devil are as bitterly opposed to our entering into our inheritance in Christ as the Canaanites were to the Israelites. We need the power of the same Lord who brought us out of the world to keep us in the place of blessing. But He is able to keep us from falling out of the blessed land of promise, and to drive out every usurping thought from the heart (Joshua 23:5).

II. How this Possession was to be Kept. There must be-

1. No Going Back. "If ye do in any wise go back, know for certainty that the Lord your God will no more drive out from before thee" (Joshua 23:12-13). There must be no going back to Egypt nor to the wilderness of sin. The principles that governed the old life must be given up. Put off the old man with his deeds, and let the time past suffice for the will of the flesh (Hebrews 10:38-39). The evil heart will always seek to depart from the living God (Hebrews 3:12). Evil things not driven out of the heart never fail to act as pricks in the eyes (Numbers 33:55).

2. No Fellowship with the Enemy. "Come ye not among them," etc. (Joshua 23:7). "Thou shalt make no marriage with them" (Joshua 23:12). "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and I will receive you" (2 Corinthians 6:14-17). To mingle with the Canaanites never improved the Canaanites, and always brought misery to the people of God. To become worldly that ye might better the world is the doctrine of devils, if they should be white ones.

3. No Division of Heart. "Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God" (Joshua 23:11). Love can bear no rival. The first commandment is, "Thou shalt have no other

gods before Me" (Exodus 20:2). "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart" (Deuteronomy 6:5). "This," said Jesus, "is the first commandment" (Matthew 22:37-38). Lot's wife had a divided heart, and judgment overtook her.

III. The Consequences of Going Back. "Be sure your sin will find you out." The backsliding Christian will surely be found out by this impoverished life and heartless testimony. To go back out of the way and will of God means the-

1. Loss of Power. God would not be with them if they went back. This is clearly taught in Joshua 23:12 and Joshua 23:13. To turn out of God's way is to grieve the Holy Spirit and become utterly impotent. It is an awful loss to lose one's power to live and witness for Jesus Christ. Samson turned aside, and the Spirit of power left him (Judges 16:20). Separation from the Vine entails loss of that sap which is the power of life.

2. Loss of Comfort. "Scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes" (Joshua 23:13). These are the results of disobedience. Miserable failures instead of joyful conquerors. To turn away from the light is to turn into the darkness. It is a great mercy that the sins of God's people pinch the conscience. The most terrible calamity that can befall a soul is to be comfortable and happy without God.

3. Loss of Capacity. "Ye shall perish from off this good land" (Joshua 23:13). This perishing from off the land of promise, because of disobedience and unbelief, was not the work of a day. When they turned away from God they became day by day more unfit, as a people, to keep possession of the God-given land. Backsliding is, of course, a process (Psalms 1:1), and a process by which our capacities for the enjoyment of the spiritual things freely given us of God gradually perish, until we in heart go right out of the land as far as our personal experience is concerned. If ye be willing and obedient ye shall eat the good of the land.

BLESSINGS REVIEWED; Or, MOTIVES FOR SERVICE.

Joshua 24:1-13

"I place me, Lord, 'neath Thy touch that thrills,

Wilt Thou, O wilt Thou me melt?

Give me the power Thine own arm fills

To impart whate'er of grace I have felt." In Joshua 24:14 we notice: (1) That service is demanded. "Now, therefore, fear the Lord, and serve Him." Every blessed one should arise and serve (Mark 1:31). (2) How this service should be given. "In sincerity and truth." Mere perfunctory service is an abomination (Luke 19:20-23). (3) What this service implies. "A putting away of other gods." The Lord's will alone must be the ruling principle of the life. The god, self, must be put away. Him only shalt thou serve (Romans 15:3). "Now, therefore." This word "therefore" suggests some foregoing reasons why this service should be rendered. We observe the following. There had been-

I. Deliverance. "I brought you out" (Joshua 24:5). They were emancipated through blood (Exodus 12:13). So are we (1 Peter 1:18-19). Once the slaves of sin, now the children of God. Delivered to serve (Luke 1:74).

II. Separation. 'The Lord put darkness between you and the Egyptians" (Joshua 24:7). The darkness of death still lies between the saved and the unsaved (John 5:24). The Lord doth put a difference (Exodus 11:7). No human power will ever be able to bridge the great gulf fixed between death and life.

III. Victory. "I gave them (enemies) into your hand" (Joshua 24:8). All the enemies of the believer are conquered foes. They need not have dominion over you (Romans 6:14; Micah 7:9). He giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 7:25).

IV. Protection. "When Balak called Balaam to curse you he blessed you still" (Joshua 24:9-10). He can turn the counsel of the wicked to naught (Nehemiah 4:15). "The Lord is thy keeper; He shall preserve thee from all evil" (Psalms 121:5, Psalms 121:7).

V. Possession. "I have given you a land for which you did not labour," etc. (Joshua 24:13). " Not of works, lest any man should boast." What did the prodigal do for the benefits he received? (Luke 15:22-23) What have we that we have not received (Ephesians 2:7). "Now, therefore, fear the Lord, and serve Him."

CONSECRATION AND SERVICE.

Joshua 24:14-28.

"How scant and measur'd are our gifts, Each on the other duty shifts; Upon ourselves we lavish spend, And paltry nothings His cause send. What cost it Him to save thy soul, Ere thou on Him thy sins didst roll?"

It has been said that "Entire consecration embraces three things-being, doing, and suffering. We must be willing to be, to do, and to suffer all that God requires. It covers body, soul, and spirit. These are to be used when, where, and as God requires, and only as He requires. Must be made deliberately for all time coming, without any reserve, and in reliance upon divine strength. This is a faithful and true witness. Here is-

I. A Call to Decision. "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve" (Joshua 24:15). Ye cannot serve two masters. To halt between the opinions of self and God is to tarry upon the plain of destruction, like Lot's wife (Luke 16:13). "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves, His servants ye are?" (Romans 6:16). Yielding to sin makes us the servants of sin. Yielding to God makes us the servants of God.

II. A Noble Determination. "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15). The Lord in some way will publicly acknowledge those who, in the fear of God, command their children and their households (Genesis 18:19). But let this be an individual decision, "As for me." "What wilt Thou have me to do?" Every man shall give an account of himself to God. To serve the Lord implies making Him your Master. Not I, but Christ. One is your Master. Who is He? Self or Christ?

III. A Stirring Reflection. The people answered and said, "The Lord our God, He it is that brought us out of Egypt, . . . and did those great signs, . . . and preserved us all the way, . . and drove out the Amorites, . . . therefore will we serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:16-18). Their calling to mind the past goodness of God led them to a definite surrender of themselves to Him. Shall the memory of Christ's sufferings and victory for us not constrain us to yield ourselves in loyal service to Him? "Ye

are not your own, for ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your bodies and your spirits which are His."

IV. A Solemn Declaration. Joshua said, "Ye cannot serve the Lord, for He is an holy God; He is a jealous God" (Joshua 24:19). It is an easy thing to say that we will serve the Lord, but it is a very different thing to put it into daily practice (see Matthew 26:33-35). The service of God is an holy service, and only holy ones can render it (Leviticus 19:2). "Who shall be able to stand before this holy Lord God?" (1 Samuel 6:20). Those cleansed by the blood and filled with the Spirit. Ye cannot serve God if Mammon or self has any authority over you, for He is a jealous God, jealous because He is Love (1 John 4:8).

V. A Decided Affirmation. "Nay, but we will serve the Lord. We are witnesses" (Joshua 24:21-22). They were witnesses against themselves that they had chosen the Lord to serve Him. Peter and the rest of the disciples affirmed that they would rather die than deny their Lord, but they all forsook Him, and fled when danger appeared. Self-confidence is ever the arm of flesh that fails. A strong will may be a blessing or a snare. All depends on whether the strength is merely human or divine. Be strong and very courageous (Joshua 1:7).

VI. An Indispensable Condition. "Now therefore put away the strange gods, and incline your heart," etc. (Joshua 24:23). If the Lord is to be served every other usurping god must be put away, and the whole heart inclined leaning only upon the Lord. Everything that takes the place the Lord alone should have in our hearts is a strange god to Him; that with which He can have no fellowship. Service must always be associated with holiness. Work for God is to be the fruit of personal consecration to God. David would not offer to God what cost him nothing (2 Samuel 24:24). The ministry of the Son of Man was to give His life (Matthew 20:28). So should we first give our own selves to the Lord. "And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God" (2 Corinthians 8:5). THE DEATH OF JOSHUA.

Joshua 24:29-31.

"When the dangerous rocks are past,

When the threatening tempests cease.

Oh! how sweet to rest at last

In a silent port of peace.

Though that port may be unknown,

Though no chart its name may bear,

Brightly beams its light on One,

Blest to find his refuge there." The spiritual mariner's port of rest has no place on the business charts of earth. Port Death is a haven where those greedy of the world's gain have no desire to cast anchor. Some do rush into it in stress of weather to escape what seems more terrible than the separation of soul and body. The Christian's "port of peace" is the bosom of God. To him death is but the placid waters in the bay that speak of the nearness of the rest that is in the harbour of His all-satisfying presence. To die is gain. The death of Joshua was the final triumph of a conqueror. It

suggests-

I. A Great Honour. "Joshua, the servant of the Lord" (Joshua 24:29). What a privilege to have one's name and character so closely linked with the Lord! To be known as "the servant of the Lord" is a heritage worth coveting earnestly. It is infinitely better than being known as a successful man or a millionaire. There is no degree that will tell in eternity like this. Of many it may be truly written, "John, the servant of the world." "Samuel, the servant of sin." "Mary, the servant of self." "Martha, the servant of fashion." Such have their reward, their crown of honour is in the dust instead of in the Lord.

II. A Passing Privilege. "It came to pass that Joshua died" (Joshua 24:29). Yes, even those who are reckoned indispensable to the success of God's work die. No matter how great the burden of responsibility it must be put aside. Life itself, with all its great and eternal possibilities, is but a passing opportunity. The key-note of Genesis 5 is, "And he died." "It is appointed unto men once to die." But this quickly vanishing "little while" is enough to fulfil the work God has given us to do if the time is redeemed. Did not our Lord realise this when He said, "I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day" (John 9:4). His working day was a short one, but, oh, what wealth of labour was in it.

III. A Rebuke to Covetousness. "They buried him in the border of his inheritance" (Joshua 24:30). It does not matter how large our earthly possession may be, a little hole in the border will suffice when the spirit departs. Those who pride themselves in adding house to house and land to land should remember that a few odd shillings will be enough to pay for their shroud. There are many graves in the border land. That lair in the cemetery may mean the border of your inheritance. The grave is not only in the border of our earthly heritage, it is also in the border of eternity. "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body" (1 Corinthians 15:44). The border is the last point of contact with the old and the perishing before we touch the new and the eternal. Set your affections on things above, and not on the things which are on the earth.

IV. An Encouragement to Faithfulness. "Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua" (Joshua 24:31). Another evidence of the posthumous influence of a holy life. "He being dead, yet speaketh." The king that knew not Joseph dealt hardly with his brethren. The memory of the wicked shall rot, while the righteous shall be held in everlasting remembrance. Think of the posthumous influence of Jesus Christ. The higher the life, or light, the farther will the radiance of its power and glory go. Jesus Christ has been exalted to Heaven, "far above all," that His influence might reach out to the uttermost parts of the earth, and down to the uttermost depths of human need, and on to the uttermost end of the ages. In so far as our lives are lived in the heavenly places will they tell with restraining or encouraging power upon those who may come after. The sun may set, but the effect of its healing beams is still felt by every living thing. To me to live is Christ.

Judges

"WHY HAVE YE DONE THIS?"

Judges 2:1-5.

"If Thou hadst not Been stern to me, But left me free, I had forgot Myself and Thee."-Ben Jonson. The "angel of the Lord" may mean "the angel of His Presence," that angelic form which makes the presence of the Lord, a powerful reality. This the Holy Spirit now does. Wherever He is the presence of God is felt. The journey from Gilgal (rolling away) to Bochim (weepers) may in a moral sense be very short. If we do not walk in the light of His will the distance between our successes and failures will never be very great. We observe here- I. A Work of Grace. This grace was manifested in-

1. A Merciful Compulsion. "I made you to go up out of Egypt" (Judges 2:1). It is a blessed thing when salvation becomes a pressing necessity. Compelled to forsake our godless ways through the force of constraining grace. It was so with Saul while on the way to Damascus (Acts 9). The compulsion of Almighty love.

2. The Gift of a Rich Possession. "I brought you unto the land" (Judges 2:1). This good land was the land of promise. To Israel it meant freedom, peace, plenty, progress, and power. Typical of the possessions the believer has in Christ Jesus.

3. An Unfailing Assurance. "I will never break My covenant with you" (Judges 2:1). The gifts and callings of God are without repentance. God Himself will not alter the thing that has gone out of His lips (Psalms 89:34). We may fail, yet He abideth faithful to His own promise. The bargain will never be broken on God's side. He cannot deny Himself.

4. A Needful Warning. "Ye shall make no league with the inhabitants; ye shall throw down their altars" (Judges 2:2). The inhabitants of the land were bitterly opposed to the purposes of God, therefore the children of God must make no covenant with them. The servants of Christ must in no way identify themselves with that spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience. Their false gods must be thrown down, and the Lord alone exalted.

II. A Miserable Failure. "But ye have not obeyed My voice" (Judges 2:2). The failure came in their case, as it often comes in ours, through unbelief. O fools and slow of heart, to believe all that He hath spoken! The voice of God is still in His Word, because His Word is the breathings of the Holy Ghost (2 Peter 1:21). The Scriptures are always living and active (see Hebrews 4:12, R.V.). To turn away from His revealed will is to close our ears to the voice of God. Be not deceived, God knows when His voice is obeyed. He is personally interested in every individual child of His. How often have we complained of our failures? May not the cause be here: "Ye have not obeyed My voice?"

III. A Searching Question. "Why have ye done this?" The "angel of His presence" is jealous for the honour of God. What answer can a disobedient one give to this personal, pointed inquiry? An

honest answer would be: "I feared man more than God, and was better pleased with my own thoughts and plans than with His." Paul's "Not I, but Christ," has been changed into "Not Christ, but I." Ye know that, apart from the presence and power of the Holy Ghost within you, ye cannot live or witness for God as ye ought; yet ye have gone leaning on your own strength and wisdom, and came away defeated. "Why have ye done this?" Ye know that to obey His voice is the secret of heart-restfulness, yet ye have not walked in this light. "Why have ye done this?"

IV. An Expressive Answer. They answered not by words, but by deeds. Acts speak louder than words-

1. They Wept. "The people lifted up their voice and wept" (Judges 2:4). The message from him who represented the presence of God had gone home to their hearts. "Why have ye done this?" smote them with the silence of self-condemnation that could only find expression in tears of repentance. It was a heart question that wrung out this heart-melting response. The crowing of a cock sent the same burning question into the heart of self-confident Peter, and with the very same result. "He went out and wept bitterly" (Matthew 26:75). "Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of" (2 Corinthians 7:10).

2. They Sacrificed. "And they sacrificed there unto the Lord" (Judges 2:5). Sacrificing unto God is the only possible way of redeeming what we have lost by disobedience. The tears that are not followed with self-denying deeds are not very hot. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit" (Psalms 51:17). The broken spirit allows all that is in it to flow out for God. "I beseech you therefore by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1). THE SONG OF DEBORAH.

Judges 5.

"Command, Lord, what Thou wilt,

My way be dark or bright;

Upon the Rock I'm built,

Thou shalt defend the right;

O look to me, and bring Me forth conquering to sing."

"The song of Deborah," says Dr. Farrar, "is one of the grandest outbursts of impassioned poetry in the Bible." Like the song of salvation, the deep fulness of its harmony depends on the rich variety of its notes. It is a song of triumph. It is wonderful how nicely we can sing when we have experienced deliverance from all our enemies through faith in Jesus Christ. Those taken up out of the fearful pit of iniquity have a new song put into their mouth (Psalms 40:2-3). This song of the prophetess resembles our song, in that it has in it a note of-

I. Fellowship. "Then sang Deborah and Barak" (Judges 5:1). The song of salvation is not a solo, for while the saved one sings for joy there is also joy in the presence of the angels of God (Luke 15:10). The song of deliverance at the Red Sea was sung by Moses and the children of Israel (Exodus 15:1). Let us exalt His Name together.

II. Personal Dedication. "The people willingly offered themselves" (Judges 5:2). This is a sure forerunner to victory. When the people of God willingly offer themselves as instruments of righteousness in His hand, to do His will, the shout of triumph will certainly follow. As with the Church, so with the individual; personal consecration to the work of the Lord is the strait gate into the way of success in His service. "They first gave their own selves to the Lord" (2 Corinthians 8:5).

III. Exultant Joy. "Awake, awake, utter a song" (Judges 5:12). The song of the Lord's delivered ones is so high pitched that only the saved can sing it, and they need to be wide awake to give it the needed emphasis. The halfhearted make but a sorry attempt to touch the notes on the leger lines of this heavenly song. The psalmist was clearing his throat for it when he said, "Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early" (Psalms 57:8). Ye that dwell in the dust of an unclean and praiseless life, awake and sing (Isaiah 26:19).

IV. Mutual Encouragement. "Zebulun and Naphtali were a people that jeoparded their lives in the high places of the field" (Judges 5:18). Reuben could debate on the merits of the war, and create divisions, playing the part of the "higher critic" (Judges 5:16), and perhaps helping Gilead, Dan, and Asher in their guilty selfishness and cowardliness (Judges 5:17). But give honour to whom honour is due. Those who stand firm on the "high places" in this holy warfare against worldliness, and every form of sin that works in opposition to the gracious will of God, let them be mentioned in our prayers and praises to God. All who jeopard their lives for the cause of Christ, and even their own good name, should have honourable mention before God and man. This is a very effective antidote for jealousy in the Lord's work.

V. Faithful Warning. Meroz and the inhabitants thereof were to be cursed bitterly, "because they came not to the help of the Lord against the mighty" (Judges 5:23). The people of Meroz may not have actually hindered the Lord's warriors, but they did not help; in this lay their guilt. They were cursed because they did nothing. Prayerless Christian, take note. The fig tree was cursed by the merciful Christ because it was fruitless. Doing nothing in the way of helping on the Lord's cause is the sure road to a withered Christian life, and it maybe to a God-dishonouring posterity. Abigail was well taught in theology when she assured David that, "The Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house, because my lord fighteth the Lord's battles" (1 Samuel 25:28). Look after His business and He will look after yours.

VI. Solemn Reflection. The mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried, "Why is his chariot so long in coming?" etc. (Judges 5:28-30). Deborah's reference to the mother of Sisera watching and wearying for the return of her murdered son is an intensely womanly touch. Here is pictured the terrible disappointment that must finally come to those who hope for peace and prosperity while fighting against the purposes and people of God (Exodus 15:9). While we celebrate our deliverance from the guilt and power of sin in our song of praise, let us not be unmindful of those who are without God and without hope in the world; those who are feeding on vanity, and are as the chaff to the wheat; those who walk in the light of the sparks of their own kindling, and whose light shall suddenly be quenched. The only hymn that we read of Christ ever singing was sung under the shadow of the Cross (Matthew 26:30).

GIDEON'S CALL.

Judges 6:11-24.

"Thou art as much His care as if beside

Nor man nor angel lived in Heaven or earth;

Thus sunbeams pour alike their glorious tide

To light up worlds, or wake an insect's mirth;

They shine, and shine with unexhausted store-

Thou art thy Saviour's darling, seek no more."

-Keble.

Many have lived lives of sorrow and failure because they have mistaken their calling. It is not so with those called of God, as was Gideon. The gifts and callings of God are without repentance. Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and the consequence was what it always will be when we turn away from the Lord our Redeemer-bondage and oppression under the hand of an enemy (Judges 6:1-2). But when they were impoverished they "cried unto the Lord" (Judges 6:6), and He saved them out of their distresses by sending them a prophet to warn (Judges 6:8) and a mighty man to save. The cry out of the depths of our impoverished hearts brings an answer out of the depths of His infinite fulness. In seeking to grasp the salient features of this portion let us note-

I. A Sorrowful Plight. "Gideon thrashed his wheat, and hid it from the Midianites" (Judges 6:11). What a picture of a life lived under the fear of man! Separation from the ways of God will certainly pervert the motives of life. How are the mighty fallen that the redeemed of the Lord should tremble at the face of man? Elijah, in another sense, thrashed out his wheat fearlessly in the presence of his enemy, because he stood before the Lord God of Israel (1 Kings 17:1).

II. A Comforting Message. The angel of the Lord appeared, and said unto him, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour" (Judges 6:12). This messenger of the covenant preached unto Gideon the Gospel of the grace of God,"The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man." It is His will and purpose to bless you and make you a blessing, therefore arise and put on thy strength. This angel brought to Gideon what the Holy Spirit brings to us-a remembrance of our privileges as His people. He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you.

III. An Anxious Question. And Gideon said, "If the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us?" etc. (Judges 6:13). All this dishonour and misery came because of sin; but, blessed be God, although we may fall through our iniquity, He does not cast off and for ever deny His people. His great fatherly heart still loves and yearns for the restoration of His erring ones to His bosom. If the Lord is with us, why is our testimony so fruitless and our prayers so powerless? Just for the very same reason-an evil heart of unbelief (2 Chronicles 15:2).

IV. A Great Commission. The Lord looked upon him, and said, "Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel; have not I sent thee?" (Judges 6:14). His might undoubtedly lay in the assurance of Jehovah's presence with him (Judges 6:12). Samson was not a giant; his great strength lay in the power of the Spirit of God with him. He does not send us a warfare on our own charges. Depressed and doubting soul, herein is the secret of might, "Lo, I am with you alway, and all power

is given unto Me." Go in this thy might (Joshua 1:9; Matthew 28:18-19).

V. A Common Excuse. "Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? my family is poor, and I am the least," etc. (Judges 6:15). It was so also with Moses (Exodus 3:11) and with Saul (1 Samuel 9:21). Poverty and weakness are no arguments against the exceeding riches of His grace and power to usward. Urging our own helplessness in the face of His all-sufficient promise only betrays our lack of faith in His Word. Still, the Lord expects that His abounding grace should never beget in us anything like self-confidence or boasting. The revelation of the glory of His goodness and of the high calling into which we have been brought are sure to make us feel keenly the impotency of all human strength and wisdom (see Luke 5:8-9). Our conscious weakness is one of the best qualifications for the work of God (1 Corinthians 1:27; 2 Corinthians 12:10).

VI. An Assuring Promise. "And the Lord said unto him, Surely I will be with thee" (Judges 6:16). God meets his felt need with the promise of His presence. The presence of God means the supplying of all our wants as His servants. There is no other way whereby the Lord can equip us for His work than by the power of His presence, by the Holy Ghost within us. Gideon says, "I am poor, and my father's house are few in number;" but God's answer to his and our poverty and feebleness is, "I will be with thee." Greater is He that is with us than all that can be against us. "Himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee," so that with courage we say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not fear" (Hebrews 13:5-6, R.V.).

VII. A Confirming Token. "If now I have found grace in Thy sight, then show me a sign, and there rose up fire out of the rock" (Judges 6:17-21). The God that answereth by fire, let him be God (1 Kings 18:24; Acts 2:1-4). Why should a sign be needed after giving His sure word of promise? In infinite grace God adapts His methods to the natural infirmities of man. He adds the seal of the Spirit to the promise of His Word. This holy fire appeared after the offering had been poured out before the Lord. As the fire of the Lord of old had to do with the offerings on the altar (Leviticus 9:24), so the Holy Spirit of burning comes now as God's answer and sign to a life consecrated unto Him. Ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost and with fire. "Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?" (Acts 19:2, R.V.).

VIII. An Adoring Act. "Then Gideon built an altar there unto the Lord, and called it Jehovah-shalom"- Jehovah, send peace (Judges 6:24). Because he had seen the angel of the Lord face to face he feared that he would die. But his fears having been rebuked by His "Peace be unto thee" (Judges 6:22-23), he built an altar, and called it the "Peace of Jehovah." "My peace I give unto thee." The assuring Word of God's promise ought to be enough to lead us into that adoring attitude of sacrificing restfulness (John 14:27). This altar, like the altar of the Cross of Jesus Christ, speaks powerfully of the peace of God. The cry of both was, "Jehovah, send peace." And peace has been made. A peace that passeth all understanding. May it garrison our hearts and constrain to adoring worship.

GIDEON AT WORK.

Judges 6:25-40.

"For as we see the eclipsed sun

By mortals is more gazed upon

Than when, adorn'd with all his light,

He shines in serene sky most bright;

So valour in a low estate

Is more admired and wondered at."-Butler. The apostle Paul has declared that "When I am weak, then am I strong." Judged by the wisdom of the world this is certainly paradoxical. The seeming absurdity is partly explained by his previous utterance. "I will glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). Gideon in himself was weak and uninfluential; but now that the presence and peace of Jehovah was with him, and in him, he becomes what God saw that he ought to be: "A mighty man of valour."

I. Where he Began.

1. At Home. "Take thy father's bullock, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath" (Judges 6:25). The command to "honour thy father," etc., has a far-reaching effect, and may be fulfilled by a son in a way that is very painful to the father. Gideon would honour his father, but destroy his father's gods. It takes courage to make a start and take a stand for God and for righteousness among our own kin. "Go home to thy friends, and tell them what great things the Lord hath done for thee" (Mark 5:19).

2. At Once. "And Gideon took ten men, . . . and did it by night" (Judges 6:27). It would appear that no time was lost. Gideon's ten servants, through his consistent testimony, was fully in sympathy with Jehovah, and ready at once to follow their master in this needed work for God. The call was clear. Why should he put off? Is it not as clear for you? Yet you linger. The Master is come, and calleth for you.

II. What He Did. His work was twofold.

1. A Pulling Down. "Throw down the altar of Baal" (Judges 6:25). The altar of Baal represented that which was false, deceptive, and opposed to the will and rule of Jehovah. Every God-usurping thing around us or within us must be overturned and dethroned. "Our weapons are not according to the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down imaginations and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God" (2 Corinthians 10:4-5, R.V.).

2. A Building Up. "Build an altar unto the Lord thy God" (Judges 6:26). It is not enough to undeceive the worshippers of false gods; the true God must be put in their place. It is not enough to take the pleasures of the world from its votaries; we must be able to put something better in their place. The Altar of God, viz., the Cross of Christ, is the divine substitute for the barren and powerless inventions of men. To preach Christ and Him crucified is to build up the Altar of the Lord.

III. What Followed. Such definite action will always be accompanied with very positive results. There came-

1. A Changed Attitude. "The men of the city said, Bring out thy son that he may die" (Judges 6:30). Death, in one form or another, is for ever the world's penalty for faithfulness to God. The men of the city (who mind earthly things) are always bitterly opposed to those iconoclasts- men of

God-who seek first the kingdom of God. But the disciple is not greater than his Master. The first evidence of faithfulness to Christ is the opposition of the ungodly.

2. A Changed Name. "Therefore on that day Gideon was called Jerubbaal" (Judges 6:32). "Let Baal plead," or "Baal's antagonist." It is a blessed stigma to be called "a hater of false gods," an enemy to ignorance and superstition. It is quite becoming for a man to get a new name when he becomes a new creature (Genesis 32:28).

IV. How He was Encouraged by the-

1. Anointing of the Spirit. "The Spirit of the Lord came upon (clothed) Gideon, and he blew a trumpet" (Judges 6:34). Fitness for the service of God can only be found in the Spirit of God. The blowing of the Gospel trumpet by a man clothed with the power of God will surely be effectual in gathering many after him. "Ye shall receive power when the Holy Ghost is come upon you" (Acts 1:8).

2. Testimony of the Fleece. In answer to the prayer of Gideon the fleece was wet with dew, while the earth around was dry; and, again, the fleece was dry while on the ground there was dew (Judges 6:36-40). A convincing proof that the providence of God in connection with the needs of His people is not the blind workings of chance. The Spirit of God, like the wind, bloweth where it listeth; and, like the dew, it may fall on the fleece or not on the fleece, according to the cry of the man of God. Every servant of God may have this twofold witness: the Spirit within, and the special token of God's workings without. Prayer and providence go together.

GIDEON'S FOLLOWERS TESTED.

Judges 7:1-8.

"Nor yet conclude all fiery trials past;

For Heaven will exercise us to the last,

Sometimes will check us in our mad career

With doubtful blessings and with mingled fear."

-Dryden.

Gideon had been called of God as a "mighty man of valour." God knows where to find the instrument that is suitable for His work. "Not he that commendeth Himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth" (2 Corinthians 10:18). When Gideon blew the trumpet a great many gathered after him (Judges 6:34), commending themselves, but whom the Lord had not commended. So the sifting process had to be applied. They had pitched beside the well (Judges 7:1), and between the water and the warfare the would-be followers were tested. But note-

I. A Strange Hindrance. The Lord said, "The people that are with thee are too many for Me" (Judges 7:2). This is "to human wisdom, how severe?" An army of 32,000 too many for 120,000! (chap. Judges 8:10). Yes, this is the Almighty's logic, that no flesh should glory in His presence (Deuteronomy 8:12-17). Our own strength and wisdom are always too many for God (1 Corinthians 1:29). It is to the faint that He gives power, and to them that have no might He

increaseth strength (Isaiah 40:29). "When I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10). "Not by might, nor by power" (Zechariah 4:6).

II. An Urgent Call. "Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early" (Judges 7:3). The presence of the fearful and the self-interested are always a hindrance to the work of God (Deuteronomy 20:8). How slow we are to learn that our Lord can do without those doubting and fearful professed followers! We are ready to be discouraged when they turn out of the ranks of workers for Christ, when in heart they never were really in line with the Spirit of God. They turn out, because in spirit they never had turned in. "For if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us" (1 John 2:19).

III. A Startling Revelation. "And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand" (Judges 7:3). This turn about made a great gap in the ranks. Only ten thousand remained. God's warriors have to be weakened and reduced to bring them up to real efficiency in His presence. When the Church of God and the teaching of Christ are being assailed by an ever-increasing number of enemies it is wonderful how many false professors are found out by their turning away from the faith. Such dissensions cannot hinder the progress of the kingdom of God any more than the blowing away of rotten twigs by the wind can impede the growth of a tree.

IV. A Second Test. "And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there" (Judges 7:4). When the appeal was made to their own will many turned away back, but now the purging of those that are left is to be according to the will of God. Much that we would pass for wheat His fan will prove to be only chaff (Isaiah 1:25). The greater the victory to be achieved in the Name of Jesus Christ the hotter the furnace of trial through which we must pass. It was so with Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Daniel, Peter, and Paul. Where are they who have been much used of God who have not had His sifting, purging fire turned upon them? It is one thing for us to search ourselves; this will doubtless turn many cowardly things away out of our life, but when God Himself comes by His searching Spirit to try us, then we are brought down to utter hopelessness in our own strength, that no flesh may glory in His presence, and that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us (2 Corinthians 4:7). "Search me, O God, and try me."

V. A Consecrated Band. "And the Lord said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you" (Judges 7:5-7). A straw may indicate which way the wind blows. Those who lapped the water with the hand had evidently a keener sense of and were more alive to the importance and urgency of the occasion. Those who "bowed down upon their knees" were specially eager after their own selfish gratification. We are not fit for the work of God while our own personal comfort is our chief concern. No doubt they were all alike thirsty, and the water would be equally precious to both parties as the good and needful gift of God. But we don't live to eat and drink; we eat and drink that we may live to the glory of our God. As the servants of Christ let us lap thankfully of the wells that God in His providence may open before us by the way; but thou shalt not bow down to them as a mere hireling, else in the sight of God thou shalt become unfit to join the victors in the battle of the Lord. "This one thing I do" is the language of those who have yielded themselves entirely to the doing of the will of God, who partake of the pleasures of this world, as a dog lappeth the waters in passing, but whose heart is set on the will and work of the Lord. Consecrated souls lap the waters of earth with their eyes on the Cross of Christ.

GIDEON'S ENCOURAGEMENT.

Judges 7:9-15.

"Observe the rising lily's snowy grace,

Observe the various vegetable race;

They neither toil nor spin, but careless grow,

Yet see how warm they blush, how bright they glow!

What regal vestments can with them compare,

What king so shining, or what queen so fair?

Will He not care for you, ye faithless, say?

Is He unwise? Or are ye less than they?"-Thomson. Be not discouraged because of the way. He that hath begun the good work in you and through you will keep performing it until the day of perfection. If Gideon's heart was lifted up with pride when 32,000 gathered around him it would surely sink when he saw the powerful looking army melt away till only a handful of three hundred were left, but this was a "Handful on Purpose." God's handful of separated ones, "ready to do whatever the King would appoint." The divine method is quality, not quantity. He desires not appearance, but truth in the inward parts. "The Spirit of the Lord came upon David, ... but departed from Saul" (1 Samuel 16:1-7).

Gideon was mightily encouraged by the-

I. Promise of God. "Arise, get thee down unto the host, for I have delivered it unto thine hand" (Judges 7:9). The battle was already fought and the victory gained in the purpose of God. Now Gideon is called upon to arise and enter into that purpose and claim the offered deliverance. Does not the promises of God in Christ mean as much as this to us? Is it not the purpose of God that we should be saved from all our sins and delivered from all our enemies? Then arise, and in His Name claim the victory. He is faithful that hath promised (Luke 1:74-75).

II. Presence of God. The Lord had said unto him, "Surely I will be with thee" (Judges 7:6-10). His promise of victory always brings with it the assurance of His presence (Judges 7:9). "Lo, I am with you alway." Does this promise only hold good when we are conscious of His nearness? Are our moral sensibilities to be the criterion of the truthfulness of His Word? Are we only thankful for His powerful presence with us when we feel it? It is surely an encouragement that we can continually reckon on our Lord being with us by His Spirit when we know that we are doing that which is pleasing in His sight.

III. Providence of God. "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28). When our affections are set on Himself, and while we are walking according to our high calling, every circumstance in life is planned for our good by the wonder-working hand of God. This is part of the great Redemption which we have in Christ Jesus. See how He wrought for the comfort of His servant Gideon. There were three different streams of influence which culminated at one divinely-appointed moment. There was-

1. A Dream. "Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian," etc. (Judges 7:13). Dreams are common, but Jehovah was the Author and Giver of this one. Despair not at the lack of means for getting within touch of those who are the enemies of God and of His Christ while the ear of God is open to your cry. He may be causing others to see the little barley cakes overturning their tents and creating dismay even while we are lamenting their utter indifference to the will of God.

2. The Interpretation of the Dream. "And his fellow answered, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon," etc. (Judges 7:14). When the trembling dreamer told his dream the mighty power of God seemed to take hold of the hearer that he could see nothing else but his own and his fellow's doom in this simple vision. Ah, when God is speaking the simple message comes with a self-condemning revelation. Yes, the cake of barley, the bread of the Lord's host, becomes the sword of the Lord in the camp of His enemies. Gideon's little consecrated band is in the hand of the Lord, and He prepares for them the victory.

3. The Hearing of it by Gideon. "And it was so when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof that he worshipped" (Judges 7:15). The whole scene was a divinely-planned coincidence, and another proof of that unerring providence that constrains the faithful servant of God again and again to bow in silent worship. This is the finger of God. It is God's manner to choose the things that are weak and despised to confound the things which are mighty (1 Corinthians 1:27-28). Although the Lord is often pleased to give us providential evidences of the truth of His Word, let us ever remember that His promises are enough without them; what Gideon heard in the tent did not make the Word of God more sure. "All the Promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen" (2 Corinthians 1:20).

GIDEON'S VICTORY.

Judges 7:16-25.

"'Tis always morning somewhere in the world,

Thron'd evil yet shall from its height be hurled;

The nail-pierced hand holds still the seven stars,

Truth stronger, nobler groweth by its scars."-Grosart. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal. Like Gideon, every divinely-called one has a work to do that would be otherwise perfectly impossible but for the grace of God. Every regenerated life is a miracle, a new centre of operation for the spiritual forces of Heaven, and of course there must be a special manifestation of supernatural and unworldly influences. If a Christian is not in the eyes of the world an anomaly he is nothing. The Spirit of God always makes a tremendous distinction between men. "Ye are a peculiar people." The energy of the natural man, and that of the Holy Spirit in the believer, are as different as darkness is from light; as far apart in character as Judas was from John. Notice the-

I. Strange Preparation. "He put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers" (Judges 7:16). Trumpets, lamps, and pitchers. Those who have faith in God can afford to use weak things. There was a great difference between the weapon of Goliath and that of David (1 Samuel 17:40-45). Pitchers with nothing in them but lamps may suggest hearts cleansed and filled with the light of the knowledge of God (2 Corinthians 4:6-7). This knowledge to

be sounded out with trumpet lips (Romans 10:14). When God makes His choice of weapons they are always weak and base in the sight of the wisdom of this world (1 Corinthians 1:27-28). Fools for Christ.

II. Present Example. Gideon said, "Look on me, and do likewise; as I do, so shall ye do" (Judges 7:17). Each one must look unto him who is God's messenger, and who goeth before them. Gideon himself, in his ways and actions, was an example to each consecrated follower. Christ hath left us an example, that we should follow His steps. Look unto Him, and not unto one another. Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it. He pleased not Himself. Look on Him, and do likewise. The Captain of our salvation, like Gideon, desires His followers always to keep within sight of Him.

III. Uniting Battle Cry. "And they cried, The sword of the Lord and of Gideon" (Judges 7:20). There was only one sword among them, but it was enough., for it was the Sword of the Lord, and the hand of Gideon was grasping it. The one glittering blade of divine truth is mightier than all the weapons of darkness The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. This Word is the sword of the Lord, and of His Christ. It is the alone weapon for the whole camp of His followers. It will be a blessed and victorious day for the Church when this is its unmistakable cry, "The Word of the Lord and of His Church."

IV. Peculiar Warfare. "They blew the trumpets, and break the pitchers, and held the lamps, and cried," etc. (Judges 7:19-20). Every man, as God's chosen one, had a trumpet, a pitcher, and a lamp, but every one's faith was in the "Sword of the Lord." Each soldier sounded his trumpet as an individual testimony for God, then the pitchers were dashed together and broken into countless fragments; a broken and a contrite heart is needed if the lamp of heavenly truth is to shine forth in the eyes of the ungodly. Then came the united cry, and the great battle was quickly won. Lips telling out the Gospel with clear trumpet tones, and the light of the knowledge of God shining cut of broken hearts, and Christ, the Word of God uplifted. These are the crying needs of to-day, and these are God's means of overcoming the forces of evil. Put on the whole armour of God.

V. Complete Victory. "They stood every man in his place round about the camp, and all the host ran, and cried, and fled" (Judges 7:21). Let us inquire as to the source and secret of such a triumph. They were-

1. United. They were as one man with one sword. When the singers were as one then the house was filled with glory (2 Chronicles 5:13). Not only union, but unison is needed (John 17:21).

2. Obedient. "They followed Gideon's example." The wise man is not he that saith the will of God, but he that doeth it (Matthew 7:21; see Psalms 81:13-14).

3. Faithful. "They stood every man in his place" (Judges 7:21). Only those who truly trust can stand steady (2 Chronicles 20:17). When we take our right place God will take His.

4. Triumphant. God gave them the victory (Zechariah 4:6). When I sent you, lacked ye anything? They answered, Nothing (Luke 22:35; 2 Corinthians 9:8). Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, "Rule thou over us, for thou hast delivered us" (chap. Judges 8:22). So may we crown our Deliverer, Lord of all.

GAAL; or, GODLESS EFFORT.

Judges 9:26-49.

"Ever scorn to be a coward, who stands silent by,

When ill tongues our Lord seek to crucify;

Never be ashamed to count one for Him,

Or the lustre of the name of 'Christian' dim."

Scriptural names are always eloquent of character. "Gaal, the son of Ebed," means the "loathing son of a slave," strongly suggestive of pride and poverty. A man who could not see any one wiser or better than himself. Through his "loathing" eyes he saw others as through a coloured glass. True, Abimelech was a murderer (Judges 9:5), but it is not God's way to overcome evil with evil, but to overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21). Every servant of Christ may find some wholesome food for thought here. Observe his- I. Hopeful Start. He was-

1. Trusted. "The men of Shechem put their confidence in him" (Judges 9:26). The men of Shechem were as blind to true moral greatness as Gaal himself. But doubtless his self-confidence would be Considerably augmented by this expression of their faith. Whatever helps to puff us up helps us to our ruin as workers for Jesus Christ.

2. Feasted. "They did eat and drink, and cursed Abimelech" (Judges 9:27). Carnal delights make a poor preparation for the service of God. Gideon's men were tested and sifted before the conflict, but Gaal's followers were rested and feasted. Instead of praying they cursed. The gladness of the Lord in the heart is greater than that begotten by corn and wine (Psalms 4:7). Material good does not always mean spiritual prosperity.

II. Courageous Stand. He was-

1. Defiant. "And Gaal said, Who is Abimelech, and who is Shechem that we should serve him?" (Judges 9:28). This sounds like the clarion note of a God-raised reformer, but it was nothing but the vain wind of a self-conceited bigot. It is easy even for the Christian worker to talk defiantly of the forces opposed to the progress of the soul, and of the kingdom of God amongst men, but everything depends on the ground of our boasting (1 Samuel 14:6).

2. Self-Confident. "Would to God that this people were under my hand, then would I remove Abimelech" (Judges 9:29). O these mighty my's and I's, the progeny of pride and self-confidence. How would it look to put this language in a more logical form? Would to God that I were God. We naturally shrink from this, but self-confidence is a denial of God, and the forerunner of destruction (2 Samuel 15:4). "Pride goeth before a fall."

III. Utter Defeat. "Abimelech chased him, and he fled; and Zebul thrust out Gaal and his brethren" (Judges 9:40-41). That his work was an ignominious failure need not be wondered at when we consider the God-dishonouring motives that constrained him. Be sure your secret sin will find you out in public defeat. It was not the cause espoused by Gaal and his compatriots that was bad, quite the reverse, but that he undertook it in his own name, without the call of God. Jephthah and Gideon accomplished great deliverances because God was with them. The secret of Gaal's failure is still the secret of the failure of many of the Lord's professed servants. There was-

1. No Acknowledgment of God. If we would have His blessing on our work it must be done in His Name. The self-satisfied soul of Gaal had no room for God. It was so different with Moses, David, and Gideon. Some are afraid honestly to acknowledge God lest He should put His foot in all their plans and purposes, so instead of getting their Christless purposes crushed in infancy they get them trodden under foot of God in the full strength of their maturity.

2. No Revelation from God. It is not easy continually to recognise God in our work if we have not had from God a revelation of that work. Gaal had no message from the Lord burning in his heart. Like Absalom, he was self-ordained, and God-deposed. Where there is no vision there is no "Here I am, send me." Where there is no voice from Heaven there is no "What wilt thou have me to do?"

3. No Inspiration by God. The Spirit of the Lord clothed both Gideon and Jephthah (Judges 6:34; Judges 11:29), but Gaal's inspiration came from the wine cup (Judges 9:27). The one is from above, the other is from beneath; the one is of life, the other of death. "Ye shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto Me" (Acts 1:8). Of how much of our service for the Lord may it be said: There is no revelation, no inspiration?Of so much may it be said: There is no victory.

JEPHTHAH; or, CALLED TO SERVE.

Judges 11.

"God never meant that man should scale the Heaven

By, strides of human wisdom. In His works,

Though wondrous, He commands us in His Word

To seek Him rather where His mercy shines."-Cowper. The names of Gideon and Jephthah have honourable mention by the great apostle in his select roll of the faithful who had "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, and obtained promises" (Heb. 11). The story of Jephthah is the story of every converted sinner-a lifting up "from the dunghill, and a setting among princes" (Psalms 113:7). Observe some things concerning him. He-

I. Was Born in Sin. "He was the son of an harlot" (Judges 11:1). "A mighty man of valour," but a child of iniquity. Naaman was a mighty man in valour, but he was a leper (2 Kings 5:1). By birth he was disqualified from entering into the congregation of the Lord (Deuteronomy 23:2). "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?"

II. Was Disinherited. "They thrust out Jephthah, and said unto him, Thou shalt not inherit in our father's house" (Judges 11:2). His right to inherit by succession was destroyed through his father's sin (Deuteronomy 21:16). By one man's disobedience many have been made sinners. "The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9). Adam's sin drove him out of his inheritance in the garden of Eden, and all his posterity have been born outside. If we would have an inheritance among them that are sanctified it must be by faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 26:18).

III. Became a Companion of the Vain. "Then Jephthah fled, and there were gathered vain men to him" (Judges 11:3). Like a sheep gone astray, he turned to his own way. It would appear that he

now became a brigand, or freebooter, an antitype of Rob Roy of modern history. Such were some of us. When deprived of hope we plunged into the abyss of a reckless, selfish life. Seeking to drown remorse with the excitement of sinful pleasures. A man is known by the company he keeps. "Fowl of a feather flock together." "And being let go, they went to their own company" (Acts 4:23).

IV. Received an Important Invitation. "The elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, Come and be our captain" (Judges 11:5-6). These elders no doubt saw in this daring son of the wilds gifts and qualifications that, if rightly directed, might be of immense value to the cause of God and of His people-what the early disciples would certainly see in the gifted, but Christ-hating Saul, and who would doubtless make many an appeal to Heaven for his conversion. The call came to Jephthah as the call of the Gospel came to us, "while we were yet sinners." Like the Gospel call, it was an invitation to join the ranks of the Lord's people, from whom sin had separated him, and to fight the Lord's battles. Will you come? "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).

V. Covenanted with the Lord. "And Jephthah uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpah" (Judges 11:11). This unexpected but gracious call that came to him seems to have had the effect of making him feel his need of being reconciled to God, and of serving in His Name and strength. If the Gospel of Christ has not had such a transforming influence on our lives we have never yet known it. No matter how unique and outstanding our gifts and abilities may be before we turn to the Lord, if we would be used in His service, these must be wholly yielded to Him, or they can only prove barriers to the progress of His kingdom. It is not the strong heart, but the broken heart that God will not despise. "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (Psalms 51:17).

VI. Was Endued with Power. "Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah" (Judges 11:29). The Spirit of the Lord did not come upon him until he had yielded himself to the Lord, and made full confession, by "uttering all his words before the Lord," (Judges 11:11). It is not to the naturally courageous, but to the consecrated that the gift of the power of the Holy Ghost is given (Acts 1:8). He who has the gift of the Spirit has a great gift, no matter what other gifts he has not. No matter what our needs are-wisdom, strength, holiness, etc.-God's one and all-sufficient provision is imparted by the gift of the Spirit. By Him Christ is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30).

VII. Gained the Victory. "And the Lord delivered them into his hands" (Judges 11:32). He is fit now to have them delivered into his hands, as he himself is now in the hands of God, that no flesh should glory in His presence. Jephthah is another illustration of God using things which are despised (Judges 11:2). There is room enough in the grace of God for the most wayward and helpless. There is also sufficiency here for the hitherto barren and unfruitful. We are not saved by our works, neither are we used in the service of God because of our superior gifts or past eventful experience. It is all of grace, and His grace is sufficient for all. Without the living energy of the Holy Spirit within we shall achieve nothing. "Be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). He hath said "My Grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

SAMSON'S BIRTH

Judges 13:1-25.

"Choose Thou for me, Lord. O have not me to choose!

I know not what to ask or to refuse;

Thou knowest poverty, Thou knowest wealth,

Langour of sickness, confidence of health;

Choose for me, Lord, I know not what is best,

Thou art too just to wrong-on Thee I rest." When we trust the Lord to choose our daily inheritance for us (Psalms 47:4) we shall surely have a goodly portion. The gifts of God are all God-like, worthy of Himself. The Lord appeared unto the wife of Manoah, and promised her a son (Judges 13:3). She simply believed the message, and expected that since He had promised He was also able to perform. On the ground of His Word we may confidently expect what humanly speaking is perfectly impossible (Mark 10:27). The birth of Samson suggests to us an illustration of the new birth of a soul.

I. He was the Gift of God (Judges 13:3). What they could not do through the weakness of the flesh, God in grace accomplished. Of the new nature it is said, "Born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13). Every regenerated soul is the gift of God to a dark and desolate world, another light in its darkness, another witness for God.

II. He was Born Free from Hereditary Defect. The mother was solemnly warned to "drink not wine nor strong drink, and to eat not any unclean thing" (Judges 13:4). The physical body, as the temple of this God-given spirit, must be pure and worthy of it. Those who would travail in birth for souls must take heed to their manner of life, and touch not the unclean. This is the human side; there is another: "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The soul that is born from above, born of God, cannot possess any hereditary blemish. Such is made a partaker of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). "Whatsoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 John 3:9).

III. His Birth was Connected with Sacrifice and Wonder-working. "The offering was put upon a rock, and the angel did wondrously, and ascended in the flame of the altar" (Judges 13:19-20). Observe these three things: (1) The offering; (2) the wonder-working; (3) the ascension by way of the altar flame. How suggestive all this is of the death, and resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ our Lord, by the virtue of which every child of God is born. His offering upon the Cross, the wonder working of His resurrection power and glory, His ascension into Heaven, with the marks of the Cross in His hands and feet, just as it were "in the flame of the altar." "Manoah and his wife looked on, and fell on their faces to the ground" (Judges 13:20). So well may we at this great sight (Ezekiel 1:28).

IV. He was Separated unto God. "The child shall be a Nazarite unto God" (Judges 13:5). His separation was not by vow, but by birth (Numbers 6:5). If we have been "born of God," created anew in Christ Jesus, surely that is enough in itself to teach us that we should be separated in our lives from a world of sin and iniquity. Separation has two aspects. 1. We are separated by the will of God, according to His purpose with us (Leviticus 20:24). 2. We are to be separated by our own definite act, a deliberate and continual choice of God's will concerning us (2 Corinthians 6:17). When the precious is separated from the vile, then the testimony will be as the mouth of God (Jeremiah 15:19). It was after Abraham was separated from worldly Lot that God came with His

promise (Gen. 13; 14).

V. He was Blessed by the Lord. "And the child grew, and the Lord blessed him" (Judges 13:24). His name was called Samson-sunny. Like the sun. The separated life is a blessed life, made sunny with the brightness of His presence. Is all this not needed by us if we are to grow like as our Saviour did, "in favour with God and man?" (Luke 2:52). Many of Samson's acts and sayings reveal an almost playfulness of spirit that seems to indicate a bright sunny disposition. A sunny life is a powerful life. "The joy of the Lord is your strength."The separated life is to be a sunny life. Such was the life of our blessed Lord and Saviour-separated, shiny. Though His face was marred, the light of His life was unsullied. The blessing of the Lord it maketh rich. It made Samson rich in cheerfulness and strength, and according to Hebrews 11:32 he was made strong through faith. "According to your faith be it unto you."

VI. He was Moved by the Spirit. "The Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times" (Judges 13:25). These periodical agitatings of heart by the Spirit of God were premonitory indications of the purposes of God with him, and an inward witness of his separation unto the Lord. It is of the utmost importance that those who have separated themselves unto God should recognise the agitatings of the Holy Spirit in the heart. What may appear to be but a passing thought or feeling may be nurtured into a mighty and far-reaching purpose. The glories of midday splendour are ushered in by what seems to be but struggling rays of light. As soon as Jesus separated Himself unto the will of God as His Servant He was led by the Spirit (Matthew 4:1). They live a spiritually monotonous life indeed who know nothing of the moving of the waters of the soul, betimes, by the brooding Spirit of God. The victorious Christian can say with Paul "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Php_4:13).

SAMSON'S LIFE AND DEATH.

Judges 14-16.

"What Heaven bestows, with thankful eyes receive;

First ask thy heart, and then through faith believe;

Slowly we wander o'er a toilsome way,

Shadows of life, and pilgrims of a day.

Who restless on this world receives a fall,

Look up on high, and trust thy God for all."-Chaucer. The fuller the cup the more easily is it to spill the contents. The higher the spiritual privilege the more need for lowliness of walk before God. The stronger we are the greater the temptation to trust in our strength. The more frequently the Spirit of God moves us the more powerfully will the world and the flesh oppose us. The life of Samson alternates with light and shade. A Nazarite who seemed to be partially unconscious of the sacredness of his life, a fatal flaw in his character as a servant in the work of God. "Know ye not that Christ dwelleth in you?" Let us look at his-

I. Amazing Exploits. "He rent a young lion like a kid" (chap. Judges 14:6). "With the jawbone of an ass he slew a thousand men" (chap. Judges 15:15). "He carried away the gates of the city of

Gaza" (chap. Judges 16:3). In Samson that promise was literally fulfilled: "One man of you shall chase a thousand" (Joshua 23:10). It is as easy for God to work with one man as with three hundred (Judges 7:7). Samson had no followers; he asked for none. He alone was commissioned and empowered; he alone must do it. In olden times God usually began with one man. Jesus began with two (John 1:37). We will never do exploits for God if we wait on others to help us. One man in the power of the Spirit is always equal to the occasion. "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." The weapons used by Samson were worthy of the mighty Spirit of the Lord. "Foolish and base things" (1 Corinthians 1:27-29).

II. Superhuman Strength. "Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth" (chap. Judges 16:6); Samson was not a giant; his great strength did not, therefore, lie in an arm of flesh. No human muscle can be developed into spiritual power. The secret of his great strength lay in the presence of the Almighty Spirit of God with him, as one consecrated to the will of God. "Ye shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto Me" (Acts 1:8). This is still the secret of the great strength of any servant of Jesus Christ, and it may be yours. This great strength cannot be purchased by intellectual wisdom or social position. It is the gift of God (Acts 8:18-20), and should be to our souls what our physical strength is to our bodies, only in a superhuman degree, the mighty power of God.

III. Sore Temptation. "She pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death" (chap. Judges 16:16). You will notice that the whole force of this temptress' energy is brought to bear upon that one thing that distinguished Samson from other men, "Wherein thy great strength lieth" (Judges 16:15). In falling in love with Delilah he deliberately steps into the fires of trial. This was clearly an unequal yoke; from the very first she sought his ruin as a Nazarite (Judges 16:5-6), and proved herself an enemy to the divine purpose in the life of Samson. It is a melancholy sight to see one trifling so with the secret of his power for God. Unholy alliances are deadly enemies to spiritual power. Whatever would mar our relationship with God must be looked upon as the poison of a serpent. Our strongest point for God will be the point most incessantly assaulted by the devil and the Spirit-resisting world. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble" (Psalms 50:15).

IV. Complete Failure. "She made him sleep upon her knees; and he awoke, and said, I will go out, as at other times, and shake myself. But he wist not that the Lord was departed from him" (chap. Judges 16:19-20). While he slept his locks were cut off, and his strength went from him. He shakes himself as at other times, but it is only himself he shakes. The mighty enemy-shaking power of the presence of the Lord was gone. He is now but a withered branch, fit to be cast into the fire at the hands of men (John 15:6). When the Spirit of God is grieved our defence as servants is gone (Numbers 14:9). When the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, at that moment he began to fall (1 Samuel 18:12). His strength lay not in his locks, but that head that had never felt the touch of a razor was a witness of his consecration to the will of God. In losing his hair he lost his testimony for God. The power of the Spirit of God alone can make us true witnesses for Christ. Without this we may shake ourselves in feverish effort, but this will only reveal our utter weakness. For a servant of Christ to be as weak as other men is doing dishonour to the Spirit of God. Samson is not the only servant of God who has lost his power through worldliness and self-indulgence (Judges 16:19). Much of the powerless preaching of to-day may be traced to the same cause. No one can possibly fail in the work of the Lord who lives and acts in the power of the Holy Spirit

(Php_2:13).

V. Terrible Bondage. "The Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison-house" (chap. Judges 16:21). He was betrayed by the woman whom he loved, and on whose knees he slept the fatal sleep. The pleasures of sin always deliver over its votaries to spiritual blindness and bondage. Poor Samson. How are the mighty fallen! Let us take warning, and beware of worldly pleasures that ensnare the soul to the grieving of the Holy Ghost. Is there none among us whose service for God and His Christ is performed under the same conditions as Samson worked in the prison-house of Gaza? Blind and fettered servants, to whom the house of prayer becomes as a prison, a place to be got out of as soon as possible. We have neither eyes to see nor liberty to serve, unless we are filled with the Holy Spirit. Apart from this the Lord's work will become a drudgery and a slavery. Prison grinders instead of triumphant warriors.

VI. Final Victory. "And Samson called unto the Lord," etc. (chap. Judges 16:28-30). Out of the depths of his sorrow and helplessness he cried unto the Lord. This is the only time we read of him acknowledging the Lord. His urgent and pitiful request is granted. "His hair began to grow again" (Judges 16:22); his separation unto God began to appear once more. If we have lost our power for God there is only one way whereby it can be restored-confession and fresh consecration. Samson's dying cry was for one more manifestation of the old power, that he might die as a victor; and like Jesus Christ, our unfailing Conqueror, by the grace of God he overcame more by his death than his life. Our own restoration to God must precede the ingathering of souls (Psalms 51:12-13). THE YOUNG PROBATIONER.

Judges 17-18.

"The highest honours that the world can boast

Are subjects far too low for my desire;

Its brightest gleams of glory are, at most,

But dying sparkles of Thy living fire;

Without Thee, Lord, things be not what they be,

Nor have their being when compared with Thee."

-Quarles.

"In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (chap. Judges 17:6). Our own eyes are about the poorest guides under Heaven. "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." These chapters tell a sorrowful tale of social, religious, and moral corruption. What foolish and sinful creatures we are when the guiding hand of God is not with us! Such were some of us, but ye are washed. The old self-life, even religious life, is just the doing of that which is right in our own eyes. When Saul said, "What wilt Thou have me to do?" he had given up walking in the light of his own eyes. The nameless young man brought before us here is worthy of close study on account of-

I. Character. "A young man who was a Levite" (chap. Judges 17:7). According to Numbers 8 the Levites were called of God, separated and sanctified for the work of the Lord. Their work was to

look after the different parts of the Tabernacle when the pillar of cloud moved, and to rebuild this House of God. They were God's separated ones for His own service (Numbers 4:15-33).

II. Purpose. "He said, I go to sojourn where I may find a place" (chap. Judges 17:9). He is on the outlook for a call; he has no desire to spend the time in idleness. He is an industrious and perhaps conscientious young man; hoping that if he could only find a place he might be helpful in some way. It is a sure sign that the House of God is in ruins when the professed servants of God are seeking work at the hands of men. It was otherwise in the days of Moses and Joshua; it was otherwise also in the days of Christ and His apostles. It is the Lord of the harvest who is to send out labourers. Pray ye Him (Matthew 9:38). How often young men are pleaded with to go. Why not pray the Lord the Spirit to send them? (Acts 13:2).

III. First Call. "Micah said unto him, Dwell with me, and be unto me a priest, and I will give thee ten shekels of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, and thy victuals. So he went in" (chap. Judges 17:10). Tired of his itinerancy, he accepted the first offer. It was not a large place, only a small congregation (one family), and a small salary. The living was worth about $1 a year with board and lodgings. He had been doing nothing for a while, "so he went in." Although the loaves were small and the fishes few, there would be connected with the charge some personal dignity and profit. Had he not been a traitor to God he could not have ministered in such a house, for it was full of idols (Judges 17:5), and Micah himself was a superstitious idolater. But doubtless the "ten shekels," etc., shut the mouth of the Levite. He is more concerned about his own personal advantage than the cause of God. A mere hireling (chap. Judges 18:4).

IV. Ordination. "And Micah consecrated the Levite" (chap. Judges 17:11-13). The root idea of consecration seems to be to "fill the hands," so that the worship or service may be abundantly acceptable in the sight of God (1 Chronicles 29:5, marg.). This was the chief aspect in the consecration of Aaron and his sons. Then how could Micah, a worshipper of idols, fill the hands of the Levite with that which is pleasing unto God? No more can ye, except ye are filled with the Holy Ghost. But the young minister seemed perfectly satisfied with this hollow and empty consecration. What is the value of such empty hands laid on the empty head of him who has an empty heart? "Without Me ye can do nothing."

V. Translation. Then the Danites said unto him, "Hold thy peace, and go with us; it is better for thee to be a priest to a tribe than to one man. And the priest's heart was glad, and he went" (chap. Judges 18:19-20). This was a call to a larger sphere of labour on the condition that he should "hold his peace" and not expose their criminal craftiness. He accepted the call, virtually promising to keep his mouth shut on the sin of stealing. A man-made minister is only a minister after man (see Galatians 1:10-12). If a man has no revelation from God he has no commission from Him. We must see Jesus if we are to be witnesses for Him. The fear of man bringeth a snare. An enlarged sphere of usefulness did not improve in any way the faithless Levite; it only served to show more fully his godless and time-serving spirit. Higher positions and larger congregations are not enough to make a successful ministry. A self-seeking servant of Christ will always be powerless in the presence of ungodliness and open iniquity.

VI. Successors. "The children of Dan set up the graven image; and Jonathan and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan" (chap. Judges 18:30-31). The unprincipled young Levite suddenly drops out of sight as a lifeless, worthless thing. He has wrought no reform amongst the idolatrous

Danites; he has left no faithful example behind him. He came as an unclean bird, devoured so much flesh, and flew off we know not where. But Micah's graven image still stands in their midst and usurps the place of the God of Israel. His successor was no better than himself. In this instance it was "like people, like priest." The utter worthlessness of an unspiritual ministry is here revealed, the need of being baptised in the Holy Ghost is strongly implied (John 15:16, John 15:26-27).

COUNSEL FOR BACKSLIDERS.

"Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord" (Lamentations 3:40).

1. This is a needful work. "Turn again." Implying that we have turned away from the Lord (Romans 3:12).

2. This is a personal work. "Let us." Self-examination needed (1 Corinthians 11:28).

3. This must be a careful work. "Search." Search the motives and the condition of heart that has fostered them (Psalms 51:6).

4. This is a humbling work. "Try our ways" (Psalms 26:2; 1 John 1:9).

5. This will be a profitable work. "Turn again to the Lord" (Hebrews 10:19-20).

Ruth

THE STORY OF RUTH

RUTH, THE DECIDED PILGRIM.

Chapter 1.-"Choose ye this day."

THE BOOK OF RUTH, like the Song of Solomon, is full of grace and truth. It evidently belongs to the times of the Judges, perhaps to the early days of Gideon, when the Midianites prevailed and "destroyed the increase of the earth," thereby causing a "famine in the land" (Judges 6:1-6), which constrained this "certain man" to sojourn in Moab (Rth_1:1).

Hosea 7:2, "And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there." Famine drove them there, and Moabitish connection kept them there. "In the days of adversity consider"-for adversity will either drive a Christian nearer his God or nearer the world. If faith does not cling to Him the flesh will drag from Him. Did ever any believer make anything of going to Egypt for help? What did Lot make? or the Prodigal, or Elimelech? Naomi lost both her husband and sons through her journey to Moab. It was all right to go to Egypt for help when Joseph was there, because there was corn in Egypt; but now the true Joseph has been exalted to Heaven, and woe must come upon them that seek help apart from Him. Those who go to the world for help instead of to Him are likely to come back like Naomi a weeping widow bereft of all, or like the Prodigal, repentant in shameful rags.

"Then she arose" (Rth_1:6). The Prodigal also remembered his father's house in the far country, and said, "I will arise." "Naomi heard that the Lord had visited His people, and given them bread," and this was gospel to the afflicted wanderer. She believed the tidings, and her faith brought her back. She heard, she believed, she acted. "Faith cometh by hearing." The Gospel of God is good news from a far country. Man has wandered far from God. The good news has reached the world, that God has visited the people in the person of His Son, and given them bread-"The Bread of Life." Oh! that the weary, famished, broken-hearted wanderers who have heard the good tidings would, like Naomi, "Arise." Many have heard this blessed Gospel in the far country of alienation, but how few have believed the report; the majority seem content to dwell in Moab, and feed on the husks that the swine do eat.

"She went forth OUT of the place" (Rth_1:7). There cannot be a returning without a separation. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate" (2 Corinthians 6:17). If Heaven would be gained the world must be shunned; if you would eat at the Father's table the swine-troughs must be forsaken. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Luke 16:13). Choose whom ye will serve. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in Him" (1 John 2:15).

"Surely we will return with thee unto thy people" (Rth_1:10). This is the language of Ruth and Orpah, and seemingly both alike earnest. But those who would follow the religion of Jesus Christ must endure trial, and to stand must be decided. There are many Orpahs who, through adversity

or excitement, run well for a time, but by and by they forsake, like Demas, because they love the world, and not unfrequently do such sever themselves, like Orpah, with the kiss of pretended friendship. Rest, in the Moab of this present evil world, is what rebel man would like; but Matthew 11:28 is God's way.

"And Naomi said, Why will ye go with me?" (Rth_1:11). The motives of every professed disciple must be tested. No earthly inducement is offered. No worldly preferment can be gained. "I am too old to have an husband." Undying love alone to the Person of Jesus will spurn every worldly temptation and go forward.

"Behold thy sister has gone back" (Rth_1:15). Why? Was not Bethlehem in her eye? Ah, yes! but Moab was in her heart. "Remember Lot's wife." There is no neutral standing; it must be either back to your people and your gods, or "thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." It becomes those who name the Name of Jesus to depart from all iniquity. There may be mouth profession where there is heart division, and to trust in profession is to lean on a shadow. In Matthew 11:7 Orpah went out; in Matthew 11:15 we see her gone back. The going back of one will always prove an additional trial to another; but see how Ruth overcomes the temptation. She said: "Entreat me not to leave thee." What decision there is in the words and tone of her reply, and why so decided, and why did Naomi cease to try her? Because she was "steadfastly-minded" (Rth_1:18). The double-minded are unstable. Her heart was fixed. Would that all the disciples of Jesus were like-minded. She could truly say: "One thing I do, forgetting the things that are behind, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling" (Php_3:14). And did she not gain the prize of the high calling when she was made the wife of the wealthy Boaz? "Let no man take thy crown" (Revelation 3:11).

Every true believer in Jesus can use the language of Ruth in a deeper spiritual sense. They can say: "Whither Thou goest I will go, where Thou lodgest I will lodge; Thy people shall be my people, Thy God my God." They can also add: "Where Thou diest I have died, and there have I been buried (but now risen again, and nothing shall part Thee and me. Neither life not death, nor any other creature shall be able." Every Gospel hearer makes their choice either to go "out" or "to go back." What is your choice? "Wilt thou go with this man?" was asked of Rebekah. Her reply was, "I will go." In Luke 14 they began to make excuse; in 2 Chronicles 30:10, "they laughed them to scorn."

"So they two went until they came to Bethlehem" (Rth_1:19). Can two walk together except they be agreed? Here we are reminded of the two on their way to Emmaus. Naomi and Ruth walking together is a beautiful picture of our fellowship one with another on our way to the heavenly Bethlehem (house of bread) with the mutual understanding that naught but death can part us; but our walk with the Lord Jesus death cannot even interrupt. "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14:19).

Bethlehem may represent the Church; so we read, when they came to Bethlehem all the city was moved about them. There was joy in the house when the Prodigal came back: there is joy among the angels when one sinner repenteth. This joy is real, because the Church is a family in nature as well as in name. But they say in astonishment: "Is this Naomi?" (Rth_1:19). What a change, few perhaps can recognise her. Ah! the far country experience is generally a sad one, the pleasant is turned into bitterness, plenty transformed into poverty, fullness gives place to emptiness. She has

to confess, "I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty" (Rth_1:21). So with the Prodigal. He gathered all together, but he came home empty, and if the servants did not know him, the father did, and that too a long way off. You remember how the man came back that went down to Jericho and fell among thieves.

If a Christian backslides down into the world, how can he escape being robbed of all he possesses, robbed of his peace, his joy, and his testimony, and when the Lord brings him back (for the Lord will bring him back), it will be in sorrow, shame, and in bitterness of soul, but yet Ruth may be with him, a child of the far country, an experience that will be a blessing to him in the future.

Now, Naomi in reviewing her wilful wanderings, has to acknowledge that "the Lord hath testified against me" (Rth_1:21). He testifies against every backslider. Are you as near the Lord as you used to be? Is He testifying against you? Return, O wanderer, to thy home!"

OUTLINE OF CHAPTER I.

I. A God-Dishonouring Choice (Rth_1:1-2). Elimelech means, "My God is King." Why, then, should he go to Moab, and come under Chemosh, the fire-god of the heathen? When we fail to trust the true God we come under the power of the god of this world.

II. A Miserable Experience (Rth_1:3-5). Naomi lost her husband and two sons in the far country. Forsaking God for worldly advantages and material prosperity will surely bring soul misery.

III. A Soul-Moving Story (Rth_1:6). "the Lord had visited, and given them bread." Such is the Gospel, the story of Divine supply for the needy.

IV. A Testing Time (Rth_1:7-13). "She went forth." Faith leads to definite action. Her action powerfully influences others. Ruth and Orpah are both deeply moved. "They, seeing your good works" (Matthew 5:16).

V. A Final Decision (Rth_1:14-18). The one follows no more, the other clings as for very life. The unstable kiss and go back. The steadfastly minded leave all and press on.

VI. A Humbling Confession (Rth_1:21). "I went out full, but come back empty." Yes, we need to be emptied that we might be restored to faith in God. But, thank God, the way back is still open.

VII. A Hearty Welcome (Rth_1:19). "All the city was moved." To come back to a life of simple trust in God is to come into the warmth of a home. Such a backcoming is always seasonable (Rth_1:22)-the beginning of harvest.

RUTH, THE HUMBLE SEEKER.

Chapter Rth_2:1-12.-"Seek and ye shall find."

"Naomi had a kinsman, a mighty man of wealth" (Rth_2:1). Then why did she go to Moab instead of coming to her wealthy kinsman? Why do many in the time of trial forsake the Fountain of living water and go to broken cisterns? Boaz means strength. What foolishness it is then in the hour of weakness to forget the friend that is strong. Our kinsman Redeemer is a mighty man of wealth, and if I speak of strength, lo! He is strong.

Perhaps the spirit of independence and self-will restrained Elimelech and his wife from asking help from Boaz. They would shift for themselves rather than bow to beg; but what disappointment it brought, what a sorrowful failure it proved. It is always so if we are too proud to let our requests be made known unto God. He may allow us to follow our own stubborn way until we have spent all the strength and energy we had. Then shall we be glad to come back in our emptiness, and be thankful for the gleanings from the fields of our rich kinsman. "Ye have not, because ye ask not" (James 4:2).

Ruth said to Naomi, "Let me go to the field and glean" (Rth_2:2). Ruth may here represent an anxious soul in search of the truth. She has forsaken her old companions and her gods. "Left all," but she has not yet found rest to her soul; but like an earnest seeker, she is not ashamed to gird herself with the gleaner's apron. Those who are ashamed of the truth of God's Word are those who don't know its sacred worth. Many would be glad to get the corn of the heavenly Bethlehem for their souls, but they are ashamed to confess their anxiety by appearing as a gleaner or a seeker. Rather than seek they starve. They deem it prudent that no one should know their need. Ruth did not need to be driven to it, or even persuaded; she went because she desired to go. When any one is really anxious about their souls they will not need to be compelled to search the Scriptures.

Notice also that Ruth knew where to go to glean. "Among the reapers" (Rth_2:3). This is the most likely place to find. Where is a troubled honest seeker most likely to find the needed blessing? Is it not by following after the ministry of those who are "reapers," those who know what to bring in, and what to leave out. As in Leviticus 19:19 some, heedless of this command, gather in all, they don't rightly divide the Word.

"Her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging to Boaz;... and behold Boaz came" (Rth_2:3-4). "The steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord" (Psalms 37:23). Many a seeker has been constrained to use language like this. "They happened just to light on a part of Scripture that talked about Jesus, and as they went on, wondrous revelations were made." Behold the Master comes and talks with them. While Ruth was gleaning Boaz appeared, and after saluting his servants (for there is mutual love and confidence between Boaz and his workers; he comes with grace in his heart and a blessing on his lips, and his servants bless him; so is it with the willing servants of Jesus, mutual confidence and mutual blessing) he inquires, "Whose damsel is this?" (Rth_2:5) "The Master is come and calleth for thee" (John 11:28). His compassionate eye rests kindly on the anxious stranger. He draws near, he speaks, "Hearest thou not, my daughter" (Rth_2:8). It is quite possible for one to be so busy seeking that they do not at first hear the voice of the Master. His words to the seeker are full of grace. "Go not to glean in another field, but abide here." The law allowed her to glean (Leviticus 19:9), but only grace would say, ."Abide here." Here the Master has found the seeking one. The Good Shepherd seeks till He finds. When a seeking sinner is earnestly following the "reapers" and searching the field of revelation the Master is sure to meet him, and bless him with that grace that fills His heart, and constantly flows from His lips. His grace is good news to the weary gleaner. Grace came to Ruth by Boaz. He knows how to speak a word to the weary.

"Go not to glean in another field" (Rth_2:8). The field of carnal reason will offer you only chaff and stubble. If ye abide in Me, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Grace brought to

Ruth far above what she could ask or think. Not only "liberty," but "protection." "He charged them not to touch her" (Rth_2:9). Such is the privilege of all those who share this grace "wherein we stand."

Now, what effect had this manifestation of grace upon Ruth, did it make her self-confident and boastful? Oh, no!

"She fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground" (Rth_2:10). When a weary, heavy laden soul sees the exceeding riches of His grace self is bowed to the ground. When Saul met the Lord he fell to the earth. It is not the wrath of God that leads us to repentance, but His goodness. The hammer of the law may break the icy heart in pieces, only grace can melt it, but it is easiest melted when broken. After being bowed down with a mighty sense of unworthiness, she asks, "Why have I found grace in thine eye, I a poor stranger, thou a mighty man of wealth" (Rth_2:10). "Grace," and oh, such grace! "Why?" Just because He is gracious. It is a sure sign that grace is received and enjoyed when this question is so spontaneously asked, "Why have I?" There is astonishment that such unworthiness should be so highly favoured. These are the first feelings of the new born soul. "Herein is love" (1 John 3:1). And Boaz said, "It hath been fully showed me all that thou hast done unto thy mother" (Rth_2:11). "I know thy works" (Revelation 2:2). It hath been fully showed Him (Jesus) all we, have done, whether good or bad. "Inasmuch as ye did it unto these, ye did it unto Me" (Matthew 25:40). Naomi was the friend of Boaz. Is it not comforting to remember that He knows all the little deeds of kindness we do, no matter how much the blinded world may misjudge our acts?

"Where He may lead I'll follow,

My trust in Him repose;

And every hour in perfect peace,

I'll sing He knows. He knows."

OUTLINE OF CHAPTER

Rth_2:1-12.

I. Her Great Humility (Rth_2:2). In desiring to become a gleaner she shows her willingness to take the place of a poor one. But she would rather do that than go back to Moab. Her separation from her old life was complete. She is not ashamed to take the place of a seeker.

II. Her Good Fortune. "Her hap was" (Rth_2:3). She may have gone out trembling, but the guiding Spirit of God was with her, as He is ever with those who have turned their backs upon the far country and its gods. It was while she was seeking that she met the mighty man of wealth.

III. Her Character Searched Out (Rth_2:5-7). The master considers her case. Nothing is hid from him. "It has been fully showed me," he said. "I know thy works, and labour of love."

IV. Her Path Made Plain (Rth_2:8). "Go not, abide here." All fear is now dispelled by the assurance of his grace. Truth-seekers in the field of His Word will find grace upon grace.

V. Her Grateful Acknowledgment. "She fell, and bowed, and said," etc. (Rth_2:10) "Why have I?" Just because he is gracious. She could not plead that she deserved such grace, but she thankfully acknowledged it.

VI. Her Heart Comforted. (1) Comforted with the assurance that he knows all about her (Rth_2:11). (2) Comforted with the assurance that he is in full sympathy with her (Rth_2:12). He desired for her refuge and rest under the wings of Jehovah. All this our heavenly Boaz (Jesus) gives to them that trust Him (Matthew 23:37).

RUTH, THE SUCCESSFUL GLEANER.

Chapter Rth_2:13-23.-"Grace reigns."

It now becomes the subject of grace to acknowledge the blessing received. Ruth said, "Thou hast comforted me, Thou hast spoken friendly (to the heart-margin) unto thine handmaid" (Rth_2:13). When the Master speaks He speaks home to the heart. He well knows the trouble is there; He came to bind up the broken-hearted. Ruth's confession of grace received just opened the channel wider for the outflow of grace, for Boaz said unto her, "At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread" (Rth_2:14), the bread provided by Him for His servants. She now enjoys the privilege of the servant sitting at the Master's table, eating the Master's bread in fellowship with the Master's servants.

"She sat beside the reapers" (Rth_2:14). No doubt these were seasons of rest and times of refreshing (Isaiah 28:12) to this weary labourer; and, moreover, "He reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed" (Rth_2:14)

How sweet to get the bread fresh from the Master's hand. This is, indeed, soul-satisfying grace. Many get their bread at second-hand, and are rarely satisfied. Ruth's was a hand-to-mouth existence, but it was from His hand to her mouth, the hand of the mighty man of wealth.

What a lovely little picture is here of those memorable times of blessing wherein our Lord and Master refreshes the hearts of His servants while they are bearing the burden and heat of the day. When He invites them to "Come and dine" (John 21:12), and they sit down with Him, and receive from His own hand those things which He hath provided for them, "My God shall supply all your need" (Php_4:19). Yet although Ruth had experienced great grace, there is still more to follow, for it is all of grace from beginning to end. Salvation by grace, and the life of faith, are beautifully manifested in this touching story. Ruth offers no excuse, but thankfully receives all He gives. She does not dishonour Him by thinking He is giving too much. Many Christians dishonour the mighty Son of God by living more like paupers than princes.

"All things work together for good" (Romans 8:28). While Ruth is busy gleaning, Boaz is busy planning for her comfort and success. "He goeth before" (Matthew 28:7). Boaz commanded the young men, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and let fall also handfuls on purpose for her." What words of grace are these. Gleaning among the sheaves is the privilege of those who have found favour in the sight of the Master; and what rich sheaves of promise we have in the field of His Word! But only believers have the liberty to glean here (Ephesians 2:12), and according to your faith be it unto you. Those also who have found grace in His sight find many an unexpected handful that has been dropped on purpose for them. And notice, these handfuls did not fall by

chance, they were each a gift of his grace. So our blessed Master does not leave His servants to the caprice of blind chance, or to pick up what joy and comfort they may; but many a rich handful He drops on purpose to comfort and cheer them in their work. Gleaning among the greedy and the selfish is most arduous, miserable work, and such is the worldling, seeking satisfaction in other fields. But how different in the field where grace reigns! There the handfuls are dropped on purpose. If you go to glean on other fields be sure the handfuls will cease. Jesus says, "Follow Me."

Now we read that she "beat out that she had gleaned, and took it up" (Rth_2:17). While gleaning in the field of Revelation, among the thoughts of God, how apt we are to gather also the chaff and straw of the foolish thoughts of our own evil hearts. The chaff and straw may increase the bulk, but they will not increase the value of what we may have gleaned. The wheat is precious in proportion as it is pure. So there is much need for the beating out, and this can be best done where Ruth did it-in the field. If, like her, we are more anxious for quality than quantity, then by comparing Scripture with Scripture the truth of God will be clearly beaten out. This is the fine wheat, take it up, and let the chaff go to the wind and the straw to the fire. Preach the Word; if you can't eat the chaff yourself, don't give it to another.

It is also worthy of notice that "she brought forth, and gave her mother" (Rth_2:18) not only what she had gleaned, but also the prepared corn which she had received direct from the hand of Boaz (Rth_2:14). She had received it all through grace, and she kept nothing back. If Naomi represents "pure religion," why does it lack so much? Is it not because many of the gleaners keep back part of the price, laying up for themselves while the kindred of Jesus are in need?

Then Naomi said, "Where hast thou gleaned today?" (Rth_2:19). Ah! she had been with the "mighty man of wealth," and in the fat pastures where the handfuls are dropped on purpose. Ruth answered, "The man's name is Boaz." (Rth_2:19). That was enough. When servants come out from the presence of Jesus to speak of His Name they come as those bearing much precious seed; there is a heavenly beauty and freshness about them, so that some may be constrained to ask: Where hast thou gleaned today? But the answer immediately follows: We have been with Jesus, the mighty God, the Prince of Peace.

Ruth went home and told her friend what great things Boaz had done for her and promised to her. Those who value the grace and fellowship of Jesus will also value the privilege of telling others what His grace has done for them. "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul" (Psalms 66:16).

OUTLINE OF CHAPTER

Rth_2:13-23.

Ruth went out empty, but she came back laden with blessing and beaming with joy. So much so that Naomi was constrained to say, "Where hast thou gleaned to-day?" (Rth_2:19). The secret of her success lay in this-

I. She had been with a mighty man of wealth (Rth_2:1-19). Like Christ, Boaz had (1) a wealth of possessions; (2)a wealth of influence; (3) a wealth of grace.

II. She had been with a near kinsman (Rth_2:20). She knew not of the near relationship, but he did. The kinsman had the right to avenge or redeem. Our Kinsman Redeemer came not to condemn, but to give His life a ransom for us.

III. She had been with one who understood her need. He spoke to her heart (Rth_2:13, margin). This is always the manner of our Redeemer, for He knows what is in man.

IV. She had been with one who was not ashamed to acknowledge her publicly (Rth_2:14). "She sat beside his reapers: and he reached her parched corn." He gave her a time of refreshing from his own presence. Ruth never says "No" to the gifts of his grace.

V. She had been with one who planned for her good. His eye was over all the field, and all were ready to do his bidding. So handfuls were dropped on purpose for her, "according to His will" (Romans 8:28). They are blessed indeed who come into touch with the unsearchable riches of Christ.

RUTH, THE RESTFUL BELIEVER.

Chapter 3.-"Rest in the Lord."

Then Naomi said, "My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee?" (Rth_3:1). Ruth had found favour in the sight of Boaz, and had tasted the exceeding riches of his grace, but she had not yet found the rest of unbroken fellowship. She was not yet in the yoke with Boaz by the marriage tie. "Take my yoke upon you, and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matthew 11:29). This was the rest that now remained for Ruth. Union to the mighty man of wealth is the almighty remedy for her poverty. Are there not many timid believers who have rejoiced in the grace of Jesus but cannot yet call Him My Lord, My Shepherd? The only way to abiding communion and uninterrupted fellowship is Ruth's way, "faith and obedience." She believed all that Boaz told her, and did all he bade her (Rth_3:5).

"Behold he winnoweth barley to-night" (Rth_3:2). This is not the reapers' work, they have gone to their rest. Now He comes whose fan is in His hand, He will thoroughly purge His floor. Every day's work has to be winnowed by the Master, and to the servants of Christ this is a source of comfort, for with the barley, if much labour, there is also much chaff. So they are glad to have this work purged ere it reaches the garner, knowing that they are rewarded for the wheat, and not for the chaff, whose end is the fire because there is no life in it. And Naomi said, "Wash thyself" (Rth_3:3), and get thee down to the floor. This advice given to Ruth was practical and common sense, for although she had experienced great grace at the hand of Boaz, yet in approaching him for higher favours still she must use every means possible to secure the blessing desired. And so should we in making our requests known unto Him. If we regard iniquity in our heart the Lord will not hear. First, be reconciled to thy brother, "wash thyself," put away and incline your heart (Joshua 24:23).

Naomi also said, "Mark the place where he shall lie" (Rth_3:4), and lay thee down at his feet, and he will tell thee what thou shalt do. If we want to learn the will of our Master toward us we too must be willing to lie at His feet. Mark the promise He has given, for this is where the Master lies, and lay thyself down there and pull the skirt of His Word over thee, and wait patiently for Him, for He will tell thee what thou shalt do. Notice the three steps of Ruth to the feet of Boaz: (1) Washing. (2) Watching. (3) Waiting.

"When Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down" (Rth_3:7). The master had sown the seed and carefully watched it from the blade to the earing. Now the harvest is past, the winnowing is over. His soul is satisfied, and he rests. Shall not our Divine Master also see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied when He shall with the fan of judgment winnow the mixed mass on the floor of the world? Shall there not be enough to satisfy His longing soul and make glad the heart of Him who went out from the home of His glory, bearing precious seed, and who sowed in tears? (Luke 19:41). Shall He be sorry that the chaff has been blown away? He shall rejoice over His people with singing (Zephaniah 3:17).

"And it came to pass that at midnight he said, Who art thou?" (Rth_3:8). Though He tarry, wait for Him. His voice is often heard at midnight by the waiting one, while others, it may be, are all insensible to His presence. The special blessing is often received through special waiting.

OUTLINE OF CHAPTER 3.

Naomi had great faith in their Kinsman Redeemer. Now that Ruth had put her case into his hands, she is told to "Sit still, for the man will not be in rest till he have finished the thing" (Rth_3:18). See how Ruth entered into that blessed rest.

I. She casts herself at his feet (Rth_3:4-6). She had offered a request before (chap. Rth_2:7), but now she offers herself. It was in the darkest hour of the night that his voice was heard.

II. She claimed him as her kinsman (Rth_3:9). She claims the fulfilment of his office as redeemer in her behalf. It was a great demand for a poor stranger to make, but the mighty man of grace looked upon it as an act of kindness showed Him (Rth_3:10).

III. She received his promise (Rth_3:10-13). There was no reluctance in Boaz to perform the part of a kinsman redeemer. She asks, and at once the promise is given. He is faithful who hath promised. Ruth does not make him a liar by guilty doubt.

IV. She rests in his work. She sits still now, leaving him to do the redeeming work. What else could she do? The work was not hers, but his. She had his promise that he would finish the thing. So she rests in faith. Rest in the Lord. Trust also in Him, and He will bring it to pass. (Leviticus 16:30-31).

RUTH, REDEEMED AND CLAIMED.

Ruth 4.

"Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat down there" (Rth_4:1). What to do? To intercede for Ruth. And success is sure with such an intercessor, being "a mighty man of wealth." He is a man of mighty influence, and must prevail. Are we not reminded here of Him who has ascended up on high, and is set down at the Father's right hand to make intercession for us who have been found of Him? He that delighteth in mercy, and who is able to save to the uttermost (to the end) all that come unto God through Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. And Boaz said to his kinsman, "Redeem, for there is none to redeem beside thee; and I am after thee" (Rth_4:4). This kinsman, like the law, had the first claim, but not the ability to redeem. The law is our kinsman condemner; but Jesus, like Boaz, is our Kinsman Redeemer. By the law is the knowledge of sin, not the forgiveness of sin. This we can have through the precious Blood alone, the great redemption price. By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified. The answer this kinsman gave

was, "I cannot redeem." But Boaz, the mighty man of wealth, is well able to redeem, therefore what the law could not do "in that it was weak" (Romans 8:3), abounding grace hath accomplished, for "He hath redeemed" (Galatians 3:13).

Boaz said, "What day thou buyest the field, buy (it) also of Ruth" (Rth_4:5). Ruth, as emblematic of the Church, is the real treasure in the field. The field is the world; the treasure is the Church, as in Matthew 13:44. And our heavenly Boaz, who was rich, for our sakes became poor, because He sold all that He had and bought the field, that He might secure the hidden treasure.

"And Boaz said unto the elders and all the people, Ye are my witnesses that Ruth, the Moabitess, have I purchased to be my wife" (Rth_4:10). A few points are worthy of notice in connection with this Redemption.

I. He only could redeem. He had the right as kinsman; he had the power as a mighty man of wealth; he was also in the right condition to redeem, being alone; and now the redemption itself brings joy and satisfaction to his own soul. And shall not the redeemed Church be to the heart of her Redeemer a new source of eternal joy and satisfaction? He shall be satisfied. Christ only can redeem. His incarnation made Him our Kinsman, and gave Him the right to redeem. His divinity made Him mighty, and gave Him the power to redeem. We have redemption through His Blood (1 Peter 1:18-19).

II. This was a Willing Redemption. Boaz did not grudge the redemption money. How could he when his heart was set on the purchase of Ruth? He willingly offered the full price, although that price included the gift of himself. So was it with Jesus, our princely Kinsman, who loved us and gave Himself for us, that He might give Himself to us. Nor did He hesitate to pay the awful price of sorrow, suffering, and blood, that He might redeem us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.

III. This was a Gracious Redemption. Boaz was not ashamed to redeem Ruth, the poor stranger. The prince of wealth stoops to lift the poor helpless one, who cannot redeem herself. He hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden; he hath shown strength with his arm; he hath exalted them of low degree, he hath filled the hungry soul with good things, and now the soul of Ruth shall magnify her lord. The wealthy Prince of Heaven is ashamed of none who look to Him for redemption. He says, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved." He invites the wretched, the miserable, the poor, the blind, and the naked to look to Him and trust in Him. Yea; He stoops in His redemption work to lift the helpless from the horrible pit on to the Rock of Strength, to lift the poor and the polluted from the dunghill, to rank among princes, and to be co-heirs with Himself. He is not ashamed to call them brethren. So the gleaner, through grace, becomes an heir of His glory.

IV. This was a Public Redemption. There were many witnesses to the fact that the price was paid; this thing was not done in a corner, but in the presence of the elders of all the people. When Moses smote the rock, it was in the presence of the elders. The Rock Christ was also publicly smitten, they put Him to an open shame. He suffered without the gate. As Boaz went up to the gate to finish the work in behalf of Ruth, in the sight of many witnesses, so Jesus went up to Calvary and finished the work the Father gave Him to do in behalf of His people. Afterwards, when the price was paid, He rose from the dead; and as Boaz, when the bargain was settled, "plucked off his shoe," Jesus plucked off the grave-clothes as a token that the covenant was sealed and the

inheritance redeemed; and the apostles say, "We are witnesses." He was seen of many.

V. The Purpose of this Redemption. "That the name of the dead be not cut off" (Rth_4:10). In Adam all have died unto God; but in Christ, through His redemption, all that believe are made alive unto God. Thus spiritual seed is raised, according to the gracious purpose of God. "Boaz did not redeem Ruth to be his slave." He says, "Ruth have I purchased to be my wife," to be part of himself. What more could he do for her than that he had done? Communion has now culminated in union. Her service henceforth shall be that loving, ready service which is the glad outflow from unity of heart, and purpose, and interest, and in the self-sacrificing spirit of those who abide in the Master's presence, and who know that He hates putting away. Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your bodies and spirits, which are His. It was the grace alone of Boaz that transformed the life and relationship of Ruth, and by faith she got access into this grace wherein she now stands and rejoices in hope.

VI. This was a Perfect Redemption. "Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife" (Rth_4:13). The prophecy of Naomi has now been fulfilled. "The man will not be at rest until he hath finished the thing" (chap. Rth_3:18). Our Kinsman Redeemer shall likewise come and finish the thing by taking His purchased Bride home to be with Himself, for where He is there shall we be also. The day that Boaz redeemed Ruth that same day he took her. The present dispensation is the day of salvation (redemption) to the Gentiles. At the close of this same day our Divine Kinsman shall appear, and take His redeemed Church to Himself. So shall she be for ever with her Lord and Saviour. When Ruth knew that Boaz had purchased her to be his wife, would she not be anxiously looking for him every moment to come and take her to be with himself? Is not this the present position of the Church? Working, waiting, watching, till He come who hath redeemed us by His own Blood, for the Lord Himself shall descend, and when He shall appear we shall be like Him, we shall see Him as He is, and dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. May the Lord direct your heart into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

1 Samuel

HANNAH; OR, THE TRIUMPH OF A SORROWFUL SPIRIT.

1 Samuel 1.

"Why comes temptation, but for man to meet

And master, and make crouch beneath his feet,

And so be pedestall'd in triumph."

-Browning.

It is refreshing to find such a gracious spirit as Hannah in the midst of the moral ruin that followed the priestly rule of the kind-hearted but weak-willed Eli. The man who is more concerned about the honour of his sons than the honour of God is sure to bring the holy cause into ridicule (chap. 1 Samuel 2:29). Hannah means grace, and she is true to her name; so the grace of God is made sufficient for her. There is much we might learn from her.

I. She was Sorrowful. "A woman of a sorrowful spirit" (1 Samuel 1:15).

1. Because she was Childless (1 Samuel 1:5). Believing that "Children are a heritage of the Lord" (Psalms 127:3), it vexed her soul that this heritage was not hers. She counted it a shame to be fruitless. Has your fruitlessness for God ever vexed your soul? It is a shame for any Christian to be barren in the work of God (2 Peter 1:8).

2. Because she was Mocked. "Peninnah, her adversary, provoked her sore, to make her fret" (1 Samuel 1:6). Her childless condition brought upon her the sneer of the ungodly. It is a heart-searching and deeply humbling experience for any child of grace, as Hannah was, to have the finger of derision and ridicule pointed at them by one who loves not the Lord and yet seems to enjoy more of His favour than the other. Is God ungracious? No; but those fiery shafts of the enemy may be permitted by God to convict us deeply of the barrenness of our lives, that we may cast ourselves the more unreservedly upon the Divine all-sufficiency.

3. Because she had a very Sensitive Nature. If she had had more brass in her heart she would have had fewer tears in her eyes (1 Samuel 1:7). There is great hope for any Christian worker who can weep over the fruitlessness of their lives. It is good that we should feel this "bitterness of soul before the Lord" (1 Samuel 1:10). Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion.

II. She was Prayerful.

1. She Prayed. "She prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore" (1 Samuel 1:10). She did not return railing for railing; being reviled, she threatened not. We may thank God for the trials that send us into His presence, to plead, with full purpose of heart. The scourges of the enemy only serve to drive her into the place of blessing.

2. She Vowed. "O Lord, if Thou wilt give unto Thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord" (1 Samuel 1:11). She purposes in her heart that if the Lord will, in mercy, roll away her reproach, she will consecrate His gift entirely to His service. This is a mighty argument with God. What will He withhold from those who seek not great things for themselves, but who desire to honour Him with His every gift.

3. She Believed. "So the woman went her way, and her countenance was no more sad" (1 Samuel 1:18). The Lord had spoken to her heart, as Boaz did to Ruth (Rth_2:13, margin). She brought her burden to the Lord, and she went away without it. It is one thing to tell the Lord about our burdens; it is quite another thing to cast them on the Lord (1 Peter 4:7). The countenance is sure to be changed when the heart has found rest in the will of God.

III. She was Joyful (chap. 1 Samuel 2:1).

1. Her Prayer was Answered. "She called his name Samuel, saying, Because I asked Him of the Lord" (1 Samuel 1:20). She asked a son, and the Lord did not give her a daughter. Whatsoever ye ask, believe that ye receive, and ye shall have. He who can make the barren woman to be a joyful mother of children (Psalms 113:9) can also make the fruitless Christian worker a happy winner of souls.

2. Her Testimony was Given. "I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying; and the Lord hath given me my petition" (1 Samuel 1:26-27). What a simple, yet powerful, testimony this is. She knew that He heard her, now she has the petition that she desired of Him (1 John 5:15). "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss" (James 4:3).

3. Her Vow was Performed. "As long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord" (1 Samuel 1:28). She paid her vow unto the Lord (Psalms 116:18). In the giving back of Samuel she was forming a powerful link of connection between herself and the Lord that must have enriched her whole life with blessing. Every sacrifice we make for the honour of our Lord will certainly increase our interest in Him. Be not like the wicked and slothful servant who hid his lord's money (Luke 19:22), but use for His glory every gift received, and every victory won, through the prayer of faith. THE CALL OF SAMUEL.

1 Samuel 3.

"Often through my heart is pealing

Many another voice than Thine;

Many an unwilling echo stealing

From the walls of this Thy shrine.

Let Thy longed-for accents fall:

Master, speak and silence all."

-F. R. Havergal.

"The Word of the Lord was precious (rare) in those days; there was no open vision." Why? The spiritual heavens were shut up, because of the unbelief and unrighteousness of God's professing

people (chap. 1 Samuel 2:12-17). In these degenerate days God takes the child Samuel and sets him in the midst, that out of the mouth of this babe He might ordain strength (Psalms 8:2). God hath chosen the weak things to confound the mighty (1 Corinthians 1:27). Samuel was "lent unto the Lord" (chap. 1 Samuel 1:28). Now the Lord takes the loan of him that He might through him speak to all Israel. We may learn here-

I. That the Call of God may Come very Early in Life. Samuel must have been quite a child when the Lord spoke to him, perhaps about six years of age. Is it not wonderful that the Almighty, the "Ancient of Days," can make His will known to a child? "They that seek Me early shall find Me" (Proverbs 8:17). "The High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity" dwells with the humble spirit (Isaiah 57:15).

II. That the Call of God may come, although we may have had no Personal Experience of God. "Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord" (1 Samuel 3:7). He believed in Him, but as yet he had had no personal dealings with Him. The existence of God was known to him, but the Word of the Lord had not yet been revealed unto him. He earnestly worshipped the Lord, according to the traditional faith (chap. 1 Samuel 1:28), but as yet he had received no definite message from Him. What a difference it makes in one's religious life when His Word has been heard, and His will concerning us as individuals has been clearly revealed. This is eternal life, to know Him and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent. Those who honestly seek like Samuel shall surely find.

III. That the Call of God Comes at an Opportune Time. "Ere the lamp of God went out" (1 Samuel 3:3). There is something melancholy in the very idea of the lamp of God going out. Had He not expressly commanded that the light of the holy lamp-stand was to burn continually (Leviticus 24:2). Does it not reveal the backslidden condition of the priesthood, that the lamp of God was allowed to go out? It is suggestive of the watchful grace of God that He spoke to Samuel ere the sacred light had died away into midnight darkness. How fares it with the lamp of God in our own hearts? Is our testimony dying down for the lack of fresh oil?

IV. That the Call of God may Come in a very Natural Way. "The Lord called Samuel, and he ran unto Eli" (1 Samuel 3:4-5). The voice was so humanlike that he thought it was the voice of Eli. Let us take care that those calls or rebukes that come to us in familiar forms may not be the very voice of God to our own souls. The Lord had a purpose in speaking to Samuel as He did. He wished Eli, the priest, to know at the lips of the child that the Lord had spoken. Samuel's instantaneous obedience to the call reveals what manner of spirit he was of.

V. That the Call of God Demands an Answer to God. "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth" (1 Samuel 3:10). Eli could give Samuel no answer to the call of God. Those called of Him must respond to Him for themselves. It is so in the matter of salvation. Every one who has gone astray from God must turn back to Him, and with a willing ear hear what God the Lord will speak. It is so in the matter of consecration and service. No man can do this for us. We must yield ourselves unto God (Romans 6:13). It is with Him we have to do. The mighty God, the Lord hath spoken. Hear Him.

VI. That the Call of God may Involve Painful Testimony. "Samuel feared to show Eli the vision" (1 Samuel 3:15). It was a solemn and humiliating message that he had received for Eli. He and his house were to be set aside as unworthy of the priesthood. But the truth must be told, and let it be

said to the credit of the old weak-kneed priest that he was prepared to hear all that God had spoken, and to acquiesce in His will (1 Samuel 3:17-18). There be many who say, "Prophesy unto us smooth things," and who would be sorely offended if the whole counsel of God was told out in their ears. But the Lord will fulfil all His purposes, whether men will bear or forbear. When the learned and honoured Eli prove unfaithful, then the Lord will speak to some consecrated boy and make him a preacher of righteousness.

VII. That the Call of God Insures Fellowship and Victory. "The Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground" (1 Samuel 3:19). He never sends us a warfare on our own charges. When the Word of God is brought home to our hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit it is that it might be fulfilled in our own experience. His presence with us, in the preaching of His Word, is the guarantee that He will bring it to pass. "If the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken" (Deuteronomy 18:22). The word was not Samuel's, but the Lord's, so it will not return unto Him void. The secret of success in the Lord's work always lies in the doing of His will. "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it" (John 2:5). "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." THE LOSS OF THE ARK OF GOD.

1 Samuel 4:1-11.

"Yet the Power appears to-morrow

That to-day seems wholly lost,

And the reproductive sorrow

Is a treasure worth the cost."-Houghton. The capture of the Ark of God by the Philistines was the sorest blow that had ever fallen upon the nation of Israel. The corrupt state of the priesthood was to blame for this national failure and disgrace. There is a closer connection between holy living and national prosperity than many in these days seem to think. The Philistines, as the enemies of the Lord's people, are always aggressive when Israel is in a backsliding condition. The lusts of the flesh are sure to prevail when the soul gets out of communion with God.

I. What the Ark signifies. It was the symbol of the presence of God. It was the throne on which the Lord sat, and from which He ruled and taught His people (Exodus 25:22). It was also the mercy-seat, the medium through which He communed with Israel. What the Ark was to them Christ is to us, the resting-place, the medium of communion, and the channel of revelation and blessing.

II. When the Ark was brought out. After they had been smitten before their enemies they said, "Let us fetch the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord out: it may save us" (1 Samuel 4:3). It is good to fall back on God in the day of defeat, but is the favour and help of God only to be sought after we have done our best to succeed without Him? "Man's extremity may be God's opportunity," but why should God's opportunity only come after we have persistently ignored Him till we are dead beat?

III. The Dread of the Philistines at the Ark. "When they understood that the Ark of the Lord was come into the camp they were afraid" (1 Samuel 4:6-8). So well they might, if that Ark represents the presence of that Almighty God who smote the Egyptians with plagues, and wrought such miracles in the wilderness on their behalf (1 Samuel 4:8). If this is so, then in battling against the people of God they will be found fighting against God Himself. Alas! how often we Christians forget

what the men of the world remember, that if Christ is with us mighty works should show themselves, and that the more closely we are identified with Him in our work and warfare the more difficult and desperate does their own condition appear. The ungodly still dread a man full of the Holy Ghost. Well do they know that to oppose such they need to screw up their courage and "quit themselves like men" (1 Samuel 4:9; Luke 16:8).

IV. The Faith of Israel in the Ark. "It may save us out of the hands of our enemies" (1 Samuel 4:3). It is quite clear that their faith in the invisible God had withered up into a superstitious reverence for the material Ark. They worshipped the form, but denied the power. The God-deserted Ark (Psalms 78:60) was everything, while He who inhabiteth eternity had no place in their hearts. Instead of saying," Let us fetch the Ark," had they said, "Let us confess our sins and return to the Lord," He would doubtless have saved them. Multiplying forms in religious services will afford no security against the inroads of the enemy. The Gospel that is not in the power of the Spirit of God is only the Ark with the glory departed. The Philistines of to-day are in great force against the people of God. Let us fetch out the Gospel of God, but let us see that our faith is not in the mere form of words, but in the God of the Gospel. "The kingdom of God is not in word, but in Power" (1 Corinthians 4:20).

V. The Capture of the Ark. "The Ark of God was taken" (1 Samuel 4:11). The object of their confidence was taken from them, that their faith might be in God only. Let us learn from this-

1. That ungodly men cannot preserve the power of religion. The dissolute and licentious sons of Eli had charge of the Ark of the Covenant (1 Samuel 4:4). What a God-dishonouring association. Is it any wonder that the cause of God is turned into ridicule when self-seeking and unprincipled men have charge of the holy things? They must be clean that bare the vessels of the Lord.

2. That the Lord will not protect forms when the Spirit is gone. There is nothing in an empty dish to satisfy either God or man. The Pharisaic spirit is always ready to contend for the outward and the formal, because it is blind to the spiritual and the eternal.

3. That sin always brings defeat. If we regard iniquity in our heart the Lord will not hear. The secret sin of Achan brought open shame in Israel. The disobedience of Saul led to the departure of God from Him. "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). THE ARK OF GOD IN THE HANDS OF THE PHILISTINES.

1 Samuel 5:6.

"Blind unbelief is sure to err,And scan His work in vain;

God is His own interpreter, And He will make it plain."-Cowper.

While the jubilant Philistines were bearing away the Ark as a trophy, little did they think that they were bringing the judgment of God down among themselves. The Ark, like the Bible, may be a dead letter to some, but in the hands of the Holy Spirit it is a two-edged sword. It is always a solemn and critical thing to be brought into contact with that presence and power of which the Ark was the visible symbol, that power which killeth and maketh alive, that bringeth low and lifteth up (chap. 1 Samuel 2:6-8). The experiences of the Philistines, with the Ark of the Covenant, are very much the same as those of the ungodly now under the power of the Gospel of Christ.

I. Their Religion was Completely Upset. "Dagon fell upon his face before the Ark of the Lord, and his head and his hands were cut off" (1 Samuel 5:3-4). They put the Ark in the temple of their god, thinking to keep both. But God and Dagon cannot both rule in the same house. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." When Christ comes in the false theories and opinions of men must fall. The Dagon of self may stand erect, and claim all the homage and worship till the Ark of the Truth of God comes into the temple of the heart, then he must fall on his face before the Lord, and part with both his head and his hands. Until self is completely broken he will be set up again and again. Men still think that they have to do many and great things to merit the salvation of God; but when they come into the presence of Christ the Ark, their lofty thoughts and imaginations must fall down before Him.

II. They were Severely Smitten. "The hand of the Lord was heavy upon them, and destroyed and smote them" (1 Samuel 5:6, 1 Samuel 5:12). Not only was their god destroyed, but they themselves afflicted with painful tumours. The Ark of His presence brings no comfort or encouragement to those who are His enemies, nothing but the wounding and bruising of conviction and humiliation. "When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will reprove the world of sin, because they believe not in Me" (John 16:8-9). The Gospel will be the savour of death where it is not the savour of life. The Ark of the Lord is a dreadful possession to the unsaved.

III. They were Utterly Perplexed. "What shall we do to the Ark of the Lord?" (chap. 1 Samuel 6:2). They had sent it from city to city, seeking to get it peacefully disposed of, but this only increased their suffering and alarm. We are solemnly reminded here of how others, in after years, sought to get quit of Jesus Christ, the true Ark of God, until Pilate, almost in the exact words of the Philistines, said, "What shall I then do with Jesus?" Paul was playing the part of these troubled enemies of God when he kicked against the goadings of the Word of Truth (Acts 9:5). There is a tremendously important question that still presses with perplexing urgency upon ungodly men to whom the Gospel has come. How are you going to dispose of the claims of God and of His Christ? Submission or rejection?

IV. They Sent it Away. They made a new cart, put the Ark on it, and with a trespass offering they sent it away (1 Samuel 5:7-8). Suppose we read it thus: "They made a new cross, put Him on it, and as a trespass offering they sent Him away!" The Philistines would not have this Ark to rule over them. Away with it. Christ, like the Ark, was delivered up at the instigation of the chief priests (chap. 1 Samuel 6:2). The presence of the holy Ark of God's covenant testified against them, but there was no repentance of sin, no pleading for mercy, but a growing desire to get back to their former Arkless condition. They felt that they could not keep it and continue as they were. They must either send it away, or be reconciled to God. How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?

V. They had Clear Evidence of its Divine Character. "See if it goeth up by the way of His own coast, then the Lord hath done this: if not, then it was a chance that happened to us. And the kine took the straight way to Beth-shemesh" (1 Samuel 5:9-12). Thus they had another proof, in the manner of its home-coming, that the Lord God of Israel was with it, and had been dealing with them through it. Well might they have said, as the centurion did, when he saw the manner of the home-going of the rejected Saviour of men, "Truly this was the Son (Ark) of God" (Mark 15:39), The Gospel of God is still as the "Ark of the Covenant" among men. Mighty deeds are still being

wrought through it, false systems of religion fall down before it, and the enemies of the Lord are smitten with terror in its presence. By its works it asserts its own divinity. Yet many, though fully convinced that it is of God, treat it as the Philistines did the Ark, they refuse to yield to its claims, and politely send it away with an offering, and remain the enemies of God.

EBENEZER.

1 Samuel 7.

If in the past we have been faithful, we will now have much cause to be thankful. Before Ebenezer comes- 1. Contrition-"Israel lamented after the Lord" (1 Samuel 7:2).

2. Confession-"We have sinned against the Lord" (1 Samuel 7:6). After this there had to be- 3. Conversion-"Return unto the Lord" (1 Samuel 7:3).

4. Separation-"Put away the strange gods" (1 Samuel 7:3).

5. Consecration-"Prepare your heart unto the Lord, and serve Him only" (1 Samuel 7:3). These steps are always sure to lead up to Ebenezer: "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." This "Stone of help" has many tongues.

I. Ebenezer Speaks of Redemption. "Hitherto." This points us back to the bondage of Egypt-to the slavery of sin-to the hole of the pit whence we have been dug (Exodus 12:12-13; Ephesians 2:12-13).

II. Ebenezer Speaks of Preservation. "Hitherto hath." The Lord thee keeps. He kept them by His mighty power, and guided them by the skilfulness of His hands (Psalms 78:72). While walking through the dark shadows in the valley of life we need fear no evil (Psalms 23:4). He keepeth the feet of His saints, and their way too (Proverbs 2:8). May the prayer of Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 be fulfilled in us!

III. Ebenezer Speaks of Answered Prayer. "Hitherto hath the Lord helped." "Samuel cried unto the Lord, and the Lord heard him" (1 Samuel 7:9). The rain comes down according to the vapour that ascends (Job 36:27). The incense was put upon burning coals. Prayer must ascend from a burning heart. "Whatsoever ye ask believing." Every believing prayer will yet have its store of testimony.

IV. Ebenezer Speaks of Victory. While Samuel offered the Lamb, the Lord discomfited the enemy (1 Samuel 7:10). This was indeed victory through the Lamb. We, too, must overcome through the Blood of the Lamb (Revelation 12:11). It is when the Lamb of God is lifted up in presence of the ungodly that the Lord thunders with the voice of conviction.

V. Ebenezer Speaks of Divine Faithfulness. "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us"-helped us all the way. Not one good thing hath failed (Joshua 13:14). He is faithful that hath promised. His promises, like the barrel of meal, waste not (1 Kings 17:16). He that hath begun the good work will perform it (Php_1:6).

VI. Ebenezer Speaks of Testimony. "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." This is a noble, God-honouring confession. They give Him all the praise. What have we that we have not received? Yet not I, but Christ in me (Galatians 2:20). What have we done worth doing that He

hath not wrought in us? (Php_2:13). "To God be the glory, great things He hath done."

VII. Ebenezer Speaks of Encouragement for the Future. The Lord who hath blessed us "hitherto" will also bless us henceforth and for ever. He who hath delivered, and doth deliver, will yet deliver (2 Corinthians 1:10). "Be of good cheer" and "have faith in God."

SAUL, THE CHOICE YOUNG MAN.

1 Samuel 9.

"Life is the day of grace,

Up! Strive to win the race;

Lo! Grace and Truth have come;

Turn, listen, be not dumb."-Grosart. The morning of Saul's life was calm and bright, and full of promise; the midday was cloudy and threatening; the afternoon was cold, and dark, and stormy; the evening was terrific with the thunderstorm of despair, and suicidal blackness. His life began with a day of grace, and ended with the "wages of sin." In this chapter we have Saul brought before us as a "choice young man, and goodly." Let us take a look at him. He was so in his-

I. Personal Appearance. "There was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he" (1 Samuel 9:2). He had what almost every young man covets to have- an attractive and commanding persona. God had richly blessed him with a finely-formed and superior physical body. This is an inheritance that is not to be lightly esteemed, although many, both young men and young women, use this gift of God only for their own selfish ends. A healthy and well-formed body makes a beautiful temple for the Holy Spirit, and may be a mighty weapon in His hands to the pulling down of the strongholds of Satan.

II. Child-like Obedience. He went at once at his father's bidding to "seek the asses" (1 Samuel 9:3-4). Although Saul was "head and shoulders higher than any of the people," he was not too big to obey his father. This is a lovely trait in the character of a handsome young man. When the disciples strove about who should be greatest in the kingdom of God, Jesus took a little child and set him in the midst as an example of the true spirit of greatness, and said, "He that will be chiefest among you, let him be the servant of all" (Mark 10:44). He loved us, and gave Himself for us.

III. Filial Thoughtfulness. "Come, let us return, lest my father leave caring for the asses, and take thought for us" (1 Samuel 9:5). He was not so anxious about the objects of his pursuit as to forget the anxious thoughts of a loving father. There be many young men who leave home in the pursuit of business who, in their new surroundings, forget the yearnings of a father's heart, so that their letters home are long in coming. They are wise fathers who are more concerned about the safety of their sons than the success of their worldly business.

IV. Generous Disposition. When his servant suggested that they should consult the prophet about the lost asses, he at once reminded him that he had "not a present to bring to the man of God" (1 Samuel 9:6-7). This is quite an incidental revelation of the kindliness of his nature. He could not think of asking a favour, even from "the man of God," without recompensing him in some way (Judges 6:18). It is said that "generous natures go most readily astray." The very depth and force

of their generous affections may be their greatest temptation. But the shallow inconsiderate and selfish young man is already far astray. Look not every man on his own things (interests), but on the things (interests) of others (1 John 2:15).

V. Relationship to God. "When Samuel saw Saul, the Lord said unto Him, Behold the man! . . . this same man shall reign over My people" (1 Samuel 9:17). Not only was he "a choice young man" in the sight of men, but he was "a choice young man" in the sight of God. The highest honour any young man can have on earth is to be a chosen one of God; it is worth sacrificing all the world for such a favour. And this honour have all the saints in Christ Jesus. A young man may have many lovely features in his character, many rich moral qualities, yet if this link of Divine approbation is awanting he is like a beautiful ship laden with valuable goods, but drifting aimlessly on the ocean of life. He is out of harmony with the purpose of God. Saul did not find the asses, but he found a kingdom. His disappointment was God's appointment. The Gospel of Christ is God's call to every man to inherit the kingdom of Heaven. Ho! weary seekers in the world of business or pleasure, turn aside and seek the Prophet of Nazareth, He will give you a kingdom.

SAUL, THE ANOINTED.

1 Samuel 10.

"Take my life and let it be,

Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;

Take my moments and my days,

Let them flow in ceaseless praise."-Havergal.

Arnold has said, "While life is good to give, I give." This is beautiful. Why should we wait till our youthful strength and vigour are shrivelled up before we yield ourselves to God? Samuel, Saul, and David were all chosen of God while they were young. Surely the best of masters deserves the best of servants. We have seen Saul as "a choice young man." Let us look at him now as the "chosen of God." See how he was-

I. Separated by Anointing. "Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head" (1 Samuel 10:1), as a sign that the Lord had anointed him. Priests and kings were usually called out in this fashion (Exodus 29:7; 2 Kings 9:3). All God's chosen ones still are to be separated unto Himself by an holy anointing (1 John 2:27). There was but a very short interval between the revelation of the Divine purpose to Saul and the outpouring of the oil of consecration upon his head. As soon as we know the will of God we should be separated unto Him. "After that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Ghost" (Ephesians 1:13).

II. Encouraged by Promises. The prophet gave him a threefold word of assurance. There was a promise- 1. Concerning his Business. "Two men shall say unto thee, The asses are found" (1 Samuel 10:2).

2. Concerning his Bodily Wants. Three men would give him two loaves of bread (1 Samuel 10:3-4).

3. Concerning his Spiritual Need. "The Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee" (1 Samuel 10:6). Thus he was assured that as the chosen of God all things would work together for his good, and that God would make all grace abound toward him. This threefold assurance have all those who have received the anointing of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:32). The Lord never sends any one a warfare on his own charges.

III. Changed by Grace. "God gave him another heart" (1 Samuel 10:9). We may not reckon this change as equal to regeneration, but by the grace of God new motives and desires were begotten in the bosom of Saul. This sudden and unexpected revelation of the purpose of God concerning him had, morally, made him another man than what he was before he knew this great transforming truth. When "the grace of God that bringeth salvation" is revealed to us and received by us, it will certainly make new creatures of us. No man can be the same after receiving the kingdom of God. If the Gospel has not brought to us another heart we surely have not believed it.

IV. Assured by Circumstances. "All those signs came to pass" (1 Samuel 10:9). It is a blessed experience to find that our outward circumstances are made to conform and confirm the thoughts and intents of the inner life. When the purpose of God has been revealed, and our hearts and lives willingly yielded to the fulfilment of that purpose, we shall certainly see, in the providence of God, many confirming tokens. The outer wheels of our circumstances never move contrary to the inner workings of the Spirit of God. There may be wheels within wheels, but they are "full of eyes," and so cannot err (Ezekiel 1:18).

V. Moved by the Spirit. "The Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied" (1 Samuel 10:10-11). When the Spirit of God comes upon any one there are sure to be signs following. It is but natural for Saul to join in the song of the prophetic band when he was possessed by the same Spirit. Thus the word of Samuel was fulfilled (1 Samuel 10:6). Man at his best, apart from the power of the Holy Ghost, is but a poor weakling in the service of God; but the gift of the Spirit is the assurance of God to us, that all the resources of His grace and wisdom are within our reach for the honour of His Name (John 16:13-14). This was a priceless privilege conferred upon Saul, an astonishing favour. "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

VI. Humbled by the Prospect. "Saul was taken, and when they sought him he could not be found. Behold, he hath hid himself among the stuff" (1 Samuel 10:21-22). While he was little in his own eyes, all things kept working together for his good. It is not the grace of God that puffs up, but the wind of self-conceit. The kingdom had come to him, not because he had sought it, or wrought for it. It was to him the gift of God. He was deeply conscious of the insignificance of the tribe to which he belonged, and the smallness and poverty of his family (chap. 1 Samuel 9:21). But grace delights to lavish its wealth and honour upon the weak and unworthy (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). They that be whole need not a physician.

VII. Despised by the Worthless. "The children of Belial said, How shall this man save us? And they despised him," etc (1 Samuel 10:27). These sons of worthless men had perhaps known Saul from his boyhood, and like the modern sons of Belial they make no allowance whatever for the call of God and the anointing of His Spirit. It is no new thing to be despised and sneered at because we have had a new and soul-uplifting revelation of the goodness of God. The more God honours us the more will the lewd and self-deceived despise us in their hearts. But in this we are made partakers of the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ. The carnal mind is enmity against God. But

here Saul, like our Lord and Master, was patient in suffering. "He held his peace." It is an unmistakable proof of a young man's moral strength when he can treat his enemies with magnanimous silence.

SAUL, THE COURAGEOUS.

1 Samuel 11.

"Blessed are those who die for God,

And earn the martyr's crown of light;

Yet he who lives for God may be

A greater conqueror in His sight."-Proctor.

Although Saul had been already declared king (chap. 1 Samuel 10:24), he had seemingly gone back to his old occupation, and was tending the herd (1 Samuel 11:5). This in itself was a notable proof of the dignity and strength of Saul's moral character. Had he been a small, shallow, fussy soul he would have reckoned that his promotion to the kingdom had lifted him above the menial task of a herdman. Those who are conscious that God is with them can well afford to wait. "He that believeth shall not make haste." In this chapter we have brought before us a-

I. Sorrowful Message. Messengers came to Gibeah, and told how the city of Jabesh was besieged, and that Nahash the Ammonite would make a covenant with them, only on condition that he may thrust out all their right eyes for a reproach upon all Israel (1 Samuel 11:1-4). No wonder the people wept at such humility and barbarous tidings. But will ever the people of God be able to make a covenant of peace with the enemies of God without suffering loss? Such compromising was contrary to the Word of the Lord (Exodus 23:32). The enemy of our souls, the world, is still ready to make a covenant with us if we are willing to part with our spiritual eyesight.

II. Divine Call. "The Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard those tidings, and his anger was kindled greatly" (1 Samuel 11:5-6). A man may be as much under the power of the Holy Spirit when his soul is hot with burning indignation as when it is melted with tender compassion. There are different manifestations, but the same spirit. The source of his anger was doubtless the reproach threatened to all Israel (1 Samuel 11:2). Does the call of God not frequently come by the awakening in the soul of some overmastering desire? Look at the case of Gideon (Judges 6:34), of Jephthah (Judges 11:29), and of Samson (Judges 14:6). If the Holy Spirit has kindled in the heart any burning desire, we may take it as the call of God to go in and possess that thing so desired.

III. Fearless Challenge. The hewing of the yoke of oxen, and the sending of the gory pieces throughout all Israel (1 Samuel 11:7) was like the blast of a trumpet from Heaven to a drowsy nation. "The fear of the Lord fell on the people." When a man is acting under the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit there are sure to be signs following. God's man is never awanting when the national crisis comes. It was so in the days of Luther and of Knox. It has always been God's way to single out men through whom He might reveal His will and power. Fearlessness will ever characterise that one who is being borne along by the mighty rushing wind of the Holy Ghost (Acts 4:13).

IV. Great Deliverance. The summons of Saul met with a willing and general response-"they came out with one consent"-for God always works through the Spirit-inspired message. The relief of Jabesh was both timely and merciful (1 Samuel 11:8-11). These besieged citizens were on the brink of becoming a life-long reproach to all Israel (1 Samuel 11:2) by being disabled for war and bearing on their bodies the marks of a shameful defeat. This Spirit-moved leader was able to roll away the reproach. What a mighty power for Christ and His cause a Spirit-filled life may be! Are there not many to-day who, like the men of Jabesh-gilead, are in jeopardy of losing their testimony for Christ, and bringing reproach upon the whole Church of God? O that that sacrifice, which was, as it were, "hewed in pieces" on Calvary's Cross, might be preached with such freshness and power throughout all the land that the people of God would "come out with one consent" to the rescue of the oppressed and the salvation of the perishing.

V. Magnanimous Intervention. When the people proposed that all those opposed to the reign of Saul should be put to death (chap. 1 Samuel 10:27), Saul said, "There shall not a man be put to death this day" (1 Samuel 11:12-13). It well becomes those who enjoy great privileges at the hands of God to extend great forbearance to those who may trespass against us (see 2 Samuel 19:22). It ill becomes the servants of Christ to use their spiritual authority or ecclesiastical position for the purpose of avenging personal insult. Remember Him, who though He was reviled, reviled not again. The time is coming when Jesus Christ will deal with those who have opposed His rule (Luke 19:37).

VI. Happy Result. "They made Saul king before the Lord in Gilgal, and there Saul and all the people rejoiced greatly" (1 Samuel 11:14-15). This was the public confirmation of the secret call of God. Every secret blessing will have its open coronation (Matthew 6:6). The place, made memorable for suffering and humiliation (Joshua 5:2), has now become the place of exuberant joy. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. Those who have received the special anointing must ultimately rise to special honour. The kingdom did not come to Saul because he wrought for it. It was the gift of God, and being obedient, he is now crowned with honour and glory. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.

SAUL, THE DISOBEDIENT.

1 Samuel 13:1-14.

"None could trace God's will so plain as you, while yours Remained implied in it, but now you fail, And we, who prate about that will, are fools; In short, God's service is established here As He determines fit, and not your way- And this you cannot brook."-Browning.

Samuel, in the love of his heart, and in faithfulness to the Lord, had just sounded a note of warning to Saul and the people, accompanied with a gracious word of encouragement (chap. 1 Samuel 12:20-25). But in the day of prosperity we often fail to consider. "Saul reigned one year." This might be rendered: Saul was like a child of one year when he began to reign. All that we know of Saul up till this time bears this out. Like Uzziah, he was marvellously helped till he was strong (2 Chronicles 26:15-16). The pride that lifteth up the heart into self-confidence will surely end in destruction. God will never fail or forsake those who trust Him and are little in their own eyes.

I. His Duty was Plain. To get the explanation of 1 Samuel 13:8 we have to go back to chapter 1 Samuel 10:8. The word of the prophet was both urgent and explicit. "Seven days shall thou tarry,

till I come to thee, and show thee what thou shalt do." Although the time may have been about three years after, still Saul's way was perfectly plain; he was to do as occasion served him (chap. 1 Samuel 10:7) till this present crisis should come, then he was to wait for the ministry and guidance of the man of God. Our responsibility will be according to the light we have. If, like Saul, we are conscious of being chosen of God, and of being made partakers of the holy anointing (chap. 1 Samuel 10:1), then surely the revealed will of God must become the absolute and unconditional law of our life. This is the way, walk ye in it.

II. His Faith was Tried. The Philistines had gathered in great force to fight with Israel (1 Samuel 13:5). Saul had blown the trumpet throughout the land, and summoned the Hebrews to meet him at Gilgal. While he tarried there for seven days, according to the set time of Samuel, "the people were scattered from him" (1 Samuel 13:8). His waiting may have appeared to the already distressed army of Israel as a sign of weakness and fear, so many of them took advantage of the delay and hid themselves (1 Samuel 13:6). Day by day, as he waited for the prophet, he saw the strength of Israel melting away. Every hour he tarried seemed to make his case all the more hopeless. What a test to his faith and patience! What a struggle there must have been in his soul; what a conflict between faith and sight! It is always a sore trial to part with the Isaac of our hopes while we are following the bidding of God (1 Peter 1:7). "He must increase, I must decrease."

III. His Failure was Great. "Saul said, Bring hither a burnt-offering to me; and as soon as he had made an end of offering Samuel came" (1 Samuel 13:9-10). Saul had waited till almost the close of the seventh day, as Samuel had appointed; but ere the full time had come, through pressure of circumstances, his patience with the will of God had broken down. He had chosen his own way, and stepped out of the purpose and favour of God. Every Spirit-anointed one will have their testing time. As soon as Jesus Christ was baptised of the Spirit He was led into the wilderness to be tried (Mark 1:10-13). If Abraham had failed when the great testing crisis came he never would have become the "Father of the faithful." But he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief (Romans 4:20). The way to abiding honour and usefulness in the service of God is by "enduring as seeing Him who is invisible." To fail when we are brought face to face with the circumstances planned by God for the testing and developing of our faith is to be a life-long cripple in the work of the Lord. Whenever, as Christian workers, we choose our own way rather than wait on the fulfilment of God's Word, we become as bones out of joint in the body of Christ. Such can only live a painful life.

IV. His Excuse was Vain. "Samuel said, What hast thou done? Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me; ... I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt-offering" (1 Samuel 13:11-12). His army was dwindling away, the Philistine host was increasing, Samuel was long in coming, and his own patience was exhausted. Yetin taking the place of the priestly prophet he acted foolishly, and in direct rebellion against the commandment of the Lord (1 Samuel 13:13). For unbelief and disobedience there can be no excuse. No argument or reasoning can extenuate the guilt of doing what we know to be contrary to the mind of God. He that heareth the sayings of Christ, and believeth them not, is the foolish man that goes on building his life on the ruinous sand (Matthew 7:26). The most melancholy feature of Saul's attempt to justify himself is that there are no signs of repentance. After Samuel's solemn warning he proceeds to number the people (1 Samuel 13:15). When we have discovered that we have blundered and failed, and disobeyed, genuine repentance and confession is the only way back to God's favour and fellowship.

V. His Loss was Deplorable. "Now thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought Him a man after His own heart, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee" (1 Samuel 13:14). Saul has turned away from the Lord, now the Lord seeks another man after His own heart, as an instrument more willing to abide in His hand, for the working out of His purposes concerning Israel. All Saul's trumpeting and planning now can no more hinder the kingdom from settling down in David than he could hinder the sun from setting in the west. He may shake himself like Samson, but the power is gone. It is a solemn thought that we may be earnestly keeping up the form of our service for God in the energy of the flesh when the Spirit of power has departed from us. Let us never forget that to choose our own way is to choose loss and defeat. May God work in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure!

SAUL, THE CASTAWAY.

1 Samuel 15.

"Presume not to serve God apart from such

Appointed channel as He wills...

... He seeks not that His altars

Blaze-careless how, so that they do but blaze."

-Browning.

There is a zeal that is not according to knowledge, but which is a defiance of knowledge, a violation of the Word of God and of conscience. In seeking to serve God with our own will, while we reject His, we are as it were offering swines' flesh upon His altar. The Lord will have His altar blaze, but the sacrifice must be blameless. It would seem from these words, "Now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the Lord" (1 Samuel 15:1), that God was loath to withdraw His favour from Saul. Such is His lingering grace which gives room for repentance. Saul is to have another chance to show himself faithful to God. Notice his-

I. Commission. "Now go and smite Amalek and utterly destroy all" (1 Samuel 15:3). His orders were plain and explicit. Amalek, like Jericho, was to be entirely devoted to destruction (Joshua 6:17, marg.). Neither his feelings nor reason must stand in the way of the fulfilment of the divine purpose. When we have the Lord's bidding to go, even though it should be on the water, it is ours confidently to obey.

II. Disobedience. "But Saul spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, . . . and all that was good" (1 Samuel 15:9). The command was spare not, but he spared. He allowed his eye to govern his actions, so he walked not by faith but by sight. His natural instincts, as a judge of and dealer in cattle, overruled the direct Word of God; so he spared the best, and utterly destroyed the vile and the refuse. It is always easy to devote to God that which we do not want. Will He be pleased with the vile and the refuse while we spare the best for our own purposes? Whenever self-interest is allowed a place in our service for the Lord it is sure to be at the cost of faithfulness to Him.

III. Self-Justification. This is a very sad and melancholy episode in the life of Saul. May we take it as a trumpet-warning against self-deception. The Lord said to Samuel, "Saul hath not performed

my commandments" (1 Samuel 15:11). And when Samuel met Saul, after he had been triumphantly setting up a monument of his victory, he said with the utmost complacency, "I have performed the commandment of the Lord" (1 Samuel 15:12-13). At the same time the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen that he had spared as spoil were a solemn mockery in the sight of God. Like the crowing of the cock to Peter, they might have reminded Saul of his sin. But this was not all. When Samuel charged him with "not obeying the voice of the Lord," he answered, "Yea, I have obeyed" (1 Samuel 15:20). It is pitiful in the extreme to be seeking at any time to persuade ourselves that we are right with God when He had emphatically declared that we have "turned back." "Be not deceived, God is not mocked" (Galatians 6:7). The eyes of the Lord are upon us, as they were on Saul, watching whether we are faithful to Him and His Word. Every act of disobedience is an act of rebellion against God.

IV. Confession. Samuel had to be faithful with Saul, although he was deeply grieved at his failure, and had spent the whole night in "Crying unto the Lord" (1 Samuel 15:11). "To obey is better than sacrifice," he said, and "rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft" (1 Samuel 15:22-23). Saul discovered that the secret, selfish motives of his heart had blossomed and brought forth fruit that was sure to grow fearfully bitter, so he confessed, "I have sinned: I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord: because I feared the people and obeyed their voice" (1 Samuel 15:24). Ah! the secret is out. He feared the people, and the fear of man ensnared his soul (Proverbs 29:25). Are there not multitudes of young, vigorous, gifted lives around us that are wrecked and ruined for the service of God through the very same reason -the fear of man. "Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shalt die?" (Isaiah 51:12). Any backboneless soul can be a coward. Put on the armour of God, and ye shall be able to stand in the evil day (Ephesians 6:13).

V. Rejection. "Samuel said unto Saul, Thou hast rejected the Word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king" (1 Samuel 15:26). To reject God's Word is to be rejected of God (Luke 9:26). He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar. Saul's seeming repentance and confession had come too late. The moorings of God's guiding presence was cut; Saul's life was now a drifting wreck.

"There is a line by us unseen,

That crosses every path;

The hidden boundary between

God's patience and His wrath."

"The Strength of Israel will not lie" (1 Samuel 15:29). He abideth faithful. He cannot deny Himself. What a vain show our life must be if it is not lived for the glory of God. Saul may still retain the favour of the people, but, alas, the Spirit of God had departed from him (chap. 1 Samuel 16:14). It is possible to be a Christian, and, like Saul, a "partaker of the Holy Ghost," yet the life, through being disobedient to the heavenly vision, may become a wilderness waste to itself, a stumbling-block to others, and an offence to God.

SAUL, THE ENEMY.

1 Samuel 18:29.

"Fool that I was! I will rehearse my fault:

I, wingless, thought myself on high to lift

Among the winged! I set these feet that halt

To run against the swift."-Ingelow.

Lowell hath said that "Best things perish of their own excess, and quality overdriven becomes defect." Who would have thought that the beautiful and childlike life of Saul would so soon be transformed and degraded into a purely selfish and God-dishonouring career He began in the Spirit and ended in the flesh. They that are in the flesh cannot please God. Like every other case of backsliding, it had its source in turning aside from the revealed will of God (chap. 1 Samuel 15:11-26). One step out of the path of faith is enough to put us on the way to a self-ruined life. Saul now becomes the open and avowed enemy of David, the Lord's anointed. A man possessed by an evil spirit will rush his head against the thick bosses of Jehovah's buckler. Saul in becoming the enemy of David became-

I. A Sinner against his own Family. See his dastardly conduct with Michal, his own daughter, who loved David; how he presses and schemes for their union in marriage, in the hope that she might speedily be made a widow (chap. 1 Samuel 18:20-21). Think how often the tender heart of Jonathan was grieved-for he too loved David- at his father's heartless and cowardly behaviour. When any father takes up an attitude of opposition to Jesus Christ, who is the Lord's anointed, he is always fighting against the best interests of his own household. Godliness is profitable for the life that now is as well as for the life which is to come. The love of Christ is meant to sweeten the home life by enabling us joyfully to bear one another's burdens.

II. A Sinner against the Testimony of the Holy Spirit. The scene at Naioth must have been an exciting one (chap. 1 Samuel 19:19-24). Saul hears that David is there and sends messengers to apprehend him, but as soon as they come within the holy atmosphere of the prophetic band they are influenced by the Spirit and begin to prophesy. A second, and even a third company were sent, with the same result. Then Saul himself went thither, "and the Spirit of God was upon him also." Surely if ever a man had evidence that the Spirit of God was opposed to his present actions that man was Saul, and the time was now. It would seem as if the Holy Ghost lingered over Saul, as the Shekinah glory hovered near Jerusalem ere it finally departed (Ezekiel 11:23). Oh, how loath our God is to give us up! But this last manifestation of the Spirit of prophecy fails to turn him from the error of his way. The effect was only like the morning cloud. Grieve not the Holy Spirit.

III. A Sinner against the Servants of God. Saul commanded that the priests of the Lord be slain, "because their hand also is with David (chap 1 Samuel 22:17-18). Saul, in refusing to give David his God-appointed place, is compelled to become the enemy of all who favour him. It is so still. Our relationships to Christ determine our attitude toward our fellowmen. The interests of Jesus Christ and His people are so vitally connected that they cannot be divided. "He that touched you touched the apple of Mine eye." The priestly house of Ahimelech are the first to suffer martyrdom for the cause of David. But the blood of the holy is never spilt in vain; the cause for which it is shed will surely prosper.

IV. A Sinner against the Best Interests of the Nation. It is worthy of special note that while Saul was pursuing after David, "the Philistines invaded the land" (chap. 1 Samuel 23:27-28). While he was resisting and opposing the clearly revealed purpose of God the enemy came in like a flood. The will of the Lord was to bless the nation of Israel through David, whom He had chosen. To despise and dishonour him was to obstruct the divinely-appointed channel of blessing and rob the people of the grace of God. Is it otherwise now? God hath sent His Son to bless us, nationally as well as individually. Infidelity and indifference to Christ and His cause will always be a menace and a hindrance to a nation's highest good. Men are slow to acknowledge this, but God is not mocked. In our pride and self-will we may despise and set aside the Lord's anointed, but God knows no other channel through which we can be blessed (1 Timothy 2:5).

V. A Sinner against his own Conscience. Now when David had shown the kindness of God to his would-be murderer, Saul wept, and said, "Thou are more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil" (chap. 1 Samuel 24:16-17). Yet for all this the bitterness of his heart against David constrained him to play the fool yet again (chap. 1 Samuel 26:21). A man is always playing the fool when he is warring against the revealed will of God, because he is also fighting against the deeper and truer instincts of his own nature. He that sinneth against the light sinneth against his own soul. In submitting to Christ as our King we justify our own conscience, and there is peace.

VI. A Sinner against the Providence of God. To be out of sympathy with God and His Christ (anointed) is to be out of harmony with the gracious providence of God. In chapter 26 we see the powerful Saul falling once more into the hands of the poor despised David. Oh, the solemn irony of such circumstances! Philip II. of Spain said, after the destruction of the Armada, "I was prepared to conquer England, but not the elements." But the elements in the hands of an overruling God have to be reckoned with. Those who are at enmity with the Son of David and His kingdom will certainly find out some time that the unerring providence of the Eternal One has ruled them outside His saving grace (Romans 8:28).

VII. A Sinner against the Purpose of God. If the mind was not blinded by the Devil, and maddened by the force of a rebellious self-will, no one would ever expect to succeed who was striving against the "determinate counsel of God" (Acts 2:23). "Why do the heathen rage, and imagine a vain thing?" (Psalms 2:1). It was the fixed purpose of God to exalt David to the throne of Israel, so it is his settled determination that Jesus shall yet become the "Blessed and only Potentate, King of kings, and Lord of lords" (1 Timothy 6:15). Those that fall on this stone shall be broken, and those on whom it shall fall it shall grind them to powder. "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye shall perish" (Psalms 2:12). Fall in line with the revealed purpose of God in Christ Jesus, and you will save your soul from death and your life from failure and everlasting shame.

SAUL, THE SUICIDE.

1 Samuel 28, 31.

"'Went away,' and not sent away:

Lord! I would lay this word to heart.

'Went away,' and not sent away;

Lord! give me grace to see my part.

'Went away,' and not sent away,

Making himself a castaway.

O heart of mine! this one thing do-

At all costs, to The Christ be true."-Grosart. The above lines were suggested to the author by reading what is said of the rich young man: "He went away sorrowful" (Matthew 19:22). Like Saul, he was not sent away; his turning aside from following the Lord was his own deliberate choice. In turning away from Him who is the Light, where else can we go but into the darkness? The way of transgressors is hard. The thirty-seven years that intervened between Saul's first failure through sinful impatience at Gilgal, and his tragic end on Mount Gilboa were most eventful, chiefly because of their extreme sadness and restlessness. It is an awful thing to be out of harmony with the holy and merciful God. Let us-

I. Mark his Trembling Heart. "When Saul saw the host of the Philistines he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled" (chap. 1 Samuel 28:5). Samuel was dead, the Spirit of power and of comfort had forsaken him; David was still a fugitive; and the Philistines were growing in numbers and in hopefulness. Saul's poor, desolate, and self-confident heart began to give way. What is there in us, apart from the grace of God, to sustain when the dark and cloudy day comes? In me, that is, in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing. There is nothing resident in us that will ever in any way compensate the grieving of the Holy Spirit of God. Our own wisdom and strength and youthful vigour are poor substitutes for the "armour of God." "Without Me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5).

II. Behold his Vain Inquiry. "When Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not" (1 Samuel 28:6). A fearful heart and a silent Heaven! What a sorrowful plight for a man to be in who was once a partaker of the Holy Ghost and a companion of prophets! There are times and circumstances when God will certainly close His ears to our entreaties (Proverbs 1:28). If we regard iniquity in our heart, the Lord will not hear. Nothing will more effectually bar our communion with our Lord than unconfessed sin. Let us take heed lest there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. Not to be obedient to His light is to wander into the blackness of darkness.

III. Hear his Despairing Cry. Saul, finding the door of Heaven shut, turns in his desperation to the terrible and useless expedient of witchcraft. "None can bless whom God hath cursed." To the woman of Endor he said, "Bring me up Samuel" (1 Samuel 28:11). These words are very emphatic in the Hebrew, and betoken tremendous anxiety and determination. In the bitterness of his soul he longs for one short interview with him who had power with God. Oh, for one word more from him who poured the anointing oil upon my head! What value are we now setting upon our God-given privileges? "While ye have the light, walk in the light" (chap. 1 Samuel 16:2). Those who turn away from the truth of God will assuredly be deceived through believing a lie (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12). Take heed to thyself.

IV. Witness his Ruined Prospects. The reappearance of Samuel brought no relief or comfort to the dis-anointed king; it was but the breaking asunder of the last cord of hope. Samuel's message proved to be only Saul's death-knell. "The Lord will also deliver Israel with thee into the hands of

the Philistines" (1 Samuel 28:19). Saul's sun of prosperity set when he disobeyed the "Word of the Lord" (chaps. 1 Samuel 13:14). Since that time he was living only in the twilight. Now the darkness of midnight is settling down thick and fast. Such is the course of the backslider. The fruits of disobedience, an act of inward rebellion against the "commandment of the Lord," may not appear in all their fearfulness for years; and meanwhile we may be living with comparative ease upon a past experience, but all the while our Christian life is but in the Christ-dishonouring energy of the flesh, which can only bring forth corruption (Galatians 6:8). "Search me, O God" (Psalms 139:23).

V. Take Warning from his Tragic End. "The battle went sore against Saul, the archers hit him; and he was sore wounded. Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it" (chap. 1 Samuel 31:3-4). The "last battle" will always go sore against the man who has "rejected the Word of God." The archers, visible and invisible, will be sure to hit him, he will be sore wounded, and the end will be defeat and death. O Saul, thou hast destroyed thyself. Saul sought to save his life by taking matters into his own hand, and he lost it (Matthew 16:25). To forsake the Fountain of living water is to perish of thirst, beside our self-made broken cisterns. The life that is lived in union with Christ will be a saved and victorious life, but the life that is not governed and guided by the Spirit of the Lord is already into the course of this world and drifting on to the doom of eternal loss. As Christian workers let us give heed to this solemn lesson. To fall out of line with the purposes of God as they march along is to make shipwreck of our usefulness. It was as king that Saul was rejected; it is as servants that we may become castaways.

DAVID'S CALL.

1 Samuel 16:1-13.

"God has other words for other worlds,

But for this world the Word of God is Christ."

-Hamilton King.

Saul's utter rejection and failure through turning aside from the Word of God is a beacon of warning to every servant of Jesus Christ. It is in vain we build if we are not doing the sayings of our Lord (Matthew 7:26). The wisdom of this world will always be foolishness with God. Let us note-

I. The Choice. "I have provided Me a king" (1 Samuel 16:1). Samuel was forbidden to prolong his mourning for Saul. The will of the Lord ought to be more precious to us than the prosperity of our friends. Another king had been prepared and provided for His people. David was being prepared for the throne of Israel by his faithfully tending and defending his father's sheep (chap. 1 Samuel 17:34-36). As a well-known preacher has said, "God always begins a long way back." God may choose the foolish things of this world, but He does not choose the lazy things. What we should aim at is not promotion, but faithfulness to God. Personal acquaintance with Him, and devotion to His will and work, is the highway to success and open reward. Don't be afraid of your gifts and capabilities being overlooked because you live and move in ah obscure sphere of life; the Lord knows where the instrument is lying that is fit for that special work needed to be done. Make thyself a polished shaft, and God will surely hide thee in His quiver.

II. The Commission. "The Lord said unto Samuel, Fill thine horn with oil and go" (1 Samuel 16:1). Since David, the son of Jesse, has become His chosen one, so He also chooses the means by

which this end may be gained. God's providences will never contradict His purposes. He that hath begun the good work in our behalf will carry it on. The anointing oil for the head of David is put in Samuel's horn at the bidding of God, so it will not be put there in vain. Neither is it in vain when the Holy Spirit fills the heart of any servant of God, as many as are ordained to eternal life through them will believe. Samuel went, as every ambassador for Christ should go, in God's Name, with God's message, carrying with them the holy anointing power. Do we wonder that "the elders of the town trembled at his coming" (1 Samuel 16:4). The true man of God will always be a man of authority.

III. The Search. "Send and fetch him" (1 Samuel 16:11). Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel; but the Lord cannot be deceived with a man's countenance or the height of his stature. It is with the heart manbelieveth, so "the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he." Because David was the least among them, he was the last they thought of; but the last shall be first, for nothing could be done till David came. "Not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth" (2 Corinthians 10:18). He who made himself of no reputation was exalted "far above all." Self-defence is often a confession of weakness and self-conceit. In the judgment of men intellectual gifts and outward appearances are of great weight; but in the balance of God the scale goes down in favour of the humble and contrite heart. Eliab and Abinadab may pad their chests and stretch themselves to the full, but they cannot take the place of the herd laddie, whose heart is right with God. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked." No amount of pretence or bribery will ever gain that which can only come through being called of God. Make your calling and election sure.

IV. The Anointing. As soon as David came the Lord said, "Arise, anoint him: for this is he." So Samuel "anointed him in the midst of his brethren" (1 Samuel 16:13). Perhaps because of envy his brethren show no signs of gladness at their brother's high promotion. This wretched joy-choking feeling is utterly unworthy of any son of God. But the chosen one becomes the anointed one. This is God's order; this is our privilege. "The Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward." It was a definite and memorable experience in the life of David. Is not every truly consecrated life accompanied by the anointing of the Spirit of Power? (Acts 4:31). We are not sent a warfaring on our own charges. For every special task to which we are called there is a special supply of the Spirit of grace given. David was "a man after God's own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14) before he was anointed, but just because he was such a man the sacred symbolic oil of power was put upon him. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes" (Matthew 11:25, R.V.). "To them that have no might He increaseth strength" (Isaiah 40:29).

DAVID'S VICTORY.

1 Samuel 17.

"Faith alone is the master-key

To the strait gate and narrow road;

The others but skeleton pick-locks be,

And you never shall pick the locks of God."

-Walter Smith.

Faith is a sword "that smites with more than mortal blow." David learned to use this sword when but a lad tending his father's sheep among the uplands of Bethlehem. Those who win open and public victories for God are those who have triumphed in the lowly sphere of life and in the hidden kingdom of the heart. Goliath is a fit type of the god of this world, who blatantly defies the Lord's people. Tradition credits him as being the one who took the Ark of God. "Choose you out a man, and let him come down to me!" cried this giant prince of boasters. But they were utterly unable to choose such a man. The overcomer of Israel's enemy must be the chosen of God, the man after His own heart, a true type of Him who came to destroy the works of the Devil, and to bruise the head of the adversary. We shall view David here in this light. Notice his-

I. Gracious Mission. "He went as Jesse had commanded him, and came and saluted his brethren" (1 Samuel 17:17-22). David, like Christ, came out from his father, rejoicing to do his will, and bringing the love and gifts of the father to his brethren. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. As the bright ruddy youth went forth with the ten loaves for his brethren, and the ten cheeses for the captain of their thousand, who would have thought that this (child) was set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel?

II. Motives Misjudged. "And Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why earnest thou down hither? I know thy pride" (1 Samuel 17:28). This eldest brother, like the kinsmen of Christ, betrays the grossest ignorance of the real character of the pure and generous-minded David. David's motives were so unselfish that the proud self-seeking Eliab could not understand him; besides, it was a gratuitous insult to his father who sent him. It is not easy for a man to judge what is white when he persists in looking through coloured glasses. David's sufferings here were akin to the sufferings of Christ, and an example of how we, too, must suffer if we are faithful to the Father's word and will. David's calm reply to this libellous charge is worthy of note. "What have I now done? Is there not a cause?" Yes, there is a cause-deep, far-reaching, and God-glorifying.

III. Solemn Determination. "David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight this Philistine" (1 Samuel 17:32). God's special purpose in bringing him into the camp at this time has come upon David as a rapidly-growing revelation. The Spirit of God has convinced him that his mission is to overthrow the defier of Israel, and, like his Lord, "he set his face like a flint" to do it. If you feel moved by the Spirit to do even some unprecedented thing for the glory of God be not deterred by the worldly wisdom which says, like Saul, "Thou art not able" (1 Samuel 17:33). As David, the stripling, stands before the tall armour-clad king of Israel, with a sling and a staff in his hands, despised and rejected by his own brethren, he looks altogether unfit for such a conflict. But God hath chosen the weak things to confound the mighty.

IV. Unwavering Confidence. "Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear; and this Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied... the living God" (1 Samuel 17:34-37). David's past and secret experiences of the power of faith in the living God nerves his soul now with fearlessness. Was it not so also with the "Greater than David?" Are there not always secret victories in the life before we openly triumph in the sight of doubting and fearful men. Those who defy the living God are not to be feared by those who trust Him. Windbags are not of much account with Him who is a consuming fire. Perhaps Saul looked upon David as one whose spirit was willing, but whose flesh was weak when he put his armour on him (1 Samuel 17:38). But the armour that suits a man who

fights in the energy of the flesh will never suit a man who wars in the power of the Spirit. So he put them off, "for he had not proved them." The Lord's anointed must meet the enemy not as a soldier, but as a shepherd (John 10:10-11). As an armour against the sting of pain they gave Jesus wine mingled with myrrh. But He received it not. He met the enemy in the strength of faith.

V. Invisible Armour. David said, "I come to thee in the Name of the Lord of Hosts, the God whom thou hast defied" (1 Samuel 17:45). Goliath could only see the stripling and his staff; he could not see the mighty Name in which David was encased as a tower of strength (Proverbs 18:10). His Name means all that He is in our behalf, and this is "the whole armour of God." Put it on (Ephesians 6:10-11). Our weapons are not carnal, but mighty through the Spirit. Our help is in the Name of the Lord (Psalms 124:8). "If ye ask anything in My Name, I will do it" (see Acts 3:16).

VI. Decided Victory. "So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone" (1 Samuel 17:50-51). It was with the sling of faith and the stone of truth that David's Lord prevailed over the enemy of souls in the wilderness (Luke 4:1-13). As David slew Goliath with his own sword, so Christ conquered death by dying and him that had the power of death, that is, the devil (Hebrews 2:14-15). David went forth to the fight, as Christ went to the Cross, in the presence of those who doubtless thought that they would see him again no more alive. But he came back again, triumphant over the foe, and became the chiefest among the thousands. This great battle was between the representatives of two different kingdoms; each nation conquers or falls in their champion. So was it with God's anointed Son. "Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57). We are "more than conquerors" through Him.

DAVID AND JONATHAN.

1 Samuel 18:1-4; 2 Samuel 1:26.

"All through life there are wayside inns,

Where man may refresh his soul with love;

Even the lowest may quench his thirst

At rivulets fed by springs from above."

-Longfellow.

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God" (1 John 4:7). In this little portion of Scripture we have "apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Proverbs 25:11). The love of Jonathan for David seems a pure unclouded reflection of that love of God which is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. It was wonderful.

I. His Love was Real. "He loved him as his own soul" (1 Samuel 18:1). It was no mere formal business connection. Jonathan had taken David and all his interests home to the secrets and carefulness of his own soul. The love that fails to do this is shallow and selfish. How can we say that we love Christ if His interests do not appeal as powerfully to us as our own. Paul had done this when he said, "To me to live is Christ" (Php_1:21).

II. His Love was Surpassing. It passed the love of women (2 Samuel 1:26). To say this suggests that it was supernatural. The highest form of human love is found in the true motherly heart. The love that excels this is that "greater love" manifested in the only begotten Son of God (1 John 4:9), and begotten in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (1 John 4:19). The believer's love to Christ is more than mere natural love, for the carnal mind is enmity against God. The natural heart is an alien to the Holy One.

III. His Love was Inseparable. "Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him" (1 Samuel 18:3) True love will always constrain to a closer bond of union; mutual affection culminates in the marriage tie. The love of Christ constrains us. What to do? Why, like Jonathan, to yield our life's concerns into the hands of Him whom God hath exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour (Chap. 1 Samuel 20:14-16). Hear the whisperings of Christ's dying love in those never-to-be-forgotten words, "Do this in remembrance of Me" (1 Corinthians 11:24).

IV. His Love was Self-Sacrificing. "Jonathan stripped himself... and gave to David" (1 Samuel 18:4). Love will not hide; "It doth not behave itself unseemly: it seeketh not her own" (1 Corinthians 13:5). Love gives till the giving is felt as a sacrifice. It was so with the love of Christ, who for our sakes stripped Himself and became of no reputation, that we through His poverty might be made rich (2 Corinthians 8:9). The love of Christ was manifested in that poor woman who, when overtaken by a snowstorm, stripped herself to save her child. In stripping ourselves for the honour and glory of the Christ of God we are proving the reality of our confidence in Him. If He is to triumph for us, let us give Him "even to our sword and our bow." Self-aggrandisement is always inconsistent with the glory of God.

V. His Love was Well Deserved. No doubt there were many personal attractions about David to draw out the full flow of Jonathan's affections, for David "behaved himself wisely" (1 Samuel 18:5), and was to Jonathan the fairest and chiefest among ten thousand. But the secret of the strength of his love lay in the fact that he knew David as the Lord's anointed and the coming king of Israel (chap. 1 Samuel 20:15). Surely the tenderest affections of his pure soul were well spent when lavished unreservedly on the beloved of God. A greater than David is here! One who spake as never man spake, and whose behaviour has been such that neither God, man, nor devil could find fault in Him. And He says, "Lovest thou Me?"

VI. His Love was Reciprocated. "The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David" (1 Samuel 18:1). These two souls were knit together in their desires and motives, as the warp and woof of a web. The knitting together shows that the affections of David responded in full measure to the love of Jonathan, so that the vital interests of the one were intertwined with the vital interests of the other. This is something deeper than mere belief in outward conformity; it is the very essence of "the unity of the Spirit." Jesus Christ was moved by that yearning fathomless love when he prayed that "they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in them." This deep spiritual union can only be brought about where there is the entire surrender of all on both sides for mutual advantage through the constraining power of love. This is what Christ has done for us. What response are we making to Him? "He that loveth not knoweth not God: for God is love" (1 John 4:8). Our Lord is abundantly willing that His life should be knit with our life. Are we equally willing that our life should be knit together with His life, and so become one in heart and purpose for the glory of God?

DAVID IN ADULLAM.

1 Samuel 22:1-2; 1 Samuel 22:23.

"When God afflicts thee, think He hews a rugged stone,

Which must be shaped, or else aside as useless thrown!"

-Trench. In the closing verses of the previous chapter we have recorded what was perhaps the darkest passage in the experience of David. What a melancholy sight-the Lord's anointed one feigning himself mad through the fear of man. Even anointed ones will be constrained to play the fool when they put their trust in the arm of flesh instead of in the living God (chap. 1 Samuel 21:10). As soon as David lost faith in God he changed his behaviour, and took to "scribbling on the doors of the gate" like a lunatic. There is a very vital connection between our creed and our conduct; a change of faith will certainly lead to a change of behaviour. Through fear of King Achish David fled to the cave of Adullam. Solitude with God is better than the friendship of the world. This act of separation was richly rewarded, for "his brethren and all his father's house went down thither to him" (see chap. 1 Samuel 17:28). There came also many others.

I. The Character of those who came to David.

1. The Distressed. It was one thing to hear about David, and perhaps to sympathise with him in his cause; it was quite another thing to be driven to him by the force of sheer necessity. We are not told what they were distressed about. The cause may have been the sufferings of David or the unsettled condition of the country, or some personal affliction and loss. In any case, it is a blessed distress that constrains us to seek the help and share the fortunes of the Lord's anointed. The self-satisfied heed not the claims of the rejected One (Revelation 3:20). It was distress that brought the prodigal home to his father (Luke 15:18).

2. The Debtors. "Every one that was in debt." In fleeing to David, and espousing his cause, those bankrupts found a way of escape out of all their liabilities under the rule of a God-rejected Saul. Under the law we are insolvent debtors, but Christ rescues such sinners, and is willing to bear their blame for ever (Luke 7:42).

3. The Discontented. Those whose souls were embittered through disappointment and harassing circumstances-thirsty, restless, and unsatisfied lives. Oh, how many are smitten with this plague! Yet how few seek refuge in the presence of Him who alone can satisfy (Psalms 23:5). Around the world's self-made broken cisterns there are great multitudes of such wretched folk who are more inclined to talk of their complaints than to go to the heavenly David, who is the Fountain of Life (Jeremiah 2:13). Contentment is learned here (Php_4:11).

II. Why they came to David.

1. They came because they believed in him. They believed that David was God's appointed king, and his was the right to reign over them. They had in fact got converted to David. Faith cometh by hearing. Have we so believed in Jesus Christ as the divinely-appointed and highly exalted King over all?

2. They came because they were decided for him. Their belief led them to take definite action. They not only heard the sayings, but did them, according to the ways of the wise (Matthew 7:24). It is one thing to believe about Christ, as the anointed Saviour and King; it is quite another to take

our stand with Him and for Him (John 9:27). In deciding for David, they, like us, had to go forth unto him, without the camp, bearing his reproach (Hebrews 13:13). Decision for Christ means separation from the world.

3. They came because they were prepared to submit to him. Having claimed him as their king, they yielded themselves into his hands, for the honour of his name and the advancement of his kingdom. How can we claim to have acknowledged Christ as our King if we have not surrendered ourselves to Him? Is not this our reasonable service? (Romans 12:1).

III. What David became to Them. "He became a captain over them." As soon as they took their place as followers David assumed his right and power to lead. They would thus therefore look to him-

1. For Guidance. Their attitude to David now is, "Not my will, but thine be done;" what wilt thou have me to do? Is this the attitude of our heart to Him who hath received us in our dire need, having redeemed us with His Blood? One is your Master, even Christ. He guides by the unerring eye of His Word (Psalms 32:8). "Lead thou me on."

2. For Protection. Having become the disciples of David, they exposed themselves to the wrath and enmity of the followers of Saul. They who obey the god of this world will always be at war in their heart with the followers of the Lord's anointed. But greater is He that is with us than he that is with them. God is for us, therefore we shall not be moved. David said, "Abide with me, fear not; for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life: but with me thou shalt be in safeguard" (1 Samuel 22:23). "He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him."

3. For Reward. The cause of David was no forlorn hope. It was the cause of God, therefore its ultimate triumph was sure. They who suffered with him in the days of his national rejection would, no doubt, be honoured with him in the day of his exaltation. "If we suffer with Him, we shall also be glorified together" (Romans 8:17). The day is coming when this despised One shall be crowned Lord of All, and those who have followed Him in the rejection will be abundantly rewarded when they enter into the "Joy of the Lord" (Matthew 25:21). He shall divide the spoil with the strong (Isaiah 53:12).

DAVID AND ABIGAIL.

1 Samuel 25.

"Take love away, and life would be defaced,

A ghastly vision on a howling waste."-Newman.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profit able for doctrine" (2 Timothy 3:16). So that "profitable doctrine" may be found in this chapter if we consider the three prominent persons mentioned as having a typical character-David, as the Lord's anointed, representing Christ and His claims upon men; Nabal in his pride and foolishness is a fit type of the Christ-rejecting men of this world; Abigail is a beautiful example of those who believe, in obedience to the deeper and truer instincts of our nature. Let us note- I. The Request of David. "Give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand" (1 Samuel 25:8).

1. The Reason for it. David and his men had been as a wall of protection unto Nabal's herdmen, both by night and day (1 Samuel 25:16), while they were keeping their sheep among the hills of Carmel. His presence had saved them from the thievish bands of marauders, therefore his request was reasonable. Surely He who has saved us by the power of His presence has a claim upon us.

2. The Manner of it. These ten young men, like the ambassadors of Christ, were sent out in the name of their lord and master (1 Samuel 25:5). To despise them was to despise him that sent them (Luke 10:16). They came with a message of peace (1 Samuel 25:6), and this peace, like that proclaimed by the messengers of the Gospel, was threefold. "Peace to thee, peace to thine house, peace to all thou hast." Suggestive of peace with God, the peace of God in the home of the heart, and the peace that passeth all understanding, touching all that we have. Truly such a message coming to us, as it came to Nabal, through the servants of God's appointed King, shall constrain us to a thankful trust.

II. The Foolishness of Nabal. He is described as a man who was "very great" (1 Samuel 25:2), but great men are not always wise. The wisdom of folly of a man will become very apparent when he is brought face to face with the claims of God (1 Corinthians 2:14). The balance of the sanctuary is unerring. His folly is seen-

1. In Rejecting the Claims of David. "Nabal answered, Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse?" (1 Samuel 25:10) Like Pharaoh, he makes a boast of his ignorance (Exodus 5:2). Like a backslider Peter, he says, "I know not the Man." The servants of Christ often meet with the same ungracious reception in presenting the claims of their Lord. Quibbling questions are asked in such a self-important manner that the messenger is smitten dumb with sorrow of heart. Argument is out of the question, as it is not with the servant they have to do, but with Him who sent them. So they turned back and told David all those things (1 Samuel 25:12). (See Matthew 14:12.)

2. In Living for Self-Gratification. "Nabal made a feast like a king, and was drunken" (1 Samuel 25:36). The folly of Nabal is further seen in his making a god of his belly, and seeking the honour and praise of the ungodly rather than that of the Lord's anointed. He had nothing for David, but he had plenty to spend on that which ministered to gluttony and the pride of his own heart. There are many modern Nabals who think all is lost or wasted that's given for Christ while they gorge themselves with surfeiting and drunkenness. Nabal was a fool, and so is he that layeth up for himself, and is not rich toward God (Luke 12:20-21).

III. The Wisdom of Abigail. "She was a woman of good understanding" (1 Samuel 25:3). Surely this was a case of being unequally yoked with an unbeliever. Abigail's wisdom is self-evident when we consider her attitude toward David. "She made haste, and took... and fell before David on her face" (1 Samuel 25:18-23). Thus we see that-

1. She Yielded Instantly. "She made haste" to meet all the demands made by David through his servants. This was to her a work of faith, as well as a labour of love. She believed in David, that the Lord would certainly establish his cause (1 Samuel 25:28), and although she saw not the messengers sent by him (1 Samuel 25:25), her "good understanding" constrained her to yield a hearty obedience to his will. She knew that this God-appointed king was not to be trifled with, and that there was danger in delay. Have we so believed and yielded to the claims of Jesus Christ our Lord? Or do we rather make haste to excuse ourselves?

2. She Pleaded Earnestly. She pleaded for her foolish husband, whose way was right in his own eyes (Proverbs 12:15), but was utter madness in her's (1 Samuel 25:25). She prayed for herself (1 Samuel 25:28), knowing that the power of life and death was in David's hands. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men. It is when we believe in Christ for ourselves, and yield to Him, that we truly see the terrible folly and danger of those who reject Him, and are constrained through pity and compassion to fall down before Him in earnest intercession for them.

3. She Testified Courageously. "In the morning, when she told Nabal these things, his heart died within him" (1 Samuel 25:37). She was wise enough to wait until the wine had gone out of him; she knew the uselessness of reasoning with a drunken man. The night before he could have faced anything under the influence of that wine which is a "mocker." But now, when the stern and solemn truth stares him in the face, the shock of death steals over his heart. Brave Abigail, she acknowledged David as king, and confessed him, fearless of the indifference and spite of her husband against him. Let no wife be hindered from trusting in Christ, and confessing Him, through the folly of her husband.

IV. The Results that Followed.

1. Nabal, the Rejecter, was Smitten. "The Lord smote Nabal, that he died" (1 Samuel 25:38). Perhaps Jesus Christ had Nabal before His mind when He gave that parable in Luke 12, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." The plans and purposes made by the ungodly to escape the claims of Jesus Christ are weapons formed against Him that shall not prosper. The man who refuses to believe in Christ is setting the eternal God at defiance.

2. Abigail, the Believer, is Exalted. "David sent for her, and she became his wife" (1 Samuel 25:40-42). Assuredly this was a full reward for her faith, and an abundant answer to the desire of her heart (1 Samuel 25:31). Separated from the foolish worldly Nabal, she was now free to be married to another, even to the Lord's anointed. She is now, in the time of David's rejection, as closely related to him as she was when he sat upon the throne. As she was, so are we now, in Christ Jesus. "Be ye separate, saith the Lord, and I will receive you."

DAVID AMONG THE PHILISTINES.

1 Samuel 27-29.

"In the natural desert of rocks and sands, or in the populous moral desert of selfishness and baseness, to such temptation are we all called."-Carlyle. Of all the moral deserts or quagmires into which a Christian may be driven by the force of temptation none is more horrible than that of selfishness. Such self-centred lives are scandals on earth and heart-griefs in Heaven. But let him that is without sin cast the first stone. Have we not all at times, in our own hearts' affections, played the prodigal in taking a journey into the far country? Or have we never, like David, while in a fit of cowardliness, sought the comfort and help of the uncircumcised? David finding rest among the Philistines is a greater marvel to us than Saul among the prophets. It is a melancholy spectacle to see the Lord's anointed one depending on a heathen king for protection, or a child of God turning aside to the pleasures of this world for refreshing. Let us note- I. Why He Went. He was tempted to take this false step because-

1. He Feared Man. "He said in his heart, I shall perish one day by the hand of Saul" (chap. 1 Samuel 27:1). "The fear of man bringeth a snare." When David said this in his heart he was denying the holy anointing (1 John 2:24). This is dangerous ground. It was here where Saul was when he fell from the favour of God (1 Samuel 15:24).

2. He Forgot God. If this had not been so, how could he ever have said, "There is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines." Is there nothing better for a child of God in the day of distress than to seek the help of the ungodly? Hath not he said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee, so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Hebrews 13:5-6). Is that not much better? In Psalms 109:4 we see David on his better behaviour.

II. How He Succeeds. He-

1. Escaped Persecution. "Saul sought no more again for him" (chap. 1 Samuel 27:4). This is not always an unmixed blessing (1 Peter 4:13). There are always two ways by which we may escape persecution. The one is by the interposition of God on our behalf (Acts 5:19; Acts 12:7), the other is by our backsliding into the ways of the world. The world loves its own.

2. Got Yoked with an Unbeliever. How this came about is very clear, and was very natural. He first of all "found grace in the eyes" of the king of Gath (chap. 1 Samuel 27:5). Then he acknowledged himself as "thy servant," and so was promoted as "the keeper of the king's head" (chap. 1 Samuel 28:2). In this way, by denying his true character as the servant of God, and submitting himself to another master, did David become unequally yoked with an unbeliever. It was when the prodigal had forsaken his father, and sought relief in the "far country," that he was constrained to "join himself" to a citizen of that country. The backsliding in heart will soon be found backsliding in conduct. It is an infallible evidence that we are "living after the flesh" when we are more ready to consider what would be "better for me" (chap. 1 Samuel 27:1) than what would be better for Christ and His kingdom.

3. Was Compelled to Act in a Deceitful Manner. He and his men had invaded some of the nomadic tribes up about the borders of Egypt; and when Achish asked him, "Whither have ye made a road to-day?" David said, "Against the south of Judah." This was a deliberate falsehood (chap. 1 Samuel 27:8-12). Was he not again playing the deceiver when he pretended to the king of Gath that he desired to go and fight with the Philistines against the Israelites? (chap. 1 Samuel 29:8). Was he not, in his heart, glad of this providential way of escape out of the desperate dilemma into which he had brought himself through fear and faithlessness? This is the wretched, double-dealing kind of life that a man is compelled to live who has experienced the saving grace of God, and been made a partaker of the Holy Ghost, when he backslides into the ways of the world and seeks to avoid all suffering for Christ. If he would please men he must act the hypocrite, for down in the deeper depths of his being the true light hath shined, although he is inwardly conscious that he is not walking in the light. No man, after receiving the holy anointing, as David did, can ever be the same as he was before the anointing, no matter how far he may fall from the enjoyment and power of it. Even salt without its savour is still savourless salt. "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye be able to withstand in the evil day" (Ephesians 6:13).

DAVID RECOVERING ALL.

1 Samuel 30.

"Is God less God, that thou art left undone? Rise, worship, bless Him, in this sackcloth spun, As in the purple!"-E. B. Browning.

It is not so easy for us to praise God when our circumstances are to us as a covering of sackcloth and ashes as when they are as the royal robe of unbroken favour and success. Yet the discipline of the one may be as fruitful of blessing as the other if we are found abiding in the will of God. But the wilful prodigal will certainly suffer loss. David's alliance with the Philistines brought him into sore trouble, as all such unholy connections are sure to do. See here-

I. A Crushing Disappointment. "David and his men came to the city, and behold it was burned with fire" (1 Samuel 30:3, 1 Samuel 30:5): While seeking to help the ungodly he suffers the loss of all that he had. It is the old story in another form of the prodigal son in the far country beginning to be in want. "They lifted up their voice and wept," and David was "greatly distressed" (1 Samuel 30:6). In attempting to watch the vineyard of others David failed to keep his own. The enemy's fire is often needed to waken us up to a true sense of our position in the sight of God.

II. A Work of Faith. "But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God" (1 Samuel 30:6-8). Wives, sons, daughters, cattle, houses, all gone; and the people "spake of stoning him." David now comes to himself, and turns to the Lord as unto a friend in the time of need, for who in such circumstances could encourage himself in a stranger. The spirit of faith again sits on the throne of David's heart, as when he faced Goliath, and he is at once another man. Having remembered the Lord his God in affliction, he rises up, like a giant refreshed with new wine, to the dignity of his high calling. Yes. "What time I am afraid I will trust in Thee" (Psalms 56:3-4). "He inquired at the Lord" (1 Samuel 30:8). We cannot encourage ourselves much in Him unless we are prepared to submit our way to Him (1 Samuel 28:6).

III. An Assuring Promise. "Pursue, for thou shalt without fail recover all" (1 Samuel 30:8). This precious word of the Lord sets every fear at rest. Although as yet there is no change in the calamitous circumstances, his heart finds peace. All will be well, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. It is no vain thing, in the day of distress, to encourage yourself in God. Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart.

IV. A Providential Hap. "They found an Egyptian in the field" (1 Samuel 30:11, 1 Samuel 30:16). David had the promise of God that all would be recovered. But how was it to be done? Where were now those invading Amalekites? Who will guide them to their rendezvous? This poor unfortunate youth, who had to drop out of the ranks of the Amalekites because of sickness, and was left by his heartless master to perish by the roadside, is the divinely-appointed means to the fulfilment of the God-given promise. The means are in His hand as well as the end; and the things that God chooses are "weak and despised" in the eyes of the ungodly, like this dying Egyptian, but mighty to the pulling down of the strongholds of Satan (1 Corinthians 1:27-28). This little episode, by the way, has a halo of glory about it. Our heavenly David is not ashamed to pick up the world's sick and half-dead castaways, to nourish them into life and health, to engage them as His servants, and to use them for the furtherance of His cause and kingdom, having slain the enmity by the power of His kindness (1 Samuel 30:11-12). Such were some of us.

V. A Complete Victory. "David recovered all" (1 Samuel 30:16-20). Who else could? He had yielded himself to God for this purpose, and having His promise he went in His Name, and proved the faithfulness of His Word. What a prefiguring of Him who was David's Lord, and who encouraged Himself in His God, and came forth to recover all that was lost through the sinful failure of the first Adam. His journey was short and the struggle was severe, but the victory was glorious, for Jehovah had laid help upon one that was mighty-mighty in sympathy and compassion, mighty in patience and in wisdom, mighty in meekness and in power, mighty in dying and in rising again, mighty to forgive and to save, mighty to burst the gates of death and to open the gates of glory, mighty to recover all and to keep and guard all that is recovered.

VI. A Gracious Offer. "Behold a present for you" (1 Samuel 30:26). The word "present" is rendered blessing in the margin. He who "recovered all" now offers a blessing to all his friends. Those who were not able to go down to the battle, but who faithfully tarried by the stuff, shall in no way lose their reward (1 Samuel 30:24). He who hath redeemed (bought back) the lost inheritance has the alone right to give such gifts to others (Ephesians 1:7). He shall divide the spoil of His unsearchable riches with the strong in faith (Isaiah 53:12). Yes, there is a blessing for you in this glorious victory if you claim Him as your Friend and Deliverer, and are faithfully, though feebly, striving to serve Him (Hebrews 2:14, Hebrews 2:16).

2 Samuel

DAVID CROWNED KING OVER ALL.

2 Samuel 5:1-5.

"In full and glad surrender we give ourselves to Thee,

Thine utterly, and only, and evermore to be!

O Son of God, who lovest us, we will be Thine alone,

And all we are, and all we have, shall henceforth be Thine own."

-Havergal.

It was a great day in Israel when all the tribes gathered together in Hebron to make David king over a united people. Perhaps the wisdom and advocacy of Abner had much to do with the bringing about of this happy event (chap. 2 Samuel 3:17-19). The man who had been anointed with the holy oil (Spirit), and who lives by faith in God, will have a path that shineth more and more with the light of His favour. We are reminded here of the time when all the tribes of earth shall confess Jesus Christ as King, and crown Him Lord of all. The turning of the kingdom to David, like the turning of the kingdoms of the world to our God and to Christ, was "according to the Word of the Lord" (1 Chronicles 12:23). We shall note here- I. The Confession. They came to David, as we may come to Christ, making confession of-

1. Kinship. "Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh" (2 Samuel 5:1). To have a "flesh and bone" relationship with a king is surely a great privilege, and a mighty plea in urging a request. Such is the honourable position of every Christian. "For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones" (Ephesians 5:30). Did not the first Adam say of Eve-a type of the Church-"This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh" (Genesis 2:23). This close and living union with Him brings us as members into vital connection one with another (Romans 12:5).

2. Failure. "In time past, Saul was king over us" (2 Samuel 5:2). There is a ring of sorrowful disappointment in these words. In time past we had an untrustworthy ruler over us, one who broke away from the command of the Lord, and who sought to destroy the influence of His anointed, and to lead us to war against the purposes of God. What a faithful type of the prince of this world, and of the woeful conductor of all those whose minds are blinded by Him. Let the time past suffice for the will of the flesh and the work of the Devil.

3. Grace. "Thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel" (2 Samuel 5:2). This is a confession of the wisdom and goodness of David's work among them. David, like the Lord Jesus Christ, dealt with them "according to the integrity of his heart and the skilfulness of his hands" (Psalms 78:72). It is wonderful, in looking back over even our past sinful life, how much of the wisdom and grace of our Lord we now see. What we then thought was opposed to our highest interests we can now trace to the skilfulness of His hands.

4. Faith. "The Lord said unto thee, Thou shalt feed My people." By these words the elders made confession of their faith in David as the one appointed by Jehovah to lead them and feed them as a shepherd. He whom God hath set up shall not be easily overthrown. Hath not Christ, the Shepherd of our souls, been commissioned of the Father to feed His sheep? And shall not we, like these elders, acknowledge our King as He who spreadeth a table for us in the wilderness, and as He who is in Himself the "Living Bread."

5. Surrender. "Thou shalt be prince (or ruler) over Israel" (2 Samuel 5:2, R.V.). This language is expressive of perfect subjection to His word and will. Thou shalt rule over us, and our lives are at thy disposal for the carrying out of all the purposes of thy heart. Are we prepared so to yield ourselves as instruments of righteousness to Him who is our Redeemer and King? Can we pray in truth, "Thy will be done in us, as it is done in Heaven?"

II. The Covenant. "King David made a covenant with them" (2 Samuel 5:3, R.V.). This offer was accepted, and an everlasting bond of union formed. David's league with them was the pledge and promise that his wisdom and power would be exercised for their personal and national well-being. So they anointed David king over Israel. So may it be with us. All who are prepared to crown Jesus King over all will have the benefit of His covenant of promise and power. The crowning of Jesus over our lives means for us a life of victory and blessing.

"Crown Him Lord of All."

DAVID RESTORING THE ARK.

2 Samuel 6:1-16.

"O heart! Weak follower of the weak,

That thou should'st travel land and sea,

In this far place that God to seek

Who long ago had come to thee."-Houghton. The Ark was the symbol of the presence of the invisible God among them, and a type of Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, but Israel had lost it (1 Sam. 4). Sin and iniquity will always separate between you and your God (Isaiah 59:2). The same Presence which was the joy and comfort of the Lord's people was a terror to the ungodly (1 Samuel 5:8). Separated from Him, "Ichabod" may be written on all we do (1 Samuel 4:21; John 15:4-5). In this chapter we have men taking up various attitudes towards the Ark, reminding us of the different positions some take up toward Christ. Notice the-

I. Zealous Formalists. "They set the Ark of God upon a new cart" (2 Samuel 6:3). The descendants of those carters are still with us. There is a show of sanctity about their actions, but they have more pleasure in putting their religion in new carts-new churches-than carrying it personally (1 Chronicles 15:15). The Ark had staves, but no wheels (Exodus 25:14-15). The religion of Jesus Christ can not be driven in a mechanical fashion. We may invent new machinery and organisations and put our faith in them, but if the "burden of the Lord" does not rest on our own hearts the cause of Christ will make no progress through us.

II. Self-Confident Professor. "Uzzah put forth his hand to the Ark and took hold of it, and God smote him for his error" (2 Samuel 6:6-7). Familiarity with holy things, without the heart to appreciate, leads to presumption (Leviticus 10:1-3). The Ark of God does not need the hand of man to steady it any more than did the Pillar of Cloud. It is possible to perish in the place of privilege through putting forth the hand instead of the heart (Romans 10:3). There be many like Uzzah, who would defend the faith, and yet show by their actions that they have no faith. They would save the Bible from falling, and they themselves fall and die unsaved.

III. Timid Seeker. "David was afraid, and said, How shall the Ark of the Lord come to me?" (2 Samuel 6:9). David was anxious to have the Ark, as many are anxious to have salvation, but the holiness and power associated with it, and a sense of his own unworthiness, made him afraid. How shall this holy, sin-smiting One come to me? How will I ever be able to live in fellowship with such purity and might? Ah, this "how?" has troubled many a seeker after God. The answer is found in the Cross of Christ, for we are reconciled to God by the death of His Son, and our hearts made the habitation of God through the Spirit. Who is able to stand before the holy Lord God? (1 Samuel 6:20). He who has access by faith (Romans 5:1-2).

IV. Humble Believer. "David carried it into the house of Obed-edom, and the Lord blessed Obed-edom and all his house" (2 Samuel 6:10-11). Obed-edom's name occurs among the porters (1 Chronicles 15:18), but though humble of occupation, he evidently received the Ark joyfully, for from that day salvation came to his house (Luke 19:5-6). David was afraid to take the Ark home himself, but he seemingly thought that it would do no harm in the humble house of the doorkeeper. The Ark seemed to say, "If any man open the door I will come in, and sup with him, and he with Me." There are many who are afraid to let Christ, the Ark of God, into the home of the heart, lest something else should need to go (Matthew 21:12).

V. Fearless Witness-Bearers. "They bare the Ark of the Lord" (2 Samuel 6:13). They did not invent another "new cart." with elaborate decorations, to help it in its progress, neither did they pay others to do the carrying for them. They boldly took "the burden of the Lord," and bare it. The cause of Christ is not to be advanced by those who know no more about the personal Saviour than the oxen knew about the Ark. Christ, like the Ark, must be borne by those who have been separated unto Him (1 Chronicles 15:14-15; Acts 9:15). We need at times to have the Ark on our shoulder, in the street as well as in the house. In the eyes of some the Ark is always out of its place, unless when it is out of sight.

VI. Joyful Confessor. "David danced before the Lord with all his might" (2 Samuel 6:14). His mourning is now turned into dancing, his sackcloth has been exchanged for the girdle of gladness (Psalms 30:11). Obed-edom's blessing has brought the blessing of a strengthened faith to him. Perfect love casts out fear. The presence of God is here triumphing through sacrifice (2 Samuel 6:13). So we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation (Romans 5:11, R.V.).

VII. Sneering Fault-Finder. "Michal saw King David dancing before the Lord, and she despised him in her heart" (2 Samuel 6:16). The things of the Spirit of God are foolishness to the natural man (1 Corinthians 2:14). In their ignorance and self-conceit they mistake glad men for mad men (Acts 2:13). Any fool can be a fault-finder, but it takes more than the world can give to make a man "dance before the Lord." The giddy worldlings dance before one another and become fools before

the Lord. Those who stare through their windows with the eyes of a Michal can see no beauty or glory in the Ark (Christ) of God, no cause for joy in its (His) coming. They hide, as it were, their faces from Him. When Christ comes will He find you among the formalists, the fearful, the faithful, or the fault-finding?

DAVID AND MEPHIBOSHETH,; OR, SAVED BY GRACE.

2 Samuel 9.

"Man's forgiveness may be true and sweet,

But yet he stoops to give it. More complete

Is love that lays forgiveness at thy feet,

And pleads with thee to raise it! Only Heaven

Means Crowned, not Vanquished, when it says Forgiven!"

-A. Procter.

Much food for reflection might be found in comparing this chapter with Romans 9-11. The purposes of God concerning Israel, as revealed in these chapters, ought to be better known than they are among believers everywhere. We might observe here- I. Mephibosheth's Condition; or, The Sinner's Need.

1. Fearfulness. From the fact that such inquiry had to be made, we may learn that Mephibosheth was hiding from the king. They dread God who know not His love (2 Samuel 9:1). Hiding from his best friend. So like the sinner (Genesis 3:8).

2. Destitution. "In the house of Machir (sold) in Lodebar" (without pasture) (2 Samuel 9:4). How true! The rebellious dwell in a dry land (Psalms 68:6). Away from God the sinner is but lodging in the house of poverty (Isaiah 44:20; Luke 15:16).

3. Helplessness. "Lame on both feet" (2 Samuel 9:13). At that time ye were without strength (Romans 5:6). With regard to the things of God the unregenerated are heartless, handless, footless. Any ability we have is God-given (1 Peter 4:11).

II. David's Purpose; or, The Love of God. He wished to show kindness to the house of Saul (his enemy) for Jonathan's sake (the gift of God). What an illustration of 2 Corinthians 5:19. This-

1. Love was Spontaneous. It was the voluntary impulse of a kind and merciful heart. "God is Love." God takes the first step towards man's redemption (Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:2). He so loved the world that He gave His Son. "We love Him because He first loved us."

2. Love was Gracious. It sought out the undeserving. It offered favour to an enemy. While we were yet enemies Christ died for us. It was, indeed, the "Gospel of Grace" that David's servant carried to the poor cripple. What a privilege to belong to such "sent ones" (2 Samuel 9:5). This is a beautiful illustration of Romans 10:14, Romans 10:15. What is the meaning of John 20:21?

3. Love was Self-sacrificing. "I have given all that pertained to Saul" (2 Samuel 9:9). This was a great gift, but it was for Jonathan's sake. In John 3:16 we see a greater gift, and with this gift

comes the pledge of all things (Romans 8:32; 2 Peter 1:3).

III. Mephibosheth's Faith; or, Salvation Enjoyed. He-

1. Believed the Message. So proved his faith by obeying the call. "He came unto David" (2 Samuel 9:6). See 2 Chronicles 30:10-11). The Master is come, and calleth for thee. We test the truth of the Gospel when we believe it.

2. Humbled Himself. "He fell on his face." So well he may. He confesses himself to be as a "dead dog" (2 Samuel 9:8). You hath he quickened who were dead in sin-worse than a dead dog. The goodness of God leads to repentance (2 Corinthians 5:14).

3. Was Accepted. "David said, Fear not, I will show thee kindness" (2 Samuel 9:7). The God who invites will surely receive (John 7:37). Think of His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:7).

4. Was Adopted. "He shall eat at my table as one of the king's sons" (2 Samuel 9:11). Although he was lame on both his feet he sat continually at the king's table. His table of mercy covers many an infirmity (1 John 3:1-2).

5. Was Made an Heir. "David said, I will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father" (2 Samuel 9:7). From poverty to plenty through the grace of the king (1 Peter 1:3-4). By grace are ye saved through faith (Ephesians 2:8).

DAVID'S FALL AND FORGIVENESS.

2 Samuel 12:1-14.

"The spark, self-kindled from within,

Which, blown upon, will blind thee with its glare,

Or smothered, stifle thee with noisome air."-Coleridge.

"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10-12). Backsliding never begins with an overt act of guilt, but in the secret thought of the heart. "Thou hast left thy first love, therefore thou art fallen" (Revelation 2:4-6). Christians may fall out of fellowship with God, although they may not fall out of their relationship as children, any more than the prodigal in Luke 15 could fall from his sonship. There was a vast difference in results between the fall of Saul and that of David, or between the denial of Peter and that of Judas.

I. The Nature of It. David was guilty of adultery and murder (chap. 11). The killing of Uriah was a subtle device to cover the shame of his sin with Bathsheba. Oh, into what depths a child of God may fall in one unguarded moment! Here note the faithfulness of the Bible in exposing the faults and failings of its heroes. David is not the only holy man that has been dragged into the mire of sin through the influence of a look (chap. 2 Samuel 11:2). Eve saw before she took the forbidden fruit. Lot's backsliding began when he "looked toward Sodom," and a look was the ruin of his wife. The first step that led to the destruction of the old world was taken when the "Sons of God looked on the daughters of men" (Gen. 6). The words of Christ are very searching in this connection (see Matthew 5:28). As we stand in the glare of this searchlight from Heaven, who will be the first to

cast a stone at David?

II. The Fruit of it. "By this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme; the child also shall surely die" (2 Samuel 12:14). The marrying of Bathsheba before the child was born did not cover the guilt of his sin in the sight of God (chap. 2 Samuel 11:27). How sad when the behaviour of a professed servant of God fills the mouths of His enemies with arguments against Him and His cause! The misdeeds of Christians gives the enemy occasion to say things that blaspheme His Holy Name. Has He not said that "the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes" (Ezekiel 36:23; see also Romans 2:24).

III. The Conviction of it. "Thou art the man" (2 Samuel 12:7). This arrow was not shot at random. Those who are living in sin are not to be convicted with a mere hint, they have to be "pierced in the heart" (Acts 2:37). As Christ was pierced for our sins, so must we be pierced with conviction. David's secret sin was naked before God. Like the sin of Cain and Achan, no human device could cover it. The message sent by Nathan was singularly apt, as God's messages always are; and like Latimer and Knox, he feared not the royal wrath. When a man has a message from God his manner will be bold and his speech unequivocal. Was it not thus with Jesus Christ?

IV. The Confession of it. "David said, I have sinned against the Lord" (2 Samuel 12:13). He makes no excuse, he mentions no extenuating circumstances, he blames no one for betraying his secret to the prophet. He is too deeply wounded to offer any resistance. He does not say, I have sinned against Uriah, but I have sinned against the Lord. When a man has discovered that he has "sinned against Heaven" (Luke 15:18), he will cease justifying himself (Psalms 51:4). When the wife of John Brown, the martyr; asked the murderer Clayerhouse how he would answer for this day's work, he sneeringly replied, "As for man, I will answer to him; as for God, I will take Him into my own hands." A dead conscience makes a man as arrogant as Satan himself. Job said, "Because I am vile, what shall I answer Thee?" (chap. Job 40:4). "God be merciful to me a sinner" is the incense that rises from the live coals of a burning conviction (Luke 18:13).

V. The Forgiveness of it. "Nathan said, The Lord hath put away thy sin" (2 Samuel 12:13). It is still true that "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us" (1 John 1:9). How sweetly David sings of this abounding mercy of God in the thirty-second Psalm. The prophet Micah exults in the same joyful note. "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity" (Micah 7:18).

1. It was Immediate. As soon as confession was made, so soon was his pardon declared. Behold in this the readiness of God to bless, as soon as the heart of man is in a right state to receive it.

2. It was Complete. "The Lord hath put away thy sin." Who shall ever find what God hath put away? God never upbraids, where there is honest confession, but by the power of His omnipotent grace, He sweeps the hell-born thing for ever from before His face. "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1:29).

3. It was Accompanied with Promise. "Thou shalt not die." The forgiveness of God is associated with the promise of life (Acts 13:38-39; Ephesians 1:6-7; John 5:24). He forgives, then He assures the forgiven one with His Word. Although we should never hear a voice, as it were from Heaven, saying to us as it said to John Bunyan, "Will you have your sins and go to Hell, or forsake them and go to Heaven." Yet are we not justified until we confess our sins and believe on the Lord

Jesus Christ.

DAVID AND ABSALOM.

2 Samuel 13-18.

"Seek to be pleasant, seek to be winning.

Rudeness and sourness are kin to sinning;

Seek to bring sunshine wherever you go,

Have faith in a bright word more than a blow.

Seek to be 'care full' for nothing at all,

Receiving buoyant whatever befall;

Seek still to show that He healeth your scars,

That trials bring joy as night bringeth stars."

-GROSART

David's terrible fall through sin may have had much to do with the fostering of pride and self-confidence in the formation of the character of Absalom. No man liveth unto himself. The fruit of a parent's iniquity may have a resurrection and a judgment in his offspring. The story of Absalom is the story of a prodigal perishing in the far country; it is a beacon of warning to all young men in danger of being lured to rain through the tost of the eye and the pride of life. Let us take a survey of this young man's career and note his-

I. Natural Advantages. These were exceptionally great and favourable. Not only was he the son of a king, but in his personal appearance "There was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him" (chap. 2 Samuel 14:25). But what a terrible contrast there was in his moral and spiritual nature, "From the sole of the foot even unto the head there was no soundness in it" (Isaiah 1:6). Hereditary advantages or disadvantages are not sufficient in themselves to make or mar true nobility of character, but a favourable start may count for much in the race of life. Absalom had a wide door of glorious possibilities opened for him in that he was able to command the affections of the men of Israel (chap. 2 Samuel 15:6). But outward appearance counts for nothing in the sight of God (1 Samuel 16:7).

II. Revengeful Spirit. Absalom's "cold-blooded murder of his brother Amnon "two full years" after Amnon's vile and cruel deed had been done reveals a dogged and remorseless spirit (chap. 2 Samuel 14:23-28). Time and circumstances had no power to cool the fire of his unforgiving temper. His words were like honey and butter, while deceit lurked in his heart (chap. 15. 4). Outward beauty and inward deformity are for ever characteristic of the hypocrite "whited sepulchres." See the whiting process described in Romans 10. S.

III. Renewed Opportunity. Absalom who had fled to Geshur to escape the wrath of his father is now after the lapse of several years restored to the favour of theking through the influence of his

cousin Joab (chap. 2 Samuel 14:33). In the providence of God he has another chance of making a fresh and more honourable start in life. How momentous are the consequences that hang on this renewed day of grace! Will he choose the narrow path that leads to life, or the broad self-made way that leads to destruction? Are there not many young men in our towns and cities to-day who are lightly esteeming a repeated privilege that is heavily laden with eternal issues. "Behold, now is the accepted time" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

IV. Self-Aggrandisement. "After this Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him" (chap. 2 Samuel 15:1-6). The forgiving grace of the father, instead of mellowing his heart into thankful submission, seemed only to give greater license to his unbridled will and presumption. An unregenerate sinner will turn the grace of God into lasciviousness by taking all the favour and blessing God can give him, that these might minister to his own pride and self-glory. In after years Adonijah played the same proud, ruinous game (1 Kings I. 5). He that exalteth himself shall be abased (2 Corinthians 10:18).

V. Open Rebellion. "Then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth" (chap. 2 Samuel 15:10). The hypocritical mask is thrown off, and the secret purposes of his heart are revealed. He declares himself an enemy to the government of David his father, and an aspirant for the position and authority of the king. It is most suggestive that the two hundred men whom he had called, and who went in their simplicity, "Knew not anything" (chap. 2 Samuel 15:11). Open rebellion against the will and ways of God is the ripened fruit of a secret, self-centred life. As long as ungodly men can gain some worldly advantages by their false pretensions they will refrain from manifesting their true inward dislike to the rule of God. But the day is coming when every hidden thing will be revealed.

VI. Untimely Death. "Behold I saw Absalom hanged in an oak" (chap. 2 Samuel 18:9-14). In riding into the wood to escape "the servants of David" he rode into the jaws of death, for that head of pride and beauty was caught between two branches of an oak, and the mule in whom he trusted "went from under him." Those who fight against God have forces to reckon with that they know not of; then mule, whatever that may be, will one day go from under them, leaving them helpless "between Heaven and earth," as utterly unfit for either. The man who built his house on the sand had the object of his confidence taken from under him too. It is very different with the redeemed of the Lord (Psalms 40:2). Joab's treatment of the unfortunate pretender was cruel and ghastly. "Vengeance is Mine, saith the Lord, I will repay." Surely the triumph of the wicked is short.

VII. Ironical Monument. "Now Absalom had reared up for himself a pillar, and called it after his own name" (chap. 2 Samuel 18:18). He had set up this pillar, perhaps to mark his last resting-place and to perpetuate his name, but instead they "cast him into a great pit in the wood, and laid a very great heap of stones upon him" (chap. 2 Samuel 18:17). His utter disregard for parental and divine authority prepared for him the burial of a dog. His pillar, like the pillar of salt on the plain of Sodom, became a monument of the judgment of God against disobedience. It was another tower of Babel on a small scale. In Luke 18:11 we see another man busy rearing up his pillar, but their name is legion (Romans 10:3).

VIII. Sorrowful Father. "O my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" (chap. 2 Samuel 18:33). The only one that was able seemingly to shed tears for Absalom was that one who was most grievously insulted by him. What a revelation is here of the depth and

tenderness of the love that was sinned against. There were doubtless several elements that went to add pungency to David's grief, viz., his own aggravating fall, the painful circumstances of the death, and Joab's disregard for the king's command (2 Samuel 13:5). But what shall we say of the love of God, who, while we were yet sinners, rebels, sent His only begotten Son to die for us? Herein is love, a love that willeth not the death of any, a love that has wept over the erring (Luke 19:41). A love that is ready to forgive. A love that has already suffered the sharp pangs of death in our stead; but, alas, a love that is as lightly esteemed by many to-day as David's was by Absalom.

DAVID'S SONG OF DELIVERANCE.

2 Samuel 22:17-20.

"O strengthen me, that while I stand

Firm on the Rock, and strong in Thee,

I may stretch out a loving hand

To wrestlers with a troubled sea."

-F. R. Havergal. This Song of Deliverance is in itself one of the most marvellous deliverances that has ever been achieved by mortal lips. It is the singing of one whose heart has been attuned to the harmony of Heaven. What depth of rich personal experience is revealed in these glowing exultant words (2 Samuel 22:1-7). A full sense of the greatness of God's salvation is enough to make the dumb to sing with a sweetness that even the eloquent worldling cannot approach. Confiding our attention to the few verses indicated above, we remark about this deliverance that it was-

I. Needed. Concerning his enemies, David says, "They were too strong for me" (2 Samuel 22:18). Too strong for him, but not too strong for the God that was with him. The world, the flesh, and the Devil are all too strong for us, but greater is He that is in us than all who can be against us. Those who fight in their own strength will find out to their sorrowful loss that the enemy is too strong for them.

II. Divine. "He sent from above" (2 Samuel 22:17). The need was so very great that saving help could only come from above. Help came from above when God sent Samuel to David with the divine call and the holy oil. He laid help upon One that is mighty when He sent His Son to seek and to save the lost (John 3:16). "Except a man be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God (John 3:3, margin).

III. Personal. "He took me" (2 Samuel 22:17). This is a sweet little testimony. He might have taken others and left me, but "He took me." The hand of God's mighty redeeming power was stretched out to grip me and to take me from the "horrible pit" (Psalms 40:2), and out of the "deep mire" (Psalms 69:1-2). The salvation of Christ is a very personal matter, and, blessed be His Name, all who trust Him will be taken by Him.

IV. Great. "He drew me out of many waters" (2 Samuel 22:17). The Lord drew David out of the waters of danger when He saved him again and again out of the murderous hand of Saul. He drew him out of the waters of affliction when the crown was put on his head. He was drawn out of the waters of guilt when Nathan pronounced the forgiveness of his sin (2 Samuel 12:13). The salvation

of God is a drawing out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son. The waters of affliction and persecution may still flow in upon us, but out of them all our God can draw us. He drew me, or I would certainly have been overwhelmed like the Egyptians. "Salvation is of the Lord."

V. Hearty. "Because He delighted in me" (2 Samuel 22:20). His salvation was not only a matter of power, but of love. "God so loved the world that He gave." This a sweet note in the song of the saved, "He delighted in me." We often find this out only after we have had our feet established on the rock of His eternal truth. This delight does not spring from anything in us by nature, but has its source in the fathomless generosity of His own character. He delighteth in mercy. Herein is love.

VI. Satisfying. "He brought me forth into a large place" (2 Samuel 22:20). Some are afraid to be drawn out of the many waters of their sins lest they should be brought into such a narrow place that all the joy of their life would be crushed out of them. Those who, by the grace of God, have been brought into the kingdom of God have been brought into a very large place, for this kingdom is bounded by eternity. They have been brought into the family of God, and are the heirs of eternal life. This "large place" may surely be taken as referring also to the enlarged possibilities that open up for us in Christ Jesus as "kings and priests unto God."

DAVID'S OFFERING.

2 Samuel 23:15-17.

"What Thou has given me, Lord, here I bring Thee,

Odour and light, and the magic of gold;

Feet which must follow Thee, lips which must sing Thee,

Limbs which must ache for Thee ere they grow old."

-C. Kingsley. As Herbert hath said, "My God must have my best." There is something sublimely pathetic about this simple act of David in pouring out a drink of water as an offering unto the Lord. It was very natural for the thirsty warrior, while lodging in the hold of Adullam, to long for some water from that crystal spring at Bethlehem, where in earlier days he had so often quenched his burning thirst. First impressions are not easily effaced. The privileges of youth may be eagerly longed for in after days, and a higher value set upon them when they can scarcely be had. See then what David offered. It was a-

I. Common Thing. "Water" (2 Samuel 23:15). We may find sacrifices for God in the smallest details of life. We need not be always looking for some great thing to do in order to show our hearts' devotion to our Lord and Master. With every daily mercy there comes the opportunity of glorifying God. Little quiet moments of time may be turned into acceptable sacrifices unto God.

II. Costly Thing. It was water secured at the "jeopardy of their lives" (2 Samuel 23:17). A common thing made precious, because purchased with a great price. Such were all of us who have been redeemed with the precious Blood of Christ. David was sufficiently large-hearted not to offer to God, as a sacrifice that which cost him nothing (chap. 2 Samuel 24:24). There are those who reserve for God the torn reputation, the lame life, and the sick days (Malachi 1:13). They give to

God that which they no longer want-a diseased body and a sin-smitten soul. "Honour the Lord with thy substance" (Proverbs 3:9).

III. Desirable Thing. "David longed for the water of Bethlehem" (2 Samuel 23:15). In making this offering David was not giving that for which he felt he had no need, for his whole soul longed to have it. It is easy for us to offer God that for which we have no longer any capacity to enjoy. Many readily part with their goods for charitable purposes when death is looking them in the face, who while healthy and vigorous held them greedily with an iron hand. There is no sacrifice in this. In pouring out the water the royal shepherd was giving to the Lord that which was, at that moment, the best he had. Present yourself unto God. Perhaps this may be your most desirable thing.

IV. Consecrated Thing. He "poured it out unto the Lord." He refused to use it for the gratification of his own longings. Even water spilt on the ground after this holy fashion is not lost; it brings forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness. It is a making deep the ditches within our own natures for a mightier filling with the "water of life" that comes from the very throne of God. Everything becomes holy that is given to the Lord. "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits?"

V. Thing that could not be taken back. "Water spilt; that could not be gathered again." Who ever thought of taking back for their own use the sacrifice that was laid on the altar? What was given to God was His, and His for ever. David was perfectly conscious that in pouring out the water unto the Lord it could never more be his own. Do we realise what this means? If we have given ourselves unto the Lord, then we are "not our own," and it is the grossest sacrilege to take back for our own self-gratification that which belongs only to God. "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; see also 2 Corinthians 5:14-15),

DAVID'S CHOICE.

2 Samuel 24:1-14

"God loves to work in wax-not marble. Let Him find

When He would mould thine heart, material to His mind."

-Trench.

"Weak and feeble hands may touch God's great hand while groping blindly in the dark." These are not the exact words of Longfellow, but the suggestive substance. In numbering the people David was groping blindly for the hand of human strength when he touched the divine hand of judgment. In this chapter we have before us a-

I. Subtle Temptation. "He moved David to say, Go, number Israel" (2 Samuel 24:1). This move evidently came from the Devil, for the author of the Chronicles tells us that "Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel" (1 Chronicles 21:1). It was to Israel's own hurt and defect that their number and strength was depended on. It is ever the cunning device of Satan to get us to trust in our own strength, for well he knows that if we do that he will succeed in "standing up against us" (Ephesians 6:11). "It is not by might (numbers), nor by power (human influence), but by My Spirit, saith the Lord" (Zechariah 4:6). We may safely "count our blessings," and count on His promises, but to count on our own wisdom and strength is to lean on a broken reed.

II. Full Confession. "David's heart smote him after he had numbered the people, and he said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly" (2 Samuel 24:10). Joab's glowing report that there were in David's united kingdom "thirteen hundred thousand valiant men that drew sword" (2 Samuel 24:9) brought no feeling of relief to the sin-smitten heart of the king. What were these if God was not for him? All our natural gifts and powers of intellect however great, all our experiences however rich and varied, will avail us nothing in the work of God if the power of the Holy Spirit is awanting. Perhaps much of our failure in the past has been due to the numbering of our own capabilities, to an ignoring of the Holy Ghost. We number our organizations, our meetings, our people, and our pounds, but say, How much do we count on the power of God? Might we not pray with David, "O Lord, take away the iniquity of thy servant, for I have done very foolishly?"

III. Terrible Offer. "Thus saith the Lord, I offer thee three things, choose thee one of them" (2 Samuel 24:12-13). The three things were all equally fearful, although the length of duration was very different. "Seven years' famine," "three months' fleeing before the enemy," or "three days' pestilence." Yielding to the tempter has brought to David a sorrowful alternative. The wages of sin is death in the believer as well as in the ungodly. It would seem that all three judgments were due owing to David's sin; but God, who "delighteth in mercy," gave Him his choice of one. The three judgments are most suggestive of the fruits of disobedience and dishonouring God. Soul hunger, soul defect, and soul disease. God does not promise to give us our choice as to how He will chastise us for our pride and unbelief, but let us take heed lest there be in any of us such an evil heart, for sin will surely find us out.

IV. God-honouring Choice. "David said, Let us fall into the hands of the Lord, for His mercies are great" (2 Samuel 24:14). David had sinned against God in choosing to number the people, now he would honour God in allowing Him to choose for him. God's mighty hand was uplifted to smite, and the penitent king saw it coming down with terrible force, but he looked beyond the awful sword-girt arm, into Jehovah's gracious heart, and took refuge in His mercy. He would rather anchor his soul in the mercies of a righteous, sin-hating God than "fall into the hand of man." He knew that the mercies of the wicked are cruel. The wounds of a friend are better than the kisses of a traitor. Although God's arm is strong to smite, His love is strong to save. The choice God offers now in grace is between life and death, between retribution and salvation, Heaven and Hell. Why should any one now say, "I am in a great strait," when the only open way of escape from the vengeance of God against sin is in "His mercies which are great," in Christ Jesus, who bore our sins in His own body on the tree. "I flee to Thee to hide me" (Psalms 143:9).

1 Kings

ADONIJAH; or, THE CONQUERED REBEL.

1 Kings 1:5-9, 1 Kings 1:41-53.

"On the verge of never-ending woe

Man doubting stands. Yet plum'd with pride the while,

Folding his arms in self-admired repose,

Cased in self-confidence."-Williams.

Adonijah was a man with a beautiful name, "My Lord is Jehovah," but with a heart stuffed with grace-withering pride. David's stormy life was about to close. The winsome Absalom had been suddenly cut off in the midst of his vain-glorious career. Now the handsome-looking Adonijah aspires to the throne of his father. Like many another child of beauty, he had evidently been half spoiled through a father's indulgence (1 Kings 1:6; Proverbs 29:15).

I. See him Exalted. "He exalted himself, saying, I will be king" (1 Kings 1:5). "He that exalteth himself shall be abased" (Luke 18:14). Satan's lie, "Ye shall be as gods" (Genesis 3:5), is ever a tempting bait to the proud heart. He prepared him chariots and horsemen, and spread his great bribery feast, but "Solomon he called not." Yet he who was allowed no part in all his plans and purposes was the one chosen of God to prevail. It is ever the sinner's way to exalt himself, to the exclusion of Him whom God hath sent to bless (Acts 3:26). "Pride goeth before a fall."

II. See him Ignored. David said, "Assuredly Solomon shall reign after me" (1 Kings 1:30). "And they blew the trumpets and said, God save King Solomon" (1 Kings 1:39). While Adonijah was exalting himself, Solomon, the despised and rejected, was being exalted, and anointed by both priest and prophet (1 Kings 1:45). There is another King, one Jesus, whose right it is to reign, and whom God hath exalted Lord over all, blessed for ever. All who exalt themselves against Him will find that their claims and pretentions will be as utterly disregarded by God as were those of Adonijah by David. Those who, in the pride and self-confidence, exalt themselves against the Christ of God will assuredly waken up in the end to find themselves rebels and liars, deceived and defeated. Let the would-be independent remember that there is Another who is quite independent of their independence.

III. See him Awakened. It must have been a terrible shock to Adonijah when Jonathan came hastily with the news that, "Verily our lord King David hath made Solomon king, and that he sitteth on the throne of the kingdom" (1 Kings 1:42-46). Jonathan was a faithful messenger. He told the whole truth, keeping back nothing. And if his message cut the young Pretender to the heart, proving him to be a self-deceived rebel, be was not to blame for that. The Gospel that was a savour of life to the followers of Solomon was a savour of death to Adonijah and his adherents (1 Kings 1:49). The moral is plain. Jesus sitteth on the Throne of His Father. All who exalt themselves

against Him are rebels. The message is, "He that believeth not is condemned already." Saul, on the way to Damascus, had quite as sudden an awakening as Adonijah (Acts 9:3-5).

IV. See him Saved. Here we might note-

1. The Constraining Cause. "Adonijah feared because of Solomon" (1 Kings 1:50). Why should he not fear? The man who has been made to see himself an alien to the good purposes of God has surely great cause for fear. There is no living creature under Heaven that will not seek safety through the feeling of fear. Those who sneer at the thought of being saved through fear have usually no objections to put up their umbrellas through fear of getting wet when overtaken by a shower. Where there is a true sense of danger there will be fear. "Noah, moved with fear, built the Ark" (Hebrews 11:7).

2. The Place of Refuge. "He caught hold on the horns of the altar" (1 Kings 1:50). Neither the altar not its horns would have much attraction for him before the fear of death laid hold on him. It requires a sense of sin and guilt to make the place of atonement desirable and precious. "The preaching of the Cross is, to them that perish, foolishness, but to the sin-convicted soul it is the saving "power of God." In laying hold of the horns of the altar he was binding himself, as it were, a sacrifice unto God (Psalms 118:27).

"Other Refuge have I none,

Hangs my helpless soul on Thee."

3. The Changed Life. "He came and bowed himself to King Solomon" (1 Kings 1:53). In 1 Kings 1:5 we see him "exalting himself," but now he "bowed himself." The rebel is suddenly transformed into a servant. Solomon, the king of peace, bids him go in peace. He has found peace with the king through the altar of sacrifice. The life that was forfeited because of sin has now been saved by grace, that it might become the servant of righteousness (Luke 1:74-75).

SOLOMON'S CHOICE; or, FULLNESS OF BLESSING.

1 Kings 3:1-16.

"True wisdom is not gotten, but is given;

Not dug out of the earth, but dropped from Heaven:

Heavenly, not earthly, is the brightness of it."-Lytton.

It was said of Solomon that "the Lord loved him" (2 Samuel 12:24). How fitting it is to find it stated now that "Solomon loved the Lord" (1 Kings 3:3). Surely the love of God for us should awaken in our hearts love to Him. It was a very exceptional opportunity that came to Solomon when God said to him, "Ask what I shall give thee." Such special privileges, laden with Almighty and eternal possibilities, don't usually come within the reach of any of God's servants without some unusually solemn preparation. It was certainly so with Solomon.

He had gone to Gibeon, a journey of seven miles, and had a long and solemn time of great sacrificing. "One thousand burnt-offerings" he has seen laid on the altar. His whole mind and heart were filled with thoughts of the holiness of God, the horribleness of sin, and the great holocaust

atonement. As Solomon lay down that night to sleep, with a deep sense of his own weakness and unworthiness, God appeared to him in a dream, with such an offer of grace as was sufficient for all his needs. If we would be honoured of God, then our souls and in our substance we must honour him. We shall consider-

I. The Divine Offer. "God said, Ask what I shall give thee" (1 Kings 3:5). Let us pause and think of who it is that makes this offer. This "I" is the I that filleth eternity. It is the offer of Him who is the Creator and Possessor of all, whose Name is Holy, and whose nature is Love. Think again of the abounding generosity of the offer. "What I shall give thee." Only one chance like this is needed to enrich a soul for time and eternity. In making this offer God was as it were laying all the wealth of His Divine Character and Kingdom at the feet of Solomon, that he might be filled out of all the fullness of God. But does the Lord come to us with an offer like this? Yea, He has done more, for in the gift of His Son the whole wealth of "His unsearchable riches" lie continually before us for our daily appropriation. Even without our asking, yea, while we were yet sinners, He gives His all in dying for us.

II. The Wise Choice. "Give Thy servant an understanding heart" (1 Kings 3:9). It was not enough that he should have the opportunity of choosing; he must make up his mind and speak out his request. Every Gospel hearer has the opportunity of making such a choice, but how few like Solomon seek the hearing heart (margin). It was a wise choice, because it-

1. Covered all his Need (1 Kings 3:7-8). A heart quick to hear the guiding, comforting words of God would strengthen and sustain him, as a "little child" set by the grace of God "in the midst of a great people." If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God (James 1:5). "Christ is made of God unto us wisdom," etc. In choosing Him we choose that which covers all our need.

2. Pleased God (1 Kings 3:10). It pleased God, because what he asked was not for any mere selfish advantage, but for His honour and the good of His people. We always ask amiss when we would consume it on our own pleasures (James 4:3, margin). Are not our prayers often choked with the cares and anxieties of self-interest?

III. The Abundant Answer.

1. He Got what he Asked. "I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart" (1 Kings 3:12). God alone can work in us such a gift as this. This is eternal life to know Him. The promises of God are meant to be claimed and definitely fulfilled in the experience of the believer. Ask and ye shall receive.

2. He Got More than he Asked. "I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honour" (1 Kings 3:13). He sought first the Kingdom of God, and all other things were added, and added in such plentitude that Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches (1 Kings 10:23). He that findeth Christ findeth wisdom, and happy is that man, for riches and honour, and length of days are his (Proverbs 3:13, Proverbs 3:16). "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Lord, give me the "hearing heart," that Thy will may be done in me, and that the people may be blessed through me. A ROYAL INQUIRER.

1 Kings 10:1-13.

"You are not guilty because you are ignorant, but you are guilty when you resign yourself to ignorance." -Mazzini. The coming of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon may be a fore-glimmering of that time when a "Greater than Solomon" shall reign, and when kings shall come to the brightness of His rising (Isaiah 60:1-3). The wisdom of Solomon was the wisdom of God, from whom every good and perfect gift cometh (chap. 1 Kings 3:12). There would be more anxious inquirers everywhere if there were more of God's servants in possession of this rare gift- a "hearing heart" (chap, 1 Kings 3:9, margin). The Queen of Sheba is mentioned by our Lord and Saviour, as a warning and example to those who, after, should hear of the wisdom of Him who is the wisdom of God (Matthew 12:42).

I. She Heard. "The Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon" (1 Kings 10:1). It should be specially noted that this fame was "concerning the Name of the Lord." In the report which came to the ears of the "Queen of the South " the wisdom of Solomon was vitally connected with the Name of Jehovah. Is it not so also with the Gospel which has been brought to our ears? There is a oneness between the wisdom and power of Jesus Christ, and the Name or character of the Eternal God and Father. The secret of His fame was concerning the Name of His Father. Blessed are the ears that so hear (Matthew 13:16).

II. She Inquired. "She came to prove him with hard questions" (1 Kings 10:1). She did not make light of it (Matthew 22:5). She felt that this Heaven-born wisdom of Solomon's might bring light and comfort to her own beclouded mind; and although she hardly believed all that she heard she would satisfy herself with a personal inquiry. So she came Just as she was, with a "Very great train" of camels and servants, and "communed with him of all thai was in her heart" (1 Kings 10:2). She was both an anxious and an honest inquirer. Go thou and do likewise. You have heard of the saving fame of Jesus. Go and prove Him by telling Him all that is in thine heart. You have more encouragement than this queen had, for you have a pressing invitation (Matthew 11:28).

III. She Received. "Solomon told her all her questions" (1 Kings 10:3). There was nothing hid from the king that she required to know. We cannot believe that her questions were in the nature of puzzles. Suck trifles would be entirely beneath the dignity of the wisdom of God. We believe that her riddles contained real intellectual difficulties, and that the darkness in her mind was dispelled by the light of Heaven. Oh, how she would marvel as her difficulties one after another disappeared in the dawning of the truth of God as revealed by the Lord's anointed! So shall it be when a troubled soul communes with Jesus. He is the Truth. He knows what is in man, and all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in Him.

IV. She was Humbled. "When the Queen of Sheba had seen all there was no more spirit in her" (1 Kings 10:4-5). When she contrasted Solomon's wisdom, his house, his table, his servants, and his way up with her own, all her pride and self-esteem withered up within her. There was no room for boasting left; it was excluded by the law of heavenly grace and wisdom. When the self-righteous Saul of Tarsus met the Lord of Life on the way to Damascus, and was made to see His power and glory, there was no more spirit in him to think of himself more highly than he ought to think. It will ever be a humbling to us when our own wisdom and righteousness is brought into contrast with His.

V. She Confessed. "She said to the king, It was a true report that I heard... Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it; and, behold, the half was not told me" (1 Kings

10:6-7). Who hath believed our report? The Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, concerning His wisdom, power, and glory, is true, whether men believe it or not. Like the Queen of Sheba, we cannot understand or share personally in this heavenly wisdom until we come. But if we have come and got our own eyes opened, let us not be ashamed or afraid to make full confession to the honour of His glorious Name.

VI. She Testified. "Happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom" (1 Kings 10:8). "The enlightened soul covets earnestly the best gifts. The servants of Solomon had a privilege that none others had on the face of the earth. So also has the servants of King Jesus. They see and hear things which many prophets and righteous men desire to see, but did not (Matthew 13:16-17). But are there not many to whom this high honour is conferred who are not happy in their close relationship to the King of kings? Worldly Christians who have but a poor appreciation of the written Word, which is the wisdom of our God. The happy servant hears the words of wisdom from the King's own lips.

VII. She Praised. "Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee" (1 Kings 10:9). It is a comely thing for those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious to render praise and thanks unto His holy Name. Yes, blessed be the Lord our God, who delighted in Jesus Christ as our Atoning Sacrifice, and set Him on the throne, "because He loved us for ever." Every manifestation of His grace and wisdom should awaken every faculty within us to praise and adoration. Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.

VIII. She was Abundantly Satisfied. "Solomon gave her all her desire, whatsoever she asked" (1 Kings 10:13). He supplied all her need. But the grace of the "Greater than Solomon" is greater, for He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask. No seeking soul will ever go hungry away from Him. He satisfies with good. "Ho, every one, Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in His fullness (Isaiah 55:2). A MAN-MADE RELIGION.

1 Kings 12:26-33.

"Hope of every sort-whatever sect,

Esteem them, sow them, rear them, and protect,

If wild in nature and not duly found,

Gethsemane! in thy dear, hallowed ground-

That cannot bear the blaze of Scripture light,

Nor cheer the spirit, nor refresh the sight,

Nor animate the soul to Christ-like deeds,

(Oh, cast them from thee!) are weeds, arrant weeds."

-Cowper.

Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, although of the race of Joshua, he became a ringleader in sin. Seeds of thought sprang up in his heart and mind rank and wild, but instead of treating them as "arrant

weeds" he nurtured and protected them, as if they belonged to the Garden of the Lord. So the seeds of evil spread like thistle down. This religion of Jeroboam is like every other Christless religion.

I. It had its Origin in the Human Heart. "Jeroboam said in his heart" (1 Kings 12:26). There are only, virtually, two religions in the world-the one has its origin in the "I will" of God, the other has its source in the "I think" of man. "My thoughts are not your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8), saith the Lord. The heart of man is deceitful and wicked, out of it there can never come a system of worship that meets the claims of God and the needs of the soul. A revelation is needed; a revelation has been given. Anything opposed to this, or a substitute for it, is gross presumption and rebellion.

II. It was for his own Selfish Ends. He set up his golden calves-one in Bethel and the other in Dan-lest the people should go to Jerusalem to worship and the hearts of the people be turned from himself (1 Kings 12:27-29). It was a religion that centred on his own personal honour and aggrandisement. Self is for ever the centre of every godless religion. The pride of life lies at the root of all mere human schemes. The religion of the scribes and Pharisees was just another form of the sin of Jeroboam (Romans 10:3).

III. It was Ostensibly for the Good of Others. "It is too much for you to go to Jerusalem" (1 Kings 12:28). He pretended that it was for their convenience and advantage that these golden gods were set up. The religion that is born in the carnal heart can only make hypocrites. The great scheme of godless socialists are not one whit better than the devices of Jeroboam, they set up calves of gold, saying, "These be thy gods, O people." It was a religion of selfish expediency and not of sacrifice. The thought of self-denial was carefully excluded.

IV. It was Contrary to the Word of God. "The king said unto them, Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (1 Kings 12:28). "Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox" (Psalms 106:20). The command of God was plain, "Thou shall not make unto them any graven image" (Exodus 20:4). The desire of the carnal mind is to walk by sight, and not by faith. The inventions of the unrenewed heart are sure to be in opposition to the revelation of the mind of God. "I thought," said Naaman, but his thought was not at all in harmony with the manner and purpose of the man of God. Saul was quite in earnest when he thought that he should do many things contrary to the Name of Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 26:9) The ladder to Heaven must come from Heaven (John 14:6).

V. It Became a Snare to Others. "This thing became a sin" (1 Kings 12:30). The thing set up became the object of worship instead of a means to help the thoughts to God. Man is always prone to be more taken up with his own works than the works of God. The little ornamental cross or the prayer-book becomes more precious than the things which are invisible and eternal. The products of men's own imaginations are exalted to the throne of the affections, and the presence of God usurped. That thing, whatever it is, that takes the place of God "becomes a sin."

VI. It has no Regard for Purity. "He made priests of the lowest of the people" (1 Kings 12:31). This is characteristic of all man-made religion; there is no value set on inward holiness of life. Outward conformity and parade are enough to meet all its requirements. The consecrated sons of Aaron were not the kind of ministers Jeroboam wanted (Numbers 3:6). Their strict adherence to the Word of God would not suit his purpose. It is so still with those who are satisfied with the form of

godliness and deny the power. They wish their own will and ways carried out, so they prefer the "lowest" motives as their governing principles; the pure light of God's Word would only reprove and rebuke.

VII. It has the Appearance of Being Right. There was the altar, the priests, and the ordained feast, "Like unto the feast that is in Judah" (1 Kings 12:32-33). But the whole thing was a sham and a mockery, a lifeless image of the real. There was all the outward semblance of the true, but it had no foundation in the sight of God. "No authority from Him," no power to bless its votaries with pardon, peace, or hope. It was a thing destined to bring disappointment and the curse of God (chap. 1 Kings 13:2). Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith. "Without Me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5).

"ALAS, MY BROTHER!" Or, THE DECEIVED PROPHET SLAIN.

1 Kings 13.

"Mortal! thou standest on a point of time,

With an eternity on either hand;

Thou hast one duty, above all sublime-

Where thou art placed serenely stand."

-Houghton. This is a melancholy story. It is always infinitely sad to see those who were once mightily used of God tripped up in the end through temptation, and falling a prey to him who goeth about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. But although the lion slew this prophet of God he was not permitted to devour him (1 Kings 13:25). There are seven things about this unfortunate man that we would like to point out.

I. He was a True Believer. He is called "A man of God" (1 Kings 13:1). He was not a mere "man of the world" whose portion is in this life, but one who has personal dealings with God, and who in heart and life belonged to Him. Not a mere professor or time-server, but a true servant of the Most High.

II. He was a Man with a Message. "He came by the Word of the Lord unto Bethel" (1 Kings 13:1). He was not a commentator, but he was an ambassador. He had a ministry committed to him by the Lord, a ministry of warning and condemnation. No evangelist was ever more surely called of God than this man. "A man of God" is one whom God has lifted up and fitted as a vessel for His own use, committing to him His own precious treasure (2 Corinthians 4:7).

III. He was a Man of Courage. "He cried against the altar in the Word of the Lord" (1 Kings 13:2). He testified with a loud voice against this altar built by Jeroboam as a rival of Jehovah's, even while the king "stood by." The Word of God burned in his bones, and he could not but speak the things which he had heard from Him. It was so also with Peter and John (Acts 4:20).

IV. He was a Man of Power. God bore witness to his testimony by signs and wonders in the stiffening of the king's arm and hand which was stretched out to "lay hold on him," and also in the "rending of the altar" and the spilling of the ashes. "Signs following" are always an evidence that the man is not serving God in his own strength. He had power for service because he spoke in the

Name of the Lord. When God works through His servants it is as a wonder -worker. We may well question whether God is working through us if signs and wonders are not being wrought (Mark 16:17).

V. He was a Man of Self-Denial. After praying for the restoration of the king's hand (for he had also power in prayer), the king asked him to "come and refresh himself and take a reward," but he would not (1 Kings 13:6-9). Like Elijah, he would "receive none" (2 Kings 5:16). He was no hireling in the work of the Lord. He knew what it was to deny himself and take up his cross and follow Him who had called him. Surely such a mighty man as this will never fail! But, alas!

VI. He Fell through a False Professor. This old liar pretended that an angel had spoken to him, saying, "Bring him back" (1 Kings 13:11-18). At first he refused, but being tired and hungry (the Devil seemed to take advantage of his physical weakness) he was finally persuaded to turn aside from the revealed will of God and to obey the invention of man. The temptation was sore, but his way was perfectly clear. He had a revelation from God, and so ought not to be turned aside by any private interpretation of man. In obeying the false prophet he must have been quite conscious that in his conduct he was contradicting the deeper conviction of his soul. If our hearts condemn us not then have we confidence toward God. Hearken not to those prophets who would "make you vain" by ministering to the lusts of the flesh, "they speak a vision of their own heart" (Jeremiah 23:16). Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God, because there are many false prophets gone out into the world (1 John 4:1). There is one mark by which you may know them, and that is "lightness" (Jeremiah 23:32). They have little reverence for the "Word of God" or the atoning blood of His Son; they try if possible to "deceive the very elect" (Matthew 24:24). This man went back and, it cost him his life, for a lion met him and slew him (1 Kings 13:24). It was the end of his testimony for God. The influence of false teachers makes men less faithful to God and His Word. By their fruits ye shall know them.

VII. He was Mourned over by the One who Deceived Him. "He laid his body in his own grave, saying, "Alas, my brother" (1 Kings 13:30). Yes, well may he mourn, after tempting him into the net of destruction. Even being buried in the same grave will not atone for the sin of deception. How will he face him in the resurrection whom he had lured from the will of God by the substituting of his own thoughts for God's? How shall it fare with the false teachers (higher critics) of our day when in the presence of God they are face to face with the faith, withering fruits of their self-created visions? "Alas, my brother," take heed how ye hear, stand fast in the truth.

PRAYING IN DISGUISE.

1 Kings 14:1-17.

"Prayer against His absolute decree

No more avails than breath against the wind,

Blown stifling back on him that breathes it forth:

Therefore to His great bidding I submit."-Milton. The more deeply we are imbued with the spirit of prayer the more simple and child-like shall we become. "Sublimity always is simple," is how Longfellow puts it. Eloquent prayers may only be the haughtiness of the human heart in disguise. The wife of Jeroboam is not the only one who has put on the mask while making their requests

known unto God. Purity of worship was at a very low ebb while King Jeroboam made the "lowest of the people priests" and consecrated "whosoever would" (chap. 1 Kings 13:33), "I want to" is by no means the only qualification for the service of God. The Lord had sent a warning cry against this unholy altar (chap. 1 Kings 13:2). Now the jealous God of Israel visits the iniquity with judgment. This attempt to outwit and delude the prophet of the Lord has its lessons for us. There was a-

I. Knowledge of God. Jeroboam could not be a stranger to the great things Jehovah had wrought for His people Israel; and had not the prophet of the Lord foretold him that he should be "king over this people?" (chap. 1 Kings 5:2). But the revealed will of God had been set aside. His acts of worship were now according to his own thoughts and convenience, so he made Israel to sin by the substituting of his own ways for the ways of the Lord (chap. 1 Kings 12:33). There may be a knowledge of the ways and will of God, while the daily life is a presumptuous denial of the divine revelation.

II. Feeling a Need. "Abijah the son of Jeroboam fell sick" (1 Kings 14:1). They were very anxious to know "what shall become of the child" (1 Kings 14:3). Our dearest and our best are never beyond the withering touch of God's finger. Every sorrow and disappointment may be to us as goads to drive us nearer our God if our hearts are right with Him. There is bitterness of heart that cannot be spoken into the ears of ordinary mortals; that needs the touch of the Eternal. The yearning of the soul at such times is to know what the will of God is concerning us.

III. Disguising of Character. The wife of Jeroboam changed her appearance and went to inquire of the man of God, "feigning herself to be another woman" (1 Kings 14:2-5). Perhaps the king knew that the old prophet Ahijah was blind by reason of age, but both he and his wife seemed to forget that God was not blind. It is utterly needless for any one to come to God feigning themselves to be different from what they are; and yet this disguising of the true character, while making requests known unto God, is a common pious fraud. On our knees we may pretend to believe all that the Lord hath spoken, then among our fellowmen we put on our self-magnifying glasses, and forget the Lord that bought us. God looks on the heart, and as a man thinketh in his heart so is he before Him.

IV. Complete Failure. As soon as she came to the door of the prophet she heard these mask-scathing words, "Come in thou wife of Jeroboam, why feignest thou thyself to be another" (1 Kings 14:6). The veil of her disguise was rent from the top to the bottom, and the light of God's presence shone in upon her. Saul had his disguise torn off him while on the way to Damascus. The Pharisee that went up to the temple to pray feigned himself a righteous man, but he went away as he came, with his mask untouched and his soul unblessed (Luke 18:14). Jeroboam and his wife were desirous of knowing the mind of the Lord about their child, but they were afraid to face the will of God concerning themselves and their ungodly lives. The disguise was evidently an attempt to avoid the dreaded prediction of the "man of God" in the preceding chapter. Is there anything in the background of our lives that we are afraid God should deal with, things which make us put on a mask when we venture to seek for divine light or guidance? It will not improve matters to hide them, God will deal with us according to our daily life before Him. Therefore come to the light that the evil deeds may be reproved, confessed, and cleansed (John 3:19-21), for be sure your sin will find you out.

ELIJAH, THE SEPARATED ONE.

1 Kings 17:1.

"If thou could'st trust, poor soul,

In Him who rules the whole,

Thou would'st find peace and rest,

Wisdom and sight are well, but trust is best."

-A. Proctor.

Ahab, the haughty king of Israel, had taken Jezebel, the pretty but wicked Zidonian to wife. Through her influence the prophets of God are slain, and the worship of Baal is established in the land as the national religion. Only seven thousand among all the thousands of Israel remain true in heart to God, and these, through fear of the king, hid themselves and their testimony. The whole nation seems overwhelmed with this flood-tide of idolatry. But away in the village of Tishbe, among the uplands of Gilead, there is a man, perhaps a poor peasant, whose heart has become hot with indignation, and whose jealousy for the honour of Jehovah burns with holy zeal. We fancy we hear him in secret pleading with God for His own Name's sake to rebuke the iniquity of His people and bring Israel to its knees by sending some arresting judgment upon the land (James 5:17). God answers the earnest cry of the Tishbite, and there and then chooses him to be the instrument in His hand, to turn the nation back to the worship of their Divine King. To accomplish this great work he is invested with all authority. "There shall not be dew nor rain these years but according to my word." The interests and the power of God are committed to this servant, because he is wholly devoted to Him. Having been equipped with power, he goes forth to Samaria to declare the message of God in the ears of Ahab. No man will ever accomplish much for God who has not had in some respects a similar training. Note- His Standing. "The Lord God of Israel, before whom I stand." He stood as one-

1. Who Believed in God. His faith gave him the victory over all fear of Ahab. Those who have set God before them will not play the coward in the presence of any earthly monarch. It was this consciousness of the presence of God that stiffened the moral backbone of Luther and John Knox. After Pentecost Peter and John were filled with the same holy boldness as Elijah (Acts 4:19-20).

2. Accepted by God. Elijah had yielded Himself unto God that he might be a channel through which His words might come to the hearts of the ungodly, and through whom the power of God might be manifested. The Lord accepted his offer, and filled him as an earthen vessel with His divine treasure (2 Corinthians 4:6-7). He had got the victory with his God in secret, now he is rewarded openly. Many of God's notable servants have come suddenly out of unexpected places.

3. In Fellowship with God. The whole force of Elijah's moral and spiritual being was on the side of the God of Israel. There was a oneness of purpose between them. All idea of self-seeking was withered up by the fire of Jehovah's presence. Those who would serve the Lord will have very unpleasant work to do if they are careful about their own personal interests and honour. The secret of courage and power in the work of Christ lies in knowing His will and delighting to do it.

4. Who Waited on God. As the eye of the maid is turned to her mistress, watching for the next indication of her will, so stood the life of Elijah before the Lord God of Israel. So may our souls wait on Him. The Moravian motto is most suggestive with the ox standing between an altar and a plough, "Ready for either." Ready for either sacrifice or service, as the Lord may appoint. But Elijah's standing before God was not in idleness, but in the fearless attitude of one whose life was a protest against the popular sin of the nation-idolatry. "Let your light so shine"' (Matthew 5:16).

5. Who had the Authority of God. He speaks as if the power of God and the resources of Heaven were at his disposal. "There shall not be dew nor rain these years but according to my word." The keys of Heaven had been given to him, and the treasures of dew and rain would only be poured out when he was pleased to open the door. This was a terrible and most effective weapon which God had put into the hand of His faithful servant. Those who fight the battles of the Lord are never sent to warfare on their own charges. Is not the gift of the Holy Spirit equally effective now for the carrying out of God's purposes in the reclaiming of men to the fellowship of His Son? Elijah, like Jesus Christ, spoke as one having authority, because he had the authority of God for that which he spoke. Elijah was a man "subject to like passions as we are." But have we the faith of Elijah? (Mark 9:23).

Some Other Lessons.

1. That God can easily find the man He needs.

2. That the man chosen of God is often prepared in secret.

3. That great men often come out of unexpected places.

4. That those sent by God have always a definite mission.

5. That the secret of holy boldness is, "Standing before God."

6. That judgment is sure to overtake those who defy God.

ELIJAH, THE HIDDEN ONE.

1 Kings 17:2-6.

"Yet not in solitude! if Christ is near me,

Waketh Him workers for the great employ!

Oh, not in solitude! if souls that hear me

Catch from my joyance the surprise of joy."-Myers. When Elijah had delivered his God-given message to the idolatrous king of Israel it would seem as if he did not know which way to turn next. Perhaps it was in answer to a prayer for guidance and protection that God said, "Get thee hence, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith." He who had slain so many of the Lord's servants was not likely to spare a man like Elijah. The servants of Christ still find it a testing time after the delivery of some unwelcome death or life message in the Name of God. How sweet it is at such times to find the Lord Himself a refuge and a hiding-place to the troubled soul! We observe that Elijah's hiding-place was a place of-

I. Divine Appointment. The Lord said, "Hide thyself by the brook Cherith." How could he feel safe or satisfied hiding in a place of his own choosing or making? What a sigh of relief would escape the heart of the obedient prophet as he sought and found the God-appointed place of rest, such a feeling of relief as the sinner knows, when in obedience to God's Word he flees for refuge to that appointed place called "Calvary." It matters not where the man-slayer ran for safety, he could have no assurance of it until he ran into the God-appointed city of refuge. Are we resting where God has bid us rest, in Jesus Christ, His beloved Son?

II. Perfect Seclusion. He was completely hid in the secret of the Lord's presence from the pride of Ahab and the strife of Jezebel's tongue (Psalms 31:20). The place of God's salvation is a place of separation and seclusion. Your life is hid with Christ in God. What an honour to belong to "Thy hidden ones" (Psalms 83:3). All such hidden ones abide under the shadow of the Almighty (Psalms 91:1). They are saved from the fear of man, from the slavery of fashion, and from the harassing anxieties of the ordinary worldly life. "Thou art my hiding-place" (Psalms 32:7).

III. Assuring Promise. "Thou shalt drink of the brook: and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there" (1 Kings 17:4). God never sends us a warfare on our own charges. This promise could not be separated from that hallowed place "Cherith." All the promises of God are in Christ Jesus Yea and Amen. To know that His Command had gone forth was enough to allay every doubt and fear as to all his needs being supplied. All things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose. We are saved by His grace and assured by His Word.

IV. Wonderful Experience. "The ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning and in the evening" (1 Kings 17:6). The prophet could not have such a manifestation of the loving-kindness of God anywhere else; being in God's way He met him and blessed him. So is it at the Cross of Christ. The provision was-

1. Plentiful. Not only had he "bread and water," but flesh also. The life of faith will always be met with His "exceeding abundance." The young lions in the full vigour of their own strength do suffer lack; but they that trust the Lord shall not want any good. At that holy place appointed by God, the Cross, there is sufficient for all.

2. Regular. "Morning and evening," as long as it was needed. He who hath begun the good work is able to carry it on. He who gave you the first mouthful of grace is able to make His grace sufficient for you all the way (Exodus 16:35). In the secret place of His presence you may have "day by day your daily bread."

3. Miraculous. Every morsel of Elijah's food while here came to him in a supernatural fashion. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." The life that has been begotten by the Word of God must also grow thereby. Miracles are an everyday occurrence to the man who lives by faith in the Son of God. When Jesus asked those who had gone out in His Name, "Lacked ye anything?" they said, "Nothing" (Luke 22:35). God's ravens are everywhere, and His command is enough to make them the ministers of mercy and blessing to any of His hidden ones.

ELIJAH, THE FAITHFUL.

1 Kings 17:7-16.

"Reason unstrung the harp to see

Wherein the music dwells;

Faith pours a hallelujah song,

And heavenly rapture swells.

While Reason strives to count the drops

That lave our narrow strand,

Faith launches o'er the mighty deep

To seek a better land."-Havergal.

We walk by faith, not by sight. Elijah had a long rest beside the secret brook-perhaps about twelve months. This would serve as a test both to his faith and his patience. We must learn to wait on God if we would do exploits for Him. Moses waited in the Midian desert forty years before the divine call came. But what could he have done to save Israel before that? The man who had to face the testing ordeal of Carmel must be a man approved of God. Precious faith, like precious gold, must needs pass through the refining fires. The prophet now receives another call.

I. The Time of this Call. "After the brook dried up" (1 Kings 17:7). We may be perfectly assured of this, that when God in His providence closes one door against His servants He will open another. It will be a trying time to witness in the channel of our present comforts being gradually narrowed and the stream slowly drying up. It may be the drying up of the brook of worldly prosperity, but especially when the much-loved brook of self-confidence has dried up do we feel how utterly helpless we are. But man's extremity is God's opportunity.

II. The Command Given. "Arise, get thee to Zarephath" (1 Kings 17:9). When the brook became silent then God spoke. When the mountains of our boasted strength shall depart and the hills of our carnal hopes be removed the kindness of the Lord shall not depart, neither shall the covenant of His peace be removed (Isaiah 54:10). Zarephath means a smelting-house, a place of fiery trials. It was meet that the prophet of fire should pass through the refining furnace. All who would live godly must suffer persecution. Elijah's journey of one hundred miles through a famine-stricken country would afford him ample opportunities for faith. Away from the shady brook, this must have been to him as a baptism of fire. Did not the New Testament Elijah say of Christ that He will baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire?

III. The Promise Made. "I have commanded a widow to sustain thee" (1 Kings 17:9). Perhaps the prophet thought that she must surely be a wealthy widow that was to supply his need during the remaining time of the famine. In any case, God's "commands to the ravens" had not failed him, neither would His Word to the widow. How the message came to this poor widow we don't know, but doubtless this Zidonian was prepared in some way; it may have been through earnest prayer, like Cornelius (Acts 10). He is faithful that hath promised.

IV. The Test of Circumstances. This widow, as we suppose, with some secret God-given premonition that all her wants would be supplied, is now face to face with starvation. As far as her reason could go there was only "an handful of meal" between her and death. She went out with a heavy heart to gather fuel to cook her last meal when the crisis came (1 Kings 17:10-12). Her circumstances seemed to belie the "command of God." Abraham was similarly tried when commanded to offer up his son Isaac, the child of promise. But see, Elijah comes, looking for the wealthy widow with whom he was to lodge. He meets her gathering sticks, and when he asks "a morsel of bread" he is told that all she possesses for her and her son is "an handful of meal and a little oil." Here, again, circumstances seem to make the Word of God of none effect. But, like Abraham, "he staggered not at the promise of God, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform" (Romans 4:20). He shows his faith in the divine promise by persisting in having the first share of the little store, and saying to the half-bewildered woman, "Fear not." Did not our Lord ask a drink of the woman of Samaria, knowing that He had something better to give her, even that blessing which, like the Widow's meal, "shall not waste?"

V. The Obedience of Faith. "She went and did according to the saying of Elijah" (1 Kings 17:14-15). The prophet gave her the promise of the Lord God of Israel, that the meal in that barrel would not waste nor the cruse of oil fail until the famine would cease. She believed the Word, and took what seemed her last handful of meal, and even with a hungry soul prepared it for Elijah. She practically gave away, at God's bidding, all that she had, and cast herself entirely upon His promise. She had neither precedent nor example for such an act and for such a hope, but she had faith in the Word and power of God. Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed.

VI. The Fulfilment of Promise. "The barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the Word of the Lord" (1 Kings 17:16). Thus for a full year (1 Kings 17:15, margin) did they eat bread, day by day, that was miraculously given them. Truly theirs was a life of faith on the promise of God. If the meal was always at the bottom of the barrel, yet was it never awanting. They who trust Him wholly will find Him wholly true. "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" (John 11:40).

ELIJAH, THE REVIVER.

1 Kings 17:17-24.

"Whene'er a noble deed is wrought,

Whene'er is spoken a noble thought,

Our hearts, in glad surprise,

To higher levels rise.

The tidal wave of deeper souls

Into our inmost being rolls,

And lifts us unawares

Out of all meaner cares."-Longfellow.

There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, but unto none of them was he sent, but unto this widow in a city of Sidon. Why did our Lord refer to this at the time He did (Luke 4:25) if it were not just to show them that salvation is through the grace of God, delighting to lift up the despised among men, and the unworthy in the sight of God. It was a marvellous work the God of Israel had wrought for this poor lonely widow, not only in supplying her daily need, but in raising her son from the dead. Truly might she sing, "Oh! to grace, how great a debtor!" What hath the grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men taught us? (Titus 2:11-12). Now we see in this highly favoured home-

I. A Severe Trial. "The son of the woman fell sick, and there was no breath left in him" (1 Kings 17:17). The light of her eyes, the joy of her heart, and the hope of her future life has been suddenly cut off. She sits with the dead boy "in her bosom" (1 Kings 17:19), but the natural warmth even of a mother's heart is utterly unavailing to bring back to these vacant eyes the light of a living soul. No more can we, by the strength of natural affection, nurse back to life those of our loved ones who are dead in their sins. "Without Me ye can do nothing."

II. A Bitter Complaint. "She said, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? Art thou come to call my sin to remembrance?" (1 Kings 17:18). The death of the child had awakened within her some sad memories of the past. What this sin was we cannot positively say. It may have been connected with the birth of the child. Anyway, her soul was deeply moved. The presence of the "man of God," the manifestation of the power and goodness of God in the daily multiplying of the handful of meal, and this vivid remembrance of her own sin filled her soul with the deepest anguish. It is an awful sight to see one's sinfulness in the light of the great goodness of God. When Simon Peter saw it, he cried, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8). It is infinitely worse to remember one's sins, like the rich man, where there is no "man of God" to help, or message of hope for a self-ruined soul (Luke 16:25).

III. A Gracious Request. He said unto her, "Give me thy son" (1 Kings 17:19). Although the sharp words of the afflicted and sin-wounded woman must have deeply stung the sensitive heart of the "man of God," yet he betrays no impatience. He utters no complaint, but with the tenderness of a father, and with the faith of a Heaven-born giant, he says, "Give me thy son," and he took the dead boy "out of her bosom." Oh, man of God, what canst thou do with the dead? A man of God will always act differently from an ordinary mundane mortal, by facing difficulties that seem unsurmountable and tasks that are impossible with men.

IV. A Place of Blessing. "He carried him up into a loft where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed" (1 Kings 17:19). The loft must have been a very humble place in appearance, but to this prophet, priest, and prince it was the "Holy of holies," the audience chamber of the Prince of Life and Glory. The little window of this "closet" looked right into the throne-room of the Eternal. Blessed is that man whose "closet" is filled with the warmth of the breath of God. "When ye pray, enter into thy closet and shut the door. Thy Father seeth in secret" (Matthew 6:6).

V. A Prevailing Prayer. "The Lord heard the voice of Elijah, and the soul of the child came into him again" (1 Kings 17:21-22). In asking that the "child's soul might come into him again," he was surely asking a great thing. But men who claim to "stand before God" must expect great things from God. The life of faith cannot be limited to the natural, and circumscribed by precedent. Above what we ask or think, God is able to do. But not only did he ask, he also "stretched himself upon

the child three times." With the faith of his heart he gave also the whole warmth of his physical body. His body, soul, and spirit were all consecrated to this great work of reviving. There are many who pray for reviving who would not stretch their little finger to lift a soul out of the ditch of sin. In "stretching himself" he gave himself wholly to the work. When Paul wished to recover Eutychus he embraced him (Acts 20:10). There be many who stretch themselves without the prayer of faith, but it is as vain as when Samson "shook himself" without the power of the Holy Spirit (Judges 16:20).

VI. A God-honouring Confession. When Elijah had brought down the child and delivered him unto his mother, she said, "Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the Word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth" (1 Kings 17:24). The miracle in the barrel did not convince her like the miracle in her son. The overwhelming evidence of the truthfulness of the "Word of the Lord" is, that by it souls pass from death unto life, born again by the incorruptible seed of the Word. The death and reviving of her son was the means in the hand of God of bringing her into the knowledge and love of God; so out of our deepest trials there may come our highest blessings, and when they do come let us honestly and joyfully confess them.

ELIJAH, THE FAITHFUL WITNESS.

1 Kings 18:1-39.

"Could we but crush that ever-craving lust

For bless, which kills all bless, and lose our life-

Our barren unit-life-to find again

A thousand lives in those for whom we die,

So were we men and women! and should hold

Our rightful rank in God's great universe."-Kingsley. The third year of the famine was now running its course. All this time Elijah, as the mouthpiece of God, had no message for the guilty nation. Jehovah Himself was speaking through those barren fields and sealed-up heavens, calling for confession and repentance. There are times when God's servants have to be silent, when He is speaking loudly by some crushing providence. Elijah had a long silence before he made that bold and tragic declaration on Carmel. In this chapter we get a fuller view of the faithfulness of this prophet of fire in his-

I. Readiness to Obey. When the call came, "Go, show thyself unto Ahab," immediately "Elijah went to show himself" (1 Kings 18:1-2), He had been commanded to hide himself (chap. 1 Kings 17:3). Now he is to show himself. He was equally ready for the one or the other. The man who is set on witnessing for God, as Elijah was, and is willing to hide himself, is sure to be lifted up, brought out, and set before the people as one having authority. To show himself to Ahab was to show himself to one who had been eagerly hunting for his life (1 Kings 18:12). But the righteous are bold as a lion (Proverbs 28:1).

II. Boldness to Rebuke. When Ahab found Elijah he seemed as if he had found a "pestilent fellow." But was there not a tremor of fear in that question so awkwardly put, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" How could he trouble Israel by shutting up the heavens when the king was utterly

helpless? The prophet's answer was straight and piercing as an arrow to his heart from the quiver of the Almighty. "I have not troubled Israel, but thou... in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord" (1 Kings 18:18). What constitutes a troubler? "Forsaking the Word of the Lord." Every backslider is a troubler in the Church of God. Achan's secret sin brought trouble into the whole camp of Israel. What should be said of those infidel "critics" who pose as religious teachers and are troubling the whole land with their soul-damning heresies? The need of the age is Elijahs.

III. Call for Decision. The prophet commands the king, and his eight hundred and fifty false prophets are summoned, with the nation, to meet Elijah on Mount Carmel. It was a big order, but the man who "stands before God" will go in for great things. "How long halt ye between two opinions?" is the pointed question rang out as soon as the people had gathered themselves together. This solitary man of God was intensely practical. Well he knew that "no man can serve two masters," and that indecision about the service of God was ruinous. Their decision for God or Baal was to be evidenced by their "following Him." The outward life must declare the inward purposes of the heart.

IV. Desire to put God to the Test. "Let them choose one bullock, and I will dress the other,... and the God that answereth by fire, let Him be God" (1 Kings 18:23-24). Better test our theories and principles in time than to have them breaking down on the border of eternity. The man of faith is never afraid to risk his all on the honour of God (Hebrews 11:17). An "answer by fire" was quite a reasonable test for them, as they worshipped Baal, the god of fire. Surely the great "sun god" would not fail such a multitude of prophets. At midday, when the sun was at its hottest, they got frantic, and "leaped upon the altar" as if they themselves were ready to be sacrificed for their faith, but there was "neither voice, nor any to answer." Their god was the voiceless myth of their own imagination. The "two opinions" between which they halted were man's and God's. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, saith the Lord." Prove your own selves.

V. Believing Prayer. There is no fuss, no excitement betrayed by the man of God, as he calmly builds the altar and drenches the sacrifice and the wood with "barrels" of water from the sea (Jeremiah 46:18). He does not seek to make it easy for God to answer by fire, but to make it sure that the fire is from God. His prayer is simple, because it is the prayer of faith. "Let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel," etc. (1 Kings 18:36-37). The prophet urges a fourfold reason for this special miraculous manifestation of His power.

1. That it might be known that Thou art God.

2. That I am Thy servant.

3. That I have done all these things at Thy Word.

4. That the heart of the people might be turned back. It was a cry for the vindication of God's own honour, a cry that was immediately answered, for "Then the fire of the Lord fell" (1 Kings 18:38). This was a Pentecostal day for Israel. Those who are truly faithful to God must expect great things from Him, that His own Name may be glorified in them and by them. It is because of our unbelief that signs and wonders are not still being wrought among us. "Command ye me."

VI. Bringing Others to Confession. "When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, The Lord, He is God" (1 Kings 18:39). It was such a revelation as Thomas had when he said,

"My Lord and my God." There is nothing like the down-coming of the fire of God- the Holy Ghost-to burn off the masks from the faces of self-deceived religionists. The "one man ministry" of Elijah was an overwhelming force in the kingdom of Israel. The man that "stands before God" has always God to stand by Him. There is no other way to bring deluded sinners to their knees but by the power of God in answer to the daring faith of His believing servants.

ELIJAH, THE INTERCESSOR.

1 Kings 18:41-46.

"Surely, too, some way

He is the better of my love!

I'll believe His very eye would never sparkle thus,

Had I not prayed for him this long, long while."

-Browning.

The falling of the fire of the Lord from Heaven, and the cutting off of the prophets of Baal, had effectually arrested the rising flood-tide of idolatry that threatened to overwhelm the whole land. Now that the people were on their faces confessing that "the Lord He is God" (1 Kings 18:39) showers of blessing are at hand. The quick ear of the man of God is the first to hear the "sound of abundance of rain." The heavens will soon be opened to pour out its treasures upon thirsty souls when they bow in humble confession before Him (Isaiah 44:3). It was a welcomed Gospel that Elijah preached to Ahab when he said, "Get thee up, eat and drink, for there is a sound of abundance of rain." There are those to whom times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord mean nothing more than eating and drinking-personal enjoyment. It was far otherwise with Elijah. To him the sound of coming blessing was an urgent call to prayer. He-

I. Prayed Believingly. He heard the "sound of abundance of rain" (1 Kings 18:41). The sound may have been that of the assuring promise of God ringing in his soul (1 Kings 18:1). So faith cometh by such hearing. The secret of a bold, courageous life lies in the hearing of faith. When the ear of faith is dull, the feet of service will be tardy and the tongue of testimony will stammer. To prevail in prayer, "hear ye the Word of the Lord."

II. Prayed Humbly. "He cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees" (1 Kings 18:42). The believer who is the boldest before men will be the humblest before God. To cast ourselves down is the best way of preparing ourselves for the fulfilment of the promise of God. The greatest in the kingdom of Heaven may be the littlest in the eyes of men (Matthew 18:4). The greatest of all masters was the humblest of all servants. It was the man who could not lift up his face that received the benediction of God (Luke 18:13).

III. Prayed Perseveringly. "There is nothing. And he said, Go again" (1 Kings 18:43). Elijah had heard the sound of a coming abundance, but his servant could see nothing. It is not easy seeing that which as yet can only be apprehended by faith. But although nothing could be seen that did in no way discourage the prophet, he said, "Go again, seven times." He had the sure Word of God's promise, and he kept believing and pleading although appearances were all against him. Like

Jacob, he will not let go till the blessing come (Genesis 32:26). Elijah walked by faith, while his servant walked by sight. The importunate pleadings of faith will never be sent empty away (Luke 18).

IV. Prayed Definitely. He prayed for rain (James 5:17-18). This mighty man of God seemed never to have more than one arrow in his quiver at a time. Prevailing prayers have always been definite. David said, "In the morning will I direct (set in order an arrow in the bow) my prayer unto Thee, and will look up," confidently expecting the answer (Psalms 5:3). The general prayer is generally powerless. Who would come into the presence of an earthly king with a string of generalities, not one of which was immediately wanted or expected? Prayer meetings are often strangled to death by the numberless petitions offered which are never expected to be answered. As a rule the prayer that prevails with God and is answered by floods of blessing springs out of some definite promise of God, received by faith, and perseveringly pleaded before His throne of grace (Ezekiel 36:37).

V. Prayed Successfully. "Behold there ariseth a little cloud, . . . and there was a great rain" (1 Kings 18:44-45). Let us take heed when the little cloud appears that we do not despise the day of small things (Zechariah 4:10). God's "little cloud" can be made broad enough to cover the whole sky and to meet all our need. The few loaves and small fishes are sufficient in His hands to satisfy the cravings of a multitude. Elijah asked, believing that he would receive, and he did have (Mark 11:24), and God was glorified In so answering. "Whatsoever ye shall ask in My Name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John 14:15). Seeing that it is the chief desire of the Son to glorify the Father in answering our prayers, surely this is one of the most powerful of all reasons why we should "ask in prayer, believing that we ELIJAH, THE DOWNCAST.

1 Kings 19:1-8.

"Art thou alone? and dost thy soul complain

It lives in vain?

Not vainly does he live who can endure!

O, be thou sure

That he who hopes and suffers here can earn

A sure return."-Proctor.

"Great men are not always wise." Elijah failed just at that point where we would have expected him to take an unflinching stand. Yet it may be good for us to know that God's greatest servants were men of "like passions with ourselves." As they, like our Lord and Saviour, were made sharers of our infirmities, so we might be made partakers of their virtues and glories. All things are possible to him that believeth. We observe here a-

I. Cowardly Flight. "When he saw that, he arose, and went for his life" (1 Kings 19:3). When he saw that Jezebel's pride and hatred were unsubdued after all that he had done-in proving his authority on Carmel by calling fire from Heaven and praying floods of rain upon the parched land, and showing his loyalty to King Ahab by running as a herald before the royal chariot all those eighteen miles through the drenching storm. As he waits outside the gate all the reward he gets is

a message that because he had slain the prophets of Baal his life would be taken "by to-morrow about this time." So he "went for his life." Exhausted and disappointed he forgets God and the present need of Israel for a spiritual teacher, and takes to preserving his own life. By faith he boldly stood before Ahab and all the prophets of Baal; by fear he fled before the vain threats of an unprincipled woman. How are the mighty fallen! "Let him that standeth take heed. "

II. Despairing Cry. "He requested for himself that he might die" (1 Kings 19:4). He found it a very unprofitable business that of seeking merely to save his own life. A self-centred life is sure to come to grief. When one steps out of the current of God's will and purpose concerning us our chariot wheels are sure to "drive heavily." Jonah prayed the same prayer while he was in a bad mood (chap. 1 Kings 4:3). Paul was animated by a different spirit when he wrote, "Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you" (Php_1:24). At that moment the kingdom of Israel was in desperate need of that very man who was counting his life a worthless thing. Has the cause of Christ no need of thee?

III. Gracious Touch. "As he lay and slept; behold, an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat" (1 Kings 19:5). Elijah's merciful Master did not send a messenger to thrash him, or even to rebuke him for his fearfulness. His loving heavenly Father knew best what his tired and weary child needed. "Arise and eat." The terrible strain of Carmel, the wearisome run before Ahab, the long journey into the wilderness had no doubt brought upon him complete physical and nervous prostration. The remedy provided by God was "a cake baken on the coals and a cruse of water." He knows the frailty of our frame (John 21:9-12). How long he slept before the angel touched him we cannot know, but perhaps he was, through utter weakness, in danger of sleeping the sleep of death had not the angel wakened him up to eat. Are we not reminded here of that other angel of His presence, the Holy Spirit, whose gentle touch awakens many of God's downcast ones, and whose tender voice bids them arise and eat of Him who is the Living Bread. That angel may be touching you even now.

IV. Wonderful Discovery. "He looked, and, behold, there was cake baken on the coals; . . . and he did eat and drink, and laid him down again" (1 Kings 19:6), It is not for naught that the angel of God touches any one. For every Spirit-awakened soul there is a much-needed miraculous feast awaiting them. He was not disobedient to the heavenly touch. "He looked," and seeing the divine provision he appropriated it. It must have been a very palatable breakfast, cooked by an angel, and all for himself. But God's provision is always suitable to the needs of the soul. It did not concern Elijah how the cake was formed or the coals kindled. It was enough for him that this was God's gift to him, and that he needed it and was invited to take it. So it is with the salvation that is in Christ Jesus.

V. Second Blessing. "The angel of the Lord came a second time, and touched him" (1 Kings 19:7). He had already got as much of the gift of God as to save his life, but not so much as would strengthen him for the journey that lay before him. So in mercy he was called again to "arise and eat, because the journey is too great for thee." Are there not many who have received of the Lord Jesus Christ as the gift of God that which has saved their souls from death, but who, like Elijah, have "lain down again" in selfish ease, and who need a second awakening that they might arise and so partake of Christ, that they may be able to go on in a life of suffering and testimony? Some people don't believe in a second blessing, but Elijah did.

VI. Supernatural Power. "He went on the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb, the mount of God" (1 Kings 19:8). Elijah's first meal saved his soul, but the second enabled him to witness for God. That forty days' journey was not accomplished in his own strength, but in the strength of the gift of God. This grace ministered to him was sufficient to bring him unto the mount of God (a journey of about two hundred miles). All this is most suggestive of what the gift of His grace is able to do for all who will obey the call to "arise and eat" (2 Corinthians 12:9). Who has ever yet found out the full "strength of that meat" which is within the reach of every child of God in His blessed Word? Downcast and discouraged soul, this call is for you. "Arise and eat." "Thy words were found, and I did eat them," etc. (Jeremiah 15:16; Psalms 119:111).

ELIJAH REBUKED.

1 Kings 19:9-16.

"Who can come near to God with a heart not on fire?

Souls must tire upon earth who in Heaven would rest.

Is it hard to serve God, timid soul? Hast thou found

Gloomy forests, dark glens, mountain tops on thy way?

All the hard would be easy, the tangled unwound,

Would'st Thou only desire as well as obey."-Faber. On the strength of the Heaven-sent meat, Elijah reached "Horeb, the mount of God." "They that wait on the Lord shall... walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31). Horeb was pre-eminently the mount of the revelation of God, because here the unconsumed bush was seen ablaze with a divine fire; here the law was given with its terrible accompaniments, and perhaps it was in this very cave that Moses stood while the glory of God's goodness passed by (Exod. 33). It must have been with mingled and solemn feelings that Elijah found himself in the midst of surroundings crowded with such striking and holy memories. Will there be any such manifestation of the divine presence to him? Surely he has come here to meet with God! Will those who seek Him not find Him? If men would go to the "house of God" as Elijah went to the "mount of God" what signs and wonders would be wrought!

I. A Searching Question. "What doest thou here, Elijah?" (1 Kings 19:9). By this question was the Lord sternly demanding of the prophet why he was here, instead of encouraging the nation to stand firm for the God who had answered by fire on Carmel, or was it a question full of grace and tenderness seeking to call out the needs and fears of his heart that He might in mercy satisfy and comfort? In any case, it is always God's method to go to the root of the matter and deal with the motives of the life. Throughout the Scriptures divine questions are frequently accompanied by marvellous revelations (Genesis 32:27; Exodus 4:2).

II. An Honest Answer. "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts; . . . I only am left, and they seek my life" (1 Kings 19:10). All those who would faithfully serve the Lord will have many heart-searching questions to answer. As a defence, Elijah's reply was a very poor one, but as a confession it was simple and sincere. He had been very jealous for the Lord, now he was afraid of his own life. All Israel had gone astray, he only was left. Perplexed and despondent he had come here partly through fear and partly to hear what God the Lord would speak to his soul. Any one

who truly loves the Lord, but who, through unusual temptation and bodily infirmities, has given way to fear, can easily understand the feelings of this man of God at this particular time.

III. A Wonderful Manifestation. There came now the divine call to "Go forth and stand before the Lord" (1 Kings 19:11). Is he not reminded by this that through unbelief he had lost his standing (chap. 1 Kings 17:1). Let us keep on the whole armour of God that we may be able to stand (Ephesians 6:13). The prophet is now made a witness to the marvellous power of the Lord in a fourfold manner. He sees it in the wind, the earthquake, the fire, and the still small voice. But in the rending wind, the shaking earthquake, or the melting fire there was no message from the Lord for the trembling servant. "The Lord was not in them." The Lord would teach us as well as Elijah that there is something more needed to bring men to Himself than a mere display of natural powers. The strong wind of words, the earthquake of argument, and the fire of enthusiasm may do mighty and terrible things, yet if the still small voice of the Lord, the Spirit, is not in them there is no message from God to the souls of men. It is "not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord" (Zechariah 4:6). The mightiest of all the forces that are at work in this world is that "still small voice" of the Holy Spirit that whispers God's Word of truth and life into the listening heart. A voice is something more than a sound or an influence, it is an assurance of the presence of a living Personality (Son_2:8). "My sheep hear My voice" (John 10:27).

IV. A Powerful Effect. "When Elijah heard it he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out" (1 Kings 19:13). The terrific effects of the wind, the earthquake, or the fire had evidently driven him back into the depths of the cave (1 Kings 19:11); but the sweet wooing voice lured him from his dismal hiding-place, with his face hid in his mantle because it was burning with shame. Men will be all the more likely to be constrained by the sweet voice of love after they have heard the thunderings and felt the burnings of that law which is holy, just, and good. The terrible trumpet of Sinai made men stand "afar off," while the voice of Calvary constrains men to draw nigh with a shame-mantled face.

Here, but in very altered circumstances, the same question is again put, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" And, alas, the very same answer is given. Has he profited nothing by all those revelations of divine resources that he adds no petition for grace or strength to go on overcoming in the Name of Him who doeth wondrously? It would seem as if this repeated question was his last chance of getting fully restored to the power and authority of the prophetic office, but he failed to take advantage of it. He is not allowed to become a castaway, but it would seem that from this time the purposes of God concerning him are changed, and another is chosen to take his place. Has he now become a marred vessel in the hands of the Great Potter? Let us take heed lest we should come short. How shall we escape the same failure if we neglect the great opportunities that God in His infinite mercy brings within our reach?

V. A Humbling Confession. "Go, return, . . . and Elisha shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room" (1 Kings 19:15-16). When Elijah persisted in saying "I, even I, only am left," it was an evidence that he had climbed down from his walk of faith and was now walking by sight. Was the Lord not rebuking his unbelief when he said to him, "I have left Me seven thousand in Israel which have not bowed unto Baal" (1 Kings 19:18). God could easily have made Elijah sufficient to do the work of the three men whom he was now sent to anoint. Who can tell all that the Lord is able to do through one life that has been entirely and continuously yielded to His will? It was surely a self-humbling

work to go and call a man to take his own place so soon after accomplishing such a mighty work for God as was witnessed on Mount Carmel. "Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall." "Let no man take thy crown" (Revelation 3:11). THE CALL OF ELISHA.

1 Kings 19:16-21.

"Jesus calls us from the worship

Of the vain world's golden store;

From each idol that would keep us,

Saying, 'Christian, love Me more.' "

-C. F. Alexander.

There is a self-evident vein of irony in these words of C. Kingsley:

"I was not good enough for man,

And so was given to God."

How ready we are to think and act as if the prime of our days was too valuable for us to be given to God, and that the fag end of our life is best suited for surrendering to the will of God. Where in all the Bible do we find any one called of God to do service for Him when infirm with age? Were not the Levites disqualified for the work of God at the age of fifty? (Numbers 8:25). Are there not now comparatively few being saved beyond that age? Elisha was undoubtedly a young man, whom Elijah, at the bidding of God, came without a murmur to anoint him as prophet "in his own room." Observe the-

I. Significance of his Name. Elisha means God is Salvation. This was a name well suited for the man who was to take the lead at this time of national crisis. While in a despondent mood Elijah said, "I, even I, only am left," but the Lord rebuked his pessimism by saying, "I have left Me seven thousand," and Elisha was one of them. The after life of Elisha shows him to be strong where Elijah was inclined to be weak-in being faithful and careful down to the smallest events in life. Elijah's faith was mighty in Mount Carmel, but it failed him under the juniper tree. The man who knows that the presence of God is Salvation will surely be steadfast and immovable in the work of the Lord.

II. Time of his Call. It was while he was "ploughing" (1 Kings 19:19). He was only a ploughman. Yes, but who can tell what depth of soul exercise and heart agony he may have had over backsliding Israel while following the oxen across the fields. There was One who did know, and who answered the secret longings of his heart by calling him out as a witness for Himself. The Lord knows where and when to lay "His hand on that hidden one who has in secret been prepared for a more honoured place in His service." The divine call came to Moses while he kept the flock of Jethro (Exodus 3:1); to Gideon while he thrashed wheat (Judges 6:11); to David when in the sheepfold (Psalms 78:70); to Amos while a herdman (chap. 1 Kings 7:14). All Christ's disciples were called from very common occupations. He found Bunyan among the pots and pans. "If any man hear My voice" (Revelation 3:20).

III. Manner of his Call. "Elijah, passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him" (1 Kings 19:19). It came suddenly, although Elisha's preparation may have been going on for several years. It came unmistakably. The mantle or spirit of the prophet had now fallen upon him. This was to him an holy anointing from the Lord (1 Kings 19:16). The mantle of Elijah was the symbol of the Spirit of power. Elisha could do no mighty works for God without this definite baptism. No more can we. "Tarry until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). The sudden encircling of the prophetic mantle about him was an experience he could not possibly forget or ignore (Acts 19:1).

IV. Effects of this Call. It was followed by-

1. An Instant Response. "He left his oxen and ran after Elijah" (1 Kings 19:20). He did not wait for a more convenient season, or he too might have been startled some day with the question, "What doest thou here, Elisha?" His call, like ours, is a passing one. The prophetic power will not abide with him unless he follows and keeps, as it were, in touch with that mantle which, in grace, had fallen upon him. So if we would abide in the power of His anointing we must be willing and ready to be led by the Spirit, and to walk in Him and with Him. An instant recognition of God's call, by the coming upon us of the Holy Spirit, should be made. "Set thine heart upon all that I shall show thee" (Ezekiel 40:4).

2. A Revelation of Filial Tenderness. "Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee" (1 Kings 19:20). These words, we think, do not in any way betray the spirit of that man who said, "Suffer me first to go and bury my father" (Matthew 8:21). The call came to Elisha in the form of an offer instead of a command. An offer which he instantly accepted. Perhaps his love for his father and mother was one of the chief evidences of his righteousness with God and fitness for service. Those who would feel it no sacrifice whatever to leave home, even for the service of God, are not likely to be sent by Him (Matthew 19:27-29).

3. A Willing and Definite Testimony. "He took a yoke of oxen and slew them... and gave unto the people" (1 Kings 19:21). What would the people think of such an act? Killing the useful oxen and making a fire of the agricultural instruments! It was an indication to them that he was now done with this business, as he had deliberately accepted the gracious offer of the prophetic office at the hand of Elijah. All that Elijah said to him was, "Go back again, for what have I done to thee?" As much as to say, If there is no correspondence in your heart to this outward call then go back. But there was, and he fearlessly obeyed.

4. A Personal Separation and Service. "Then he arose and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him" (1 Kings 19:21). As a vessel he has been cleansed, and made meet for the Master's use. He forsook all and followed Him. He began his great life's work in a very humble fashion, by "pouring water in the hands of Elijah" (2 Kings 3:11). He sought not great things for himself, but only to please and help his Master. Oh, that the words of our gracious Master might be true in our lips when face to face with the needs of men! "I am among you as he that serveth." "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it" (John 2:5).

ELIJAH, THE REPROVER.

1 Kings 21:15-29.

Life is beautiful wholly, and could we eliminate only

This interfering, enslaving, o'ermastering demon of craving,

This wicked tempter inside us, to ruin still eager to guide us,

Life were beatitude."-Clough.

If spotless angels fell through the sin of ambition, how can a sinful man hope to succeed by it? The scheming Jezebel had brought the honest Naboth to an untimely death, that her weak but ambitious husband might get possession of his inheritance. The greed of gain has driven others than Jezebel into terrible deeds of darkness. The love of the world is as cruel as the grave. It is as the nursing of a beautiful serpent that will one day send its poisonous fang into the soul. There was a-

I. Seeming Success. "When Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, he rose up to take possession of the vineyard" (1 Kings 21:16). It was nothing to him how Naboth had died as long as he was now out of his way to the taking possession of his valuable garden. "Get, get," by hook or by crook, is the creed of iron-heeled selfishness. What better are those drink-dealers, who by their craft and cunning have enticed multitudes to ruin and death that they might get possession of their money, which was their only vineyard?

II. Forgotten Factor. The Lord said unto Elijah, "Behold, Ahab is gone down to possess the vineyard of Naboth" (vv. 1 Kings 17:18). That secret chamber has never yet been built where a plot can be formed without the eyewitnessing of God. The forgotten factor in the schemes of worldly men and women is God. God is not in all their thoughts. Such may succeed for a time, like Ahab and the Babel builders, but all man's works, to be a final success, must pass muster with a righteous God (Genesis 11:5; 1 Corinthians 3:13).

III. Stern Command. "Go down to meet Ahab, and speak unto him, saying, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine" (vv. 1 Kings 17:19). This was a terrible message that Elijah got from the Lord Almighty, who is so infinite in love and compassion. God is love. Yes; but while he "keepeth mercy for thousands" (Exodus 34:7) He will by no means clear the guilty impenitent. The prophet might have preferred to have taken a more gracious message to the king, but to tone down the solemn warnings of Jehovah would be to prove himself a traitor to God and a deceiver of souls (Acts 20:20-27).

IV. Startling Question. "Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" (1 Kings 21:20). The messenger of God found out Ahab, as the writing on the wall found out the profane Belshazzar. Sudden surprises are sure to overtake the secret sinner (Luke 12:20). "Be sure your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23). But why was the prophet of God his enemy? Just because he was living at enmity with God. Was Elijah His enemy because he told Him the truth? (Galatians 4:16). If the sinner is not found by the servant of God he will one day be found by God Himself. Will it then be as an enemy? Light is always the enemy of darkness.

V. Straight Answer. "I have found thee; because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord" (1 Kings 21:20). When a man has sold himself to the work of the Devil it is surely high time that he was "found out," and what a mercy it is to be arrested in such a fatal course. Ahab, in selling himself, like every other such sinner, had stifled his conscience and deliberately become

the abject slave of lust and pride. To sell one's self "to work evil in the sight of the Lord" is one of the most culpable and dastardly transactions of which a human soul is capable. Yet for greed of gain and love of the world how many there be who are daily doing it.

VI. Terrible Prospect. "The dogs shall lick thy blood;. .. evil upon thee and upon thy posterity;... the dogs shall eat Jezebel" (1 Kings 21:21-24). What a dismal outlook for wealthy royal sinners! The woe that slumbereth not against the covetous has come (Habakkuk 2:9). "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Matthew 7:2). These judgments were of God's appointment, not the prophet's. All workers of iniquity have a fearful future, which sooner or later will reveal itself in awful reality (Revelation 21:8). "The hope of the wicked shall be cut off" (Proverbs 2:22).

VII. Merciful Deliverance. "When Ahab heard those words he rent his clothes, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly. Then when the Lord saw that Ahab humbled himself before Him, He promised not to bring the evil in his days" (1 Kings 21:27-29). Repentance and humility before God is the only way whereby the guilty may hope to escape Holy and fiery indignation. There is nothing like a discovery of our sinfulness before Him to make us go softly. Here is another proof of God's readiness to forgive the penitent. He delighteth in mercy; judgment is His strange work. The great outstanding and unfailing testimony to God's willingness to save is the Cross of Christ (Isaiah 57:7).

BEN-HADAD'S FALL AND RESTORATION.

1 Kings 20:30-34.

"Jesus, who to Thy Father prayed

For those who all Thy love repaid

With this dread cup of woes,

Teach me to conquer, Lord, like Thee,

By patience and benignity.

The thwarting of my foes."-Faber. The cause of the defeat of the great host of Syrians was a denial of God. They did not believe that the God of Israel had any power in the valleys (1 Kings 20:28). An imperfect and false idea of God has been, and is still, the source of ruin to many. "They that know their God shall be strong" (Daniel 11:32). To the believer God is the God of every hill and valley of their daily life. We do not attempt here an exposition of the above Scripture, but wish to use it only as an illustration or historical picture of the great salvation. Notice then a-

I. Fearful Condition. "Ben-hadad fled into an inner chamber" (1 Kings 20:30). The marginal reading of the Revised Version is "from chamber to chamber," as one convicted of danger and seeking safety, but finding no place to rest. How like this is to an awakened sinner, running as it were from place to place, from sin to sin, and from pleasure to pleasure, seeking rest and relief to his troubled soul, but never getting any assurance of salvation. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done."

II. Hopeful Proclamation. "We have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings" (1 Kings 20:31). These servants who had heard this good news did not hide the tidings from the anxious Ben-hadad, but carried them at once to him. Have we not heard that the King of Heaven is merciful, and that He "delighteth in mercy," and is "ready to pardon?" Are we hiding the good news, like the lepers of Samaria, from those timid and fearful souls who, like Ben-hadad, have been crushed and defeated in the battles of life, and who run to and fro secretly seeking a place of rest?

III. Self-humbling Intercession. "They put sackcloth on their loins, and ropes on their heads, and came to the king of Israel, and prayed for him" (1 Kings 20:32). In praying for Ben-hadad they were praying for one who had forfeited his life through open rebellion. These intercessors identified themselves with the guilty one for whom they prayed. The sackcloth and the ropes spoke of repentance and a readiness to die for his sake. The way to pray for others is to put ourselves in their position and circumstances. Did our Lord Jesus Christ not do this? Where is our sackcloth and ropes when we make intercession for transgressors before our merciful King? Is our sympathy manifested?

IV. Heartening Revelation. "He is my brother" (1 Kings 20:32). When the king of Israel deigned to call him, who had been his enemy, his "brother," it was the throwing open of the door of grace and mercy to the petitioners. They were quick to catch it, and take advantage of it, by saying, "Thy brother." What an encouragement we have in praying for others when we know that He loves His enemies and is prepared to receive them and treat them as brothers 1

V. Peaceful Reconciliation. "He caused him to come up into the chariot" (1 Kings 20:33). A little while ago he was fighting against the king of Israel, now he is reconciled to him, and having fellowship with him in his own chariot. Once we were enemies to the Son of God by our wicked works, but now, through grace and a mighty intercession, we have been brought nigh, and lifted up, and made to sit with Him in heavenly places. Our fellowship is now with the Son in the chariot of His salvation.

VI. Voluntary Restitution. "Ben-hadad said, The cities which my father took from thy father I will restore" (1 Kings 20:34). Now that he had been "saved by grace" he was prepared to yield up to him all that beforetime had been taken from him. Should not the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ constrain us to yield up to Him that life which was beforetime taken from His service and spent in opposition to His will? (Romans 12:1). "Thou hast loosed my bonds... What shall I render unto the Lord?" (Psalms 116:12, Psalms 116:16-17).

VII. Blessed Consummation. "So he made a covenant with him" (1 Kings 20:34). They made a mutual agreement to seek one another's welfare in time to come. Surely all self-seeking should end when we have been forgiven and reconciled unto God through the death of His Son. Is there not also a mutual understanding between the saved sinner and the Son of God, that while He looks after our interests in Heaven we should look after His interests on earth? As He has brought us into sonship shall we not agree to be His bond-slaves? "I determined not to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). So said Paul, whose whole soul had been captivated by the covenanting grace of God.

MICAIAH, THE FAITHFUL.

1 Kings 22.

"When gathering clouds around I view,

And days are dark and friends are few,

On Him I lean, who, not in vain,

Experienced every human pain;

He sees my wants, allays my fears,

And counts and treasures up my tears,"-Gran

Union is not always strength, for an unequal yoke with unbelievers is shown in this chapter to be utter weakness. God is willing to use weak things, but not unclean things. The godless Ahab was quite pleased to have the help of the God-fearing Jehoshaphat, but such compromising on his part could only end in shame and defeat. However, he was anxious that some true prophet might be consulted, and at last Micaiah was called. Micaiah is a noble man, with some of the daring of Elijah about him. Let us ask-

I. Who was he?

1. He was a Holy Man, a man who knew the mind of the Lord (1 Kings 22:8). The meaning of his name is "Who is like Jehovah?" In his character he was like God, and in his testimony there are none like God. He was Jehovah's mouthpiece and representative, a light to shine in a dark place. All who have been called of God into the fellowship of His Son have been called to a like life and work.

2. He was Tempted. The messenger that was sent from the king to call him tried to persuade him to speak words pleasing to the king, as the other prophets had done (1 Kings 22:13). The temptation was to please man rather than God. Paul said, "If I yet pleased men, I would not be the servant of Christ." The king's four hundred false prophets had all spoken smooth things, but the man who stands in God's stead must be prepared to stand alone. The workers of iniquity always like to hear good said concerning them, and men-pleasers are always found speaking smooth things.

3. He was Faithful. "Micaiah said, What the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak" (1 Kings 22:14). When Luther was told that all the world was against him, his answer was, "Then I am against the whole world." The faithful preacher will never shun to declare the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). "He that hath My Word let him speak My Word faithfully, saith the Lord, for what is the chaff to the wheat?" (Jeremiah 23:28). A man handles the Word of God deceitfully when he turns its sharp edge away from the hearts of the people (see 1 Kings 22:17).

II. How was he Treated?

1. He was Hated. "There is yet one man, Micaiah: but I hate him" (1 Kings 22:8). Why did the king hate him? Because of this faithfulness to God. "He doth not prophecy good concerning me." His words were not smooth enough for the royal ear. Christ and His disciples were hated for the same cause. The carnal mind is enmity against God. It is quite clear that if Ahab had loved God he would

not have hated His servant because he spoke the truth. "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light" (John 3:20).

2. He was Mocked. "Zedekiah smote him on the cheek, and said, Which way went the Spirit of the Lord from me to speak unto thee?" (1 Kings 22:24). What does false prophets or men-pleasing professors know about the Spirit of God? He has no place in their ministry. They are always ready to smite with the tongue when grace has not been poured into their lips. But smiting the speaker does not break the teeth of the truth. In our testimony for Christ we need never forget that our position is outside the camp of worldly-mindedness, bearing His reproach.

3. He was Imprisoned. "Put this fellow in the prison" (1 Kings 22:27). He became the enemy of the self-seeking because he spoke the truth. It is easy to bind the servant of God, but the Word of God is not to be bound; its Spirit, like the wind, bloweth where it listeth. When they imprisoned John Bunyan "The Pilgrim's Progress" came out of the jail, and has been wandering through the world ever since.

III. What Became of his Prophecy? (1 Kings 22:17).

1. It was Fulfilled, although some Believed it not. The king had ordered him to be shut up until he would return from the battle in peace. He was peaceful enough when he came back, for he was carried back dead (1 Kings 22:37) according to the word of Micaiah (1 Kings 22:28). The unbelief of some could never make the Word of God of none effect.

2. It was Fulfilled, although the Unbeliever Disguised Himself to Escape it (1 Kings 22:30, 1 Kings 22:34). No man has ever yet been able to disguise himself so that God could not find him out. The "bow at a venture" became the divine detective to apprehend Ahab. God's arrows never miss the mark. There are many ways by which unbelievers disguise themselves, with the hope of escaping the judgment of God. Be sure your sin will find you out. The cloak of morality or religion will never hide from God the sin of an unbelieving heart (1 Samuel 16:7).

3. It was Fulfilled, because it was God's Word (1 Kings 22:14). His Word shall not return void, as an empty, fruitless thing. Every Word of God is pure, incorruptible, and unfailing. He never speculates. There is no shadow of doubt about God's shalls. The prophet who speaks in the Name of the Lord and whose word does not come to pass is a fraud (Deuteronomy 18:21-22). It is impossible for God to lie. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" (Hebrews 2:3).

2 Kings

ELIJAH, THE MAN OF GOD

2 Kings 1:1-16

"A king sang once

Long years ago: 'My soul is athirst for God,

Yea, for the living God'-thy thirst and his

Are one... Life is not enough,

Nor love, nor learning-Death is not enough,

Give us now, now I-to live in the life of God;

Give us now, now!-to be at one with Him. "-Ingelow.

AHAZIAH, the son of a wicked father, meets with an accident, and is sick, then he desires to inquire of the god of Ekron. His fall might have been a great blessing to him as it made him feel the need of divine assistance; but, instead of calling upon the God of Heaven, he chose to inquire of the god of flies, and thus ignore the Lord God of Israel. But God is not mocked; He thrusts His servant Elijah right in front of the king's messengers with the sentence of death. The prophet appears before us here as a "man of God," and as such let us consider him.

I. He was Commissioned. "The angel of the Lord said unto Elijah, Arise, go... and say unto them, Is it because there is no God in Israel that ye go to inquire of Baal-zebub?" (2 Kings 1:3, R.V.). As a man of God, he was called upon to speak on God's behalf. Is there not a great need for definite testimony along this line to-day, when multitudes are forsaking God, the Fountain of Living Water, and hewing out for themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water (Jeremiah 2:11-13). Is it because Christ has failed that men seek after the pleasures of sin? Is it because the Gospel of God has lost its power that men go after another gospel? Oh, man of God, be true to thy calling, and preach Christ.

II. He was Believed. The turning back of the messengers proved that they were convinced that this man spoke with more than human authority, then, after describing his appearance to the king, he said, "It is Elijah the Tishbite" (2 Kings 1:8). The manner of the "man of God" cannot be the same as ordinary mortals. If Elijah had addressed them in the fashion in which many preach the Gospel, they would have smiled and went on after their "lying vanities" to the forsaking of their own mercy. (Jonah 2:8). Although they knew not the name of the man, they felt that there was a supernatural ring about his message. "It is Elijah!" It is just like that man who is constantly doing wonders in the name of his God, in turning sinners from the error of their ways.

III. He was Mocked. Ahaziah did not blame his servants from turning back, but that man for predicting his death. So a captain with his fifty men were ordered to apprehend him. They found Elijah on the top of a hill (perhaps Carmel), and, in a tone of contempt and insolence, they said: "Thou man of God, the king hath said, Come down" (2 Kings 1:9), as if the saying of the king was of greater weight than the message of God. He demanded him to come down. The captain of the second fifty was even more insolent in saying, "Come down quickly." They seemed utterly helpless of themselves to bring him down. There is a hill-top from which no power on earth can bring down a "man of God"-that is the hill-top of peaceful communion in the divine presence. It is the delight of the enemy to get a man of God down. (See Nehemiah 6:2-3).

IV. He was Vindicated. "Elijah said, If I be a man of God, then let fire come down from Heaven," etc. (2 Kings 1:10-12). There are those who labour to justify Elijah here, as if Elijah had manufactured the avenging fire, or had prevailed on God to do something derogatory to his holy character. It was the Holy Name of God these captains were sneering at when they spoke so contemptuously of the man of God. The devouring fire was God's vindication of His own Name as represented by His servant Elijah. Our God is a consuming fire, and He will not hold them guiltless who taketh His Name in vain. Elijah did not need to vindicate himself, but His God, who is ever jealous of His Holy Name, did it in a most convincing and overwhelming fashion. It is God that justifieth. "Take heed, that ye despise not one of these little (humble) ones which believe in Me" (Matthew 18:10).

V. He was Feared. The third captain, who came with his fifty, came in a different spirit. He had learned, through the terrible doom of his predecessors, that this seemingly meek and helpless "man of God" was not to be spoken against with impunity. He was a man for whom the Almighty fought, and who had all the forces of Heaven on his side. "He came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and besought him for his life and the life of the fifty." He had discovered that it was not only with the man he had to do, but with the God who was for the man.

VI. He was Obedient. "The angel of the Lord said unto Elijah, Go down with him, and he arose and went" (2 Kings 1:15). The third captain prevailed, not by commanding the man of God to "come down," but by casting himself down at the prophet's feet. God had respect unto this man's prayer. It was just like a man of God to be ready to render immediate obedience to the Lord whenever His will is made known, whether the call is to go up or go down. "Anywhere with Jesus," says the Christian heart.

VII. He was Faithful. He went down to Samaria, not as a prisoner, but as a prince surrounded with his bodyguard, and fearlessly delivered his unwelcome message to the guilty king (2 Kings 1:16). He would surely die, because he had sought help from the dead god of Ekron, and had despised the living God of Israel. Every soul that so sins shall surely die. Oh, man, fallen by thy sin, and sick unto death, hear His voice of mercy saying, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved,... for I am God, and there is none else" -who can deliver. "There is none other Name under Heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 6:12).

ELISHA; Or, EQUIPPED FOR SERVICE

2 Kings 2:1-15.

"Only work that is for God alone

Hath an increasing guerdon of delight;

A guerdon unaffected by the sight

Of great success, nor by its loss o'erthrown."-Havergal

While at the plough "Elijah cast his mantle upon him" (1 Kings 19:19). Having been overshadowed with the prophetic mantle, is the sure evidence of being "Called of God." Elisha did not preach as a candidate. The "Call" of God is always accompanied with the needed fitness (see Lev. 8. Leviticus 8:1, Leviticus 8:6, Leviticus 8:13, Leviticus 8:24, Leviticus 8:30; Isa. 6). Let us look at Elisha as a type of the faithful servant of Christ. He-

I. Follows his Master's Footsteps. "As thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee" (2 Kings 2:2-6). He followed his master from Bethel-the House of God-to Jordan, the place of Death and Separation. Personal devotion ought to keep us walking closely with the Master (Rth_1:16). Peter followed afar off, and we know the consequence.

II. Shares his Master's Victory. "The waters were divided, and they two went over on dry ground" (2 Kings 2:8). As with Elijah, so with Christ, the dark waters of death (Jordan) rolled between him and his ascension into Heaven, but he went through them. We, His followers, now share His victory (Romans 6:4; Galatians 2:20; 1 Corinthians 15:55-57).

III. Seeks his Master's Spirit. "Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me" (2 Kings 2:9). He loved to be with his master, now he seeks to be like him. This is always the outcome of knowing Jesus-the desire to be made conformable (Php_3:10). Every Christian has the common portion of the spirit (Romans 8:9). How few seem to have the double portion (Acts 19:2; 1 John 2:27). Covet earnestly the best gifts.

IV. Witnesses his Master's Glory. "Behold there appeared a chariot of fire, and Elijah went up into Heaven. And Elisha saw it" (2 Kings 2:11-12). Having followed Christ unto death and burial by faith, we become eye-witnesses of His Resurrection Glory (Romans 6:11; 2 Peter 1:16-17). Elisha must follow his master over Jordan to see him taken up. Before Christ lives in us we die with Him (Galatians 2:20). It was such a sight as made him rend his own clothes in pieces (Genesis 37:29).

V. Receives his Master's Gifts. "He took up the mantle of Elijah that fell from him" (2 Kings 2:13). The mantle falling from the ascending master seems emblematic of the Holy Spirit's coming after Jesus was glorified. This holy mantle may be accepted or left unused. To Elisha it was the token of his receiving a double portion of his master's spirit. Without this gift we can never, as we ought beseech men in Christ's stead (2 Corinthians 5:20).

VI. Overcomes in his Master's Name. "He took the mantle and smote the waters, and they parted hither and thither" (2 Kings 2:14). He overcame by the gift from above. In the name of our Risen Lord, and with the anointing from above, great and mighty things are to be done (Ephesians 3:20). See what Peter accomplished after the mantle of power fell upon him (Acts 2:14).

VII. Manifests his Master's Likeness. "When the sons of the prophets saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha" (2 Kings 2:15). He did his master's works, and so reflected his master's image. Does our life and testimony call forth such a confession (Acts 4:13). Let us rend our own clothes (self-will) in pieces and take up the mantle (Spirit) of our glorified Lord and Master,

that we may show forth the power of His resurrection by doing His works (John 14:12-13).

ELIJAH AND CHRIST.

2 Kings 2:1-15.

"Arise, for the day is passing,

And you lie dreaming on;

The others have buckled their armour

And forth to the fight are gone.

A place in the ranks awaits you,

Each man has some part to play;

The past and the future are nothing

In the face of a stern to-day."-Procter.

Arise, the whole course of the Christian life is one grand ascension out of darkness into His marvellous light: out of the self life into the life of God; a forgetting of the things that are behind, and a pressing onward and upward after those things that are above. A resurrected life implies resurrected affections. The manner of Elijah's departure forcibly reminds us of our Lord Jesus Christ, and leads us to think of some other points of resemblance between them. He was like Christ-

I. In the Character of his Ministry. Like our Saviour, Elijah was very much alone in the fulfilment of his mission. Both had a definite message from God, both had power to close or open the heavens. Elijah, like our Lord, was reckoned an enemy by those whom he came specially to help. Both were despised, while yet they were dreaded. Elijah's ministry, like Christ's, began by the showing of himself as one whose character had hitherto been unknown (1 Kings 17:1), and ended with a translation.

II. In his Glorious Prospect. Elijah evidently knew that he was to be suddenly taken into Heaven by a whirlwind (2 Kings 2:1-2). He had the blessed hope of passing, in bodily form, into the Kingdom above. So was it also with Jesus Christ after He had passed through the Jordan of death. He said unto Mary, "Touch Me not, for I am not yet ascended unto My Father" (John 20:17). Is this not the hope that is set before us? "We shall not all sleep (die), but we must all be changed. In a moment, at the last trump, this mortal shall put on immortality." He that "hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 John 3:3).

III. In his Victory over Jordan. The deep, dark waters of Jordan rolled between him and the place of his glorious ascent to the heavenly mansion. They were divided hither and thither when smitten by his mantle. The mantle was the symbol of the prophetic office turned into a weapon of divine power. Jesus Christ overcame the Jordan of death by smiting it with the mantle of His sacred body. "The waters saw Thee, O God, the waters saw Thee; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled" (Psalms 77:16). By His death on the Cross the waters of sin fled, and the depths of Hell were troubled.

IV. In his Relation to his Followers. "So that they two went over on dry ground." Elijah and his successor were undivided in Jordan, Elisha went down with his master, and, for the time, became buried together with him in this new-made grave. If he had stopped short of this he would have, missed the "double portion." We must be planted together in the likeness of Christ's death if we would be also in the likeness of His resurrection (Romans 6:5-6). Self must go down into death with Christ if we would rise in newness of life, clothed with His mantle of divine authority (Galatians 2:20-21).

V. In his Gracious Offer. "Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee before I be taken from thee" (2 Kings 2:9). His loving master is about to vanish out of his sight, but ere he goes he, as it were, throws the door of Heaven open, and gives his servant a glimpse of its treasures and the opportunity of "asking what he will." This Christ did when He promised the Holy Spirit to His disciples before He was taken away from them. As Elijah had to go before he could send down the mantle, so Christ had to depart before the Spirit could be given (John 16:7). In promising the Holy Spirit, Christ was like Elijah, putting within the reach of His followers the possibility of "asking what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7).

VI. In his Glorious Homegoing. "Elijah went up into Heaven,... and he saw him no more" (2 Kings 2:11-12). "The time was coming that He (Christ) should be received up" (Luke 9:51); "and while they beheld," like Elijah, "He was taken up, and received out of their sight" (Acts 1:9). Like Enoch, he walked with God, and he was not, for God took Him. Blessed are all they who are so firmly assured of the glorification of their Master: "Eye-witnesses of His Majesty" (2 Peter 1:16).

VII. In his Special Gift. "Elisha took up the mantle that fell from Elijah, and went back, and smote the waters" (2 Kings 2:13-15). Like the disciples in the upper room, he tarried till he had received his master's gift from above-that gift, in the power of which wonders were to be wrought in His name. His master was gone, but now "greater works" were to be done through this heavenly gift, which was to be to him a "double portion." Have we so eagerly appropriated that mantle that has fallen for us in His gift of the Holy Ghost, that the works of our ascended Master may be reproduced by us? Elijah wrought seven miracles, but Elisha with the "double portion of his spirit" was able to perform fourteen (John 14:12). "Have ye received the Holy Ghost?" (Acts 19:2). THE HEALING OF THE WATERS.

2 Kings 2:19-22.

"He always wins who sides with God,

To him no chance is lost;

God's will is sweet to him when

It triumphs at his cost. "-Faber.

Jericho had come under the blight of the divine curse. Like this sin-ruined world, it could only be restored by the sacrifice of a first-born (Joshua 6:26; Colossians 1:14-15). All the wealth and wisdom in Jericho could not remove its plague of "bitter waters," neither can the power or wisdom of men stop the outflow, or change the nature, of the bitter waters of sin. The power of the Lord alone is sufficient for all this (2 Kings 2:21). The need of this city represents the need of every sin-polluted life-divine healing.

I. Its Condition. This is viewed in two different aspects-

1.-Its Situation was Pleasant (2 Kings 2:9). As far as outward privileges were concerned, everything was favourable. The soil was rich in possibilities, the climate was the finest, the site of the city was delightful. What a picture of a sinner in the midst of favourable circumstances! What possibilities lie within the reach of the soul of man! "The situation is pleasant" of all who are surrounded with Gospel privileges. But these in themselves are not enough.

2.-Its Ground was Barren. Labour as they may, their toil did not bring satisfaction. Those "brackish" waters continually failed to yield them the desire of their hearts. Such is the state of those whose hearts have not been healed by the Word of God. The figs of true satisfaction and the grapes of holy joy cannot grow on the thistle and thorns of man's unrenewed nature. Out of the heart are the issues of life (James 3:11). An evil heart will always send out bitter waters in the sight of God (Matthew 15:19-20). Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?

II. The Remedy.

1.-Its Nature. "A new cruse with salt therein" (2 Kings 2:20). This "new cruse" may be a fit emblem of the New Testament, with Christ as the salt of salvation therein. The prophet here signifies that the salt represents the healing virtue of Jehovah (2 Kings 2:21). This salt has never lost its savour. "There is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

2.-Its Application. "He cast the salt into the spring" (2 Kings 2:21). He did not attempt to heal the streams apart from the fountain. He went straight to the source of the evil at once. The salt could work no healing miracle on the spring until it got into contact with it. Those who go about to establish their own righteousness are trying to purify the stream while the spring remains unhealed. It is not Christ in the Bible that saves, but Christ in the heart. Our Lord cast the salt into the spring of life when He said to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again!" "Have salt in yourselves" (Mark 9:50). "Christ in you the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

III. The Results.

1.-There was Healing. "So the waters were healed" (2 Kings 2:22). The streams were healed, because the fountain head was regenerated. Make the tree good and the fruit will be good. If the heart springs are pure, the streams of action will be pure and healthful. The waters may not be more copious than they were, but they will be much more welcome and beneficial. So will it be with the outcome of the life when Christ comes into the spring of the heart and renews the waters of actions. The healed waters may abide in the same channel, but oh, how different the results! It is a passing from death unto life.

2.-There was Fruitfulness. "There shall not be from thence any more death or barren land" (2 Kings 2:21). Death and barrenness are turned into life and fruitfulness when the power of the divine transformer gets into the being. It is easy to bring forth good fruits when the disease of sin and uncleanness have been taken out of the life. Fruit is the outcome of what we are more than of what we do (John 15:4). A polluted heart makes a barren heart. These poisonous waters were changed suddenly, they did not gradually grow better. It was the expulsive power of a new infection. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His.

FLOODS OF BLESSING IN NEW-MADE DITCHES.

2 Kings 3:6-25.

"Feeble hands and helpless, Groping blindly in the darkness, Touch God's right hand in that darkness. "-Longfellow.

After the death of Ahab the king of Moab refused to pay his tax of 100,000 lambs and 100,000 rams, with the wool, to Jehoram, the son of Ahab. This led to the union of the three kings and a declaration of war against Moab. Several singular things happened which may be full of significance for us.

I. A Great Need. "There was no water for the host" (2 Kings 3:9). The number of the host was great, and thoroughly equipped with all the implements of warfare, but they were powerless because perishing of thirst. A picture of a Church, thoroughly organised and fully equipped with all the means of warfare, but utterly helpless because the refreshing stream of God's saving power is not among them (Acts 1:8).

II. An Urgent Inquiry. "Is there not a prophet of the Lord, that we inquire of the Lord by him?" (2 Kings 3:11-14). What a scene-three kings begging a favour from a man who had but lately left the plough. If the water had been plentiful they would have acted quite independently either of God or Elisha. It was when the prodigal "began to be in want" that he thought of his father's house. The faithful man of God does not fail to remind the king of Israel of his hypocrisy in serving other gods in the day of his prosperity, and then seeking the help of Jehovah when the wells were dry (2 Kings 3:13). It is the old story of man's pride and poverty. The Lord and His servants are often ignored till the day of affliction comes.

III. A Strange Demand. "But now bring me a minstrel" (2 Kings 3:15). The prophet respects the presence of Jehoshaphat, and is willing to hear what God the Lord will speak to them through him. His spirit is perhaps somewhat troubled at this unexpected turn of events in the attitude of these kings, and he knows that to hear the "still small voice" of God there must be perfect calmness of soul in His presence. The minstrel might help him to be still that he might know the mind of the Lord (see 1 Samuel 16:23). Music has its place in the service of God, but the mischief in our days is that the people get more interested in the minstrels than in the message of God. In fact, the minstrel is now sometimes found taking the place of the prophet. But the great need of the people is the Word of God.

IV. A Definite Message. "Make this valley full of ditches;... that valley shall be filled with water" (2 Kings 3:16-17). Ditch-making is a very humble work; but the deeper they dig the larger the blessing. Room must be made for the fulfilment of the promise of God. It is but a "light thing in His sight" to send floods of blessing in an unexpected way. The digging of the ditches was an evidence of their faith in God's Word, and that their expectation was from Him. They believed, and therefore prepared the way for the promised waters. Are we making any ditches in the valleys of our Christian experience, where the river of God might enter and remain as an abiding blessing? Prepare ye the way. Make room for God.

V. An Abundant Supply. "In the morning, when the meat-offering was offered, . . . the country was filled with water" (2 Kings 3:20). This labour of faith was abundantly rewarded, for every man's ditch became a well of water. The blessing of God, it made them rich. Of His fullness did they all receive. There was no excuse for their continuing in a state of paralysing thirst after God had given

them this great gift. They would not be such fools as to refuse to accept the gift until they could understand its source, and course, and character. It was the river of life to them; it was nigh even in their own ditches, and there was all-sufficiency for all. God's answer to the prayer of faith will always be to the full. Give to Him, and it shall be given unto you again "full measure, pressed down, and running over" (Luke 6:38).

VI. A Twofold Result. The Moabites deluded, and the Israelites saved (2 Kings 3:21-25). That which was the means of bringing deliverance to the one brought destruction to the other. The same Gospel, which is a savour of life to the believer, is a savour of death to the doubter. These waters, which brought salvation to the host, appeared to the Moabites only as the blood of the slain. There are those still who can see nothing in God's great provision, as revealed in Calvary's Cross, but the blood of the martyr. Because of their sin God had sent these Moabites a strong delusion, so that they all believed a lie, that they all might be condemned (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12). For if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost (2 Corinthians 4:3-4). This stream of salvation, like the pillar of cloud, was not what it seemed to be in the eyes of the ungodly. So with the preaching of the Cross; to them that perish it is foolishness, but to the saved it is the power of God. "Now, therefore, Moab to the spoil" was their cry, as soon as they believed that the host had been "smiting one another." Whenever the Lord's people take to smiting one another the enemy will hasten to the spoil. But in this case they walked by sight, and were deluded and defeated. The leaders of the host believed the message of God at the lips of Elisha, prepared the ditches, and in answer to the cry of these empty channels the gift of God came, and was received; then, in the strength of that gift, they overcame. "Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57). THE WIDOW'S OIL; Or, GRACE SUFFICIENT.

2 Kings 4:1-7.

"It may be hard to gain, and still

To keep a lowly, steadfast heart,

Yet he who loses has to fill

A harder and a truer part."-Procter.

Seasons of affliction are common to all, but only the children of God have wonders wrought for them in such experiences. It is on the cloudy day that the rainbow of His promise is most easily seen. There is always a fruitful "afterwards" to those whose souls are exercised in the day of trouble (Hebrews 12:11). It was while the Israelites were in the desert that they saw the glory of God's goodness in giving them bread from Heaven and water from the flinty rock. This widow of one of the sons of the prophets has been brought into deep water, but see how God in His infinite grace and power was able to supply all her need. Observe the order-

I. Destitution Confessed. "She cried, saying, The creditor is come to take my two sons to be bondsmen" (2 Kings 4:1). Her husband is dead, and being hopelessly in debt, her sons, who are her only hope for the future, are about to be sold. What a sorrowful plight! Yet she honestly confesses the whole truth. Such were some of us when the law as a merciless creditor came suddenly upon us, saying, "Pay me that thou owest" (Matthew 18:28), and when we discovered

that we had "nothing wherewith to pay" (Luke 7:42), that we were already "sold under sin." Being shut up to faith, what else could we do but cry unto Him who is the true Elisha, "the mighty to save?"

II. Grace Offered. "What shall I do for thee?" (2 Kings 4:2). Elisha, as God's representative, flings back, as it were, the door of heavenly privilege that she might ask what she will. It was the offer of grace sufficient for all her need. So poor was she that she had nothing in the house "save a pot of oil." But poverty is no obstacle in the presence of Almighty grace and fullness (Luke 18:41). It is those who think that they have need of nothing who shut the Saviour outside of their lives (Revelation 3:20). What shall I do for thee? "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it" (Psalms 81:10).

III. Preparation Needed. "Go, borrow thee vessels, empty vessels, not a few" (2 Kings 4:3). As yet, she had no room for the great blessing God was about to give her. It is wonderful how even our neighbours, by their kindness or otherwise, may supply us with that which will enrich us with heavenly blessing. The borrowing of empty vessels was an exercise of faith. She believed that she might see. It was so with the Israelites when they made the "valley full of ditches" (2 Kings 3:16-20). The relative value of each vessel to her was according to its capacity for receiving. This is also God's manner of dealing with His vessels of grace (2 Corinthians 12:10).

IV. Faith Rewarded. "She poured out, and the vessels were filled" (2 Kings 4:5-6). It was a great crisis in this woman's life when she "shut the door upon her and her sons," and ventured, as in the presence of God alone, to claim the promise by faith. When one has made up his or her mind to "shut the door" and definitely prove God, there will surely be a marvellous outpouring of the oil of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 6:6). She could not make the oil, any more than we can manufacture the saving grace of God, but she could hold the vessel and trust God to cause the outflow. Her faith was rewarded to the very uttermost, for every empty vessel was filled.

V. Blessing Hindered. "There was not a vessel more; and the oil stayed" (2 Kings 4:6). As long as there was an empty vessel, and faith to use the gift of God, there was no lack. His grace was made sufficient. We are never straitened in God, but always in ourselves, when the flow of His blessing is stayed. Whenever our conscious weakness gives place to self-satisfaction, then the oil of His Spirit's power is hindered and arrested (Micah 2:7). The blessings of His grace, although in Him there is infinite fullness, yet are they too precious to be poured out and spilt where there is not the empty vessel of a needy heart. Grace can only be given to meet a real need (2 Corinthians 12:9). There are those who talk joyfully of the times past, when the God-given oil flowed freely. But why is it stayed now? (Judges 16:20). No more emptiness!

VI. Deliverance Accomplished. "Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt" (2 Kings 4:7). Having received the gift of God, she is able now to meet all the claims of the creditor. She and her sons were saved by grace alone. The claims of a broken law can only be fully met by us through the infinite grace of God brought to us by Jesus Christ; by that love of God which is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, and which is the "fulfilling of the law." If these sons were asked how they were saved from bondage, they could truly say, by the "gift of God." It is not otherwise with us (John 3:16).

VII. Provision Made. "Live thou and thy children of the rest" (2 Kings 4:7). The oil, which saved them from debt and slavery, was also to sustain them day by day. The children of Israel were not only saved by the blood of the lamb, but sustained by feasting on it (Exodus 12:8). Christ came not

only to redeem us from the curse of the law, but also to satisfy us daily, as the "bread of God" which came down from Heaven. Live thou and thy children by faith upon the Son of God, who paid all thy debt upon Calvary's Cross. What is still left, through His grace for thee and thine, is sufficient for all your needs, both for time and eternity. THE GREAT SHUNAMMITE; Or, FEATURES OF A CHRISTIAN WOMAN.

2 Kings 4:8-37.

Shunem lay on the road between Samaria and Carmel, where was a school of the prophets. How refreshing would the little chamber and the Shunammite's care be after a weary tramp of thirty miles in the heat and over the warm dust of an eastern road. The Lord has many a way of digging wells of refreshing for heavenly pilgrims. Those who give even a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, like this good Shunammite, they shall not lose their reward. This woman was great in the sight of the Lord. Observe wherein her greatness consisted. She was:

I. Benevolent. "She constrained him to eat bread" (2 Kings 4:8). The love of God is not in our heart if our charity acts only like an echo. The love of Christ did not wait to be solicited (Romans 5:8).

II. Discerning. "I perceive that this is a holy man of God" (2 Kings 4:9). Being herself pure in heart, she could see God in the prophet (Matthew 5:8). Pride and self-conceit so blind the minds of some that they cannot distinguish between a prophet and a profligate. Devotion is branded as cant (John 10:20).

III. Contented. "What is to be done for thee?" she answered, "I dwell among mine own people" (2 Kings 4:13). A grumbling wife makes a cloudy home. Godliness, with contentment, is great gain. The divine recipe for discontent is given in Hebrews 13:5, Hebrews 13:6.

IV. Sober-minded. She said, "Thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid" (2 Kings 4:16). The promise of a son seemed too much for her to expect. So she reminded Elisha that he was a man of God, and as such he should not flatter for favour. In her soul she hated unreality, and loved the truth. She would have been poor company for clamouring gossips.

V. Submissive. She said, "It shall be well" (2 Kings 4:23). Although her beloved child had died, with impressive resignation she said, "It shall be well." The greatest of all Sufferers, when in the flood of affliction, "opened not His mouth," knowing that "It shall be well." Ye have heard of the patience of Job.

VI. Believing. When asked, "Is it well with the child?" she answered, "It is well." It is easy saying, "It is well," while the tide of prosperity continues to flow. It takes faith to say it amidst the gloom of death (Job 13:15). Doubtless this is one of the women we read of in Hebrews 11:35. Faith is always rewarded.

VII. Persevering. "I will not leave thee" (2 Kings 4:30). She had faith in the prophet, and would not go without a blessing. Think of the effect of Jacob's faith (Genesis 32:26). We have no unjust judge to deal with; then why do we prevail so seldom? (Luke 18).

VIII. Successful. He said, "Take up thy son. She went in and fell at his feet" (2 Kings 4:37). She was not so taken up with the blessing as to forget the blesser. Mother, beware lest you be more concerned about the prosperity of your family than the honour of your Lord and Master (Matthew

6:33).

LIFE THROUGH THE LIVING; Or, HOW TO WIN SOULS.

2 Kings 4:18-35.

"I am young, happy, and free.

I can devote myself; I have a life to give."-Browning. That was a dark and cloudy day for this woman of Shunem, when her only son died suddenly on her knees "at noon" (2 Kings 4:20). In her distress she hastens to him through whom she had been blessed, whose promise she had already tested. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you, and ye shall glorify Me." This far-seeing woman would neither trust the prophet's servant nor the staff on which he leaned, her faith was in himself (2 Kings 4:30). It would be good for every troubled one to learn the same lesson. Christ Himself is the source of blessing, not His servant, nor even the staff of His Word. Without the Spirit of Life, even the Word on which He leaned as on a staff will be powerless to waken the dead in sin (2 Corinthians 3:6). It was undoubtedly the will of God that this child of promise should be raised and restored. We have here two efforts made to do this-the one a complete failure, the other a perfect success.

I. Gehazi, or the Failure of Formalism. This man seems to be typical of a class of Christian workers that are not uncommon in our own days. He was-

1. Obedient. He was ready to run at any moment at his master's bidding. He has a powerful conviction that he ought to obey (2 Kings 4:26). No man is more important than he is when about his master's business. He is faithful to the letter of the word, "saluting no man by the way" (2 Kings 4:29). He will magnify his office if he should never be the means of helping a soul out of the darkness of death into the light of life.

2. Unsympathetic. He had no word of encouragement for this sorrowful woman, but would have "thrust her away," had not his gracious master said, "Let her alone" (2 Kings 4:27). He had no eye to see a "vexed soul," but was quick to discern anything irregular or disorderly in her manner. He would stick up for rule and order, even when burdened souls are agonising for the Spirit of Life. He is the brother of those who are destitute of spiritual discernment, and who work for the master because they are paid for it.

3. Prayerless. "Go thy way, and lay my staff upon the face of the child" (2 Kings 4:29). It would appear that Elisha sent his servant with his staff, either to test the woman's faith, to humble the servant's pride, or perhaps just to get rid of him for the time being. At anyrate, Gehazi went off with the staff, and was evidently so full of self-importance and conceit that he felt no need of crying to God for His mighty power to accompany his effort in trying to awaken the dead. Self-confidence is inconsistent with the prayer of faith.

4. Powerless. "The child is not awaked" (2 Kings 4:31) It was the prophet's staff right enough, but the prophet was awanting. It is not enough that ye preach the truth, the mere letter of the Word will not raise the dead any more than the staff of the prophet. It is the Spirit that quickeneth. We may lay the very Word of Christ, like a staff, upon the face of a congregation fifty times a year, but none will be "awaked" unless there is the prayer of faith and the laying on of ourselves for the salvation of men. Those who think that they are doing their duty by going through the form of religious

service are not likely to see the dead raised by their instrumentality.

II. Elisha, or the Victory of Faith. The manner of this man of God is in sharp contrast to the formalism of his heartless servant. There was-

1. Real Sympathy. His heart was deeply stirred on behalf of the sorrowing woman (2 Kings 4:27). He felt keenly the great importance of the occasion, although the Lord had hid the secret of it from him. Until the heart of the servant of God is moved with compassion by that cry of need, so often raised at our own feet through sin and death, there is little hope of that servant ever accomplishing any great deliverance in the Name of God.

2. Believing Prayer. "He went in and shut the door, and prayed unto the Lord" (2 Kings 4:33). Human sympathy is good, but not enough to meet the needs of the case. Brotherly love is sweet, but brotherly love will not raise the dead. It is the man in whose heart the love of God is who is most deeply conscious of his own weakness, and of the need of the forthputting of the power of God. We can say our prayers when we don't expect anything special to be done; but if we would see souls delivered from the dominion of death, there must be a definite dealing with the Living God for this one thing (Matthew 6:6).

3. Personal Consecration. "He went in and stretched himself upon the child" (2 Kings 4:34). It was not his staff or anything else that he possessed, but himself that he gave for the carrying out of this great work. Was not the Lord Jesus Christ stretching Himself upon the face of this dead world's need when He submitted to be stretched upon the Cross? Christ gave Himself for us; Elisha gave himself for the child. There is no other way of winning souls but by believing prayer and personal consecration to the work. The spiritually dead need the embracing of the living (Acts 20:10). Embrace them in your heart's affections and in your prayer of faith before God. Give thyself to the work, and look to God for the life-giving power. Son of man, can these bones live? Thou knowest. Prophesy (Ezekiel 37:3-4).

4. Good Success. "The child opened his eyes" (2 Kings 4:35). He believed and laboured to see the goodness of God in his revival, and he saw it. He went forth, as it were, weeping in sympathy, bearing the precious seed of believing prayer and self-sacrificing effort, and he comes back rejoicing, bringing the sheaf of victory with him. Believe, and thou shalt see the glory of God in raising the dead (John 11:40). Sometimes preachers are led to say, like the despairing Corinthians, "How are the dead raised up?" (1 Corinthians 15:35). Let us learn here that they are not raised up by the application of forms and ordinances and dead works, but by the power of the Living God, through a living, believing, consecrated life. All life has its source in the living. Spontaneous generation is unknown, both in nature and in grace.

DEATH IN THE POT.

2 Kings 4:38-41.

"Life is too short to waste in critic peep or cynic bark,

Quarrel or reprimand: 'twill soon be dark.

Up! mind thine own aim, and God speed the mark."

-Emerson.

Elisha came back to Gilgal, from whence he started his memorable journey with Elijah (chap. 2 Kings 2:1). The sons of the prophets are "sitting before him," and although there was a "dearth in the land," there seemed to be no dearth in their souls. After Elisha had finished his lecture to the students he gave orders to his servant to "set on the great pot." Seeing that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine," we may surely look for some profitable doctrine in this miraculous healing of the poisoned food. We would not dare to say that the pot is a type of the "faith once delivered unto the saints," but it might be profitable for us to look at it as an illustration of it.

I. The Great Pot. Like the faith once delivered unto the saints-

1. It was Common Property. It belonged to no one in particular, but was the property of the whole school of prophets, and every one was bound to care for it. The Gospel ministry has not been committed to any individual or sect, but is the property of the whole Church of God.

2. It was the Centre of a Common Interest. Especially at dinner time, they all received out of the one pot. In this time of famine there was no other source whereby their hunger could be appeased. What the great pot meant to their empty stomachs the Gospel of God should mean to our hungry souls. The Gospel is always a centre of interest to those who are experiencing a dearth in their land.

II. The Startling Discovery. "O thou man of God, there is death in the pot." The poison of death had got into the pot, although-

1. It was put in Unintentionally. The man who went out and gathered his lap full of wild gourds and shred them into the pot knew them not. They looked harmless, and so their pernicious character was not discovered. Seeing that these were new things and their nature unknown to them, surely they ought to have been tested before they were passed as wholesome food. Because a man claims to be a son of the Church, that is no reason why he should be allowed to empty the wild gourds of his "destructive criticism" into the Gospel pot. He may be doing it, like this son of the prophet, with an honourable purpose, but it is poisonous all the same. The man who put them in was not more blameworthy than those who consented to him doing it. They were all alike guilty, for we read that "they knew them not."

2. It Spoiled all that was in the Pot. There were, no doubt, many good and wholesome things in the pot, but when this new death-working element was introduced it vitiated the whole. The good things lost all their virtue in the presence of this powerful deadly thing. Do we wonder that the truths of the Gospel are being neutralised in our days, when so many new, unproven, and poisonous theories are being shred into the Gospel ministry. The general effect is just the same as the wild gourds in the pot-the whole is spoiled, and nobody is the better of it. The Gospel will never be helped by our putting into it things that we know not.

3. It Put an End to their Eating. As soon as they discovered that the contents were polluted at once they gave up taking it. They could not satisfy themselves with poisoned food. Who would blame them for refusing all that was in the pot when once they had found out that there was "harm" in it? Who shall ever be able to satisfy their conscience with a poisoned Gospel? As soon as men

believe that the Word of God is untrustworthy they will cease to take it. The inevitable consequence of allowing the self-gathering and pernicious thoughts of men to mingle with the pure, soul-satisfying thoughts of God is to taint the whole with poison and make it an unpalatable mixture good for nothing.

4. It was Instantly Reported. They did not whisper to one another to say nothing about it, and that it would come all right in the end. Immediately they tasted it they cried out, "O man of God, there is death in the pot." They never thought of attempting to minimise the mischief wrought by praising the good qualities of the man who had gathered the "wild gourds." Actuated by common sense, they said the sooner this deadly thing is exposed and removed the better.

III. The Effectual Remedy. The prophet's answer was, "Then bring meal." The meal was cast into the pot, "and there was no harm in the pot." The-

1. Means Appointed. "Meal." That which was perfectly sound and wholesome. The emblem of a pure Gospel. But the meal had to be cast "into the pot." It could not save the pottage by remaining in the barrel. It must be brought into contact with those evils which it is meant to heal. Moreover, the meal must be accompanied with the power of God, for, of itself, it could never counteract the destructive influence of the deadly gourds. So it is with the pure, nutritious Gospel of Christ. It is not enough to cast it into the deadly pots of men's minds; unless it is accompanied with the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, the death-working power of error and sin will not be overcome. The sons of the prophets were not asked to make the meal, they had but to bring it.

2. Results Produced. "There was no harm in the pot." The evil had been overcome with the good. The meal, like the incorruptible seed of the Word in the heart, puts all right, and gives these hungry souls a satisfying feast. The Gospel of Christ is the power of God to every one that believeth; for "the foolishness of God is wiser than men" (1 Corinthians 1:25).

NAAMAN, THE LEPER.

2 Kings 5:1-15.

"Man should be humble: you are very proud,

And God dethroned has doleful plagues for such."-Browning.

Naaman, the leper, occupies pretty much the same place in the Old Testament as the "Prodigal Son" does in the New. The story is both well-known and well-worn, and has been the means of bringing the light of salvation into many a soul. These are wonderful words of life, let us tell them over again. See here a-

I. Blighted Life. Naaman had almost all that a man of the world could wish in the way of honour, and fame, and success, but there was a sore in his life that all the praise and wealth of the world could not heal-"he was a leper" (2 Kings 5:9). Like the rich young ruler, there were many things which he did not lack, but he did lack "one thing"-purity. He was unclean. Wherever sin has dominion, it casts its withering blight over the whole character; but not until it becomes a conscious presence does it mar the false peace of the heart.

II. Faithful Testimony. This "little maid" had evidently profited by her godly upbringing. The God of "the prophet that was in Samaria" was to her an Almighty Saviour. She had convictions that were both real and deep, and she was not afraid to speak them out. "Would God that my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria, for he would recover him of his leprosy" (2 Kings 5:3). This was a simple, child-like testimony, but it is the kind of testimony that is everywhere needed, and that is sure to be blessed. It was the testimony of faith given at the right time and in the right spirit. "We speak that we do know." This "little maid" was the first "girl preacher."

III. False Interpretation. "The king of Syria said, Go, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel." So Naaman departed. Sent by a king to a king, and taking with him the princely gift of something like the value of $12,000, seemed to them the proper way to go about the matter of salvation from the curse of leprosy (2 Kings 5:5-6). Yes, this is that "worldly wisdom" which completely sets aside that Gospel of Grace preached by the little maid, and which is still preached through Jesus Christ. "It is not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saves us" (Luke 18:13-14). Those guided by mere natural wisdom make no allowance for the grace of God. They will not buy "without money" (Isaiah 55:1).

IV. Merciful Message. "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, . . . and thou shalt be clean" (2 Kings 5:8-10). Nothing but trouble and disappointment could come by going to the king instead of the prophet. There was none other Name given among men whereby he could be saved (Acts 4:12). The means was within easy reach. "Wash in Jordan." The promise was sure. "Thou shalt be clean." The prophet kept himself out of sight that Naaman's faith might be in God and not in man. The true herald of the Gospel does not seek the honour of men, but he will have a definite message of certain salvation for every anxious inquirer. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

V. Rebellious Spirit. "Naaman was wroth, . . . and went away in a rage" (2 Kings 5:11-12). Why did this God-sent message of salvation from the lips of the prophet come to his heart like a spear thrust instead of a healing balm? Because of his pride and false notions of the God of salvation. He said, "I thought he will surely come out to me," etc. No, that proud "I" and that haughty leprous "me" must be broken down before God's saving power can be enjoyed. The simple message of the Gospel of Christ cuts at the roots of all preconceived opinions and self-efforts of men. Naaman, or any other man, may wash as often as he likes in the "rivers of Damascus," but there is no regenerating virtue in them, because there God hath not put his promise. All our own works are godless, therefore utterly powerless to save us.

VI. Surrendered Will. "Then went he down and dipped himself seven times in Jordan" (2 Kings 5:14). Then! When? After he had been reasoned with by his sensible servants. These simple-minded men were quick to see that their master, the "mighty man in valour," was stumbling at the simplicity of the remedy. He was quite prepared to do "some great thing," but not this self-abasing foolish thing. But he changed his mind, and "then went down" with the definite purpose of putting the Word of God given to him through the prophet to the test. As soon as his mind "was made up to accept this new way of cleansing, the rest was easily and quickly done. His going down was the evidence that he had now believed the message of grace sent him. The faith that does not lead to a personal acceptance of Christ is a dead faith. "Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life" (John 5:40).

VII. Changed Man. "His flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean" (2 Kings 5:14). He became a new creature through the obedience of faith (Matthew 18:3). His faith was also evidenced by a cleansed life. "The flesh of a little child" signifies not only perfect cleansing from his foul disease, but the renewing of his youth. What a perfect illustration this is of the wonderworking power of the Gospel of Christ! "If any man be in Christ he is a new creation: old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." This great change was followed, as it ever should be, by an open confession. "Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel" (2 Kings 5:15). Truly may those, who have been loosed from their sins by the Blood of Christ, say, like the king of old, "There is no other God that can deliver after this sort" (Daniel 3:29). "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me."

GEHAZI; Or, SIN FOUND OUT.

2 Kings 5:20-27.

"My very thoughts are selfish, always building

Mean castles in the air;

I use my love of others for a gilding

To make myself look fair.

Alas! no speed in life can snatch us wholly

Out of self's hateful sight."-Faber.

Every attempt to build a God-pleasing character on the foundation of self-interest is to build a "castle in the air." These castles only look substantial in the eyes of the foolish builders, they have actually no existence in the sight of God. Take heed where you build as well as what you build (Matthew 7:26-27). Gehazi tried this kind of castle-building, but was doomed to a fearful disappointment. Mark his-

I. Special Privilege. He was "the servant of Elisha, the man of God" (2 Kings 5:20). The name Gehazi means a "valley of vision," and very fitly represents his honourable position. Many a vision of the power and goodness of God did he get through the acts and words of his divinely-anointed master. Although he lived and moved in a spiritual atmosphere, yet it seemed to be with all the pride and self-importance of an unconverted beadle. Spiritual influences and opportunities have about as little effect on some souls as the sunshine has on a toad. They can sit for years under a Gospel ministry and yet be nothing the better of it in the end.

II. Selfish Purpose. "As the Lord liveth, I will run after him and take somewhat off him" (2 Kings 5:20). No doubt the temptation was exceptionally great to a covetous man. Here was an unprecedented opportunity of making himself rich without robbing his master just by inventing a simple plausible pretence. But this "I will" of his was an act of rebellion against the spirit and honour of his master and of his God. In a few moments, and within the domain of his own soul, was the battle between good and evil fought, which resulted in the surrender of his will to do the evil thing. In making such a decision he revealed a sinful distrust in God; a desire to usurp His providence. "The love of money is the root of all evil."

III. Deceitful Work. As soon as his mind was made up to do this dastardly deed he goes into it with all earnestness, so he runs after Naaman, and begins his lying tale with "My master hath sent me," etc. (2 Kings 5:21-22). After the poison had entered his heart, his first utterance is a lie against his master. No servant of Christ can act falsely without bringing grief to his Master's heart, even if it should not at the time cast any dishonour upon His Name in the eyes of men. As soon as the love of money strikes its roots into the heart, covetousness and falsehood must appear in the life as seen by God. Satan is an unchangeable adept in the black art of lying (Acts 5:3). Resist him.

IV. Seeming Success. His plan to get for himself the silver and the garments succeeded beyond his expectation. Instead" of getting one talent of silver he got two, and, moreover, two of Naaman's servants to carry the spoil back to his own house. How very fortunate (2 Kings 5:23). What are his thoughts as he walks behind those servants carrying the bags and garments all for his own use? Does it pay to be a hypocrite? Are bags of silver and garments of beauty sufficient compensation for a violated conscience? To be clothed in purple robes and to fare sumptuously every day is not the Kingdom of God (Luke 16:19). "The Kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Asaph said, "I was envious when I saw the prosperity of the wicked... Until I went into the sanctuary of God, then understood I their end" (Psalms 73:3-17). Will the eternal end justify the means? Will success atone for sin?

V. Unexpected Discovery. "He went in and stood before his master" as he had often done before, and as if nothing had happened to mar their fellowship or hinder his service. Have we never been guilty of the same thing in seeking to maintain our standing before our Master while there is unconfessed sin in the heart? Be not deceived, God is not mocked. Be sure your sin will find you out in rendering you unfit for service. Elisha said unto him, "Whence comest thou?" and Gehazi said, "Thy servant went no whither" (2 Kings 5:25). Here is an attempt at self-justification, the fatal refuge of a backslider. He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but he that confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall find mercy. Elisha's words must have come with a pride-withering effect when he said, "Went not mine heart with thee?... Is it a time to receive money?" etc. (2 Kings 5:26). His secret sin is naked and bare before the eyes of his master. Does not the heart of our Lord and Master always go with us? Must we not stand before Him too to give an account of the deeds done in the body? Shall our final appearing bring shame or reward? Is this a time to be seeking after selfish gain and honour when we ought to be seeking only the glory of God? "Ye are not your own" (1 Corinthians 6:19).

VI. Terrible Punishment. "He went out from his presence a leper as white as snow." His covetousness led him to err from the faith, and to pierce himself through with many sorrows (1 Timothy 6:10). (1) There was the sorrow of a personal humiliation and shame. "He was a leper." (2) The sorrow of being alienated from his master. "He went out from his presence." (3) The sorrow of bringing his offspring into the same condemnation. "The leprosy of Naaman shall cleave unto thee and unto thy seed " (2 Kings 5:27). No man liveth unto himself. Gehazi, having loved this present world, and having denied God for greed of gain, seems to have become a castaway from the service of God, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his soul?" What is a man profited in the end if he lays up treasures on earth and is not rich towards God? And what shall it profit his children though, if they inherit bis earthly riches, they also inherit his earthly spirit? THE BORROWED AXE; Or, LOST POWER.

2 Kings 6:1-7.

"So should we live that every hour

May die as dies the natural flower-

A self-reviving thing of power;

That every thought and every deed

May hold within itself the seed

Of future good and future need."-Houghton. The hypocritical Gehazi had gone out smitten with the leprosy of Naaman; branded with a life-long shame and dishonour (2 Kings 6:5-27). Surely it is significant that in the very next verse we should read, "Behold, now the place wherein we dwell with thee is too strait for us" (2 Kings 6:1). The little meeting-house suddenly became too small when the false professor is excommunicated. The Church of God ought to be a growing concern, for it is the most important and best-established business on earth. The incoming of new members into the society of "the sons of the prophets" sets them all astir to seek the enlargement of their place. Fresh converts are sure to bring fresh blood and interest into a congregation. But how is the thing to be done? They propose not to have a bazaar or a sale of work, but to have a deal of work. "Let us go into Jordan, and take thence every man a beam." Every member of this Church was a worker, but some were wiser than others, for one said to Elisha, "Be content to go with us." The others seemingly would have been content to go without the master. Alas! that this class of worker should be so numerous. Interested in the "building fund," and in the general good of the Church, but indifferent about the presence and fellowship of Christ. This one who took to praying for the master's presence with them was the one who did most for the work. If the master had not been there when the head of one of their few axes fell in Jordan, their special effort would have been seriously hindered. Moses prayed, "If Thy presence go not, carry us not up hence" (Exodus 23:15). They that wait on the Lord shall exchange strength. Except the Lord build the city they labour in vain that build it. Let us now see what lessons we may learn from the man who lost his axe. The vital point of interest in this incident finds its centre here.

I. He Lost his Power for Service. As soon as the "axe-head fell into the water" he became helpless for effective work. Once he had power, now it is gone, and gone suddenly and quite unexpectedly. It is possible for a Christian worker to lose his or her power in service for God. There is a something that every servant of Christ ought to have which corresponds to the "axe-head," and without which our labour will only be a piece of useless formality-that something is the presence of the Spirit of God. Where the Spirit is grieved, there power for service is lost (Judges 16:20).

II. He Lost his Power while Working. It was while he was "felling a beam" that the axe-head fell off. His power was not lost through laziness or idleness. He had a mind to work, but had no mind to watch that the axe was not slowly slipping off the haft. It is good to be willing to work; it is safe to be willing to pray. It is possible to be so carried away with the desire for doing as to be forgetful of the spirit in which the thing should be done. Any uprising of pride and self-interest in the heart while doing service for God is a slackening of the axe-head of spiritual power, which may end in total separation if not attended to at once.

III. He Lost that which was not his Own. "Alas, master! for it was borrowed." This point is beautifully applicable to the Christian worker, because all his power for service is borrowed power, and he is accountable to his Lord for how it is used. The Lord Jesus Christ has given to His servants that with which they are to trade in His Name till He comes (Luke 19:13-22). The gift of the Holy Spirit is, as it were, a loan made over to every servant of Christ, by which they may accomplish great things for the honour of His Name. Have you borrowed and lost this wonder-working gift. In ourselves we have no power to lose. In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. "All power is given unto Me" (Matthew 28:18), says the Risen One, therefore go ye borrowing from Me.

IV. He was Painfully Conscious of his Loss. "Alas!" As soon as the axe-head disappeared he felt that further effort was useless, and, like a sensible man, he gave it up at once until things were put right again. Any amount of eloquence, earnestness, and good intentions will never make up for the loss of the keen-cutting edge of spiritual power. If the man had gone on swinging the headless handle as if nothing had happened he would have been looked upon by his brethren as one beside himself. Yet in reality he would not have been more silly than the preacher who continues the round of religious services destitute of the power of the Holy Ghost. Of course, those who go to this work, without borrowing this heavenly implement, will go on slaving away, beating the air, quite unconscious of the fact that they are attempting to fell trees with a headless haft. When will the servants of God learn to stop and examine themselves and their methods when they see their work fruitless? Tarry till ye be endued with power from on high.

V. He Immediately Appealed to his Master. "Alas, master!" To whom else could he go? If the man of God cannot help him, who can? If you find that you have lost power to make headway in the work of the Lord, do not sit down and try to content yourself with the thought that it cannot be helped. It can be helped. Take it to the Lord in prayer. Tell Him plainly that you have lost your power to win souls, and that you can do nothing until this power is restored. What a dishonour it would be to God if Elisha was not able to restore! Shall your Master fail to make good that which you ought to have for the glory of His own Name if you so commit your case into His hands?

VI. He had it Miraculously Restored. "The man of God said, Where fell it? and he showed him the place. He cut a stick and cast it in,... and the iron did swim,... and he put out his hand and took it" (2 Kings 6:6-7).

1. He Got it where he Lost it. There was no other place where he could find it. There is no use of seeking for lost power in longer prayers and better sermons when it has been lost through worldliness and self-seeking. If power for God has been lost through the worry and excitement of much serving, it can never be regained by an increase of that worry and excitement. You will find your lost power for service back at that place where you failed to reckon on the Holy Ghost, and went on in your own wisdom and strength.

2. He Got it through a Miracle. Elisha made the "iron to swim." Every enduement of power is a miracle of grace wrought through the casting in of that stick called the Cross. If is the gift of God, and always comes in a supernatural way. If God has made this gift of power to swim before your eyes as a great possibility brought within your reach, then, like this man, "put out your hand and take it." A BLIND SERVANT.

2 Kings 6:8-17,

"Thou who hast given me eyes to see,

And love this sight so fair;

Give me a heart to find out Thee,

And read Thee everywhere."-Gell. The weapons of a "man of God" are not carnal, tat spiritual. Elisha was able through his wonderful spiritual insight to save the king of Israel, "not once nor twice" from the trap set for him by the king of Syria (2 Kings 6:9-10). They go to spy the prophet out, and come back, saying, "Behold he is in Dothan." Therefore a great host is sent by night to compass the city and capture the man of vision. This praying man is a mightier obstacle to the king of Syria than the army of Israel. Oh, what power lies within the reach of that one who is in favourable contact with God! Elisha was a man whose eyes God had opened to see invisible things, but he had a servant who was spiritually blind. A "young man" (2 Kings 6:17) who had just lately come into office after the deceitful Gehazi had gone out a leper. There are some lessons of vital importance here. We may learn that-

I. There are Unseen Realities. Elisha said, "They that be with us are more than they that be with them" (2 Kings 6:16). This man of God lived by faith and endured, like Moses, as seeing the forces that are invisible. We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are unseen and eternal. To have this vision that discerns spiritual things is to be saved from the fear of man", and to be always confident of victory in the Name of God. "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world." "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). These spiritual things are not created by faith, but revealed to faith, as light does any earthly object. Did not our Lord believe that there were more than twelve legions of angels ready at His bidding to defend Him? (Matthew 26:53).

II. Some Men are Blind to these Realities. When Elisha's servant saw that host of Syrians compassing the city he said, "Alas, master! how shall we do?" (2 Kings 6:15). Like the unbelieving spies, this young man could only see with those carnal unanointed eyes which can never see God's way of deliverance. The heavenly host was also there, but the servant had no eyes to see it. To him their condition was hopeless. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:14). Spiritual blindness, if it does not lead to fear and despair, will certainly lead to pride and self-confidence. "How shall we do?" Shall we surrender to these forces of evil that are round about us, or shall we make a desperate effort to escape? Shall we allow ourselves to become captive to the power of this world, or shall we fight them in our own strength? Uttered or unuttered, this is all the salvation that the unenlightened know.

III. The Lord Alone can Give this New Vision.

"Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes that he may see" (2 Kings 6:17). Elisha did not argue with his servant; he knew that spiritual things could only be seen through spiritual eyes. "Things which eye saw not...God hath revealed unto us through the Spirit" (1 Corinthians 2:10, R.V.). Secret things belong to God Those hidden treasures of spiritual strength-mountain full of horses and chariots of fire- can only be seen and trusted by those who have received the holy eye-salve of Him who has all power in Heaven and on earth (Revelation 3:18). No amount of learning or scholarship will ever

be able to do the work of this eye-salve, which is the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit that quickeneth.

IV. Spiritual Sight Might be Given in Answer to Prayer. "Elisha prayed, and said: Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes." How confidently that man can pray who lives and moves with opened eyes, as in the presence of God, and among the realities of eternity. It is easy for the man of God to pray the prayer of faith (James 5:17). Blessed is that servant who has such a Master. Is it not your heavenly Master's will that your eyes should be so opened that you might see clearly those unfailing forces that are for you, that you might be more than conquerors? To pray a servant's eyes open, that he may see that cloud of witnesses, with which he also is compassed about, is to bring him into newness of life. If this is "the second blessing" it is a great one.

V. Opened Eyes Brings Rest and Satisfaction. "The Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." Before he could only see the enemy round about the city. The host of God was there, not to preserve the city, but the man of faith. Ye are the salt of the earth. What a revelation this was to that young man trembling with fear, and what a cure it would be for all his doubts and alarms! He could now truly say, "God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid" (Isaiah 12:2). This great saving vision now centres round the Cross of Christ. It is there on Mount Calvary, the opened eyes can see the hell-conquering chariots of God's mercy, grace, and power. This is the vision that delivers from the fear of death and the fear of man, that brings peace and rest to the soul, that inspires to praise and service, and with the hope of eternal victory. "Believe, and thou shalt see!" THE LEPERS' DISCOVERY.

2 Kings 7:1-16.

"In contemplation of created things

By steps we may ascend to God."-Milton. The famine was so great in Samaria that the almost fleshless head of an ass was sold for fourscore pieces of silver, and some women went the length of boiling and eating their own offspring (Chap. 2 Kings 6:25-29). The whole city was overshadowed with a dismal death-cloud, when suddenly a message of hope and salvation is heard from the lips of the man of God. "To-morrow a measure of fine flour shall be sold for a shekel" (2 Kings 7:1). This was God's Gospel to a perishing people. How the tidings would fly among the famishing inhabitants! But who would believe the report? How could this thing be? This message was not revealed to reason, but to faith. So it is with the Gospel of salvation. Believe, and thou shalt see! We shall view this incident in connection with these four lepers. Note their-

I. Miserable Condition. "There were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate" (2 Kings 7:3). According to Jewish tradition these men were Gehazi and his three sons. If so, it is a terrible sequel to the sin of deceit and greed of gain (2 Kings 7:5-20). Their state, like every one outside the Kingdom of God's saving grace, is pitiful in the extreme. They were unclean; they were outcasts; they were helpless and hopeless; they were ready to perish as they sat by the gate of a famine-stricken city. This is not an overdrawn picture of the man who is, by personal uncleanness, guilty before God, and who sits waiting for help at the gate of a world that is famishing for lack of that knowledge of God, which is the "Bread of Life."

II. Intense Anxiety. "Why sit we here until we die?" They are now fully awakened to a sense of their terrible plight. They used to be quite content to sit still and take things as they came, but now they

realise that to continue in this indifference means for them certain death. They are now ready to do anything, if so be that they might be saved. Although they were unclean, they were not now unreasonable, for they were quite prepared to accept the only hope of salvation set before them (2 Kings 7:4). Their only possible way of escape was to "fall unto the host of Syrians," and they decide to do it. Salvation from sin, and from that death which is the wages of sin, is never afar off from those who, in like manner, seek for it. "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30) is the language of one who was prepared to do anything, or go anywhere, to get salvation.

III. Joyful Discovery. "They went to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, and behold, there was no man there" (2 Kings 7:5-7). It must have been with great fear and trembling that they made their way to the first tent. But the Lord had wrought a wonderful deliverance. Everything was there that they needed, and nothing and nobody to stand in their way. They found a full and free salvation. "The Lord had made the Syrians to hear the noise of a great host"-perhaps that host which Elisha saw at Dothan (2 Kings 7:6-17). It is easy for God to smite His enemies with the fear of death, and make them to flee when no man pursueth. This is the terrible fear with which God may smite the finally unrepentant sinner. When we, like these lepers, enter in at the only door of hope set before us, we shall find, like them, that we are saved by the judgment and mercy of God. Our salvation has come through a divinely-wrought victory. The silent Cross of Christ, like the silent camp of Syria, speaks to us, does it not, of judgment, of victory, and of mercy? Have you made this soul-satisfying discovery? Whosoever will, let him take.

IV. Selfish Behaviour. The conduct of these lepers, immediately after they had discovered God's great provision for famishing souls, was most blameworthy. They ate and drank, and took to hiding treasure for themselves (2 Kings 7:8). For the time being they were utterly indifferent about the salvation of others. This great and merciful salvation of God had not yet got beyond their own personal needs and selfish aggrandisement, as if this Heaven-sent deliverance was exclusively for themselves. This conduct was indeed Gehazi-like. Alas! that there should be so many Christians who never seem to get beyond this first experience of eating, drinking, and hiding. All for self, nothing for others. So busy looking after their own ease and comfort that they forgot the perishing multitude, and neglected to publish abroad the tidings of salvation. Eat the "Bread of Life," drink the "Water of Life," and hide the treasures of God's Word in your heart; "but mischief will come upon you" if that is the end of your faith (1 Peter 1:9, leaving out the word your).

V. Merciful Consideration. "They said one to another, We do not well; this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace... Come, that we may go and tell" (2 Kings 7:9). These lepers had two different awakenings within the space of a few hours. The first was to a sense of their own need, the second was to a sense of the need of others. It takes some of the Lord's people a very long time to get from this one experience to the other, although, with some others, these experiences are almost simultaneous. The counterpart of eating and drinking is going and telling. To "hold our peace" in this "day of good tidings" is to be guilty of the blood of souls. As in Samaria, so round about us, there are many perishing for lack of that knowledge which we possess. Here is bread enough and to spare, yet they perish with hunger. Go and tell (Mark 16:15).

VI. Successful Testimony. "So they came and told them (2 Kings 7:10),... and the people went out" (2 Kings 7:16). They simply told what great things had been done for them, and, although the king at first doubted the statement, thinking it too good news to be true, yet afterwards the multitude

rushed out and claimed every one a portion. The gospel that these leprous men preached, like the Gospel of Christ, is exactly suited to the needs and conditions of the people. It was the news of ample provision, without money and without price. Oh, that men were half as anxious to go out by faith and take those blessings, brought within their reach through that great deliverance which God hath wrought for us on Calvary's Cross, where the enemy of our souls has been routed, and where the spoils of salvation are lying for the lifting!

LESSONS FROM THE DEATH OF ELISHA.

2 Kings 13:14-24.

"Teach me to live! 'Tis easier far to die-

Gently and silently to pass away-

On earth's long night to close the heavy eye,

And waken in the glorious realms of Day."

Elisha was now about ninety years of age. Forty-five years have gone since he performed his last public act in connection with the anointing of Jehu. There are some practical lessons we may learn from this portion. That-

I. The Most Useful Life Must Come to a Close. "Now Elisha had fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died" (2 Kings 13:14). It is appointed unto men once to die; there is a second death, but this is within the realm of man's own appointment. Elisha's master passed away without tasting death, but he must go the way of all the earth. No matter how great our gifts and privileges are, the solemn end is never far out of sight. Lives of great men do remind us of the tremendous possibilities of a single lifetime. Redeem the time.

II. The Past Achievements of the Aged should Encourage the Young. "Joash the (young) king... came and wept, and said, O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof" (2 Kings 13:14). This was a timely reminder of a great event in the life of Elisha, fifty-seven years ago (2 Kings 2:12). The young king's heart was melted at the thought of it, as he gazed on the pale face of him who once had such power with God that he became a terror to royal evil-doers. There is hope for a young man who respects the wisdom and experiences of an aged saint, and who is conscious of the fact that the mightiest weapon on earth is faith in God (Mark 9:23).

III. Confession of Need is the Way into a Life of Success. The dying prophet fully understood the deeper meaning of the king's confession. He desired victory over his enemies. "Take bow and arrows," said Elisha, "and Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands, and said, Open the window-shoot; and he shot" (2 Kings 13:15-17). That arrow was the symbol of the "Lord's deliverance." The hand of Elisha may have been weak and trembling, but it was a hand not to be despised by the young and the strong who sought victory in the Name of God. The hand of youthful vigour is powerless in the work of God without the hand of faith. The hand of the man of God is truly an "helping hand."

IV. It is Dishonouring to God to beSatisfied with Partial Success. "The man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times" (2 Kings 13:18-19). What an

opportunity the king got, when he was assured that for every time he smote the ground with an arrow he would have a deliverance. Yet he only "smote thrice and stayed." He got according to his faith (2 Kings 13:25). But why did he stop short of all that God was prepared to do for him? Was it pity for the enemy, or a self-satisfying confidence that three victories would be quite enough to serve his purpose? Why do we stop short of the fullness of the blessing when we might be more than conquerors? Are there not many like Joash, that are perfectly content with just as much of the grace and power of Christ in their lives as enable them to get along with some honour and credit to themselves. Every arrow of believing prayer means a deliverance by the power of God. "Men ought always so pray and mot to faint" (Luke 18:1).

V. God can Make His Servants a Blessing to Others even when Dead. "And when the man... touched the bones of Elisha he revived, and stood up on his feet" (2 Kings 13:21). This nameless man, buried in a hurry, was born anew in the grave of the prophet. He being dead, yet speaketh life into the dead. The posthumous influence of a holy man is in the hands of God. He who blessed thehandkerchiefs and aprons that were brought into contact with the body of Paul (Acts 19:12) will see that the memory of His justified ones is blessed. The gloryof some lives is scarcely realised until they are gone. The prodigal son, who, on returning home, found his mother dead and buried, and who went and flung himself on her new-made grave, confessing his sin, knew by experience the power of this influence. What we know not now we shall know hereafter. All who come into contact with the death of the Lord Jesus Christ are made alive again by the miraculous power of God. "You hath He quickened who were dead." Every true servant of Christ, as well as their Master, shall see of the travail of their soul, and shall be satisfied.

HEZEKIAH; Or, DARE TO DO RIGHT.

2 Kings 18:1-8.

Mazzini uttered a great truth when he said, "God created us not to contemplate but to act. He created us in His own image, and He is thought and action, or rather in Him there is no thought without simultaneous action." The wise man is he that doeth the will of God. Such was Hezekiah. Theorists are plentiful, but men of action are rare. His mother's name is given (Abi, or Abijah, possessor of Jehovah, 2 Chronicles 29:1) because, perhaps, through her influence he was what he was. The reformation in Judah may be traceable to the God-fearing mother of the king. The cause of God has always owed much to mothers. As for Hezekiah, he-

I. Chose the Right Motive. "That which was right in the sight of God" (2 Kings 18:3). He was not so foolish as to trust in his own heart, or to be guided by the light of his own eyes. It takes some daring to square one's life with that which is right in the sight of God. Any dead or sickly fish can go with the stream. Joshua made the same choice when he said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).

II. Put, Things in their Right Place. "He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves" (2 Kings 18:4). He also caused "all uncleanness to be cast out of the temple," and all the vessels to be restored (2 Chronicles 29:16-18). The things which dishonoured God were broken down and cast out; while those things which were honouring to Him were set up. The hindrances to the service of God must be removed, as well as the helps received. Are there no "places" or "images" in our own hearts or homes that occupy a higher position in our esteem than

the things of God. Put things in their right place by putting first things first, as Moses did (Hebrews 11:25-26). "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all other things shall be added" (Matthew 6:33).

III. Called Things by their Right Name. "He brake in pieces the brazen serpent,... and called it Nehustan"-a piece of brass (2 Kings 18:4). Some had been calling it a piece of God, and burning incense to it. Idolatry is a blind and stupid minister that would exalt every useless relic to the place of God. A silver cross is not a whit better than a brazen serpent as an object of worship. Call brass, brass; and sin, sin. The worshippers of money, pleasure, or worldly honour are as much idolaters as those who adored the brazen serpent, the golden calf, or the symbol of the cross. These be thy gods which control the affections of the heart.

IV. Put his Confidence in the Right Person. "He trusted in the Lord God of Israel" (2 Kings 18:5). All great reformers have found the spring of their strength in the same source-Savonarola, Luther, Knox. Hezekiah's reformation was social as well as religious, for the turning of the hearts of the people to God implied their deliverance from social oppression and degradation (see 2 Kings 18:11-12). He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool.

V. Walked in the Right Path. "He clave to the Lord, and departed not from following Him" (2 Kings 18:6). There can be no cleaving unto Him without following Him, for His presence means progress. If we would abide in Him and with Him, then we must be prepared to obey Him. "If any man," says our Lord, "would come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24). It is always safe to follow where He leads. He leads beside the still waters.

VI. Enjoyed the Right Kind of Success. "The Lord was with him, and he prospered whithersoever he went forth" (2 Kings 18:7). There can be no failure when He is with us. Defeat means self-confidence (Numbers 14:44-45). All godless prosperity is after the "wood, hay, and stubble" sort; it will end in eye-blinding smoke and eternal disappointment. The success that succeeds is that gained through faith in Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. If we are with Him, He will be with us, "working with, and confirming the Word, with signs following" (Mark 16:20). True success is always in the line of the will of God. To delight in His will is to see of the travail of the soul, and be satisfied.

VII. Showed the Right Kind of Independence. "He rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not" (2 Kings 18:7). The man who is most dependent on God is the man that is most independent of man. Let the time past suffice for the service of the flesh and that enemy the Devil. We can easily afford to rebel against all the principalities and powers that are opposed to the progress of the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, for greater is He that is with us than all that can be against us. "His servants ye are to whom ye obey," therefore "yield yourselves unto God," and say to every other master, as the three Hebrew youths said to the king of Babylon, "Be it known unto thee, we will not serve thy gods" (Daniel 3:18).

HEZEKIAH; Or, PREVAILING PRAYER.

2 Kings 19.

Hezekiah began his reign in a noble fashion. He expected much from God, and attempted much for God. Through faith he "rebelled against the king of Assyria," and "prospered whithersoever he

went" (chap. 2 Kings 18:7). But thirteen years after, through fear of the Assyrian monarch, he cowardly recanted, and now we see him stripping the "House of the Lord" of its silver and gold to atone for the offence of his independence (chap. 2 Kings 18:14-15). A backslider in faith becomes a weakling in testimony. Now, three years after this attempt to satisfy his enemy with silver and gold, he returns with a "great host," demanding the surrender of all (chap. 2 Kings 18:17-25). Give the world and the flesh an inch, and they will seek a yard. To compromise with evil on one point is to endanger the citadel of our strength for God. However, Rab-shakeh's blasphemous letter seems to have brought Hezekiah back to a sense of his need of divine wisdom and power (2 Kings 19:9-14). Only one of two courses is open for him: either submit himself to Sennacherib or submit himself to God. He cannot serve two masters; no more can ye. He chose the better part, and spread out his case before the Lord. We shall now look at his prayer. It was-

I. Urgent. The issues at stake were vital and tremendous-national liberty or bondage. Hezekiah was now fully awake to the question of the crisis that had come upon him. "This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy" (2 Kings 19:3). Have we, as the servants of Christ, as clearly grasped the situation of to-day? Is this not the day of the trouble of indifference, the rebuke of worldly enthusiasm, and the blasphemy of infidelity?

II. Unreserved. When Hezekiah received the letter "he went up into the House of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord" (2 Kings 19:14). This was better than attempting to write a reply. Some letters are like torpedoes, they are sent for the purpose of destruction-the destruction of your peace, happiness, usefulness, or confidence in God. Like the king of Judah, "spread them before the Lord;" allow Him to see and read all that has been said against both you and Him. Commit thy way unto God, and He shall direct your steps. But there are some who have not the courage to write, but would whisper a slanderous story against you. Deal with all evil reports as Hezekiah dealt with the sneering letter.

III. God-honouring. He looks on the language of Rab-shakeh as a "reproach to the living God" (2 Kings 19:16), and pleads for deliverance, "that the kingdoms of earth may know that Thou art the Lord God" (2 Kings 19:19). When our personal interests are so vitally linked together with those things which belong to the honour and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, then may we confidently expect God to do great things for us. "If ye ask anything in My Name," for My glory, "I will do it" (John 14:14). This is the strong, unfailing basis of all prevailing prayer. All purely selfish purposes must be crucified if His glory is to be the motive of the life and the argument in prayer.

IV. Heard. While Hezekiah was praying, the Lord spake to Isaiah, who sent this message of comfort to the pleading king: "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, That which thou hast prayed to Me... I have heard" (2 Kings 19:20). Not only Hezekiah's prayer, but the "rage" of his enemy had come up before God (2 Kings 19:27). His "I have heard" is sure to be followed with His "I will do" (2 Kings 19:28). "If we know that he heareth us, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him" (John 5:15).

V. Answered. "That night the angel of the Lord went out and smote in the camp of the Assyrians, and in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses" (2 Kings 19:35). At the rebuke of God "the stout-hearted are spoiled, they slept their sleep" (Psalms 76:5). When they said peace and safety, then sudden destruction came upon them. When the Israelites arose in the morning, behold, their formidable enemy had become an army of pale-faced corpses. Who shall be able to stand when

He appeareth with the flaming sword of judgment in His hand? Thus the prayer of the man of God proved more powerful than Sennacherib's host. It was such an answer to prayer as would vindicate the Name and power of God, in all coming ages, as the Great Deliverer in the day of His people's trouble and trust. Whatever be the means used, God is always ready to work, so that it may be clearly seen that the work is of God, and that we may glorify Him. Prayer is the mightiest weapon ever put within the reach of man. A SUDDEN CALL.

2 Kings 20:1-11.

"There are things Known but to God, and to the parting soul Which feels His thrilling summons."-Hemans.

I. A Solemn Announcement. "Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die" (2 Kings 20:1). This solemn declaration must have come with startling suddenness to the young king, after such a marvellous victory as that recorded in the previous chapter. Great prosperity is no guarantee of a long life. Some of the most useful and brilliant lives have been short ones. One of the most urgent duties of life is to set the house of the heart, or the home, in order for that great change which may come as unexpectedly to us as to Hezekiah. His house was the house of the kingdom. Having no son to succeed him, there was need for this timely warning to set it in order. It is hot enough for us that we live and die, there are responsibilities resting on us in connection with those who shall succeed us. Our deeds are not buried with our bones.

II. An Earnest Prayer. "Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed,... and wept sore" (2 Kings 20:2-3). The tidings he had received were most unwelcome. He had only reigned fifteen years, and was still a young man of but thirty-nine years old. He felt that as yet he was quite unprepared to submit willingly to this command of God. In turning his face to the wall he was turning his back to all human help and hope, and casting himself as a bewildered and peevish servant at the feet of his Lord. There is a selfish, petulant tone in his petition so very different from his last recorded prayer (chap. 2 Kings 19:15). There he pleads in the Name of God; here he pleads in his own name. "I have walked before Thee in truth with a perfect heart" (2 Kings 20:3), he groans, as if, because of this, his life should be prolonged. Although Hezekiah struggled against this revelation of the will of God concerning him (which we think was his sin), yet, at the same time, his prayer shows a familiarity with the Lord, which is in itself refreshing.

III. An Abundant Answer. Before Isaiah had got outside the royal court the answer came, an answer that was exceedingly abundant beyond all that the dying king had asked. He was to be healed, and fifteen years added to his life; and the city defended "for His own Name's sake, and His servant David's sake;" but, notice, not for Hezekiah's sake (2 Kings 20:5-6). Even this is not all. A miraculous work is wrought in the "dial of Ahaz" to reassure his doubting heart (2 Kings 20:8-11). We may be wrong, but we cannot resist the feeling that there is a measure of irony in all this, a holy and divine sarcasm that might teach us to be content with the will of God, even when it does seem unkind and unfair, cutting at the roots of all our future plans and prospects. A peevish, fretful child may cry for sugar until the mother is compelled just to give it the bowl and let it sip till it sickens at it. Hezekiah's life has evidently become self-centred (2 Chronicles 32:25). He is quite ready to say, "Good is the Word of the Lord," as long as there is to be "peace and truth in his day" (2 Kings 20:19). But look at the results!

IV. A Sorrowful Consequence. If those fifteen years added to his life were given as a blessing, surely there would have been much blessing in them; but instead they were fruitful of the most terrible evils It would have been good for both Hezekiah and the nation if he had died of that sickness, meant as God's good messenger to take him away from the evil to come. In the very first year of his new lease of life he showed those wily spies from Babylon all that was in his house, which tempted them in later years to come and "carry all into Babylon" (2 Kings 20:17). About three years after he was recovered there was bom unto him a son, of a woman, who, judging by her name (Hephzi-bah, my delight is in her), was to him more than his God. This son (Manasseh) set himself to undo all the good that his father (Hezekiah) had done. "He built up again the high places which his father had destroyed,... and worshipped the host of Heaven, and served them;... and built altars in the House of the Lord... He used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards.... He wrought to provoke the Lord to anger;... and seduced them to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord destroyed.... Moreover, he shed innocent blood very much, till he filled Jerusalem from one end to the other" (chap. 2 Kings 21:1-16). If Hezekiah had been content to die of his sickness, Manasseh would never have been born, and these moral horrors might never have been committed. The story is told of a mother who cried to God to save her son (who was dying) at any cost. The son lived, but the mother had the unspeakable anguish of seeing him hanged as a criminal If Hezekiah could have seen all that was to happen as the result of his prolonged life as God saw it, surely he would have said, "Not my will, but Thine be done" (Luke 22:42).

JOSIAH AND THE BOOK.

2 Kings 22.

"Woe to the man who wastes his wealth of mind,

And leaves no legacy to human-kind."-Coleridge.

Manasseh had a godly father, yet for about fifty years he lived a wicked life. Josiah had a wicked father, yet he proved to be one of the choicest of Old Testament saints. The true value of a human life depends on its relationship to God. All lasting virtue comes through our being in touch with the Lord Jesus Christ. Even the hem of His garment is full of power. Let us look at some of those features in this young man's character which have made his name great in Israel (2 Kings 23:23-25).

I. Chose a Good Example. "He walked in the way of David his father" (2 Kings 22:2). "While he was yet young he began to seek after the God of David" (2 Chronicles 34:3). He did not seek after the gods of his father Amon, for what did they do for him? Nor did he seek after the God of Hezekiah, for even the good life of his grandfather was not a perfect model; but, in the truthfulness of his soul, he went back to him who was a "man after God's own heart." He desired a God like unto the God of David, and David's God was found by him; and the works that David did, he did also, in establishing the Kingdom in righteousness. In this Josiah is an example to us. Let us go back, not to our godly forefathers, but to Christ, the (perfect) Man after God's own heart, and if His God is our God, the works of Christ will be also manifest in our lives. He hath left us an example that we should follow in His steps.

II. Revered the Word of God. "When the king heard the words of the book of the law, he rent his clothes" (2 Kings 22:11). It was a great discovery Hilkiah, the priest, made while looking after the repairs in the temple. He found the book of the law written by Moses. The Word of God may be burned or buried, but, in some way or other, it will have a resurrection, and, in due time, manifest its authority and power. While the scribe read it to the king, it was to him as a message direct from the Court of Heaven (Deuteronomy 29:25-27). In token of his belief in it, "he rent his clothes." The Word of God has usually a self-humbling, self-stripping effect before it becomes the inspiring motive of the life. It is most significant that when Josiah began to seek after God, the written Word should be brought and read in his hearing. This is in perfect harmony with the teaching of Jesus Christ (Luke 16:31). Wherever there is faith in the Word of God, there will be a rending of the heart when it is read or preached in the energy of the Holy Spirit.

III. Sought to Know the Mind of God for Himself. "Go ye, inquire of the Lord for me, and for the people" (2 Kings 22:13). As king of Judah he was anxious to know what God would have him and his people to do. He had learned from the book a lesson which this present generation sadly needs-that the "wrath of the Lord is kindled against those who will not hearken unto the words of this book" (2 Kings 22:13). The words of Scripture and the God of the Scriptures are one (2 Kings 22:16-17). When Josiah met the book, he felt as really in the presence of God as Saul of Tarsus did when he cried out, "What wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts 22:10). But it was not enough for him merely to believe the book, the tidings of the book constrained him to seek the God of the book, and to have his own life brought into conformity with His will. It was the complaint of Christ that the scribes and Pharisees of His day searched the Scriptures, but they would not come to Him for life. "They are they which testify of Me" (John 5:39), he said. Nor was the king disappointed; the answer came in a definite promise from the Lord (2 Kings 22:20).

IV. Published Abroad the Tidings from God. "The king gathered unto him... all the men of Judah, . . . and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant" (chapter 2 Kings 23:1-2). He was not ashamed of his faith in the book. Believing it to be God's message to all, he read it out in the ears of the nation. The book had moved him as no other book could, and it was able also to move others, and to so move them that their lives would be surrendered to its influence, and the whole nation saved thereby. The best way to defend the Bible is to read it and preach it as God's present-day message to the people. The best way to defend a caged lion from a pack of yelping dogs is to let it loose, and it will splendidly defend itself. Let the Bible loose in all its native and original majesty, and wonders will certainly be done. If you cannot preach the Word, you can read it. Hearers seldom sleep while the Word is being read. Ezra read out of the book "from morning until mid-day, and the ears of all the people were attentive" (Nehemiah 8:1-3). Our Lord will be ashamed of us if we are ashamed of Him and of His Word (Mark 8:38).

V. Consecrated Himself to do the Will of God. "The king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant with the Lord to walk after the Lord, . . . and with all his heart and soul to perform the words that were written in this book" (2 Kings 22:3). He took a bold stand, and launched out into the deep of God's revealed will. It is one thing to believe the words; it is quite another to perform them. The faith that does not lead to action is a dead faith. The consecration of ourselves to the will and work of God is surely the logical and legitimate outcome of faith in His Word. It was manifestly so in the Apostolic times, why not now? The measure of the power of God's Word upon our hearts is seen in the measure of our personal surrender to the doing of that Word. It is not he that sayeth, "Lord,

Lord!" but he that doeth His will that enter into that Kingdom where the Christian life becomes a power, a glory, and a blessing. He was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but fearlessly carried on the work of God. He cleansed the temple of the Lord, put down idolatrous priests (2 Kings 22:4-5), and re instituted the Passover of the Lord (2 Kings 23:21). Ye are the temple of God! Are ye cleansed from all your idols, and has the Passover Lamb got His true place in all your work for Him?

JEHOIACHIN; Or, SAVED BY GRACE.

2 Kings 25:27-30.

"She sat and wept; with her untressed hair

She wiped the feet she was so blessed to touch;

And He wiped off the soiling of despair."-Coleridge. The divine threatenings in Leviticus 26 find their terrible fulfilment in the reign of Jehoiachin. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked." Sin brings to ruin every nation and individual that yields to its dark and foulsome dominion. The king of Babylon was Jehovah's sword of vengeance in the punishment of Judah for their rebellion against Him. Jehoiachin was taken captive and thrown into a Babylonian prison, where he remained for the long period of thirty-seven years. But Babylon's new king, Evil-merodach, had mercy on him, and in grace wrought a marvellous change for him, giving us an illustration of the wonder-working grace of God.

I. Delivered. "He did lift up Jehoiachin out of prison" (2 Kings 25:27). This was his first necessity. He could in no wise lift himself up. The grace of God which bringeth salvation has a mighty uplifting power. "He brought me up out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay" (Psalms 40:2); and from the darkness and thraldom of Satan into the Kingdom of God's dear Son. As with the king of Judah so with us; there is no uplifting into liberty without the exercise of Royal Authority.

II. Comforted. "He spake kindly to him." The law has no kind word of comfort to speak, but grace has. By grace are ye saved. All those ransomed by the power of Christ are comforted by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The religion of man attempts to speak comfortably to men in the prison of sin; the religion of God first saves, then comforts. The blood of His victory goes before the water of His consolation. He knows how to speak a word to the weary. In all the coming ages God's people will show forth His kindness towards them through Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:7).

III. Exalted. "He set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon." Jehoiachin had the pre-eminence among the other kings who were as captives in Babylon. The whole incident may be prophetic of Judah's future exaltation and glory, as it is suggestive of the spiritual uplifting enjoyed by those who are risen and exalted into heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Abounding sin and failure is conquered and overcome by the much more abounding grace of God. If man's fall through sin has been great, his uplifting through grace has been greater. He can make the homeless beggar of the dunghill meet to sit among the princes of Heaven. "Oh, to grace how great a debtor!"

IV. Clothed. "He changed his prison garments." The prison garments speak of guilt, defeat, shame, and bondage; but now they are gone, and garments of beauty take their place. So it is with those whom grace hath saved. The old things which spoke of failure, degradation, and

imprisonment, are put off, and those things have been put on which tell of glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life. A change will soon be evident when once a soul has been emancipated from the law of sin and death-the filthy rags of self-righteousness gives place to the righteousness of God, which is unto all and upon all them that believe (Zechariah 3:3).

V. Honoured. "He did eat bread continually before him." He had the daily privilege of having fellowship with him who had delivered him from the house of bondage. The prisoner was now the constant companion of his saviour. The grace of God not only saves and transforms, but brings into abiding fellowship with Himself. The kindness of David wrought the same gracious work for Mephibosheth (2 Samuel 9:7). The door of our King's banqueting-house is always open for His own specially-invited guests. Eat, O friends!

VI. Supplied. "His allowance was a continual allowance given him of the king, a daily rate for every day, all the days of his life."

1. It was an allowance. It was not a reward, or something given as wages. It was something placed at the disposal of him whom the king delighted to honour. It was the provision of grace. How much has God placed at the disposal of those who have been saved by His grace? All the unsearchable riches of Christ.

2. It was a daily allowance. "A daily rate for every day." Take no thought for your life. "My grace is sufficient for thee." To-morrow's allowance will come with to-morrow's need.

3. It was given him of the king; out of the king's fullness, and from his own gracious hand were all his wants supplied. "My God shall supply all your need" (Php_4:19).

4. It was an allowance for life. "All the days of his life." The royal promise covered his every need. All is yours, for ye are Christ's.

1 Chronicles

THINE ARE WE.

1 Chronicles 12:16-18.

"Oh, Lord, that I could waste my life on others,

With no ends of my own;

That I could pour myself into my brothers,

And live for them alone."-Faber. The "love of Christ" is the mightiest motive power that ever touched a human soul, in constraining to self-sacrifice for the good of others. The true Christian is not a self-centred mystic, but a Christ-centred evangelist. He is not only a consumer of the things of God, he is a producer of the fruit of the Spirit. In the light of such like teaching, let us look at this portion. It involved a-

I. Decided Step. "There came of the children of Benjamin and Judah to the hold unto David." This may have been the cave of Adullam, or some such secret place of refuge, but to those who came to David it meant on their part a willingness to take their stand for him, and to share, if need be, the shame of rejection with him. The pros and cons about this step would likely be closely discussed before any definite action was taken. Those who would identify themselves with the rejected Son of God will do well to count the cost, but they will do ill if they go on counting and never come.

II. Conditional Offer. "David went out to meet them, and said, If ye be come... to help me, my heart shall be knit unto you." David is more anxious for quality than quantity. He well knew that it would not be for the good of his cause to have a heartless crowd following him. All who are prepared to help in the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ may depend on having His heart's affections knit unto them. The Lord's work, like David's, must be heart work. David could see but two motives they could possibly have in coming to him-either to help or to betray; they must be either for him or against him. His heart was open to embrace all who were ready to help him in the cause of God. Did not Christ also declare that "He that is not for Me is against Me?" (Matthew 12:30). Is not His heart also ready to receive all who come unto Him in sincerity and in truth?

III. Personal Surrender. "Amasai said, Thine are we, David, and on thy side." He said this after the "Spirit came upon him." It was a Spirit-indited confession; it was a Spirit-led act. There was no uncertainty about it. It implied the yielding of their lives to David for the furtherance of his cause and the fulfilment of his will. In giving themselves to him, they were no longer their own they became his instruments for the carrying on of his work. To be on David's side was to become a sharer of his sorrows, as well as of his resources; a partner in his tribulations, as well as his victories. To become a partner in the resources and triumphs of David's Lord and ours we must also yield ourselves wholly to Him, as those ready to suffer for His sake, if so be that His will might be done in us and by us. His servants ye are to whom ye yield yourselves (Romans 6:16). Consecration of service will surely follow when, like Amasai, we are clothed with the Spirit (1

Chronicles 12:18, margin).

IV. Confession of Faith. "Peace be unto thee, and peace be to thine helpers; for thy God helpeth thee." They were convinced that the God in whom David trusted was with him, and that He is greater than all that were against him. Perhaps it was the evidence of this fact that led them first of all to think of joining his band. Somehow or other men will be drawn to those whom God undoubtedly helps. The man or the cause that is espoused by the Almighty is absolutely certain to succeed. They are wise who join themselves to that movement which has God in it, and that cannot be defeated. Such a movement we have in the work of the Greater David-the Lord Jesus Christ. Did not His God mightily help Him, and are not all His helpers helped of God? What an abundant proof there is that God was in Christ, and that the help that is mighty was laid upon Him. This is seen in His words and works, and especially in His being raised again from the dead. As we can truly say of Him, "Thy God helpeth Thee," (1 Chronicles 12:18), so let us also add, "Thine are we, Jesus, Thou Son of God; peace be to Thine helpers." Those who would serve the Lord must not only believe in Him, but also possess such a spirit as will make for peace with all His helpers.

V. Successful Issue. "Then David received them, and made them captains of the band." They came in the right spirit, and they found an open door into the heart and service of their Lord. This was no formal reception. They were received as Christ also receives those who so come to Him-into the affection of His heart, and into the sacred business of His life. All who come to the Lord Jesus Christ are welcome to His love and service. But, as it was in David's case, so is it now; these two, favour and service, go together. If these children of Benjamin would enjoy the love of David they must join his service. He made them captains, for they that honour Him shall be honoured (Acts 1:8). A SONG OF THANKSGIVING, AND WHAT IT TEACHES.

1 Chronicles 16:7-36.

"Thou, O Christ, our way hast known;

When alone we're not alone;

I've felt it all, and songs I'll raise,

The garment I'll put on of praise."-Grosart. This chapter throbs with vital teaching. The song of praise and thanksgiving comes after the Ark of God has found its rightful place "in the midst of the tent that David had pitched for it," and after sacrifices had been offered unto God, and the people blessed in the Name of the Lord (1 Chronicles 16:1-3). Thankfulness is sure to come when God has got His rightful place in the life. This song teaches us-

I. What we Should Seek. "Seek the Lord and His strength; seek His face continually" (1 Chronicles 16:11). There is here a threefold object set before the seeker.

1. Seek the Lord; seek Himself for salvation. He that findeth Me, He says, findeth life. This is eternal life to know Him.

2. Seek His strength for service. They that wait on the Lord shall exchange strength. To them that have no might He increaseth strength.

3. Seek His face continually for fellowship. To have the light of His face is to have the light of His presence. "Seek and ye shall find."

II. What we should Sing. "Sing unto Him, sing psalms unto Him" (1 Chronicles 16:9). If "all the earth" should sing unto the Lord (1 Chronicles 16:23), how much more so those who have been redeemed by His Son, and strengthened by His grace and Spirit. Those whose hearts are brimful of thankfulness to God are never at a loss to know what they shall sing. They have songs which can only be sung by lips touched with live coals from the holy altar. They have many psalms to sing unto the Lord: the psalm of deliverance, the psalm of forgiveness, the psalm of peace, another of hope, another of joy, and that other, which is the sweetest of all, the psalm of His presence. We would not be asked to sing unto the Lord if the Lord did not hear and take pleasure in our singing. He hears our singing as well as our praying.

III. What we should Give. "Give thanks unto the Lord" (1 Chronicles 16:8). "Give unto the Lord glory and strength" (1 Chronicles 16:28). "Give the glory due unto His Name" (1 Chronicles 16:29). The best thanks we can give to the Lord is to live a life of grateful trust in Him day by day. We give Him "glory and strength" when we act as those who believe in His glory and depend on His strength. We cannot give Him "the glory due unto His Name" by merely talking about it, but by allowing that glory so to fill us that His Name will be glorified in us. "Freely ye have received, freely give." Give out that light and love so freely given in Christ Jesus.

IV. What we should Remember.

1. "Remember His marvellous works; His wonders" (1 Chronicles 16:12). The Israelites were never to forget the pit out of which they had been digged, nor the manner in which they had been brought out. They were saved by such marvellous works and wonders as can find their only antitype in the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. "Remember the judgments of His mouth." Remember His words. The works and words of God our Saviour are inseparably bound together. The words of Christ are "spirit and life," so are His works. The Jews wept when, in their affliction, they remembered Zion; we may rejoice at every remembrance of Christ.

3. Remember His faithfulness. "Remember His covenant for ever: the Word which he commanded to a thousand generations" (1 Chronicles 16:15, R.V.). He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Remember His covenant of grace in Jesus Christ, and reckon on His faithfulness to all His promises. The sin of forgetfulness is a very common one.

V. What we should Speak. It is well to remember God's works for us, and His words to us, but with the mouth confession is to be made.

1. We are to speak to one another of "all His wondrous works" (1 Chronicles 16:9). "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard." The conversations of God's own people with each other are often such as must grieve the heart of the Divine Listener. If the works of our Lord are not really wondrous in our eyes, we shall not be inclined to talk much about them. Let your conversation be as becometh the Gospel-that Gospel which is the greatest wonder in heaven, earth, or hell.

2. We are to speak of "His glory among the heathen; His marvellous works among all nations" (1 Chronicles 16:24). We who are witnesses unto Him, as our redeeming Lord and Saviour, must seek to spread abroad the savour of His saving Name. Fellowship one with another ought to lead up to missionary enthusiasm for the cause of Christ. Blessed are all they whose consecrated lives sing this song of thanksgiving. THE KING'S REQUEST; Or, CONSECRATED TO SAVE.

1 Chronicles 21:22-28.

"Whate'er I render Thee, from Thee it came;

And if I give my body to the flame,

My patience, love, and energy divine

Of heart, and soul, and spirit-all are Thine.

Oh, vain attempt to expunge the mighty score!

The more I pay, I owe Thee still the more!

-Madame Guyon.

Satan sought to oppose Israel, and he did it by "provoking David to number the people" (1 Chronicles 21:1). It is still a wile of the Devil to get us to trust in numbers instead of in God. Glowing reports of numerical strength are very gratifying to the flesh, and may lead to the lessening of faith in God. David's act of unbelief led to awful consequences-70,000 men perished. But David's confession was followed with this message of hope: "Set up an altar unto the Lord in the threshing-floor of Ornan" (1 Chronicles 21:17-18). This way of escape from the judgment of God was a revelation from God Himself. Who else could do it? "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, for I am God" (Isaiah 45:22)

I. The Request. "David said to Ornan, Grant me the place of this threshing-floor " (1 Chronicles 21:22). It was a big demand to make at that moment when "Ornan was threshing wheat." It was no mere idle floor, for the treasures of the owner were on it and in it. Does not our Lord and King sometimes make sudden and strange demands of us when He asks for the full control of our business, or of that scheme in which we are presently engaged. Like David, He will not take it by force; He will give us the privilege of granting it to Him.

II. The Reason. "That I may build an altar unto the Lord... that the plague may be stayed from the people" (1 Chronicles 21:22). The royal request was accompanied with reasons abundantly worthy of it. Because of sin a plague was mowing down the people as a sword in the hand of the messenger of divine vengeance. A place and an altar were needed that a sacrifice might be offered unto the Lord, that judgment might be averted and the people saved. Ornan possessed that place, and was now asked to surrender it as a means in the hands of the king of delivering the people from death. This great salvation could only be secured by Oman's place of business being converted into a place of sacrifice unto the Lord. The threshing-floor must give place to the altar. There are some men's minds that are mere threshing-floors, nothing more. Their chief business is to thresh out problems and theories. The King of Heaven demands that such threshing-floors should have an altar, that the plague of sin may be arrested, and sinners saved. The intellect can

become something more useful than a mere threshing machine.

III. The Response. "Ornan said unto David, Take it to thee,... and do that which is good in thine eyes; lo, I give thee the oxen also... and the threshing instruments... I give it all" (1 Chronicles 21:23). He might have made many excuses, such as "The time is not convenient," or "I will need to think over it," etc.; but no, he grasped the situation at once; his whole soul was captured for the cause. He not only offered the threshing-floor, but all that was on it- the oxen, the instruments, and the wheat. "I give it all." This is the language of one who evidently has the best interests of the people at heart. It is the expression of a truly missionary spirit. He yields his own personal claims to the greater claims of God and of his perishing fellow-creatures. The mercenary bargaining spirit is allowed no place in Ornan's mind in his answer to the kingly call. Are we ready at the call of our King to yield to Him the threshing-floor of our hearts as an altar; the faculties of our mind and intellect as threshing instruments to spread the fire of His holy sacrifice; and the wheat of our riches as a meat offering unto the Lord? May not the love of Christ and love to perishing souls constrain us? (Romans 12:1).

IV. The Result. The result was a threefold success.

1. Ornan was Rewarded. "David gave to Ornan for the place six hundred shekels of gold." The price mentioned in 2 Samuel 24:24 -fifty shekels of silver-was for the threshing-floor alone. This six hundred shekels of gold ($2400) was for the whole place, and was in all likelihood a second transaction. This is in beautiful correspondence with the parable of the treasures in the field. The whole field is bought for the treasure it contained (Matthew 13:44). Ornan was willing to give it all to David, but he is like the greater David who bountifully rewards those who yield their all to Him. "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and running over." Surely this is "full price."

2. God was Satisfied. "The Lord answered him from Heaven by fire upon the altar" (1 Chronicles 21:26). The sacrifice for sin was accepted, and the fire from Heaven that fell upon the altar, consuming the offering, was God's token of peace. What a comfort to Ornan to know that his gift of the threshing-floor and its contents was a means in bringing from Heaven the assuring fire! We never know all that our gifts to the cause of God may accomplish. "Prove Me, and try Me, if I will not pour out a blessing upon you."

3. Judgment was Averted. The plague was stayed. "The Lord commanded the angel, and he put up his sword again into the sheath thereof" (1 Chronicles 21:27). David's sin of numbering the people was a sin against God, and, explain it as we may, God demands sacrifice for sin. There is no way of securing deliverance from His wrath, and gaining the assuring token of His favour, but by the altar of atoning blood. The Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ is God's final effort to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Only when the Sacrifice is accepted and trusted by the individual soul will the sword of judgment be sheathed. "When I see the blood I will pass over you." A CALL FOR CONSECRATED SERVICE.

1 Chronicles 29:1-9.

"With bowed heads and open hearts we may offer ourselves.

We can do no more, and we dare do no less."-Westcott.

It is a great privilege to be able to do anything for God. There is not an angel in Heaven but what glories in every opportunity of service. Why should not His angels on earth do the same? David had an earnest desire to build a house unto the Lord, but this was not permitted him because he had been a "man of war" (chap. 1 Chronicles 28:2-3). War and worship never go easily together. Although not allowed to build the temple he made great preparations for it. He gathered gold to the value of $547,500,000, and silver to the amount of $342,000,000 (Newberry, chap. 1 Chronicles 22:14.) Why should our interest in God's work be lessened because we are not permitted to do that piece of work which we so much desire to do? Some slacken their efforts for Christ's cause at home because their way has not been opened for going abroad. There are others who, if not asked to do some great thing, they will do nothing. Note-

I. The Work. "The work is great, for the palace is not for man, but for the Lord God" (1 Chronicles 29:1). It is a great work to prepare a palace for the King of Heaven. David was anxious that God should have a house worthy of His Name, and the Lord Himself greatly desired this. But let us not forget that God was as great when in the bush as when in the temple. The glory does not consist in the character of the house so much as in the character of the occupant. "Know ye not that your body is the temple, the palace of God, and that God dwelleth in you?" (1 Corinthians 6:19). Does not He desire that you should be a house worthy of His great and glorious Name? This is a "great work." It is the work of the Spirit of God, in union with our spirits. Ye are not your own. Like this palace, ye are "not for man, butfor the Lord God."

II. The Example. David does not ask others to consecrate their service unto the Lord without having first set a worthy example before them. He says, "I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God" (1 Chronicles 29:2). And again, "I have set my affection to the house of my God. Moreover, I have of mine own... gold and silver given to the house of my God" (1 Chronicles 29:3). David's private gift amounted in gold to $16,420,000, and in silver to $2,394,000 (1 Chronicles 29:4). His example was one of love and liberality. He sought first the Kingdom of God. How does this example compare with that of David's greater Lord? Did He not prepare with all His might for the new spiritual House of God? Did He not set His affection upon this great work? Did He not give of His own untold wealth of grace and suffering? Has He not left us an example that we should follow His steps?

III. The Call. "Who then offereth willingly to fill his hand this day unto the Lord?" (1 Chronicles 29:5, R.V., margin). This was a call for full hands and willing hearts. There are multitudes who are ever ready to fill their hands with service for their own personal profit, but how few are willing to have full hands for God. Full hands imply whole-heartedness. Half empty hands mean half empty lives. Who, then, is willing? It is a call for voluntary self-sacrificing service. It is also an urgent call-"This day." The King's business requireth haste. What thou doest, do quickly, for the day of service and holy privilege will soon be past.

IV. The Response. "Then the chief of the fathers,... the captains,... with the rulers, offered willingly" (1 Chronicles 29:6). "With a perfect heart they offered willingly to the Lord" (1 Chronicles 29:9). When the heart is perfectly yielded to the claims of God's work, the hands will soon be filled with voluntary offerings. The "perfect heart" is needed to make the service acceptable unto the Lord. "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver." The gifts were different in value, but all were needed and acceptable. "Gold, silver, iron, precious stones" (1 Corinthians 3:12). Iron may have been the best

that some had, but they gave it. There would never be any lack in the house of God if those connected with it had this "perfect heart" toward the Lord. The outstanding characteristic of the great majority of professing Christians is that they "mind earthly things."

V. The Result. "Then the people rejoiced,... and David the king also rejoiced with great joy" (1 Chronicles 29:9). They rejoiced because the offerings were given "willingly, with perfect heart." Joy is the fruit of the Spirit, and is the outcome of the heart made perfect toward the Lord and His cause on the earth. The happiest Christians are those who willingly fill their hands for God. Joy in the Lord is power, "for the joy of the Lord is your strength "(Nehemiah 8:10). "The Kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14:17).

2 Chronicles

SOLOMON'S PRAYER.

2 Chronicles 6:22-42.

"A man's reach should exceed his grasp,

Or what's Heaven for?"

-Browning. This is the longest prayer in the Old Testament, and may be fitly compared with the longest in the New, as recorded in John 17. Both are intercessory and provisional. This temple, prepared for God and filled with His glory (2 Chronicles 6:14), is a wonderful type of the person and character of the Lord Jesus Christ. What the temple was to Israel, Christ is to the world. What Solomon did on the brazen scaffold (2 Chronicles 6:3), Christ did on the accursed tree-open the way for others into the place of blessing. This prayer of Solomon, like the work of Christ, revealed a large and cosmopolitan heart. In it, there was provision made for the-

I. Maligned. "If a man sin against his neighbour,... and an oath be laid,... then hear Thou and judge" (2 Chronicles 6:22). To sin against our neighbour is to sin against God, so those sinned against may confidently appeal to Him, and expect that He will "requite the wicked, and justify the righteous (2 Chronicles 6:14). As in Solomon's prayer there was provision made for the maintenance of the character of the righteous, so is there also in the intercession of Christ. Those wronged by their neighbours should believingly commit their case unto the Lord. He will avenge His own.

II. Defeated. Those "put to the worse before the enemy" (2 Chronicles 6:24). This is a numerous class. Many there be who have fallen before the power of the enemy, "because they have sinned against God." Sin always leads to defeat (Joshua 7:10-11). For God's people to be put to the worse before the enemy is to bring dishonour upon the Holy Name. He would have us to be "more than conquerors." But at the temple altar there was a way back for the vanquished to forgiveness and victory. By their returning and confessing God would hear and forgive, and restore them again to the land which He gave them (2 Chronicles 6:24-25). It mattered not how far they had been driven away by the enemy if they turned their faces towards the House of God, confessing their sins, then deliverance was to be granted them. So may those be saved who have been overcome by temptation and sin, by turning the eye of faith to the provision made by Jesus Christ at the altar of the Cross.

III. Thirsty. "When the Heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against Thee" (2 Chronicles 6:26). God had different ways of manifesting His displeasure at sin. In a spiritual sense Heaven is still shut up, so that no refreshing rain comes upon the soul of the disobedient and the backsliding. A silent and irresponsive Heaven is a fearful calamity to a thirsty soul, but this thirst is meant to bring us back in heart to the place of confession and blessing. "Then hear Thou, and forgive,... and send rain" (2 Chronicles 6:27). The way to escape the horrors

of a closed-up Heaven is to keep in "the good way" of the Lord. Abide in Him. If spiritual dearth has come, there is still in Christ provision for restoration and refreshing. "Look unto Me, and be ye saved."

IV. Oppressed. "When the enemies besiege them in the cities of their land;... when every one shall spread forth his hands towards this house, then hear Thou" (2 Chronicles 6:28-30). The people of God were not exempt from trial and suffering, even in their own cities-in the very midst of all their joys and privileges. Solomon believes that, if the enemy is permitted to besiege them and oppress them, it would be on account of their sin, for in his prayers he says, "When Thou nearest, forgive." No enemy is able to besiege and imprison any soul that is walking in fellowship with God. It is ever a wile of the Devil to get between us and Him who is the home of our hearts. But if you are really besieged so that you have no liberty to go out and in, in your service for God-out of communication, with head-quarters-then here is the remedy: Spread forth the hands of your faith toward the dwelling-place of God, and forgiveness and deliverance will be yours.

V. Stranger. Even "the stranger which is not of Thy people" finds a place in the large heart of this King of Peace. What good news it would be to the stranger who had "come from a far country," drawn by the influence of God's "great name" and "mighty hand," to find that the gate of divine blessing was open for him, and that God was willing to do "according to all that the stranger called to Thee for" (2 Chronicles 6:33). Did not the Ethiopian take advantage of this provision when he came to Jerusalem for to worship? (Acts 8:27). It is still true that those born in the far country of sin, and who are strangers to God and to His people, may have their needs supplied by calling upon the Lord. "Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." "Ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the Blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:13).

VI. Warrior. "Then if Thy people go to war... by the way that Thou shalt send them, and pray unto Thee toward this city,... then hear, and maintain their cause" (2 Chronicles 6:34-35). It is of the utmost importance that in going out in holy warfare we should go by the way that God has sent us. The Christian life is a warfare, but not with carnal weapons. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand. Praying always with all prayer, that "He may hear from the Heavens your prayer and supplication, and maintain your cause" (2 Chronicles 6:35). In Solomon's prayer, as in the work of Christ, there is provision made for certain victory in battling for the Lord. Warriors for God; keep your face towards the holy place of sacrifice and fellowship, and He will maintain your cause.

VII. Captives. "If they sin against Thee,... and their enemies carry them away captives, yet if they bethink themselves... and turn and pray unto Thee,... then hear Thou, and maintain their cause, and forgive" (2 Chronicles 6:36-39). The Lord's people could never be taken away as captives so long as they were obedient to His will. Sin leads to separation from God, and when separated from Him we become an easy prey to the enemy. The only hope for those led captive by the Devil, or the pleasures of the world? is to bethink themselves, and turn to the Lord, saying, "We have sinned, we have done amiss." If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive. The fire that "came down from Heaven" (chap. 2 Chronicles 7:1) when Solomon had made an end of praying was the token that his prayer was heard, and that God was ready to do all that had been asked. The coming of the Holy Ghost from Heaven, after Christ had finished His work, is the proof to us

that God is ready to fulfil to us all the desires of His heart. "If ye ask anything in My Name, I will do it."

ASA'S FAITH AND FAILURE.

2 Chronicles 14-16.

"Belief's fire, once in us,

Makes all else mere stuff to show itself;

We penetrate our life with such a glow

As fire lends wood and iron."

-Browning. In these chapters we have a faithful biography of Asa. The features of his character, both good and bad, are equally prominent. In the Bible there is no touching up of the negative to give the photograph a more pleasing appearance. As an historian the Spirit of God knows nothing of the art of flattery. As a man is in his heart so is he before God. The life of Asa is full of encouragement and warning to us. We observe his-

I. Good Character. "Asa did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God" (chap. 2 Chronicles 14:2). This was a noble start. He refused to be guided by the light of his own eyes, or by the opinions and prejudices of others. It is a good thing to remember that the eyes of the Lord are ever in search of those whose hearts are right with Him, that He might show Himself strong in their behalf (chap. 2 Chronicles 16:9). Right thinking will lead to right acting, and God's strength is on the side of the righteous. Asa not only "broke down the images," he also "commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers." It is not enough to put away the wrong. We must seek the right. To give up our idols will avail us nothing unless we turn to God (1 Thessalonians 1:9).

II. Great Faith. Asa's faith was put to the test when his army of 580,000 was met by 1,000,000 Ethiopians and 300 chariots, but it stood the test. "Asa cried unto the Lord his God, and said, Lord, it is nothing with Thee to help, whether with many or with them that have no power. We rest on Thee, and in Thy Name we go against this multitude" (2 Chronicles 14:11-12). He looks upon the many as nothing, but the "help of God" as everything. To have God's help is to get an almighty lift. The way to secure His help is to "rest on Him," and go in His Name. This is the work of faith, and faith gains the day, for the "Lord smote the Ethiopians before Asa." He did it, for Asa rested on Him, and trusted in His Name to do it. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

III. Timely Warning. "The Spirit of God came upon Azariah, and he went out to meet Asa, and said, Hear ye me, Asa, the Lord is with you while ye be with Him...Be ye strong therefore,... for your work shall be rewarded" (chap. 2 Chronicles 15:1-7). This is emphatically a Spirit-inspired message. Why did it come to Asa immediately after his great victory of faith? Because the Spirit of God knew that at that moment there was a danger of him being lifted up with pride, and of falling back into a state of self-confidence. Oh, how anxious the Holy Spirit still is to maintain our faith in God, that His Name might be honoured by doing great things for us! "If thou wouldst believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God" (John 11:40). Take heed how you hear.

IV. Mighty Influence. "They fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that the Lord his God was with him" (2 Chronicles 14:9). Many strangers from the kingdom of Israel joined the ranks of the king of Judah when they saw that God was on his side. Those who gain victories by faith are the most influential of all leaders. All are not born leaders. Many are ready to follow a tune who could never raise it. But the supernatural element must be self-evident in the divinely appointed leader. "My sheep," says Christ, "hear My voice, and they follow Me." Are there not many who would fall out of the kingdom of darkness to-day if they could but see that the Lord our God is with us? Not with us in theory, but in mighty conquering deeds. Asa's influence was not only attractive, but it was most effectual in turning the whole heart of Judah unto the Lord (2 Chronicles 14:12-14). He constrained them to seek the Lord until "He was found of them." He used his great influence for the best of all purposes-to bring men to God.

V. Sudden Failure. When "Baasha, king of Israel, came up against Judah... Asa brought out silver and gold out of the treasures of the house of the Lord, and sent them to Ben-hadad king of Syria" (chap. 2 Chronicles 16:1-4). This was a bribe sent to the king of Syria to help him against the king of Judah. Has he forgotten already that Spirit-inspired message of Azariah? (chap. 2 Chronicles 15:1-2). Where is his faith now? He began in the spirit. Is he going to end in the flesh? His present unbelief leads him to desecrate the things of God (chap. 2 Chronicles 15:18). When in his greater trouble with the Ethiopian host he cried unto the Lord and rested on Him, but this is not such a formidable affair, so he thinks to manage it by his own skill and stratagem. God is ignored, and Asa has fallen from grace. Our greatest dangers do not always lie in our greatest temptations, for when we are made conscious of our own helplessness in the face of a great trial, we fortify ourselves by leaning upon God. It is thinking ourselves wise enough and strong enough for the petty occasion that our greatest danger lies. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:6).

VI. Rebellious Attitude. When Hanani the seer rebuked Asa "because he had relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the Lord his God," Asa, we read, "was wroth with the seer, and put him in a prison house, for he was in a rage with him because of this thing" (chap. 2 Chronicles 16:7-10). It is an infallible sign of backsliding when a man gets into a rage at the seer of God because he tells him the truth. Casting the man of vision into the prison does not make the vision any the less true. The man of faith will always be a seer, while the man of unbelief will always be blind. Asa makes no attempt to bribe the seer, but he attempts to bridle his lips. Instead of repenting his folly in putting his trust in an arm of flesh, he seeks to justify himself, even to the condemnation of the warning voice of God. To get beyond repentance is to get beyond the hope of recovery. "If we sin we have an Advocate with the Father-Jesus Christ the Righteous" (1 John 2:1).

VII. Miserable End. "Asa... was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceedingly great, yet in his disease he sought not the Lord, but to the physicians" (2 Chronicles 14:12). His sin lay not in seeking the help of the physicians, but in not seeking the help of the Lord. Had not his heart been diseased as well as his feet this sin would never have been laid to his charge. A physician may be a gift from God as much as a seer, but when we trust the gift instead of the Giver, we dishonour God, and expose ourselves to failure and death. It is a melancholy fact that this otherwise great and good man's life is closed with these sorrowful words, "He sought not the Lord." "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12). Remember the words of the son of Oded, "The Lord is with you while ye be with Him" (2 Chronicles 15:2).

JEHOSHAPHAT, THE BACKSLIDER.

2 Chronicles 17, 18.

"The whole Cross is more easily carried than the half. It is the man who tries to make the best of both worlds who makes nothing of either."-Drummond. Of how many of God's people it may be said, as was said of the Galatians, "Ye did run well: who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" Although there are always about us hindrances in abundance, that is no reason why those gifted with the wings of faith should be hindered in their spiritual life. Jehoshaphat, like Asa, began well, but his bright morning soon became clouded with the sorrows of failure. His character affords us both encouragement and warning. We see him-

I. Highly Honoured. "The Lord was with him" (chap. 2 Chronicles 17:3). The presence of God with us is an absolute guarantee of success and sufficiency. The reason why God companied with him was "because he walked in the first ways of his father David." The first ways of David, and of his father Asa, were their best days, when their hearts were simple and perfect toward the Lord. He did not make their sins an excuse for not following after the righteousness of God. The blemishes of others are often made a stumbling-block to their virtues. Christ is the only perfect example.

II. Greatly Encouraged. "His heart was encouraged in the ways of the Lord" (2 Chronicles 17:6, margin). When Uzziah was made strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction (chap. 2 Chronicles 26:16). When pride lifts the heart, it is lifted out of the ways of the Lord into the way that leads to defeat and death. It is while we are in the ways of the Lord that we may confidently expect His uplifting. The Lord is not going to encourage that man whose manner of life is opposed to His will. "Delight thyself in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart" (Psalms 37:4).

III. Unequally Yoked. "Now Jehoshaphat joined affinity with Ahab" (chap. 2 Chronicles 18:1). Now, when he "had riches and honour in abundance." Ahab was well known as an enemy to Jehovah. "He did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings that were before him" (1 Kings 16:33). After the friendship was formed there came, of course, the fellowship. "He went down to Ahab to Samaria." The ungodly Ahabs are ever ready enough to have the servants of God to come down to their level. Nehemiah joined no affinity with Tobiah and Sanballat. His answer to them was, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down." Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers. What fellowship hath light with darkness? The darkness may need the light badly, but the light can have no fellowship with the darkness. While Christ lived on earth He was constantly walking amidst the dense darkness of human sin and guilt, but He had no fellowship with it. No more can ye.

IV. Wholly Surrendered. Not to God, but to the scheming, unprincipled Ahab. How are the mighty fallen? "Wilt thou go with me," said Ahab, and Jehoshaphat answered him, "I am as thou art" (chap. 2 Chronicles 18:3). Compromising has resulted in a voluntary captivity. Yet, at bottom, this answer is false, for the man who has known the power and fellowship of God can never be as that man who has ever been a stranger to God. We sell our liberty in Christ whenever we become the bondslaves of any man, or the tool of prejudice or fashion. The fear of man bringeth a snare. As long as Jehoshaphat was pledged to help Ahab, he was useless to help the cause of God. One is your Master, even Christ. Say to Him, "I am as Thou art" (2 Chronicles 18:3).

V. Secretly Dissatisfied. When Jehoshaphat proposed that inquiry should be made at the Word of the Lord, Ahab at once "gathered together of prophets four hundred men" (2 Chronicles 18:5). These unsent prophets were quite unanimous that it was the mind of Jehovah (whom they knew nothing about) that they should "go up." To the king of Judah the testimony of those four hundred prophets sounded so formal and hollow that he knew there was no message from God in it. Neither numbers nor unanimity can constitute the authority of God. Ahab's prophets were ordained to preach "smooth things," and they did it. Jehoshaphat said, "Is there not a prophet of the Lord besides that we may inquire of him?" (2 Chronicles 18:6). Four hundred worldly, men-pleasing preachers may be enough to keep an ecclesiastical machine going, but they are not enough to meet the needs of one single anxious soul who desires to know the mind and will of God. Words are not enough to bring settled conviction into the soul. The Christian who is satisfied with a formal powerless ministry has gone farther away from God than Jehoshaphat.

VI. Shamefully Exposed. "The captain of the chariots compassed him about, but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the Lord helped him" (2 Chronicles 18:30-31). The king of Israel disguised himself, but an arrow shot at a venture found him out. Jehoshaphat confessed and was saved. Be sure your sin will find you out. But what a sorry part the king of Judah plays in this affair! What a picture of abject helplessness in the face of the enemy-he is utterly demoralised. Who is so powerless in the presence of temptation or opposition as the backslider? Yet, when their sin and folly is acknowledged before God, how ready He is to stretch forth His hand and help. Unbelief makes cowards of us all (2 Chronicles 18:32).

JEHOSHAPHAT, THE OVERCOMER.

2 Chronicles 19, 20.

"Faith needs no staff of flesh, but stoutly can To Heaven alone both go and lead."-Herbert.

Although Jehoshaphat, through his affinity with Ahab, fell into the mire, we do not find him wallowing in it. He must have been deeply ashamed on his return to Jerusalem, when Jehu, the son of the seer, met him with that sharp rebuke, "Shouldest thou help the ungodly?" (2 Chronicles 19:2). But this good thing was found in him; he had already "prepared his heart to seek God" (2 Chronicles 19:3), and God had already marked his repentance. As we have noted in our last study his steps down to failure and shame, we shall note now his upward steps of faith to victory and joy. His work of faith is seen in-

I. Seeking the Restoration of Others. "Jehoshaphat went out again through the people,... and brought them back unto the Lord God" (chap. 2 Chronicles 19:4). If they had been led away from the Lord through his evil example, now that he was restored in heart, he loses no time in using his influence for their good. The best work we can do for our fellowmen is to bring them back to God. In bringing them to Him, we bring them to the source of peace, power, and plenty. We may bring them back to sobriety, and to the Church, without bringing them back to God. Those who seek to bring men to God show their faith in Him.

II. Justifying the Ways of God. "Now let the fear of the Lord be with you,... for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts" (2 Chronicles 19:7). These words were spoken to the judges in the land. The basis of their actions was to be the righteousness of God. There is no false dealings with Him, no respect of persons, no taking of bribes. Jehoshaphat

found this out to his sorrow and loss when he joined affinity with Ahab, and went to war with him, although Micaiah had warned him in the Name of God about it. But he has learned a lesson, so he now testifies that there is no unrighteousness with God. He will not be bribed to "help the ungodly." "He is the Rock, His work is perfect, a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He" (Deuteronomy 32:4).

III. Warning them of the Evils of Backsliding. "Warn them that they trespass not against the Lord, and so wrath come upon you, and upon your brethren" (2 Chronicles 19:10). "Burnt bairns dread the fire." The king has learned by bitter experience that there is a vital connection between the trespass of men and the wrath of God. Man cannot sin with impunity. He that goeth over the fence of God's will, the serpent of sin will surely bite him. Outside the will of God is always forbidden ground; it leads to Doubting Castle and the tortures of Giant Despair.

IV. Seeking the Help of God in the Day of Trouble. "After this the children of Moab and the children of Ammon... came against Jehoshaphat to battle" (chap. 2 Chronicles 20:1). After this-after he had decided to follow the Lord fully-the testing time came. The trial of your faith is more precious than gold. The time was when he might have appealed to Ahab for help, having made a treaty with him, but he looks away from man, and "sets himself to seek the Lord" (2 Chronicles 19:3). His example is followed by the whole nation, for they "gathered themselves together to ask help of the Lord" (2 Chronicles 19:4). Nations, as well as individuals, must believe in the Lord to be saved. The man of faith knows no other refuge than God Himself (Psalms 46:1). He appeals to God (1) as the Almighty One (2 Chronicles 20:6); (2) as the Faithful One (2 Chronicles 20:7); (3) as the Trusted One. "Our eyes are upon Thee" (2 Chronicles 20:12). Whatever thy trouble is, seek help from God, and expect it.

V. Answered Prayer. Jehoshaphat's faith in God is further evidenced by this sudden answer to his prayer. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Jahaziel, as he stood in the midst of the congregation, with this message, "Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's" (2 Chronicles 20:14-15). As soon as Jehoshaphat had put his trust in the Lord the battle became His. God takes over the responsibilities of those who cast all their care upon Him. All the man of faith had to do was to "stand still and see the salvation of the Lord" (2 Chronicles 20:17). How this was to be done they knew not; it was enough for him that God had promised to do it (Exodus 14:13-14). Christ fought for us the battle of sin and death. "Ye shall not need to fight in this battle."

VI. Humble Acceptance. In acknowledgment of God's wondrous grace, he "Bowed his head with his face to the ground,... worshipping the Lord" (2 Chronicles 20:18). The revelation of God's saving power has always a head-bowing and heart-hallowing effect upon those to whom it comes in answer to faith and prayer. The true attitude of spiritual victors is that of worshippers. The more deeply we drink of the river of His grace, the more readily shall we bow and worship. He who humbled Himself to the Cross for us has given the death-blow to our pride and self-sufficiency.

VII. Faithful Testimony. "Hear me, O Judah, Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe His prophets, so shall ye prosper" (2 Chronicles 20:20). Jehoshaphat has proved for himself the truth of this, he speaks from experience. Faith in God must lead to faith in His prophets. The fruit of faith is not weakness and instability, but strength and prosperity. The Bible affords us many examples of those who have been strengthened and made successful

through their faith in God (see Heb. 11). "Therefore be not slothful, but followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises" (Hebrews 6:12).

VIII. Joyful Expectation. "Faith laughs at impossibilities, and says, It shall be done." He believed God, and rejoiced in the hope of a glorious victory. This is seen in his "appointing singers unto the Lord, to go out before the army, and to say, Praise the Lord" (2 Chronicles 20:21). Happy is that man who can sing praise to God for His bare word of promise, and go on expecting miracles to be wrought. He shall not be disappointed. "Believe, and thou shalt see." "When they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the enemy,... and they were smitten" (2 Chronicles 20:22). "Then they returned with joy" (2 Chronicles 20:27). If the singers had been defeated, then might the enemies of the Bible rejoice; but the God of the Old Testament never fails to fulfil the expectations of all those who trust Him. This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

UZZIAH; or, FAILURE THROUGH PRIDE.

2 Chronicles 26.

"The fall thou darest to despise-

May be the angel's slackened hand

Has suffered it, that he may rise

And take a firmer, surer stand;

Or, trusting less to earthly things,

May henceforth learn to use his wings."-Procter.

Uzziah was but a lad of sixteen when he was crowned king of Judah. His reign was a long one, extending over fifty-two years. It was good for him that he came under the godly influence of the clear-visioned Zechariah, the burden of whose message was, "If ye forsake the Lord ye cannot prosper" (chap. 2 Chronicles 24:20). Who can reckon up the full value of that life, which has been illumined with a definite message from God. Zechariah's word had burned its way into the heart of young Uzziah, for in his days he sought God (2 Chronicles 26:5). The story of his life reveals to us-

I. An Encouraging Testimony. The writer of the Chronicles tells us that, "As long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper" (2 Chronicles 26:5). As long as God got His true place in the life and work of Uzziah, there were no interruptions to the steady march of his rising prosperity. All true and abiding prosperity is "God-made," and the condition of it is seeking to know and how to do His will. Mark that it was "as long as he sought the Lord," and no longer that the divine benediction rested on him and his work. It is ours to go on trusting; it is His to go on blessing.

II. An Assuring Confirmation. "He was marvellously helped till he was strong" (2 Chronicles 26:15). God helped him against the Philistines, and against the Arabians (2 Chronicles 26:7), to build towers, and to dig many wells (2 Chronicles 26:10). He also gave him a great host "that made war with mighty power to help him against the enemy" (2 Chronicles 26:13). The help of God is intensely practical. They are always marvellously helped that are helped of God. It is surely God's purpose to make those strong who seek Him, that His will may be done in them. God will still bear

them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts (distributions) of the Holy Ghost (Hebrews 2:4). "Be ye strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might."

III. A Terrible Fall. "But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction" (2 Chronicles 26:16). It is a great privilege to be helped of God and made strong, but every privilege has its corresponding temptation and danger. Peter was made strong to walk on the sea, but even then he began to sink. Elijah was made strong to overcome the wicked works of Ahab, yet afterwards he fled before the wrath of Jezebel. Yes, Uzziah fell.

1. The Cause. "His heart was lifted up." Lifted up through pride and self-confidence. As long as he sought the honour of the Lord, God lifted him up, but now that he seeks to honour himself by assuming the priestly office he falls from the grace of God (2 Chronicles 26:18). His position as king gave him no right as priest. A man's worldly position gives him no authority or fitness for the holy ministry. Uzziah, in his presumption, was setting aside the revealed will of God. He must have known that the Levites had been chosen of God from among the children of Israel to do the service of the tabernacle. A solemn warning had also been given: "The stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death" (Numbers 18:6-7). But, in his own name, and in his own strength, he would go, so his pride led to his fall. It is of the nature of self-righteousness to despise the work and office of the Priestly Saviour.

2. The Effect. "He was a leper unto the day of his death" (2 Chronicles 26:21). He was wroth, and would not go back when Azariah the priest remonstrated with him, but when the Lord smote him with leprosy "he hasted to go out" (2 Chronicles 26:20). Instead of his work being accepted of God, he was smitten with a curse, and driven out from His presence with a lifelong brand of sin upon him. Like many other lepers, the plague was in his head. Having been smitten with a sense of his presumption and sin, God did not need to cast him out of His holy place, for he himself hasted to go out. The holy presence of God is no place of comfort and rest for the unforgiven sinner. Heaven is no home for those who ignore the work of Christ, who is our Great High Priest. He is the One Mediator between God and man; the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man can come unto the Father but by Him. It was Uzziah's own sin that "cut him off from the house of the Lord" (2 Chronicles 26:21). It is the sin of putting proud self in the place of the Lord's Anointed that kindles the wrath of God, and cuts that soul off from fellowship with Him. The man who sets aside God's appointed way of life does it to his own destruction. "There is none other name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

HEZEKIAH; Or, FEATURES OF A REVIVAL.

2 Chronicles 28, 29.

"Teach me, my God and King,

In all things Thee to see;

And what I do in anything,

To do it as for Thee!

All may of Thee partake,

Nothing can be so mean,

Which with this tincture (for Thy sake)

Will not grow bright and clean."-Herbert.

Lamennais says, "Faith demands action, not tears; it demands of us the power of sacrifice-sole origin of our salvation; it seeks Christians capable of saying, 'We will die for this;' above all, Christians capable of saying, 'We will live tor this.' " The man who can truthfully say, "To me to live is Christ," is revealing Christianity in its sublimest form. Ritual and dogma may have their place, but if the individual life does not manifest itself in bringing glory to God and eternal blessing into the lives of sinful men, they are clouds without water. Hezekiah's revival work was the outcome of his own faith in the Living God- the faith which worketh by love. We shall try and find some helpful lessons here. We observe some- I. Evidences that a Revival was Needed.

1. Holy Things are Cut in Pieces. "Ahaz... cut in pieces the vessels of the House of God" (chap. 2 Chronicles 28:24). These sacred things which had been so useful in the House and service of God became the objects of the wrath and hatred of those who despised Him, whose instruments they were. All those who are seeking to cast discredit upon the books of the Bible are, in their own way, attempting to "cut in pieces the vessels of the House of God." These sixty-six books, which compose the Bible, are so many vessels needed in the House of God for the work of the ministry. Every servant of God is also a vessel in His House, and the ungodly still try, with the sharp tongue of scorn and calumny, to cut their testimony in pieces.

2. The Way of Access is Closed. "He shut up the doors of the House of the Lord" (2 Chronicles 28:24). It is surely a sign that a revival is needed when men seek to block the way of others from worshipping God. Ahaz denied Jehovah, then sought to shut others out from the acknowledging of Him as God. There are doors in the temple of every man's heart that may be closed to his own loss and destruction. The door of communion with God may be shut by our love of, and delight in, the things which He hates. Our own unfitness is as a self-closed door. The door of Divine love and light may be closed by our own pride and prejudice. The door of faith and prayer is shut up by the unbelief of our own hearts.

3. The Light of Testimony is Quenched. "They put out the lamps" (chap. 2 Chronicles 29:7). The lamps of God, aflame with the holy oil, became unbearable to those who loved the darkness of falsehood rather than the light of truth. The Christian's testimony for God is as a flame kindled and sustained by the oil of the Holy Spirit. When this is "put out," it is an insult to God and a grieving of that Spirit, whose character and mission is to make us as a flame of fire. It was a sad experience the foolish virgins had when their lamps went out. It is even the work of the world, the flesh, and the devil to put out the lamp of truth, and to quench the light of testimony, that the darkness of death and desertion may settle down in the House (Church) of God.

4. The Offering of Incense is Given Up. "They have not burned incense" (2 Chronicles 28:7). When the lamp of testimony has been put out, the offering up of the incense of prayer and adoration will speedily cease. These two are vitally connected-they live or die together. Testimony for God will be but as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals where the sweet incense of believing prayer is awanting.

5. There is a General Departing from the Worship of God. "Out fathers have forsaken Him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the Lord, and turned their backs" (2 Chronicles 28:6). There is great need for a revival when the multitude turn their backs upon the House of God. Of course we do not wonder at many turning away their faces from God's House when the doors are shut up and the lamps out. Polished stones, carved wood, and all sorts of material finery have no attractions for a soul hungering for the Bread of Life. But there are many who turn their backs upon God's provision because they prefer the broken cisterns of their own hewing. To turn the back on God is to turn the face to destruction.

II. Evidences that a Revival had Come. There was-

1. A Personal Consecration. "Hezekiah did that which was right in the sight of the Lord" (chap. 2 Chronicles 29:2). He began by getting himself put right in the eyes of the Lord. It is one thing to pray for a revival, it is quite another to yield ourselves definitely to God, that His will and work may be done in us and by us. A coming shower of blessing is sure to be heralded by drops falling on some individual soul. Seek to be that soul by personal consecration.

2. The Opening of Closed Doors. "He opened the doors of the House of the Lord" (2 Chronicles 28:3). Every avenue of the soul that has been closed through indifference and unbelief will be immediately thrown open, and the light of God's truth will have free access to the heart, which should be the House of the Lord. "Clear the darkened windows, and let the blessed sunshine in." All revival comes from the presence of the Lord, who waits outside the closed door, saying, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear, and open, I will come in."

3. A Casting Out of the Unclean. "Sanctify yourselves, and sanctify the house... and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place" (2 Chronicles 28:5). "And the priests went into the inner part, and brought out all the uncleanness" (2 Chronicles 28:16). It is an unmistakable evidence that the power of God's Spirit is moving mightily when His servants take to the work of cleansing the inner part. Out of the heart are the issues of life. If God the Spirit is to dwell in us, the inner sanctuary of the life must be purged of all that is unbecoming in His presence. The common Levites had no power to deal with those abominations that were in the inner parts of the temple, the priests had to go in and bring them out to the court, before the Levites could remove them (2 Chronicles 28:16). There are evils and hindrances to the work and worship of God that can be seen and dealt with only by those who have had the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Others, like the Levites, may see the sinfulness of certain things, when they have been pointed out, and put them away. "Cleanse Thou me from secret faults" (Psalms 19:12).

4. Realization of their True Position before God. "The Lord hath chosen you to stand before Him, to minister unto Him, and that ye should be His ministers, and burn incense" (2 Chronicles 28:11, R.V.). A revolution is certain when God's people realise their true relationship to Him as chosen ones.

(1) They are chosen by the Lord-called by His grace.

(2) They are chosen to stand before Him-to wait before Him, and to receive His Word.

(3) Chosen to minister unto Him-to do all in His Name and for His glory. "Ye are not your own."

(4) Chosen to be His ministers-to carry His Word and will to others.

(5) Chosen to burn incense-to offer unto God the sweet incense of intercessory prayer. Ye know your calling, brethren; are ye walking worthy of it? THE ROYAL MESSAGE.

2 Chronicles 30:1-12.

"Matter exists only spiritually, and to represent some idea and body it forth."-Carlyle.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine. Let us see if we cannot find some profitable doctrine from the historical facts here chronicled for our spiritual advantage. Observe the-

I. Great Provision. "The priests made an atonement for all Israel: for the king commanded that the burnt-offering and the sin-offering should be made for all Israel" (chap. 2 Chronicles 29:24). This was the great day of atonement, when reconciliation was made for the people by the blood of sacrifice. The sin-offering speaks of guilt put away, while the burnt-offering declares acceptance with God. There was no message of hope and blessing to the people until the question of sin had been settled. The Gospel of Salvation could only be preached by the apostles after Christ had suffered for us, as the sin-offering; and had risen again, as the burnt-offering. It is through Him we have received the reconciliation (Romans 5:11, R.V.).

II. Urgent Message. These letters, sent from the king, and carried by the posts throughout all Israel, contained-

1. A Call to Repentance. "Ye children of Israel, turn again unto the Lord God of Abraham" (2 Chronicles 30:6). No turning is effectual that is not unto God. The Thessalonians "turned to God from idols." A man may rend his garments and turn to idols, but those whose hearts have been rent will turn to God (Joel 2:13). Repentance is needed, for all have gone astray. God hath commanded all men everywhere to repent and believe the Gospel.

2. A Call to Surrender. "Yield yourselves unto the Lord" (2 Chronicles 30:8). This royal letter demanded, not only repentance toward God, but a personal consecration of the life to Him. The yielding of ourselves unto God is the evidence that we have in heart turned to Him. "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ" (1 Corinthians 6:15). We turn to God for life, then we are to yield ourselves unto Him, as those that are alive from the dead, and our members as instruments of righteousness unto God (Romans 6:13).

3. A Call to Service. "And serve the Lord your God" (2 Chronicles 30:8). Acceptable service is the outcome of a consecrated life. Turn, yield, serve-is the royal order. If ye are redeemed by the precious Blood of Christ, therefore glorify God in your body and your spirit, which are God's. If ye can say, "Whose I am," ye ought also to add, "Whom I serve" (Acts 27:23).

4. A Word of Encouragement. "For if ye turn unto the Lord, your children shall find compassion... for the Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away His face from you" (2 Chronicles 30:9). This letter, like the Gospel of Christ, contained the only way into a life of true happiness and usefulness.

III. General Invitation. The king's message was to be "proclaimed throughout all Israel, from Beer-sheba even to Dan" (2 Chronicles 30:5). From the southern to the northern extremities of the land. Like the Gospel, it was to be preached to every creature (Mark 16:15). All were invited to

"keep the Passover unto the Lord." It was for the glory of God that they should keep in memory that terrible night in Egypt, when they were saved through the blood of the lamb. How much more is it to His glory that we should remember the "Blood of His Cross?" To share in this great deliverance, the Gospel of God invites us.

IV. Twofold Result.

1. Some Mocked. "They laughed them to scorn, and mocked them" (2 Chronicles 30:10). The poor postmen had to bear their sneers, but it was the God of Israel, who inspired the message, that was mocked and laughed at. The posts, who passed from city to city as itinerant preachers, were not responsible for the message they carried; they were doing the king's business, and with him they had to do. The messengers of the Cross and the King of Glory are so closely linked together that to despise the one is to despise the other. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto Me" (Matthew 25:40). Saul was persecuting the saints when the Lord said to him, "Why persecutest thou Me?" (Acts 9:4).

2. Some Believed. "Nevertheless divers... humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem" (2 Chronicles 30:11). No doubt this call was a humbling one. It implied a confession of their sins and a turning away from their own wilful, wicked works. It was much easier for some to laugh at the messenger than to do this. Any fool may sneer, but it takes a wise man to repent. Although the Gospel is to be preached to every creature, that does not prove that every creature who hears the message will be saved (Acts 16:34). Only those who repent and believe-who "humble themselves and come" -can partake of the benefits of this Great Passover. Christ, our Passover, sacrificed for us. Whosoever will may come.

MANASSEH'S CONVERSION.

2 Chronicles 33:10-13.

"He that finds his Heaven must lose his sins."-Cowper.

Some lives are virtually blighted and ruined before they are born, because of hereditary tendencies. Manasseh had everything in his favour, being the son of a godly father, yet, in point of principle, he was a moral wreck. How much his mother or his counsellors were to blame for this it is difficult to say, but he proved himself to be an enemy to his father and to his God. We note his-

I. Rebellion. To all who feared the Lord, his reign was the "reign of terror." There was an utter disregard to his father's godly example. "He built again the high places which his father had broken down" (2 Chronicles 33:3). But not only so, he was possessed with such an evil spirit that he would have his own will and way, to the dishonour and defiance of God, by setting up his own idol in the House of God (2 Chronicles 33:7). The essence of rebellion against the Lord is: Not Thy will, but mine be done. The Dagon of self is often set up in the temple of God. It is said that Sir John Sloane had the heartless sayings of his unnatural son pasted together, framed and glazed, and hung up on the wall, with these words printed underneath: "Death-blows given to his mother, by George Sloane." Is not every sin a death-blow given by the sinner to the grace and mercy of God?

II. Warning. "The Lord spake unto Manasseh, and to his people, but they would not hearken" (2 Chronicles 33:10). In some way or other God made the young king to know that he was living a life at enmity with Him. If he had no special message sent by the prophet Isaiah, whom he probably

caused to be sawn asunder, he had the commandments and ordinances given by the hand of Moses (2 Chronicles 33:8). In mercy, God warns before He strikes in judgment. The warning may come through some providential earthquake, or by the still small voice of conscience, or, perhaps, through the lips of some heaven-sent messenger. Not to "hearken" is to continue an unholy warfare against the Almighty.

III. Defeat. "They took Manasseh among the thorns (hooks), and bound him with fetters" (2 Chronicles 33:11). Because he denied the Lord, the Lord brought the host of Assyria against him. National backsliding brought national defeat. This is an established principle in the government of God, as the book of Judges, and all past history, clearly teach. As it is nationally, so is it individually. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. Defeat and bondage like ravenous wolves, will, sooner or later, overtake the God-defying sinner. The Lord has many an unexpected way of "hooking" His enemies. He hooked Saul of Tarsus on his way to Damascus, with the light of truth. Manasseh was hooked with the irons of affliction and reproach (Psalms 107:10-11). What is man that he should boast himself against God? At any moment He may thrust in His hook of authority, and hurl back the rebel into everlasting doom.

IV. Surrender. "When he was in affliction he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before God" (2 Chronicles 33:12). While in his affliction and solitary confinement, his guilty past, in all its ghastliness, stares him in the face. He sees that the forces against him are overwhelming, and yields himself a prisoner unto God. Never did an enemy sue for peace more earnestly than did the subdued Manasseh. His repentance was real-he humbled himself and sought the Lord. Before, he sought to slay the truth of God by resisting it; but the truth has conquered. A drunken sailor was once brought to his knees by a Christian worker tenderly saying to him, "Jack, you had a mother." Sometimes memory, as well as patience, has its perfect work. There can be no real repentance that does not lead to God. A man might tremble, as Felix did, or be as deeply convicted as Agrippa, and yet never repent. Feeling sorry for sin, and resolving to do better in the future, is not the repentance that brings life. If our bitterness of soul does not constrain us to seek the forgiveness of God, and to yield ourselves to Him, it is a repentance that needs to be repented of. The evidence of the prodigal's repentance was that "he came to his father" (Luke 15).

V. Victory. "The Lord heard his supplications, and brought him again to Jerusalem, into his kingdom" (2 Chronicles 33:13). He comes back a new man to live a new life. Old things have passed away; all things have become new. His was a great deliverance, as all God's deliverances are. He was emancipated from a wicked self and a terrible past by being made a new creation through the grace of God. He only now begins to live; his past life has brought forth nothing but failure and shame. Manasseh is the Saul of the Old Testament. God can save the worst of sinners, but only by the way of repentance and faith. Although this is an example of the grace of God, there is no encouragement to continue in sin, that grace may abound. If one dying thief was saved, that is no proof that other dying thieves will. Although one Blondin crossed the Niagara on a rope, that is no guarantee that anybody could do it. God hath commanded all men to repent and believe the Gospel. "Then Manasseh knew that the Lord, He was God" (2 Chronicles 33:13). He knew Him now because he had experienced His saving and restoring power.

Chapter 33

Ezra

THE STIRRED-UP SPIRIT.

Ezra 1:1-11.

"Not to the rich He came, and to the ruling

(Men full of meat, whom wholly He abhors);

Not to the fools grown insolent in fooling-

Most, when the lost are dying at their doors.

Nay! but to her who, with a sweet thanksgiving,

Took in tranquility what God might bring;

Blessed Him and waited, and, within her living,

Felt the arousal of a holy thing."-Myers. The clock of God's providence may seem at times to go slow, but it always strikes at the proper minute. During the seventy years of the Jews' captivity, the cup of Babylon's iniquity was being filled, so that the time of their deliverance synchronised with the time of Babylon's downfall. The quiver of the Almighty is full of arrows. In the first year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar carried many into captivity. He reigned forty-five years; his son (Evil-merodach), twenty-three; and his grandson (Belshazzar,) three years-which make up the seventy predicted years of their bondage. In the third year of Belshazzar, Darius, the Mede, captured the city of Babylon, and Cyrus, the king of Persia, became ruler (Dan. 5). The accession of Cyrus to the throne was another marvellous fulfilment of prophecy (Isaiah 44:28). The very name of the Jews' liberator was mentioned one hundred and fifty years beforehand. This is no mere coincident or random occurrence, it is an indisputable proof of inspiration. At this crisis three distinct prophecies found their fulfilment:

1. The punishment of the king of Babylon (Jeremiah 25:12).

2. The end of the seventy years' captivity (Jeremiah 29:10; Daniel 9:2).

3. The coming of the deliverer named. We may use these words, "The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus," as a key to unlock some of the treasures of this chapter.

I. The Spirit Needs Stirring Up. "The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus" (Ezra 1:1). The will of God will never be done by us until the spirit within us is stirred up to do it. Man is not a machine. Cold, mechanical service is an insult to the living God. Selfishness is death in His sight. It is possible to have the form of godliness while the spirit is sleeping the sleep of death. You hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sin.

II. God Alone can Effectually Stir up the Spirit. "The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus." The source of all spiritual life and power is with Him. Every God-quickened spirit is a spirit raised from the dead, that He might work in that spirit both to will and to do of His good pleasure (Php_2:13). There is a divine purpose in every divinely-awakened soul. It is the Spirit that quickeneth.

III. The Means by which the Spirit was Stirred up. There was (1) the Word of God. Daniel understood by books the number of the years... that the Lord would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem (Daniel 9:2). Daniel may have showed Cyrus the prophet's reference to himself, as the divinely-appointed shepherd by whom the temple was to be built, and the captives freed without a price (Isaiah 44:28; Isaiah 45:1-13). (2) The providence of God. The fact that Cyrus was now made Governor of Babylon, he was in a position to carry out the prophetic declaration. He discovered that the means of accomplishing these purposes of God were committed to him. Woe must come upon him if he obeys not the heavenly call. Thus, God still stirs up the spirits of men, by making them to know and feel that His word has special reference to themselves in the doing of His will. No man will heartily obey the Gospel of God unless he has, like Cyrus, been powerfully convinced that it is for himself, as if there were no other to whom it could be so applied, and whose only alternative is to obey or sin against the clearest Light. A woman was once led to claim the bare promise of God through receiving a letter addressed to another woman of the same name. She concluded that, if her name had been written in the Bible, she could never have believed that it was her that was meant. When the Holy Spirit applies the word of God, it is always unmistakably luminous and personal.

IV. The Evidences of a Stirred-up Spirit.

(1) There is faith in the word of God. Cyrus said, "The Lord God of heaven... hath charged me to build Him an house at Jerusalem" (Ezra 1:2). The king of Persia was no more clearly and urgently charged to build the temple than we are to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and serve Him without fear, in holiness, all the days of our life (Luke 1:74-75). This call to us is quite as personal and imperative as the call that came to Cyrus. Have we as heartily believed it?

(2) There is confession of the purpose of God. "He made a proclamation through all the land" (Ezra 1:1). When we discover what the will of God is concerning us, we should not be ashamed to make it known publicly what our attitude is toward this revealed will. Has he not warned us that "Whosoever is ashamed of Me and of My word, of them will I be ashamed."

(3) There are liberal things devised for the honour of God. The large-heartedness of Cyrus is seen in his offer to let all the captives go who desired the restoration of Jerusalem (Ezra 1:3). in his providing for the sojourners by the way (Ezra 1:4), and in his delivering up of "all the vessels of the house of the Lord" into the hand of "the prince of Judah" (Ezra 1:7-8). The liberal deviseth liberal things (Isaiah 32:8). The spirit that has been stirred up by God will surely be constrained to do God-like things. The spirit of Carey was powerfully stirred up when he said, "Expect much from God, and attempt much for God." Moody said, "God never uses a discouraged worker." The stirred-up spirit is always on the alert for opportunities of helping on the work and people of God, and deviseth means whereby His banished ones may be restored. Such spirits seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and God worketh in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure. THE SECRET OF SUCCESS IN THE LORD'S WORK.

Ezra 6:14.

"First, seek thy Saviour out, and dwell Beneath the shadow of His roof, Till thou have scanned His features well, And known Him for the Christ by proof."--Keble.

"They prospered through the prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah." Those words may be taken as the key to the whole situation, as described in chapters 3 to 6. Including servants and maids, who had gone with their masters and mistresses, over forty-nine thousand accepted the offer of Cyrus, to leave their captivity and go up from Babylon to Jerusalem. They counted themselves blessed, on hearing such a "joyful sound" (Psalms 89:15). (See Luke 4:18). Now, look at-

I. The Work to be Done. "To build the house of the Lord God of Israel" (chap. Ezra 1:3). This house was for the honour of God: it was to be a testimony to His holy Name. We may learn from this that it is the prime duty of those who have been delivered from bondage to seek that the name of God might be magnified among the heathen. Every redeemed one should build for Him an house of testimony.

II. The Start Made. The first thing they did was to set the altar upon his bases (chap. Ezra 3:3). They began with the altar. This is the sure basis of all acceptable work for God. The atoning sacrifice must have its true place if the great house of God's Church is to be built up and established. The altar of the Cross is not upon its proper basis when it stands on the wisdom of men instead of the wisdom of God. The true basis of the Cross of Christ is to put it where God has put it, between sin and salvation. Then they laid the foundation (chap. Ezra 3:10). After the burnt-offerings came the laying of the foundation. Those who lay the foundation, and go on with the building before the altar of the Cross is placed upon its right basis, are vainly working outside the gracious purposes of God. The foundation of God's house is laid on the rock of Christ's atoning sacrifice. God's order is, first, reconciliation, then stability and progress. After this they praised the Lord (chap. Ezra 3:11). This was not formal Psalm-singing, it was the spontaneous outburst of hearts filled to overflowing with joy and thanksgiving. "They shouted with a great shout" (Joshua 6:5). Such a result surely proves that this is the right method and spirit in which to do the work of God.

III. The Adversaries. When the people of God begin to shout and praise, then the enemy will be stirred up to envy and opposition. "The adversaries of Judah came... and said, Let us build with you" (chap. Ezra 4:1-2). They professed to be seeking also the honour of the God of Israel. These may have been the "fathers" referred to by the woman of Samaria in John 4:20. The work so far has been a success, and now they wish to become partners in the business. But the answer of those divinely commissioned ones was fearless and unequivocal. "Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves will build" (chap. Ezra 4:3). Those sent ones were not going to be unequally yoked with unbelievers. What part hath he that believeth with an infidel? (2 Corinthians 6:14-16). When they saw that they were to have neither part nor lot in the matter, then they sought to "weaken their hands... and trouble them;" they also "hired counsellors to frustrate their purpose" (chap. Ezra 4:4-5). But one thing they forgot, or refused to believe, and that was, that "their purpose" was God's purpose. The cause of God cannot be properly advanced but by those who know that they have been called of God.

IV. The Temporary Interruption. "Then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem" (chap. Ezra 4:24). The wicked may have their day of triumph, but their time is short. How was the work stopped? Those "hired counsellors" wrote a letter to the new king of Persia, representing Jerusalem as a "rebellious and bad city," and that these Jews who had lately come from Babylon were rebuilding it for the purpose of fortifying themselves against the power and authority of Babylon. The king on receiving the letter made search, and found "that the city of old time hath made insurrection against kings" (chap. Ezra 4:19), and because of the city's past glory and power he "gave commandment to cause these men to cease." This must have been a staggering blow to those enthusiastic men. What could it mean? Does the providence of God contradict His Word? In the time of perplexity, wait.

V. The Renewed Effort. "Then the prophets Haggai and Zechariah prophesied unto the Jews that were in Jerusalem,... then they began to build the house of God" (chap. Ezra 5:1-2). This revival came through the word spoken "in the Name of the God of Israel." There is need for a prophet to ring out the message of God when His work has come to a standstill. These discouraged workers needed to be reminded that they were saved out of Babylon to serve the Lord in Jerusalem, and that "the eye of their God was upon them" (chap. Ezra 5:5). The prophets doubtless made it clear to them that this was God's work, and that they had been called of Him to do it, so in His Name the work is resumed with more determination than before, for "with them were the prophets of God helping them" (chap. Ezra 5:2). Nor was it in vain, for Darius the king discovered in "the house of the rolls" the decree of Cyrus concerning the Jews and the house of God, and straightway sent a letter to the "adversaries" saying, "Let the work of the house of God alone" (chap. Ezra 6:7). So "they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah" (chap. Ezra 6:14). And the house was finished (Ezra 6:15). The remedy for our helpless hands and feeble knees is a clearer apprehension of God's purposes of grace in par individual lives, and a fearless, whole-hearted devotion to the fulfilment of the same. He giveth power to the weak, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.

EZRA: HIS LIFE AND CHARACTER.

Ezra 7:10.

"Thou canst not choose, but serve; man's lot is servitude,

But thou hast thus much choice-a bad lord or a good."

-Trench.

Ezra, who led the second party from Babylon to Jerusalem, was both a priest and a scribe-a minister of the sanctuary and an exponent of the law of Moses. Between the first and second detachments there is a period of fifty-seven years. The last four chapters of the book are descriptive of the work done under the personal guidance of the author. In looking at this man and his work we shall find much that stimulates to faith and service. Observe his-

I. Preparation. "Ezra prepared his" heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach" (chap. Ezra 7:10). The preparations of the heart belong to man (Proverbs 16:1, R.V.). When a man is prepared in his heart to seek the Word of God, to do it and to teach it, a great work of revival has already begun. The heart must first be put right with God before the life can become useful for

Him. These preparations belong to man, but the revelations belong to God. Christ's first message was Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Change your mind; prepare your heart for that new order of things which has, in grace, come within your reach.

II. Qualification. "The hand of the Lord his God was upon him" (Ezra 7:6). Because of this invisible and powerful hand upon him, the king granted him "all his requests." The mighty hand of God's guiding and upholding power came upon him after he had prepared his heart to seek those things by which His Name might be glorified. The All-conquering Hand is the accompaniment of the prepared heart. We think of the disciples of Christ preparing their hearts during those ten days in which they waited for the promised power of the Holy Ghost. All who are filled with the Spirit have the hand of the Lord their God upon them.

III. Provision. "I, Artaxerxes the king, do make a decree... that whatsoever Ezra shall require of you, it be done speedily, unto an hundred talents of silver" (chap. Ezra 7:21-22). Here he had the assurance that all his wants would be supplied. Ezra prepared his heart, and God in this singular manner prepared against all his needs. He never sends His servants a warfare on their own charges. The measure of supply was to be unto even "an hundred talents of silver" ($22,000), but the measure of our supply is "according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Unsearchable riches. "Look unto Me, and be ye saved" from your poverty and powerlessness.

IV. Commission. "And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God, that is in thy hand... teach ye them that know not the laws of thy God" (chap. Ezra 7:25). Those who have the wisdom of God in their hearts must become the "messengers of the Lord of Hosts" (Malachi 2:7). The counsel of this heathen king would put many professing Christians and religious teachers to shame. If God is to have a chance of gaining moral victories among those who know not His will, surely His Word must be plainly taught to them by those who have experienced the power of it in their own hearts and lives. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. The hearing that stirs up faith in God is not the hearing of the words of man's wisdom, but the hearing of that word which is the wisdom of God. Preach the Word.

V. Consistency. "I was ashamed to require of the king soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way, because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek Him" (chap. Ezra 8:21-22) To say the least, this is the simple honesty of faith If our faith is in God, and we know that the cause is His, why should we beg for the patronage of men? Our life should be consistent with our testimony. To preach "faith in God," and be found catering for the favours of the ungodly, is to make the religion of Jesus Christ to stink in the nostrils of reasonable men. If the Lord be God, follow Him. But what did Ezra do? He made it a matter of special prayer, and the Lord of Hosts answered him (Ezra 7:23). Cast all your care upon Him.

VI. Devotedness. "The holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands... When I heard this thing I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head, and sat down astonied" (chap. Ezra 9:2-3). This was a violation of the Divine command (Deuteronomy 7:3), and the tidings of it came to Ezra as a heart-breaking sorrow. He felt it the more keenly because of the warmth of his own heart towards the Word and ways of God. The depth of our sorrow over the sins of others will be according to the depth and reality of our sympathy with the cause of God. For a people, separated unto God (Deuteronomy 7:6), to be unequally yoked

together with unbelievers, is enough to make every true servant of Christ sit down astonied. It is a paralysing and soul-sickening sight If we had more of Ezra's devotedness we would know more about the sufferings of Christ (Jeremiah 8:21). What else could he do than fall upon his knees and spread out the case before God (Ezra 7:5-15), for he felt that as long as they lived in sin they could not stand accepted before Him (Ezra 7:15).

VII. Success. "Then all the congregation answered, As thou hast said, so must we do" (chap. Ezra 10:12). And the guilty priests "gave their hands that they would put away their wives" (Ezra 7:19). The earnest prayer and faithful testimony of this consecrated scribe prevailed, and a great victory was won for God in the spiritual uplifting of the people. Some of those "strange wives" may have been as dear to some of those men as an eye or a right hand, but they must be cut off. The more closely the affections become entwined with any forbidden object, the more fatal is the snare. The secret of Ezra's success is an open one, and is within the reach of every servant of Christ-true-hearted, whole-hearted loyalty to God's Word and work. Have faith in God; the prayer of faith shall save.

Nehemiah

SOUL-STIRRING SYMPATHY.

Nehemiah 1:1-4.

"How was He The blessed One made perfect? Why, by grief- The fellowship of voluntary grief- He read the tear-stained book of poor men's souls. As I must learn to read it."-Kingsley.

Nehemiah, like Moses, was singularly fitted beforehand for the work God had appointed him to do. Belonging, as he did, to the "children of captivity," he was in perfect sympathy with them, and being the "king's cupbearer," he accepted a position of wealth and influence that gave him pre-eminence among his brethren. He was fitted, not only socially, but morally, as a true leader of men-being a man of great courage, with profound convictions and intense devotion to the cause of God. In our study of his life and character we trust there will be, in his example, much to inspire us in our service for Christ, and to follow those who "have obtained a good report through faith."

I. His Position. "I was in Shushan the palace" (Nehemiah 1:1). He had the privilege of being in this great palace because he was "the king's cupbearer" (Nehemiah 1:11). Although he occupied this high position in the Persian court, we have no reason to believe that it was at the sacrifice of any religious principle, but rather because of his attractive and trustworthy character. The "man of God" should be the most dependable of men, although, like Joseph, their virtue may become their only fault.

II. His Sympathetic Inquiry. "I asked them (men who had come from Judah) concerning the Jews... and concerning Jerusalem" (Nehemiah 1:2). Nehemiah was not so far carried away by his own promotion and success as to be indifferent to the interests of his brethren and the city of his God. They are in a sad state who, through prosperity, have had their sympathies withered up for the poor of God's people and the honour of God's Name. Those who desire to help in the cause of God will not fail to inquire into the real nature of the case. If the heart is alive unto God, we will gladly avail ourselves of every opportunity to fit our selves, even for self-sacrificing service unto Him. "Where the love of the world is, the love of the Father cannot be "The love of Christ constraineth us" (2 Corinthians 5:14).

III. The Revelation Made. "The remnant are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and the gates burned with fire" (Nehemiah 1:3). This was sorrowful news, but it is better to know the facts than live under a delusion. The people were suffering from poverty and reproach, and the wall of their defence was broken down. They were still reaping the fruits of their rebellion and idolatry (2 Kings 25). Weakness and reproach must always characterise the people of God when the walls of separation are broken down, and the gates of praise burned up by the enemies' fire. A powerless, praiseless Christian is a reproach to the name he bears.

IV. The Effect Produced. He says, "When I heard these things, I sat down and wept" (Nehemiah 1:4). All those generous forces of his soul were arrested on hearing about this God-dishonouring

state of matters. In the warmth of his sympathy he abandoned himself for the good of his fellows and the glory of his God. Oh! with what indifference we can see and hear those things that are making the Church of God to-day a reproach and a bye-word among His enemies. Paul knew about this holy soul agony when he said, "I tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ" (Php_3:18). Is it possible for us to be baptised into His death, and yet to have hearts so callous toward His cause amongst men, that we are never constrained through personal interest to sit down and weep? It is very easy and natural for us to sit down and sorrow over our own personal losses and bereavements; we cannot help feeling it, because our own souls are so closely and vitally associated with them. Then is it because we, in our hearts, are not in such close and vital fellowship with Christ and His cause and people that we are so difficult to move to tears over the ravages of sin and the desolation of the sinner? Christ wept over Jerusalem. If we had His eyes and heart of compassion we would weep over it too. If Nehemiah's heart had not been moved and melted first, he never could have done the work which he afterwards did. Can we possibly be in a fit condition for serving Christ if we are not able to weep over those things that dishonour His Name and grieve His Spirit? A further evidence that his heart was right with God is seen in the fact that his sympathy constrained him to self-denial and prayer. "He fasted and prayed before the God of Heaven." Those who have the interests of God and His kingdom so close to their hearts as Nehemiah had will be ready to deny themselves of everything that would hinder His will from being done in them and by them (Hebrews 11:24-26). He laid aside the luxuries of the palace that he might give himself to prayer. Where else can a trustful, affectionate child go but to his father in the day of perplexity and anguish? Their "great affliction" was not too great for the "God of Heaven." With a heart melted in the love of God, and eyes bedimmed with the tears of brotherly kindness, surely the prayer that comes from such a source, and in such a manner, will be abundantly answered. If we have not compassion enough to lead us to pray for others it is high time to sit down and weep, and fast, and pray for ourselves.

INTERCESSORY PRAYER.

Nehemiah 1:4-11.

"Why have they never known the way before? Why hundreds stand outside Thy mercy's door? I know not: but I ask, dear Lord, that Thou Wouldst lead them now."-C. F. Tytler.

"My prayers," says Trench, "are the one grace which my foe cannot refuse." "I can get at him through the God of Heaven," said a fond mother, in speaking of her wayward, wandering boy. Yes, prayer is one of the greatest privileges and one of the mightiest forces with which the soul of man can have to do. Through prayer Elias shut up the rain of Heaven for three and a half years (James 5:17); and Peter was delivered from the prison in answer to prayer (Acts 12:5). Having been made unto our God a kingdom of priests (Revelation 5:10, R.V.), it is part of our heavenly calling to make intercession for others. In these words of Nehemiah we think we see all the characteristics of prevailing prayer. There was-

I. Earnestness. "He wept, mourned, fasted" (Nehemiah 1:4). This was no formal prayer. It was the outcome of a soul stirred to its utmost depths. Those who draw nigh with the lip while the heart is afar off may themselves be satisfied with a prayer which is nothing but a solemn mockery in the sight of God. As God loveth the cheerful giver, so doth He regard the whole-hearted petitioner. The fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

II. Knowledge. It was because Nehemiah knew God that he could pray thus: "I beseech Thee, O Lord God of Heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love Him" (Nehemiah 1:5). He believed in God's greatness, His terribleness, His faithfulness, and His mercifulness. He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6). To know such a God and in such a fashion is to ask much and expect much. They that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits through the prayer of faith (Daniel 11:32; see 1 Samuel 12:18).

III. Importunity. "Hear the prayer of Thy servant, which I pray before Thee now, day and night" (Nehemiah 1:6). Importunity is a vital element in prevailing prayer. It was because of the widow's "continual coming" that she gained her request. This is the lesson our Lord Himself teaches us from that parable of the man begging loaves from his friend at midnight: "I say unto you... because of his importunity, he will give him as many as he needeth" (Luke 11:8). It was while Moses held up his hand that Israel prevailed. Pray without ceasing. Be not weary in such well-doing, for in due season ye shall reap if ye faint not.

IV. Confession. "Both I and my father's house have sinned, we have dealt very corruptly against Thee" (Nehemiah 1:6-7). The sin of dealing falsely with God is a very common one, and very grievous. We pretend to believe His Word, and yet live in fear and doubt; we ask Him for things that we don't expect, and make a profession of loyalty to His cause, while, in heart, we are more concerned about our own personal interests than His. How can we expect to prevail with God in prayer if there is no confession made of that deceitfulness which has made our lives so barren in the past. Spiritual bondage and failure in the Christian life imply that there is sin in the camp, and need for self-scrutiny and confession.

V. Faith. "Remember, I beseech Thee, the word that Thou commandest, saying,...If ye turn unto Me, and keep My commandments... I will bring them into the place that I have chosen to set My Name there" (Nehemiah 1:8-9). Faith lays hold upon the spoken Word of God. The prayer that is built up by faith on the promise of God cannot be overthrown. In turning to the Lord himself, Nehemiah fulfilled the condition of blessing, then he takes the place of the Lord's remembrancer, saying, "Remember... the Word." This is that beautiful childlike confidence which honours God, and is infinitely well pleasing in His sight. God cannot deny Himself when He finds so much of Himself involved in such pleading. But he goes a step farther, and reminds God of His great work in redeeming His people by His "great power and strong hand" (Nehemiah 1:10). The audacity of faith is astounding. It looks up into the face of God, saying: There is Thy word of promise, and there, in redemption, is the evidence of Thy mighty love and the strong hand of Thy saving grace. Now, therefore, do this thing for me. He that cometh to God must believe, and, in so believing, he must be rewarded.

VI. Consecration. "O Lord, be attentive to the prayer of Thy servant, who desires to fear Thy Name" (Nehemiah 1:11). In our prayers we shall often ask amiss, if we are not prepared to yield ourselves unto God, and to live for the glory of His Name (James 4:3). There are three classes of servants: the slave, who serves through fear; the hireling, who serves for wages; and the son, who serves for love. It is the obedient and devoted son who expects and gets the favour and the fullness of the father. It is those who present themselves a living sacrifice unto God that are able to prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God (Romans 12:1-2). Those who

would prevail with God to give them the servant's portion must, first of all, take the servant's place.

ANSWERED PRAYER.

Nehemiah 2:1-8.

"Speak to Him, thou, for He hears, and Spirit

With spirit can meet.

Closer is He than breathing, and nearer

Than hands and feet."-Tennyson. A period of three months comes in between the month Chisleu-when Nehemiah heard of the "great affliction" of his brethren in Jerusalem-and the month Nisan, when his prayers began to be answered. All this time he had been earnestly pleading with God in secret, yet, in his public service he had hitherto been able to conceal the sorrow of his heart by wearing a cheerful countenance. Well he knew that it was a crime against the king to appear before him with a sad face. But in thus seeking to please men we may be putting away from us the very blessing we so much desire. God does not require us to play the hypocrite in order that His will might be done. It is always best to be perfectly honest. This is clearly proven by what follows.

I. A Startling Question. "Why is thy countenance sad,... this is nothing else but sorrow of heart?" (Nehemiah 2:2). His agony of soul had become too great to be covered any longer with a smile. The king's question smote him with terror. "Then I was very sore afraid." At that time Nehemiah had become so intensely interested in the well-being of others as to forget himself in the presence of the king. Such deep self-forgetfulness cannot fail to become a channel of rich blessing to many. He had prayed that he might find mercy in the sight of the king (chap. Nehemiah 1:11), but he could never have anticipated that, through his sadness in the king's presence was to come the dawn of deliverance. "My ways are not as your ways, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 55:8).

II. A Critical Moment. After Nehemiah had confessed that his countenance was sad because "the city of his father's sepulchres lieth waste," the king said unto him, "For what dost thou make request?" (Nehemiah 2:4). If the first question filled him with fear, this one was fitted to bewilder him with astonishment. Was this the daybreak of hope falling at last upon that long night of sadness which had overcast his soul? Was this God's door of salvation now suddenly opened before his eyes? Had the time come when all the desires of his heart were to be granted him? "For what dost thou make request?" What an opportunity this is when given by one who is able to satisfy the soul with good. A greater than Artaxerxes has said, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" But observe how this man of prayer faced this new situation. "So I prayed to the God of Heaven." Had he not been living in the spirit of prayer he would not have thought of it at that particular moment. In this little spontaneous act there is a revelation of his true character. Even when taken unawares the holy habit of his soul is to look up to God for guidance. When God becomes the greatest reality in our lives there is nothing more natural than prayer. Those who say they have no time to pray know not the nature of prayer. Nehemiah found time to pray while a king waited on his answer. It is with prayer as it is with salvation- "Look and live." "Look unto Me, and be ye saved" (Isaiah 45:22).

III. A Great Request. He had now gained the favour of a great king, and so he brought large petitions. He asked definitely for two things-

1. That he may be sent. "If it please the king... send me... that I may build" (Nehemiah 2:5). This devoted servant of God had not only prayed for his brethren and his father's city, but he had consecrated himself unto God, and was ready to be used of Him as soon as the door of opportunity opened. Like Isaiah, he could say, "Here am I, send me." How can we expect God to do great things for us and by us if we are not prepared to make a sacrifice of ourselves for Him. The religion that costs nothing is just worth what it costs. Our prayers would have a new meaning if we offered them as from the altar of burnt-offering. Then he asked-

2. That he may be supplied. "If it please the king, let letters be given me," etc. (Nehemiah 2:7-8). These letters to the governors beyond the river, and to the keeper of the king's forest (royal preserves) were to Nehemiah words of authority and promise. He had What every God-sent servant ought to have, a clearly-defined commission, an assurance of safety (convoy), and the promise of supply. Our Lord and Master never sends any a warfare on their own charges. He makes all grace abound that we may have all-sufficiency. "Ask and ye shall receive" (Matthew 7:7).

IV. An Abundant Answer. "The king granted me according to the good hand of my God upon me" (Nehemiah 2:8). The secret of success in the work of the Lord lies here. When a man's life is in the grip of the "good hand of God" then signs and wonders will be done. The measure of blessing will be according to the power of that hand that is upon us. This mighty, conquering hand laid hold of Nehemiah that day when he was constrained to "sit down, and weep and pray" (chap. Nehemiah 1:4). He did not, like Jacob, wrestle against that heavenly and divine hand which was bowing him in sorrow and humiliation at the feet of God. He yielded himself entirely to the pressure of His heavy, yet "good hand." Like Ezra (chaps. Nehemiah 7:6; Nehemiah 9:28), he was quite conscious that the hand of God was upon him, as an instrument by which to accomplish the good pleasure of His will. All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.

PREPARING FOR THE WORK.

Nehemiah 2:11-20.

"Lives of great men all remind us

We can make our lives sublime,

And, departing, leave behind us

Footprints on the sands of time.

Footprints, that perhaps another-

Sailing o'er life's solemn main

A forlorn and ship-wrecked brother-

Seeing, shall take heart again."-Longfellow.

Nehemiah is one of those "great men" whose footprints have been left deep and distinct on the sands of the past, footprints that have inspired with fresh courage many a drooping heart in the

service of the Lord. His journey from Babylon to Jerusalem occupied three months. His prayers have been so far answered; he is now on the long coveted field of labour. It will be interesting and profitable for us to study his method of operation. For he-

I. Takes Time to Reflect. "So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days" (Nehemiah 2:11). Ezra also waited three days (chap. Ezra 8:32) before the work began. He that believeth shall not make haste. It is a great lesson to learn to wait on God. We imagine these three days were spent largely in meditation and prayer. Three days are significant of death and resurrection. The servants of Christ have often seen their plans and purposes pass from death into life, while they calmly waited before God. When a great crisis came in David's life he went and "sat before the Lord" (1 Chronicles 17:16). In the secret chamber, Luther, Knox, and many others learned how to conquer.

II. Surveys the Difficulties. "I arose in the night... neither told I any man what my God had put in my heart to do... and viewed the walls which were broken down" (Nehemiah 2:12-13). Like a wise physician, he begins by making a thorough diagnosis of the case. No devoted city "shimmer" ever went out of a night to view the desolations of sin with more eager eyes than did Nehemiah to investigate those ruined walls and heaps of rubbish. There are many Christian workers living in a fool's paradise because they refuse to believe that things are as bad as they really are. Those who only view the city on a Sunday can know little about those terrible heaps of broken-down humanity that are seen on a Saturday night. In many cases faith in the Word of God, and the habit of going to hear it, have been broken down, and the gates of praise have been burned with the fire of unholy criticism. Viewing the difficulties will be a wretched business and a heart-breaking task, unless, like Nehemiah, we know that God has put the remedy within our own hearts (Nehemiah 2:12). The unbelieving spies will be sure to bring back a God-slandering report. The ruin must be measured by God's remedy. Man's need can only be met by the infinite grace and power of the almighty Saviour.

III. Makes an Appeal for Helpers. "Ye see the evil case that we are in,... come and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach" (Nehemiah 2:17, R.V.). One of the best ways of beginning a work for God is to set others to work. But observe, he did not say, "Go and build," but "Come, let us build." The great work of restoring Jerusalem (Church) to its pristine glory and power will never be accomplished so long as the leaders (preachers) attempt to do all the building themselves, and seem satisfied if the others will but come, and sit, and listen, and look on. "All at it, and always at it," ought to be the normal condition of the Christian Church. It would take a very expert workman to do as much work in a week as twenty ordinary hands. Besides, as the life of God's people is one, so is their work. Unity of faith should lead to unity of effort. As a ruined Jerusalem was a dishonour to every Jew, so a weak and powerless Church is a dishonour to each individual member. The way to roll away the reproach is to arise and build. Put those displaced stones into their proper place.

IV. Gives an Encouraging Testimony. "Then I told them of the hand of my God upon me, as also the king's words, and they said, Let us rise up and build" (Nehemiah 2:18). Personal testimony is a most powerful factor in the service of the living God, but this implies, of course, a real, deep, personal experience of the goodness and faithfulness of God. This, in some measure, every leader in the work of God must have. The Holy Spirit works through us that which He has wrought

in us. The fact that God had answered Nehemiah's prayers, and called him to do this work was an inspiration to the others to "rise up and build." Such is the influence of a consecrated life. Those take too much upon them who try to put all God's servants on the same level, so do those who would monopolise the holy service because they are paid for it. While it is true that some are called of God, as evangelists, pastors, and teachers, it is also true that "to every man his work" (Mark 13:34).

V. Meets with Opposition. "When Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem heard, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us" (Nehemiah 2:19). It was a great grief to them that "a man had come to seek the welfare of Israel" (Nehemiah 2:10). The more Christ-like the life becomes, the more bitter will the enemies of God and His people be. They hated Him without a cause, and the disciple is not greater than his Lord. Sanballat means "strength and courage," and fitly stands for the wisdom of this world. Tobiah-"the Lord is good"-is a true representative of the formal professor, one who has a good name but a bad heart. They laughed to scorn the weak hands that were attempting to rebuild the walls, but they saw not the "good hand of God" that was with them. They mocked and despised, because, as the work proceeded, they found that they themselves were being built outside the city. Everything that makes the ungodly feel their weakness and their isolation from the city and people of God, if it does not lead to repentance, will doubtless provoke to opposition (Luke 23:2).

VI. Declares the Whole Truth. He meets the scoffers' objections with a simple, brief, fearless statement of the whole case. He declares the truth about God: "The God of Heaven, He will prosper us" (Nehemiah 2:20). This work is associated with the living, faithful, almighty God of Heaven; He is for it, He is with it, He is in it. He declares the truth about himself and his co-workers: "Therefore we, His servants, will arise and build." We are His servants, we are doing His business, and we will go on, say what ye will, do what ye may. He declares the truth about his enemies: "Ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial in Jerusalem." As for you, ye are strangers to God; ye are not His people. There is nothing belonging to you in the Holy City; ye have no right to any of its privileges, for the things of Jerusalem awaken no sacred memories in you. Ye have neither part nor lot in this matter (Acts 8:21). When the walls of the New Jerusalem (the Church of God) are finished, will you be built out or built in? The word of the Cross is, to them that are perishing, foolishness; but to us, who are being saved, it is the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18, R.V.). AT THE WORK.

Nehemiah 3.

"Knowing ourselves, our world, our task so great,

Our time so brief-'tis clear, if we refuse

The means so limited, the tools so rude,

To execute our purpose, life will fleet,

And we shall fade, and leave our task undone-

We will be wise in time!"-Browning.

There is a deep truth in the saying of Emerson, that "every man's task is his life preserver." This truth is specially applicable to the Christian worker. If any man will lose his life (in service) he shall save it, is the teaching of a greater than Emerson. This chapter is crowded with the names of those who took part in the work of repairing the wall. Their names are held in everlasting remembrance because, like Mary, they had wrought a good work for the honour of His Name. Holy deeds stand like footprints on the sands of time. Some brief, but important lessons might be learned here.

I. There is Need for Work. "The wall is broken down" (chap. Nehemiah 1:3). By faith, the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about; but the walls of Jerusalem are not going to be built up by faith alone. According to the practical theology of James, there is a sphere in which "faith without works is dead. " Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. Are there not many stones (souls) lying about our own doors that are out of their proper setting, and so failing to fulfil the real purpose for which they exist?

II. There is Work for All. "To every man his work" (Mark 13:34). "He that will not work should not eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Surely this holds good with regard to spiritual things as well as temporal things. What right has anyone to feast continually on spiritual things if there is no outcome in active service for the Lord, the Giver of all? All may not be able to do the same work, but all can work. The daughters of Shallum (Nehemiah 3:12) could not perhaps do as heavy work as the son of a goldsmith, or the son of an apothecary (Nehemiah 3:8). The priests (Nehemiah 3:1) and the merchants (Nehemiah 3:32) may not be equally expert in the art of building, but in the Name of God they helped in the work. Let every one do something. If you can't handle the trowel, surely you can say, "God bless the builders." Labour in prayer.

III. This Work was Voluntary. "They said, Let us rise up and build" (chap. Nehemiah 2:18). The need was set before them; they took it to heart, and made up their minds to make a start at once. Those professed servants of Christ who loiter about the ecclesiastical market-place in idleness because "no man hath hired them," are to be sincerely pitied. Those who go and work for love to Him will receive from Him "that which is right." "The wise man's heart is at his right hand," ready to manifest itself in action (Ecclesiastes 10:2). Where the heart has been given to God and His cause, the hand of service will certainly follow. The Lord Jesus Christ does not press His yoke upon us, but He does say, "Take My yoke upon you" (Matthew 11:29).

IV. This Work was United. You will notice that almost every verse in this chapter begins with words such as these: "And next unto him," "Next unto them," "After him," "After them." Every worker joined his work with his neighbour's. Because they were united in heart they willingly united in effort. They were inspired, not by any selfish consideration of personal reward or pre-eminence, but by one general God-honouring motive-the glory of His Name and the salvation of the people. The only rivalry that was among them was a provoking of one another unto love and good works. We cannot be truly united in the great work of God unless all merely sectarian and personal interests sink out of sight in the one intense desire for the building up of that cause which alone can bring honour and glory to God our Saviour. The struggle of the churches is often more like the confusion of Babel than the conviction of Pentecost. "We are workers together with Him" (2 Corinthians 6:1).

V. This Work was Successful. The word "repaired" occurs thirty-four times. Each builder repaired-made anew and finished-that piece of work given him to do. They were all successful in their work, although all did not do, perhaps, the same amount of work. In the temperament and manner of these workers there would, doubtless, be great diversity; but in their object and purpose there was great unanimity. Baruch seems to have been quite an enthusiast for the work, he is distinguished as "earnestly repairing the other piece" (Nehemiah 3:20). Then those who had houses "repaired every one over against his own house" (Nehemiah 3:28); and Meshullam "repaired over against his chamber" (Nehemiah 3:30). Earnestness is good, but it is only as wild fire in the service of the Lord, if we are not prepared to begin at home. Building for God should begin at the Jerusalem of our own door. Joshua said: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." To say, "the prophet has no honour in his own country," is no excuse for a Christian worker's failure at home. Our influence for Jesus Christ abroad will be pretty much like what it is at home. The Holy Spirit will never put a premium on hypocrisy. These workers succeeded because they would not be discouraged, although "their nobles put not their necks to the work of the Lord" (Nehemiah 3:5). There are "independent gentry" in the spiritual, as well as in the social sense-those who have such a large stock of self-respect that they cannot bend their necks to the work of the Lord. They may give a collection or a suggestion, but they will not stoop to personal service Like many church professors, they are frozen with respectability. But those whose hearts God hath touched have also got God-touched hands, so they press on with the work, and the God of Heaven, He prospers. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

It may be interesting to note that the names of the first and last workers mentioned are suggestive of Jesus Christ as the Alpha and Omega of this great spiritual work. Eliashib (God the Restorer) (Nehemiah 3:1), and Malchiah (God is King) (Nehemiah 3:31). Between the rising of the High Priest and the coming of the King the work was done.

PERSEVERANCE IN THE MIDST OF OPPOSITION.

Nehemiah 4:1-11.

"Alas! how light a cause may move

Dissension between hearts that love-

Hearts that the world in vain had tried,

And sorrow but more closely tied;

That stood the storm when waves were rough,

Yet, in a sunny hour, fall off

Like ships that have gone down at sea,

When Heaven was all tranquillity."-Moor. The more powerfully the young oak is bent before the blast, the more deeply does it strike its roots into the stiff, stubborn soil beneath. Although persecution is not something to be coveted, yet it is not to be shunned or lightly esteemed.

"Blessed are ye when men shall revile you... falsely for My sake; rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in Heaven" (Matthew 5:11-12). Everything that sends the roots of our spiritual life deeper down into the will of God will make us more steadfast and fruitful for Him. We shall note- I. The Nature of the Opposition. There was the-

1. Tantalizing Arrows of Scorn. Their quiver seemed to be full of them. They sneered at their character. "What do these feeble Jews?" (Nehemiah 4:2). They were feeble in number, and, in the eyes of their wealthy opponents, they were feeble in resources; but they saw not the helping hand of God which was with them. They sneered at their motives. "Will they fortify themselves?" "Will they sacrifice?" As much as to say, "How can they succeed in saving themselves? How will they ever set up a worship that will secure the presence and help of God?" The Lord knoweth them that are His. They sneered at their enthusiasm. "Will they make an end in a day?" They are going at the work as if they were going to finish it in a day. The lukewarm Christian is not likely to be mocked at by the easy-going worldling. They sneered at the task attempted. "Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish?" Their aims are too lofty; they attempt too much. They sneered at the work done. "Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall break down their stone wall" (Nehemiah 4:3). Such are the criticisms with which all faithful workers for God are assailed; but the building goes on, for such labour is not in vain in the Lord; for He scorneth the scorners, but giveth grace unto the lowly (Proverbs 3:34). Then came-

2. Wicked Conspiracy of the Enemy. "When the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth, and conspired all of them together to fight and to hinder it" (Nehemiah 4:7-8). But in vain do these fowlers spread their net before the eyes of the God of Heaven. They said, "They shall not know, neither see, till we come among them and slay them" (Nehemiah 4:11). But God knew, and God saw, and it was with Him, and not with these "feeble Jews," that they had to do. It was like the conspiracy of thorns against the devouring fire. Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not triumph nor escape punishment. All the united forces of hell cannot impede the progress of those who trust in God, and courageously do His will.

3. Discouragement of Doubting Friends. "Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish: so that we are not able to build the wall" (Nehemiah 4:10). Opposition is bad enough when it comes from without, but it is a worse heartburn when it comes from those who have hitherto been our friends and helpers. Judah got discouraged because he lost sight of God, and kept looking at the adversaries, the weakness of the burden-bearers, and the much rubbish that lay in the way, and, having lost faith himself, he sought to discourage others in the work, saying, "We are not able to build the wall." A discouraged man is a useless man in the work of the Lord; he is worse than useless-he is a positive hindrance. "Be strong and of a good courage: be not afraid, neither be dismayed, for the Lord thy God is with thee" (Joshua 1:9).

II. The Steadfast Character of the Workers. They had-

1. A Mind to Work (Nehemiah 4:6). They had no mind to sit moping over their difficulties, or to spend their time in mere talk or fault-finding. The love of God constrained them.

I will not work my soul to save,

For that the Lord hath done;

But I will work like any slave,

For the sake of God's dear Son."

They not only had a mind to work, but they had a mind also to have their work "joined together." Instead of joining the work together, some have a mind to work alone, while others seem to think that all the work should be done by themselves.

2. A Heart to Pray. "Nevertheless, we made our prayers unto God" (Nehemiah 4:9). A working mind should always be accompanied with a praying heart. Those who believe that "God is a Refuge" will most certainly flee to Him in a time of storm. Those who have no heart to pray will soon have no mind to work. We are called, not only to "put on the whole armour of God," but also to "pray always with all prayer" (Ephesians 6:11-18). Work for God must be done in the Spirit of God. It is through prayer that strength is imparted for service.

3. An Eye to Watch. "We set a watch against them day and night" (Nehemiah 4:9). Watching and praying are frequently linked together in the Scriptures of truth (see Matthew 26:41; Mark 13:33; Ephesians 6:18; 1 Peter 4:7). It was not necessary that these watchmen should occupy their time in following all the movements of their adversaries, it was enough that they watched the interests of their God-given work. It is sad to see many of the Lord's servants so busy studying the pull-down tactics of the enemy that they neglect to build up. Watch and pray, that ye enter not into this temptation.

WORK AND WEAPONS.

Nehemiah 4:12-23.

"Faith's meanest deed more favour bears

Where hearts and wills are weighed,

Than brightest transports, choicest prayers,

Which bloom their hour and fade."-Newman.

Man was not made to mourn, but to work (Genesis 2:15) and, as Houghton says, "Man must toil for good, or he shall toil for ill." Man is a toiler, either for God or against Him. He that is not for Me, said our Lord, is against Me. In attempting to do some definite work for God, it is good to "count the cost," but in counting the cost, let us take heed, that we count on Him who is able to bear the cost. We must measure our difficulties, and our needs, with the strength and resources of Him whose we are, and whom we serve. There are some suggestive thoughts for workers here.

I. The Workers' Position. "Therefore in the lower places, and on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords" (Nehemiah 4:13). We may not like the lower places, because there we are more exposed to the wrath of the enemy and the workers themselves may need to go out of sight. We would much prefer the "higher places" in Christian work, where we could see and be seen. Slum work is never so pleasant to some as preaching in a pulpit or on a platform. These workers had grace enough to go where they were sent, and to do their part gladly, knowing that each piece of work was a needful part of the great whole. The order was "after their families." How beautiful to see whole families united in furthering the work of the Lord.

II. The Workers' Privilege. "Be not afraid... remember the Lord, and fight (pray) for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses" (Nehemiah 4:14). Those devil-driven adversaries will never be able to make this man afraid, whose mind is stayed on that God who is "great and terrible." These warrior-toilers were not asked to fight for themselves, but for their brethren, etc. But well they knew that in seeking the good of their households they were securing their own salvation. This fighting for our sons and daughters, wives and houses must be done in faith. Fight the good fight of faith. The promise is to you and to your children. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31). Remember the Lord; remember His power and His promise, and pray for your brethren, etc. The more we think of Him the more will we think of others.

III. The Workers' Encouragement. "God brought their counsel to nought" (Nehemiah 4:15). The enemy had entered into a secret conspiracy to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder the work (Nehemiah 4:8). They had planned to fall upon them unawares, but God "disappointed the devices of the crafty, so that their hands could not perform their enterprise" (Job 5:12). How was this victory won? It was won through prayer (Nehemiah 4:4). They cried unto God, and He "turned their reproach upon their own head." Those who live in communion with God are not easily taken by surprise. The weapons that are formed against such shall not prosper. Take no thought for your life: your Father knoweth.. From the closet of prayer you can bombard and bring to confusion all the forces of hell. When Samuel cried unto the Lord, the Lord thundered upon the Philistines (1 Samuel 7:10). Who shall stand when He appeareth.

IV. The Workers' Weapons. "For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side" (Nehemiah 4:18). Yet while every worker had his recognised weapon, there were different ways in which they were held. Some had their weapons held by others, while they did the work (Nehemiah 4:16). Some wrought with the one hand, and held the weapon with the other (Nehemiah 4:17). Others wrought with their swords girded at their sides. Work and warfare are the characteristics of the Christian life. They are in danger of working in vain who neglect the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. The other danger is to be so taken up with the weapons that we neglect the work. The servants of Christ must be aggressive as well as defensive. Blessed be the opposition that makes us cling more firmly to the sword of the Spirit, for our weapons are not carnal, but spiritual and mighty. If God be for us, who can be against us (Romans 8:31). Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand. Sword-girded workers are everywhere needed in these present times. Are you one?

V. The Workers' Warning. "In what place ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither" (Nehemiah 4:20). While working and watching they were to hold themselves in readiness for a gathering together at any moment at the call of the trumpet. As the work of building went on, and parts of the wall got built up, the workers became in some places separated from one another, and so felt the need of listening for the trumpet call. Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, "the Lord shall descend from Heaven... with the trump of God... and we shall be caught up together" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). Blessed are they who work, and watch, and wait for the heavenly call.

VI. The Workers' Devotion. These men were so thoroughly devoted to the work that they willingly practised self-denial for its good. We dare not pretend to be consecrated to the work of the Lord

unless we are prepared to sacrifice personal ease and comfort for His sake. Their whole-heartedness is seen in their working long hours. "From the rising of the morning till the stars appeared" (Nehemiah 4:21). They were no mere hirelings, yawning for the hour when they might drop their tools and make for home and their own private pursuits. Those who long to get out of the work of Christ are unfit for it. It is one thing to be weary in the work, it is another to be weary of it. Their zeal was also seen in their "lodging within Jerusalem" for the good of the cause. This implied separation from all those who were without. They willingly sacrificed this liberty for the bondage of service. Those who dwell with the King for His work are the most likely to be successful in pleasing Him. Then, again, they kept themselves in constant readiness for the work. "None of us put off our clothes" (Nehemiah 4:23). The building of the wall was not a matter of convenience, but of life. "This one thing I do" (Php_3:3), was the all-absorbing motive. Be followers of them. Be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. A FIGHT WITH SELFISHNESS.

Nehemiah 5:1-13.

"Not by looking within, but by living without

This centre of self, shall a man grow wise.

Let us, leaving ourselves, then, go boldly about,

And take part in the business of earth and skies."-Lytton.

Carlyle has said, "Alway there is a black spot in our sunshine, it is... the shadow of ourselves." A shadow of selfishness-as black as midnight-appears before us here, in the first five verses of this chapter. Great distress had come into the city. The enemy had succeeded in intercepting the food supplies, and, alas, the wealthier portion of the people began to take advantage of their poorer brethren, by enriching themselves to their terrible cost. Lands, vineyards, houses, and even sons and daughters, were mortgaged, or exchanged for bread (Nehemiah 5:1-5). Things got so unbearable that a "great cry" was raised by the people. The behaviour of Nehemiah during this painful crisis gives us a further revelation of the greatness and stability of his character-features which ought to characterise every one called of God into His service. These features are-

I. Uprightness. "I was very angry when I heard their cry" (Nehemiah 5:6). It is only the truly righteous soul that can be truly angry at unrighteousness. This is not that "anger without a cause" which is in danger of judgment (Matthew 5:22), but the holy anger which is akin to the "wrath of the Lamb." Alas, that there should be so many of God's servants whose convictions don't seem to be pure enough or deep enough to move them with indignation at the merciless greed of some religious professors. These men were "brethren" (Nehemiah 5:1), but they showed no brotherly love.

II. Courage. "Then I... rebuked the nobles and the rulers" (Nehemiah 5:7). Courage in the Name of God is absolutely necessary in those called to take the lead in His work (Joshua 1:6-7). Nobles and rulers, moneyed and influential men, are often allowed to escape deserved reproof just because they have happened to be born and brought up in more favourable circumstances than others. The tyranny of the moneyed class is only equalled by the envy of the poorer class. The servant of Christ must not strive either for personal advantage or the praise of men, but in the name of his Master he must fearlessly speak out the truth as manifested in His Life, and Word,

and Work. "I am the Truth."

III. Unselfishness. "We, after our ability, have redeemed our brethren the Jews which were sold unto the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren?" (Nehemiah 5:8). Nehemiah had sought, as far as his means would allow, to redeem to liberty those who had been sold unto the heathen, but these selfish nobles and rulers had sought to get gain by selling their brethren. Love to others under heathenish influences, and a willingness to give according to ability- both of time and means-for their salvation, are the unfailing characteristics of all those who sincerely serve the Lord Jesus Christ. The Cross of Christ has not yet been clearly seen, if selfishness has not yet received its death-blow (Galatians 2:20). Think of the ability of faith and love.

IV. Holy Jealousy. "It is not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of God because of the reproach of the heathen?" (Nehemiah 5:9). When God's people do not walk in His fear they bring reproach upon His holy Name (Romans 2:24). It is a melancholy fact that many of Christ's servants are more jealous about the honour of their own name than His. When men defame us, does it cut us more deeply to the heart than when we hear them casting reproach upon the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ? Are all our vital interests so interwoven with the Name and work of our Lord and Saviour that when He is touched we are touched, and that those who honour Him, are honoured by us?

V. Thoroughness. Nehemiah was neither luke-warm nor half-hearted. Whatsoever he did, he did it heartily and completely, as unto the Lord. Like Boaz, he is not content until he has "finished the thing." Thoroughness, to be perfectly sound, must be governed by the purest motives, and acting in the clear light of the Divine will, otherwise it may be but the wild fire of fleshly enthusiasm. The thoroughness of Nehemiah's character comes out here in his demand for restoration. "Restore, I pray you, to them, this day, their lands," etc. (Nehemiah 5:11). And after he had received their promise to do so, see how he significantly "shook his lap," warning them against unfaithfulness to their vows (Nehemiah 5:13). Such whole-hearted effort was crowned with success, for "all the congregation said, Amen, and praised the Lord, and did according to the promise." How will men believe what we say, as Christ's ambassadors, if we do not fearlessly declare the whole counsel of God, keeping back nothing. All the demands of God must be reiterated by His servants, or the message delivered will be destitute of that fine, keen edge which makes it effectual in the hearts of those who hear it. The gospel of restoration has two aspects: (1) The restoring of the soul unto God; (2) the restoring of ill-gotten gain to others (Leviticus 6:4; Luke 19:8).

NEW TRIALS.

Nehemiah 6:1-9.

"Only those are crowned and sainted,

Who, with grief, have been acquainted."

-Longfellow. When Carlyle was shown a "Comic History of England," he naively asked when they would have a comic Bible? To him history was a sacred thing. To the Christian the Providence of God should be as sacred as the Word of God. But the enemy, in one shape or other, will even seek to devour those who are enthusiastic for the work of God. Two new temptations present themselves to Nehemiah. There was what might be called-

I. The Compromise Temptation. "Come, let us meet together in the plain of Ono" (Nehemiah 6:2). This wily temptation came when they heard that the wall was built, and that "there was no breach left" (Nehemiah 6:1). While the building went on they ridiculed and threatened, but now that success had come they attempt to lure them down to their level, that some compromise might be made. Satan knows how to play the fox, when it does not suit him to roar as a lion. We are not ignorant of his devices. When the enemy speaks fair you may be sure that there are seven abominations in his heart (Proverbs 26:25). Notice how Nehemiah met this temptation.

1. He Knew his own Mind. "I cannot come down" (Nehemiah 6:3). He could not even say "I will think of it." As one who was entirely devoted to the work of the Lord, his whole soul revolted at such a proposal. His feelings were akin to those of Peter and John when they said, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20).

2. He Knew his Work. "I am doing a great work." All work for God is great when judged by its eternal results Every thing must be great that has God in it. He was doing a great work, he was not dreaming about it. They are not easily tempted who are found so doing.

3. He Knew the Danger of Coming Down. "Why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you" (at that time the doors had not yet been set up upon the gates, Nehemiah 6:1). It is more honourable to work than to talk about it. It is at the sacrifice of our usefulness in the service of God that we "come down" to the plain of mere worldly wisdom. This same temptation came to our Lord while hanging on the Cross. Was He not doing a great work there, when they cried to Him, "Come down from the Cross and we will believe?" Although Nehemiah was assailed in this subtle fashion "four times," yet just as often did the shield of faith save him. Be steadfast and immovable in the work of the Lord.

II. The Evil-rumour Temptation. The fifth attempt to ensnare this man of God and ruin his work was made in the form of a false and slandering report. They declared that his purpose was to rebel against the king, and to make himself king in Judah, and to appoint prophets to preach of him in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 6:5-7). In short they charged him with pride and self-seeking. This is no new thing. Men, who are themselves selfish, can never understand the motives of those who seek only the glory of God. When the ungodly find that they cannot baffle the Christian worker they will not scruple to misrepresent his motives. Note how Nehemiah met this scurrilous attack. He met it with-

1. A Faithful Rebuke. "There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart" (Nehemiah 6:8). He not only denies the charge, but points out also the source of all the mischief, "thine own heart." The heart is deceitful above all things. It was a strong sharp thrust, but he knew that the seat of disease was deep down. The man who would be faithful to God cannot always speak smooth things. Mealy-mouthed ministers will never accomplish much for the Kingdom of God. The faithful servant of Christ must reprove and rebuke, as well as exhort.

2. An Urgent Prayer. "Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands" (Nehemiah 6:9). We never have more need to pray than when we have been shooting the arrows of conviction at the hearts of our King's enemies. Our appeals to men should be instantly followed with an appeal to God.

(1) The Need. "Strengthen my hands." He wanted strong hands to carry out the purposes of God in his life. Hands that "hang down" in weakness are useless hands. The spider taketh hold with her hands, so does the man of faith.

(2) The Urgency. "Now therefore." Now, because of my present need; therefore, because of the strength and wrath of the enemy. My God shall supply all your need. He can perfect His strength in your weakness; therefore "wait on the Lord" (Isaiah 40:31).

SUCCESS.

Nehemiah 6:10-16.

"Easy indeed it were to reach

A mansion in the courts above,

If swelling words and fluent speech

Might serve instead of faith and love. "-Cowper.

One of the profound sayings of Mazzini was, "Action is the Word of God; thought is but His shadow." Deeds will always speak louder than words. The runner is not crowned unless he strive lawfully. The trials and temptations of Nehemiah were to him what the refiner's fire is to the silver, or the lapidary's wheel to the diamond. The lustre of his character was purified and brightened through the ordeal of suffering. The trial of your faith is more precious than gold. But Nehemiah's warfare is not yet over. Here we have-

I. Another Temptation to Evil. This last attempt to ensnare this man of God seems to have been the most subtle of all. Shemaiah, who had the name of a prophet", tempted Nehemiah to come with him into some secret chamber within the temple, and to shut themselves up, saying that his enemies were coming in the night to slay him (Nehemiah 6:10). When the snare is laid by the Ahithophels it is all the more dangerous, it is the wolf in sheep's clothing. The poison of error is more difficult to detect when administered by a professed religious teacher, who is secretly in league with the enemies of God. The Devil's last dodge is to appear as an angel of light.

II. Another Steadfast Resistance. Nehemiah said, "Should such a man as I flee?...I will not go" (Nehemiah 6:11). As far as he presently knew, it may have been all true what Shemaiah said, but he felt in his heart that it would be for him a God-dishonouring act to seek his own personal safety at the sacrifice of his God-given work. "Should such a man as I flee?" I, who am in the hand of God, doing His will, and who am as safe on the wall of service as within the closed doors of ease and idleness? "I will not go." God Himself is my refuge and strength, not His earthly house. If He fails me, His temple can afford me no security. It is good for us to remember who we are, and whom we serve, in the hour of temptation and danger. Why should the sons and servants of God be driven about with every wind of doctrine? Personal influence for the cause of Jesus Christ is often sacrificed on the altar of cowardly fear. "Dare to be a Daniel." There is no armour provided for the back.

III. Another Defeat for the Enemy. "And lo, I perceived that God had not sent him: therefore was he hired that I should be afraid... that they might reproach me" (Nehemiah 6:12-13). The dastardly motives of Shemaiah have been discovered. The sheep skin has fallen from the wolf, the hireling has been found out. It is not easy to deceive a man filled with the Spirit of God. The object was to fill Nehemiah with the fear of man, and so paralyse him for the work of God. The behaviour of this sneaking and deceitful prophet is not more reprehensible than that of some modern critics, who, in

the garb of friendship, seek to paralyse the efforts of Christ's servants by inspiring them with fear and distrust. But the Church is wakening up, and will soon be saying, like Nehemiah, "Lo, I perceive that God has not sent them." Be sure your sin will find you out. No weapon formed against the work of God can prosper. "What time I am afraid I will trust in Thee" (Psalms 56:3).

IV. Another Appeal unto God. "My God, think Thou upon Tobiah... and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear" (Nehemiah 6:14). There is no recrimination, no attempt at revenge; he knows that his judgment was with his God, so he hands over his enemies to Him to have their case considered. "Think Thou upon them." Our Lord Himself had those who sought to cast him down from His excellency, and the disciple is not greater than his Lord. When Paul referred to Alexander the coppersmith, who did him much evil, he said, "The Lord reward him according to his works" (2 Timothy 4:14). In circumstances like these Christ has left us His example, "Who when He was reviled, reviled not again;... but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously" (1 Peter 2:23). Them that are without, God will judge (1 Corinthians 5:13).

V. Another Triumph for Faith. "So the wall was finished,... and they were much cast down in their own eyes, for they perceived that this work was wrought of God" (Nehemiah 6:15-16). Like the Lord Jesus Christ, Nehemiah could say, "I have finished the work Thou gavest Me to do" (John 17:4). When there is steadfast faith in God, strength and victory will be given for every God-given task, although the way may be "through much affliction and reproach." That which fills the mouth of God's children with laughter and their tongue with singing (Psalms 126:2-3), makes the eyes of their enemies to be "cast down." It is a humbling discovery for them when they perceive "that the work was wrought of God," and that in their jealousy and blindness they have been fighting against Him. Such a startling discovery every Christ-rejecter will surely make sooner or later. Yes, the eyes of the haughty will yet be "cast down," and their faces deeply dyed in crimson shame when they perceive what God hath done for His faithful followers. This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

WORD AND WORK.

Nehemiah 8.

"O Word of God incarnate!

O Wisdom from on high!

O Truth unchanged, unchanging!

O Light of our dark sky!

We praise Thee for the radiance

That from the hallowed page,

A lantern to our footsteps,

Shines on from age to age."-W. How. In this chapter we have a very refreshing change in the programme, in the form of an urgent appeal to the Word of the Lord as revealed in "the book of the law of Moses." There is something like the breath of a revival in it, in that it is the people themselves who cry out for it (Nehemiah 8:1). There is a beautiful fitness of things in this,

inasmuch as the Word of God should always be associated with the work of God. The sword and the trowel were both needed. The word of edification must follow the work of salvation. The whole scene is most impressive and suggestive. We shall look at-

I. The Preacher. "They spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book" (Nehemiah 8:1). Ezra was known as a ready scribe in the law of Moses (Ezra 7:6). Being also a priest, he was well qualified as an exponent of the Scriptures. As a priest, he was the recipient of grace; as a scribe, he was familiar with the truth. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, and in a measure must come by every preacher of the Gospel who has the Divine call.

II. The Place of Meeting. "Before the street" (Nehemiah 8:3). He read the Book in the open square, in front of the street that was before the Watergate. He stood upon "a pulpit of wood" (Nehemiah 8:4). Thus the first pulpit mentioned was built in a public square for open-air work. In the secret closet, or the market square, where Jesus is, 'tis Heaven there. The Christ-possessed boat of Peter on the lake was a holier place than the God-forsaken temple at Jerusalem.

III. The Hearers.

1. They were numerous. "Both men and women: all that could hear with understanding" (Nehemiah 8:2). The congregation literally hungered for the Word of God. What a delightful privilege to minister to such a people.

2. They were attentive. "From morning until midday... all the people were attentive to the book" (Nehemiah 8:3). They were more interested in the book than the preacher. They sought not the man, but the message.

3. They were reverent. "When he opened the book... all the people stood up" (Nehemiah 8:5). For Israel to "stand up" was virtually to declare their willingness to hear and obey. To stand up before God is no new method of testifying to our readiness to believe Him.

4. They were responsive. "All the people answered, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord" (Nehemiah 8:6). They responded to the demands of God's word by bowing their heads and offering Him the adoration of their hearts. It is a solemn thing to hear the Word of the Lord and refuse to yield to its claims. Be ye doers of the Word.

IV. The Preacher's Manner.

1. He Began by Blessing the Lord (Nehemiah 8:6). He was deeply conscious of the greatness of the occasion, the greatness of God, the greatness of the message, the great need of the people, and his own great responsibility.

2. He Stuck to the Book. "He read in the book, in the law of God" (Nehemiah 8:8). He well knew that what the people needed, was not his thoughts, but the thoughts of God as written in that book. My thoughts are not your thoughts saith the Lord.

3. He Spoke Distinctly (Nehemiah 8:8). There was no silly attempt at intoning for the sake of musical effect. He spoke straight out, clear and incisive. As R. L. Stevenson said, "The Bible should be read freshly as a book, not dreamingly as the Bible."

4. He Explained the Text. "They read distinctly and gave the sense." This was no formal heartless reading of the word. The soul of the man was greatly exercised, so that the real meaning of the words might be seen. There would not be so many senseless hearers, if all preachers were as faithful as Ezra to the Word of God.

5. He Enforced the Truth. "He caused them to understand." His business was to make them to understand what the mind of the Lord was. It is not enough that they heard it, they must, as responsible beings, be able, by the exercise of their own minds, to grasp intelligently the thoughts of God concerning themselves. He that hath My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord (Jeremiah 23:28).

V. The Effect Produced.

1. They Wept. "All the people wept when they heard the words of the law" (Nehemiah 8:9). Only reading the word! Yes, but such reading as brought conviction to the heart, and the tears of penitence to the eyes. When the Word of God, which is the sword of the Spirit, is believed, it proves itself "quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword."

2. They Rejoiced. "And all the people went their way... to make great mirth, because they had understood the words" (Nehemiah 8:12). The Word at first may pierce the heart and melt down the will, but it is to the end that we might rejoice in Him (Nehemiah 8:10, last clause). Mourning because of sin must precede the joy of salvation.

3. They Ministered. They were to "eat the fat and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared" (Nehemiah 8:10). And they gladly did so (Nehemiah 8:12). By the grace of God, we may now eat the fat and drink the sweet, but surely the love of Christ should constrain us to remember those who are as yet outside the Kingdom of God, and for whom "nothing is prepared." "Freely ye have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8). Give to them that love of God which has been so freely given to you. A CALL TO PRAISE.

Nehemiah 9:1-25.

"Some murmur when their sky is clear

And wholly bright to view,

If one small speck of dark appear

In their great Heaven of blue.

And some with thankful love are filled,

If but one streak of light-

One ray of God's good mercy-gild

The darkness of their night."-Trench. This chapter opens with the great day of fasting and humiliation. The seed of Israel had broken their unholy alliance with the strangers, and now made public confession of their sins. For three hours the Book of the Law was read, and for other three hours they confessed and worshipped. Now the call comes to "Stand up and bless the Lord their God for ever and ever" (Nehemiah 9:5). They had been reading and hearing of the great things

God had done for their fathers, until their souls were stirred up from their silent depths to bless Him who was almighty to save and to keep. In this review of the past there are some powerful reasons given why they should "stand up and bless the Lord." Because He is the-

I. God of Creation. "Thou hast made Heaven, the Heaven of Heavens, with all their host," etc. (Nehemiah 9:6). The Heavens declare the glory of God, the glory of His greatness, His wisdom, and power. The earth showeth forth His handiwork, in the variety and perfection exhibited in nature. The Heavens and the earth are the visible expressions and proofs of the Eternal Mind, and should call forth praise and adoration. They would also praise Him because He is the-

II. God of Grace. "Thou art the Lord who didst choose Abram, and broughtest Him forth... and gave him the name Abraham... and madest a covenant with him" (Nehemiah 9:7-8). By faith Abraham went out, but by grace was he chosen. By grace are ye saved. The grace that came to Abraham through the call of God, comes to us all in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. All who accept this call will, like Abraham, be led forth into a new sphere, will receive a new name, and will enter into a new life by covenant promise-the life of faith. They desire to praise Him because He is the-

III. God who Answers Prayer. "Thou didst see the afflictions of our fathers... and heardest their cry" (Nehemiah 9:9). He sees the afflictions of His people in the Egypt of this world, and hears their cry when they come to the Red Sea of agonising trial. His ear never becomes heavy through weariness; He is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. Stand up and bless the Lord for this. He is also the-

IV. God of Deliverances. He "shewedst signs and wonders upon Pharaoh... and didst divide the sea, so that they went through on dry land... and led them in the day by a cloudy pillar, and in the night by a pillar of fire" (Nehemiah 9:10-12). He saved them from their strong enemy, and led them forth by a new way. Every movement of the pillar was a fresh deliverance on their behalf. The Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ was the instrument by which all our enemies have been overthrown, and the Holy Spirit is our Guiding Pillar and daily Deliverer from the bondage of darkness and the wearisomeness of the wilderness pilgrimage. Stand up and bless the Lord your God for this. Moreover, He is the-

V. God of Revelation. "Thou earnest down... and spakest with them from Heaven, and gavest them right judgments and true laws, good statutes and commandments" (Nehemiah 9:13). Every good and perfect gift cometh down from the Father of Lights. We ought to be thankful to God that He hath given to us statutes that are right, in which the heart can rejoice, and a commandment that is pure, enlightening the eyes (Psalms 19:8-9). No man, by the process of searching, can find out God as He has been pleased to reveal Himself in His Word, and through His Son. It needs God to make known God. Let us bless Him that He has so made Himself known, that we, by faith, can rejoice in Him with enlightened eyes. Further, He is the-

VI. God who Supplies all our Need. He "gavest them bread from Heaven, and water out of the rock... and promised them that they should possess the land" (Nehemiah 9:15). A provision that covered their present and future needs. The hunger of those who pilgrimage with God can only be satisfied with "bread from Heaven;" the thirst of such can only be quenched with water from the "Smitten Rock," and their future prospect can be brightened only by His "sure Word of promise." My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Stand up and

bless Him for this, and, lastly, for this other great fact, that He is the-

VII. God of Long-suffering Mercy. "Yet Thou in Thy manifold mercies forsook them not in the wilderness" (Nehemiah 9:19). See how they tempted God. They were disobedient, "refused to obey." They were forgetful, "neither were mindful of Thy wonders." They were rebellious, "appointed a captain to return to their bondage." They were idolatrous, "they made a molten calf" (Nehemiah 9:16-18). Yet, in His manifold mercies, He was "a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness" (Nehemiah 9:17). Instead of answering their ingratitude and unbelief with judgment, He added mercy to mercy, by "giving them also of His Spirit to instruct them" (Nehemiah 9:20), so that they could testify, after forty years, that as far as the grace and goodness of God were concerned, "they lacked nothing" (Nehemiah 9:21). As they "read in the book of the law," on that twenty-fourth day of the month, of the marvellous goodness of their God in the past, their hearts began to burn within them, and no wonder. Why are our hearts so irresponsive to all the manifestations of His wonder-working grace toward us in Jesus Christ? Shall we not stand up this day, at the remembrance of His love, and bless His gracious Name for ever and ever? A CALL TO PURITY OF LIFE.

Nehemiah 13.

"To see the face of God, this makes the joy of Heaven!

The purer then the eye, the more joy will be given."-Trench.

Nehemiah had left Jerusalem, and gone back to the royal court at Babylon (Nehemiah 13:6). Perhaps in fulfilment of the promise made to the king before he was sent to build the wall (see chap. Nehemiah 2:6). How long he had been away is difficult to say, but on returning he found things in a very grievous condition. Backsliding had set in, and a powerful tendency to compromise with evil. Many had become lovers of money more than lovers of God. At once this single-eyed man of God raised his voice against them and their unseemly doings, and sought to bring them back to a life of conformity to the Word and will of God. What their hindrances were to a life of purity and power are very much the hindrances with which we have to do. What was the nature of them? Notice their-

I. Relationship to the Mixed Multitude. "When they heard the law, they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude" (Nehemiah 13:3). The law forbade the mixing of the people of God with the nations that knew not God, so as to lose their identity. When the mixed multitude went up out of Egypt with the host of Israel this did in no way mar their character as a people separated unto God, but it was different when they went with the mixed multitude. Our relationship, as Christians to the world, is that of Christ's-in it, but not of it. The men of the world are indeed a "mixed multitude," and one of the chief dangers of the followers of Jesus Christ is to get so closely associated with them and their ways as to lose their testimony for Him (2 Corinthians 6:17).

II. Relationship to False Professors. "Eliashib the priest... was allied unto Tobiah... and he prepared him a chamber in the courts of the house of God" (Nehemiah 13:4-9). Tobiah had the name of a saint (goodness of Jehovah), although he had the nature of a godless sinner. It was a startling discovery Nehemiah made in coming back to Jerusalem to find that his old enemy who had mocked them while building (chap. Nehemiah 4:3) was now comfortably quartered in one of the large chambers which should have been used as a store-room for the house of God

(Nehemiah 13:5). He had no portion nor right in Jerusalem (chap. Nehemiah 2:20). But there are men like Tobiah who are mean enough to take all the personal comfort they can get out of the house of God, while they in heart deny God, and sneer at His servants. It was surely an unholy alliance between Eliashib the priest and Tobiah the Ammonite; such an alliance as often leads the overseers of the house of God into God-dishonouring compromises with the worldly-minded. Nehemiah would tolerate nothing that disgraced the holy Name, and hindered that testimony for which the house existed. So he "cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah," and occupied the chamber with the things of God (Nehemiah 13:8-9). Tobiah's household effects may have been very good and beautiful stuff, but they were as filthiness in the holy place (2 Chronicles 29:5), because they were still Tobiah's and not God's.

III. Relationship to the House of God. Another source of danger to the purity and power of the Christian life is to allow self-interest to overrule the claims of God's house. "Why is the house of God forsaken?" he asks. It is a reproach to God that His house should be forsaken (Nehemiah 13:10-11). The Levites and singers appointed for the work of God's house had fled, "every one to his field," because their portions had not been given them. To withhold the tithes and offerings needed to maintain an honourable testimony to His Name is equivalent to robbing God (Malachi 3:8). The house of God was not meant for an ornament, but as a witness. Alas! that it should be so, of many places claiming to be houses of God; they are more ornamental than useful in the way of bringing men to God. But the labourer, not the ornamental loiterer, is worthy of his hire. Although there is a close connection in Malachi 3:10 between tithes and spiritual blessing, yet the Church in Laodicea had seemingly plenty of "meat in the house," while still in a state of spiritual destitution. There must not only be the gifts, but purity of motives in giving. Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as unto the Lord.

IV. Relationship to the Day of Rest. Nehemiah contended with the nobles for permitting this buying, and selling, and transferring goods on the Sabbath day (Nehemiah 13:15-22). It was an infringement of the law of God (Leviticus 23:32). The Sabbaths were God's. He gave them "to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them" (Ezekiel 20:12) Indifference to the sanctity of God's day of rest could only be interpreted as an expression of their disregard for the God who gave it. The Lord's day now (first day of the week), given us as a sign of His resurrection, is regarded by many in very different ways. It is still the day of rest, and is manifestly the gift of God, sanctified by Him in the raising of His Son from the dead. Neglecting this day of rest, and not honouring it as of God, has been the fruitful source of much backsliding on the part of God's people. He that regardeth the day as unto the Lord will certainly be blessed in so doing.

V. Marriage Relationship. "In those days Jews had married wives of Ashdod... and their children spake half the speech of Ashdod and could not speak in the Jews' language" (Nehemiah 13:23-25). The fruit of this unholy alliance was a marred and mongrel testimony. The children were not to blame for this defect. The tree is known by its fruit. Getting unequally yoked with unbelievers has marred the lives of many of God's children. Even Solomon was led into sin through this course (Nehemiah 13:26). Those who would "marry in the Lord" must do their courting in the Lord. The Christian man who sets his affections on an "outlandish woman," or the Christian woman who allows her affections to be captivated by an outlandish man are proving the outlandishness of their own hearts to the Lord Jesus Christ. If any man would live godly, he must suffer even the

persecution of a grieved and godless sweetheart. Neither are Christian fathers or mothers to give their daughters to men who are unbelievers, no matter what their social standing might be (Nehemiah 13:25). Paul's arguments against such unions are unanswerable. "What communion hath light with darkness?...What agreement hath the temple of God with idols? Ye are the temple of the living God....Wherefore be ye separate" (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

"How sweet the mutual yoke of man and wife,

When holy fires maintain love's heavenly life."

Chapter 35

Esther

VASHTI, THE SELF-WILLED, REJECTED.

Esther 1.

"Oh let Thy sacred will

All Thy delight in me fulfil!

Let not me think an action mine own way;

But as Thy love shall sway,

Resigning up the rudder to Thy skill."-Herbert. The book of Esther belongs to the times of Ezra and Nehemiah, and was probably written by Mordecai (chap. Esther 9:20). As has been often noted, the Name of God does not occur, and is never referred to in it. But although His Name is not found, His hand is everywhere visible. It may be fitly called, "The book of the providence of God." In this brief history we have a striking confirmation and fulfilment of that principle taught in Romans 8:28 : "All things work together for good... to them who are the called according to His purpose." Each of the leading persons in the book presents a separate type of character, under the unconscious but over-ruling providence of God. Men and women are free to act as they may, and while responsible for their actions, there lies behind all the great purpose of God to manifest Himself. The events in the book are thrilling: Vashti, the queen, is deposed; Esther, the orphan, is crowned; Mordecai, the despised, is honoured; and Haman, the boaster, is hanged. We shall consider first the downfall of Queen Vashti.

I. Her Name. Vashti means beauty. The king desired to show the princes her beauty, "for she was fair to look upon" (Esther 1:11). Physical as well as moral beauty is always attractive, but mere outward comeliness has frequently proved a temptation and a snare. It is a dangerous gift when there is no corresponding comeliness of spirit. It is no uncommon thing to find the most beautiful spirit in a rough and uncomely body.

II. Her Position. She was the queen of Ahasuerus, the greatest king on the earth. His name means "majestic prince." What an honour to be the sharer of the glory and riches of such a king. Ahasuerus in some respects may represent Him who is the King of kings and Lord of lords. Especially in the greatness of his influence and in the generosity of his character in making a great feast for all his princes and for all his people (Esther 1:3-5). And like the great Gospel feast there was no compulsion. Every one was to choose for himself as to how much or how little he was to take (Esther 1:8). A greater than Ahasuerus is here and it is our privilege to belong to Him. Queen Vashti was not more beautiful in the eyes of her king than those are in the eyes of the King of kings, in whom the "beauty of the Lord" has been put. Being made partakers of the Divine nature we become children and heirs together with Him.

III. Her Opportunity: "The king commanded Vashti to come before him with the royal crown, to show the people and the princes her beauty" (Esther 1:10-11). We are not so much concerned just now with the customs of this heathen court, with the seemliness or unseemliness of this command, but with the principles that lie underneath. Vashti held her position as queen by virtue of the king's choice and favour, just as we, by the grace of God, have been called and exalted. This command to appear before the people with the crown royal-the gift of the king-to show them her beauty, and so please the king, was giving her an opportunity of doing a most acceptable service. It was her duty as well as her privilege to obey. Is there not a similar opportunity offered us, as the royal house of the King of Heaven? Should not that beauty which the Lord our God hath put upon us be shown forth for the honour of His great Name? Let your light-the light of your life-so shine before men. This is an opportunity that we will not always have.

IV. Her Rebellion. "But the queen refused to come at the king's commandment" (Esther 1:12). The call was very urgent, for seven chamberlains had been deputed to carry it out, but she deliberately refused to obey. The reason probably was that as she, too, had "made a feast for the women in the royal house which belonged to the king" (Esther 1:9), she did not wish to break up her present enjoyment for the sake of pleasing the king in such a small matter. How often the acts of our disobedience to God have their roots down in our self-made plans and our determination to carry them out. We have prepared a feast for ourselves and others, and things are going on beautifully when some definite call from the King comes, but we judge it unworthy of our attention meanwhile, and disobey, utterly unconscious of the terrible fruits that will certainly follow. One refusal to obey may cast us out of the fellowship of the King.

V. Her Example. "This deed of the queen shall come abroad to all women, so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes" (Esther 1:17). "Acts speak louder than words." Vashti, being queen, was compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses, so that her actions had far-reaching results. This is an aspect of the Christian life that cannot be too carefully considered. We, like her, walk in high places, and one false step may be to others a license to sin. "No man liveth unto himself" (Romans 14:7). This is true, especially of the servant of God. As wives are to be subject to their own husbands, so must we be subject to Christ (Ephesians 5:22-24).

VI. Her Rejection. "Vashti came no more before king Ahasuerus" (Esther 1:19-21). He made Esther queen instead of Vashti" (chap. Esther 2:17). Her disobedience led to entire separation from the fellowship of the king. Doubtless she little imagined that this simple refusal would result in such disastrous consequences. A thought, an act, and a crown lost. How long she lived to mourn over her folly we know not, but surely her days would be spent in shame and bitterness of soul. For this same reason (disobedience) many get out of fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. There is sin in the heart, and the Lord will not hear. There has been failure through preferring our own will to the will of our Lord, and now there is no liberty of access. The failure will be all the more grievous if another has been called of Him to take our place and our crown. Hold that fast which thou hast as a servant, that no man take thy crown (Revelation 3:11). It is possible, through lack of self-subjection, even to preach to others, and yet, as a servant, become a castaway (1 Corinthians 9:27).

ESTHER, THE HUMBLE, EXALTED.

Esther 2, etc.

"Obedience is nobler than freedom. What's free?

The vexed straw on the wind, the frothed spume on the sea;

The great ocean itself, as it rolls and it swells,

In the bonds of a boundless obedience dwells."-Lytton.

Esther means "star." Star-like characters are sure to be seen and recognised. Light is self-assertive. The deposition of Vashti is followed by a most exciting search for a queen. It was a search for given qualities. It was not "Whosoever will may come." In this case the number was very elect. We are thankful that candidates for Heaven are not sought for on this principle. Not the beautiful, but sinners, Jesus came to call. Some of the notes in the song of Mary might well have been sung by Esther. "He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden....He that is mighty hath done to me great things" (Luke 1:48-49). Observe-

I. Her Condition. "She had neither father nor mother," but was brought up by Mordecai, her aged cousin (chap. Esther 2:7). No one seemed further away, by birth and circumstances, from being a queen than she was. But in the mysterious providence of God the most unlikely things do happen. No one seemed more unlikely to become a servant of Jesus Christ than Saul of Tarsus. Poverty, or ignorance, or guilt are no barriers to the infinite grace of God.

II. Her Call. "Esther was brought into the kings' house" (Esther 1:8). She is now conscious that she has been called as a candidate for a crown. Not many had such a chance brought within their reach, but still she was just one among others. In this race only one could receive the prize. It is very different with the call that comes to us through the Gospel of Christ. Every one who receives this call may also receive the crown of life and eternal honour. All that have been brought into our "King's house" will be made to rejoice in His great and gracious presence.

III. Her Character. That she was exceeding gracious and trustworthy is apparent from the fact that she pleased the keeper of the women more than the others (Esther 1:9), and that she was true to Mordecai's instructions in not revealing her nationality. Her implicit obedience to her guardian is a noteworthy feature of her humble and submissive spirit (Esther 1:20). This may seem a small matter, but it is just such a matter that God in His providence never overlooks. It is what we are in the secret of our own souls that shows itself when the time of strain and testing comes. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." It is in the good and honest heart that the seed of the kingdom springs up into God-glorifying fruitfulness.

IV. Her Choice. "When the turn of Esther was come to go in unto the king, she required nothing but what Hegai, the king's chamberlain, appointed" (Esther 1:15). Certain necessary things were appointed to be given to each of those candidates for queenship, but any other thing they might wish for the beautifying of their person, or that might help to commend them to the king was not to be denied them. The others evidently required many other things to perfect their preparation, but it is noted of Esther that she "required nothing." She chose to be satisfied with those things appointed by the king. She left herself entirely in the hands of him who had the work of preparation committed to him. Her own thoughts or devices find no place here. So let us submit ourselves to the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to sanctify us, and fit and prepare us for the presence of the King. It will fare all the better with us if, like Esther, we "require nothing" but what He has appointed,

satisfied with the garment of His righteousness, even of His only.

V. Her Crown. "The king loved Esther... and she obtained grace in his sight,... so he set the royal crown upon her head" (Esther 1:17). Her humility and faith are now rewarded by a public manifestation of the king's favour-crowned with glory and honour, although she did nothing but obey. The way to the throne was open for her whenever the king loved her. What a privilege to be loved by a king, by the King of Heaven. The love of God opens the way for us into the heart and home of God. The crown is the symbol of honour and power. Pentecost was the crowning day for the early disciples, when the tongue of fire rested on each of them, and they all received the Royal authority of Heaven, becoming partners with the King of Glory and sharers of His Kingdom on earth. To find His "favour" is to find His crown.

VI. Her Courage. "I will go unto the king, which is not according to law, and if I perish, I perish" (chap. Esther 4:16). A testing-time had now come, when all the power and authority she possessed were needed for the salvation of those who were condemned to die. Haman had succeeded in getting the sentence of death passed upon all Jews; Mordecai pleads with Esther as their only hope, but the law forbade anyone approaching the king, on pain of death, without an invitation. Nevertheless, Esther consecrates her life to this great object, and casts herself into the breach. It was a bold step. But although the law was against her, she knew that the heart of the king was for her. This also is our encouragement in giving ourselves for the salvation of others. If, like Esther, we have come into honour and power by the grace of our king, it is also "for such a time as this," a time of salvation for others. All the authority and power we have received is absolutely needed for this great work. The Jaw of the flesh will always be against us in approaching the King as soul savers. Let us, like Esther, give ourselves entirely to it. "If Iperish" in a work like this, then it is a blessed and worthy object for which to die. But she did not perish. "None perish that trust in Him."

VII. Her Conquest. She obtained favour: the golden sceptre was held out to her. Then the king said unto her, "What wilt thou, Queen Esther, and what is thy request?" etc. (chap. Esther 5:1-3). She then identifies herself with the Jews, and, pleads for her own and their lives (chap. Esther 7:3-4). Her request is abundantly answered; the enemy is overcome, and her people are saved. She sees of the travail of her soul and is satisfied. This great achievement reminds us of a greater than Esther, who, when the law was against us, cast Himself down in the presence of God on that awful spot called Calvary, saying, as it were, "If I perish, I perish." But God raised Him again, and made Him a Prince and a Saviour. The way to such conquests is self-surrender. If we are to be the saviours of others it can only be by the sacrifice of ourselves to this end. To this end have we been called into His kingdom. "Receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of souls" (1 Peter 1:9, Gk.).

MORDECAI, THE FAITHFUL, REWARDED.

Esther 2-10.

"Be strong, be good, be pure! The right only shall endure."-Longfellow.

"All God does, if rightly understood,

Shall work thy final good."-Keble. This "little man," as the name Mordecai indicates, had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity. Little did he or his captors know what an important

part he was destined to play in the kingdom of Babylon.

"God moves in a mysterious way,

His wonders to perform."

Little also did he imagine, when he agreed to adopt his orphan cousin, that she would yet be queen in Babylon. This book of the providence of God is true to its character, being full of surprises. We shall fix our attention now on the career of Mordecai. He was-

I. Merciful. It was a very merciful act to take the girl Esther, who was an orphan, and adopt her as his own daughter (chap. Esther 2:7). This may seem a very ordinary thing, but the sequence was extraordinary. It seemed the right thing for him to do, and he did it. That is where the point lies. He opened his heart as well as his home for her, and the blessing that is promised to the merciful came to him (Matthew 5:7).

II. Faithful. Two of the king's chamberlains had plotted to kill the king. The thing was known to Mordecai and he boldly revealed the dastardly design to Esther, who told the king in his name (chap. Esther 2:22-23). If one would be true to themselves and to righteousness they must be prepared, if need be, to do things that may bring others into shame and condemnation. There are those who, if they don't plot against the King of Heaven, they do it against His people and His cause. Well, if the thing is known to you there is no need for you fighting against them. Tell the King about it, who, for His own sake, will surely deal with the offenders. Be faithful to the interests of your Lord and King, and, by the good hand of God your reward will come openly.

III. Consistent. "But Mordecai bowed not to Haman, nor did him reverence... for he was a Jew" (chap. Esther 3:2-4). He refused to prostrate himself, and give to the haughty Haman that homage which is due only to God. By this act of resistance he declared his faith in and reverence for God. Mordecai was a man in whose eyes a vile person is contemned, but who honoured them that fear the Lord (Psalms 15:4). A man's faith is of no value if it does not affect his daily life. How can a man say that he believes in God if he is not ready to obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29). Those whose lives are governed by the fear of God will not be found doing just as others do, even for "peace sake." It may seem to some "men-pleasers" but a trifle, yet if he had yielded on this point he might never have been lifted up to the place of national honour that was afterwards his.

IV. Despised. "Then was Haman full of wrath" (chap. Esther 3:5); and when he learned that Mordecai was a Jew he "scorned to lay hands on him alone," and sought to destroy "all the Jews" (chap. Esther 3:6). But after laying his plans for the destruction of the Jews he was persuaded by his wife to hang Mordecai on a gallows fifty cubits high (chap. Esther 5:14). All this wrath and proposed blood-shedding because one man had courage and conviction enough not to violate his conscience and deny his God. Is the game worth the candle? No, saith the man who walks by sight, and not by faith. But what saith the Lord by His wonderworking providence? If any man will live Godly he must suffer persecution, because he will be guided and controlled by motives and principles that have no place in the affairs of the selfish and ungodly. This is where the shoe pinches, unless it is a good fit. The man of God will never feel comfortable in the shoes of a man of the world, and not to be in the world's fashion is in itself a cause of offence. "But blessed are ye when men shall revile you for My Name's sake;" great is your reward in the heavenlies.

V. Tested. "He rent his clothes... and went into the city, and cried with a loud and bitter cry" (chap. Esther 4:1). The death sentence had gone forth against him and all his people. It was a most terrible experience. His sackcloth and agony awakened the compassion and inquiry of the queen (chap. Esther 4:4-5). He was sorely cast down, but not destroyed, for his faith in God was unfailing. "If thou holdest thy peace," he said to Esther, "then shall deliverance arise to the Jews from another place" (chap. Esther 4:14). It was a tremendous strain that was upon him. Who was to make intercession for his helpless countrymen if he did not? If he held his peace how perhaps some other might arise, and this would be to his great shame. He left no stone unturned, but his faith was in the unfailing providence of God. The trial of your faith may be painful, but it is precious when found unto the praise and honour of God (1 Peter 1:7). Nothing is impossible with God.

VI. Honoured. God begun to work deliverance for Mordecai by giving the king a restless night (chap. Esther 6:1). The national records are read, and the report of Mordecai specially noted, and the desire is begotten in the heart of the king to reward his timely warning (chap. Esther 6:3-4). Who would have thought that, within one week, the man who had erected a gallows to hang this stiffnecked Jew who refused to bow to him, would be led forth by that same man, seated on "the king's horse, adorned with royal apparel, and the crown upon his head, as the man whom the king delighteth to honour." That same week he had on his finger the ring of authority worn by Haman, his enemy. It does not take God long to work a perfect transformation act, and turn His servants' tears and wailings into songs and praises. Not only is he saved himself, but exalted to a position of glory and power that he might be the means of saving others (chap. Esther 8:7-8). When any one is brought by God into a position of privilege and into a condition of power it is that great and needful things may be done by them. "I will bless thee and make thee a blessing" (Hebrews 6:14).

HAMAN, THE PROUD, DESTROYED.

Esther 3-7.

"The lawless wish, the unaverted eye,

Are as a taint upon the breeze

To lure foul spirits; haughty brows and high

Are signals to invite them nigh,

Whose onset ever saints await on bended knees."-Keble.

It has been said that "pride destroys or misleads more souls than deliberate wickedness." The history of Haman is a verification of that saying of the wise man: "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18). His Name means "magnificent," but his chequered career proves that his nature was ignominious. We see him-

I. Promoted. "King Ahasuerus promoted Haman, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him" (chap. Esther 3:1). The greater our privilege, the more terrible will be our downfall if we fail to walk humbly with our God. Capernaum was exalted to the highest point of privilege, but through the blindness of unbelief fell to the deepest depths of dishonour and shame. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Through grace, every Christian has been promoted by the King of Heaven, and has his seat above all the princes of the earth. Let us see

that we walk worthy of such an high calling.

II. Easily Offended. "When Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath" (chap. Esther 3:5). A man of his position and dignity might easily have afforded to overlook the seeming disrespect of the poor Jew; but no, his haughty pride was wounded. The more authority he got the more overbearing and tyrranical he became. Is not this how spiritual pride works? Do we think that all men are going to honour us because we have been promoted by the king? To be easily offended because we are not honoured by certain men is an evidence of pride; it is a sign that we are seeking our own glory, when anger or wrath finds a place in our hearts against any one who fails to respect us as perhaps we think they should. The servant is not greater than his Lord. It is sometimes said, "He is a good man, but very touchy." Touchiness may be another name for selfishness.

III. Boastful. "Haman told them (his friends) of the glory of his riches,... and how the king had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king" (chap. Esther 5:11). He glories in his riches, his possessions, and his position. He exalts himself because he has been advanced above the other princes and servants of the king. The men of the world who have their portion in this life have little need to boast, for such riches can soon grow wings and fly away. "Treasures of wickedness profit nothing" (Proverbs 10:2). Paul says that "Proud boasters are inventors of evil things" (Romans 1:30). And such was Haman. All unholy boasting is the fruit of impure motives. Our spiritual promotion is "not by works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:9).

IV. Revengeful. "The thing pleased Haman, and he caused the gallows to be made for Mordecai" (chap. Esther 5:14). There was still a "fly in the ointment" of Haman's glory, pomp, and pride: "All this availeth me nothing so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate" (chap. Esther 5:13). The greatness of a soul is seen in its readiness to overlook personal insults and injuries, but this man's little selfish soul could not bear it. He made no attempt to win Mordecai's favour by kindness or patience, but greedily thirsts for his Jewish blood. The feeling of revenge, or even of grudge, against another is as much opposed to true Christian experience as death is to life. It is not for us to avenge ourselves, but to commit all to the Lord, who hath said: "Vengeance is mine, I will repay" (Romans 12:19).

V. Self-Confident. When the king said unto him, "What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour? Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honour more than myself" (Esther 6:6). In the pride and self-sufficiency of his heart he could see no one more fit or deserving special honour than himself. When any one comes to this, the cup of their iniquity is just about full, and their humiliation and downfall is at hand. The principle of "suffer me first" manifests itself in many different forms, and never more loathesome than when it appears in the words or acts of a Christian worker. The law for the children of God is: "In honour, preferring one another" (Romans 12:10).

VI. Disappointed. "Then the king said to Haman, Make haste, and take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew" (Esther 6:10). It was a very humbling revelation to Haman that that hated Jew, for whom he had prepared the gallows, was to be honoured by the king as one more deserving than himself. God has His own way of making appointments for them that mourn in Zion, in giving them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness (Isaiah 61:3). He knows how to turn

our mourning into dancing, and when to put off our sackcloth and gird us with praise (Psalms 30:11). In vain does Haman spread the net before the eye of Him whose wisdom and power governs the interests of His people. All the haughty in heart will certainly be brought to shame and confusion: sooner or later will the hopes of the hypocrite be cut off. The man must be in a demoniac state of soul when the honour and exaltation of another brings such overwhelming grief and disappointment. Envy is cruel as the grave.

VII. Doomed. "So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai." (Esther 7:10). He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made (Psalms 7:15). The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands (Psalms 9:15). The wages of sin is death. In the den of lions Daniel did not get a scar, but when his enemies were cast in they "break all their bones in pieces or ever they came to the bottom of the den." The gallows of judgment that came to Haman was just as high as the murderous purpose that filled his heart. With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you again. He that humbleth himself shall be exalted, but he that exalteth himself shall be abased. The God of grace is also the God of judgment.

Job

Studies in Job JOB'S CHARACTER

Job 1:1-10

"My strength is as the strength of ten

Because my heart is pure. "-Tennyson This book, supposed to have been first committed to writing by Moses, is regarded by many as the oldest in the world. Its object is to set before us the trial of an "upright man." Job himself is quite unconscious of the fact that he is being used by God as an object-lesson to all generations; he knows nothing at all about the conference that has taken place concerning him, recorded in Job 1:7-12. The days of Job were probably about the time of Abraham, as in the book there is no mention of Israel, the Tabernacle, the Temple, or the Law. The book is of great value as a revelation of the forces that are at work against the life of the righteous. All the characters are representative: Job, the servant of God; Satan, the adversary; the three Friends, the wisdom of the world; Elihu, the wisdom of God; God, the Judge of all. That Job was no mythical character is clearly proven in Ezekiel 14:14 and Ezekiel 14:20, when his name is mentioned by Jehovah Himself. As the teaching of this book is centred in the person of Job, we shall try and grasp its leading principles through this man, that they may, if possible, become more interesting and powerful in our own individual lives.

I. He was Perfect. "Perfect and upright, one that feared God, and eschewed evil" (Job 1:1). "There is none like him in the earth" (Job 1:8). As a man, he was all that a man in those days could be in holiness of character. That there was "none like him in the earth" is not his own testimony, but the statement of Him who knows what is in man. "The Lord knoweth them that trust in Him" (Nahum 1:7). He was perfect, not in the sense of being sinless, but in the sense of being plainly (Heb.) devoted to God and to righteousness. He was transparently upright, according to his knowledge and ability. He walked in the light, although that light may have been but twilight. Like an honest man, Job straightened himself up, morally, before God and men. His character is in strong contrast to the multitude of men who, like the woman in the Gospel, are so "bowed down" with the love of the world, and the fear of man, that they can in no wise lift themselves up. Love and lust are fetters that bind the souls of men as with iron bands.

II. He was Rich. "His substance was 7000 sheep, 3000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen," etc.; "so that he was the greatest of all the men of the east" (Job 1:3). Good men are not always rich; but God had surely put a premium on the goodness and faithfulness of Job, by allowing him to become the wealthiest man in the country. The best man will always be the richest, if not in material goods, certainly in the more enduring treasures that are spiritual and Divine. Although there was a gulf of agony between Job's present and future life, yet he found that it paid to be righteous. The perfect man will be upright, will fear God and hate evil, if all his worldly possessions should need to be sacrificed for this end. If his riches increase--even spiritual riches-he sets not his heart on them.

III. He was Wise. "Job rose up early in the morning and offered burnt-offerings for all his family, for he said, It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts. This did Job continually" (Job 1:5). These family gatherings, for social enjoyment, were in themselves a good testimony to their upright and priestly father. Those seven sons must have been well brought up, when they sought so often the fellowship of one another, and did not fail to give their three sisters a special invitation to their parties. Job did not forbid such festivities, but he knew human nature too well to suppose that there was no moral danger connected with such seasons. "It may be that my sons have sinned." When it is a question of pleasure-seeking it is so easy to forget God, and to act in such a way as to dishonour His holy Name. So Job, as priest in his own family, offers a sacrifice for each of his sons. As a wise father, he is most concerned that his sons should be kept right with God. It is not enough for the "perfect man" that his family should be healthy and happy and prosperous in the world; he longs intensely, and spares no sacrifice, that they might each one live and walk in the fear and favour of God. Sin against God is that one thing which his upright soul has learned to hate.

IV. He was Protected. "Hast Thou not made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?" (Job 1:10). His person, his family, and his property, were hedged about by the special care of God. Three circles of defences had been raised about him. He and his were as the vineyard of the Lord (Isaiah 5:1-2). Satan seems to have known more about the impregnable position of Job than Job himself. His fear of God had made him safer than he thought. The God of yesterday is the same God to-day. We cannot see that "angel of the Lord that encampeth round about them that fear Him," but the Devil does. Hedges of the Lord's making are too thick even for the cunning hand of Satan. Satan's testimony to the security of God's children is of great value. Without God's permission his great power is utterly useless against the man that is hiding in the bulwarks of his God. "God is our refuge... therefore will not we fear."

V. He was Marked. "The Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered My servant Job.. Then Satan answered, Doth Job fear God for nought?" (Job 1:8-9). Job, being a perfect and upright man, was an object of special consideration to the Lord and to Satan. He was a marked man for the favour of the Lord, and for the envy and hate of Satan. Both God and the Devil marks the perfect man (Psalms 37:37). The divine consideration is all for our safety and usefulness-the Satanic consideration is how to disturb and destroy. Is it not true in a sense, of every "perfect man in Christ Jesus," that they become the special objects of assault by the powers of darkness? When Joshua, the high priest, was seen "standing before the angel of the Lord," Satan was seen "standing at his right hand to resist him" (Zechariah 3:1). Why was Satan so desirous to have Simon Peter that he might sift him as wheat? Did he dread lest that warm impetuous nature should be wholly yielded to the cause of Jesus Christ? Those whom Satan and his host takes no trouble at must be accomplishing very little for God. Heaven and Hell marks the holy man. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil.

JOB'S ADVERSARY

Job 1:6-22; Job 2:1-10.

"When the fight begins within himself

A man's worth something."-Browning.

Job's case was typical. Ye have heard of his patience, as ye have seen the faith of Abraham, and the meekness of Moses. Job's desperate struggle is allowed to take place in the open arena, that we might learn the secret of resistance. It is a battle between the best of men and the worst of enemies. Satan does his best to crush and overthrow the integrity of this "perfect man" who has been incased with the special providence of God, and who can offer but a passive resistance. Although God's environments were everything that could be desired, he was not proof against the powerful temptations of the Devil. The environments of Christ Himself did not save Him from Satanic assaults. Job had a good house, and a good income, but houses and wages are not everything that men need, if they would stand firm against all the deadly wiles of the Devil. About this enemy of all righteousness, let us not forget-

I. His Personality. According to the teaching of Scripture there is but one Devil, but many demons. The apostles and evangelists in referring to him always speak in the singular, and this they do about thirty times. "Get behind Me Satan" could never be said of a mere impersonal influence. He is a liar from the beginning, an influence cannot lie. Only men and devils can lie. All lying is devilish, and devilishness proves there is a Devil.

II. His Origin. "The Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it" (Job 1:7). The same mystery that hangs over the fact of sin, hangs over the origin of Satan. When our Lord says that he was a murderer, and a liar, from the beginning, it is difficult to believe that he has ever been anything better. According to his own confession, his sphere of work is "going to and fro in the earth." His domain is the world; and his condition is one of eternal restlessness. That Satan and his demon host are the disembodied spirits of a pre-Adamic race, that brought the condemnation of God upon them because of sin, is a theory not without some attractions.

III. His Object. His unwavering purpose is to set God and man at variance (Job 1:11). In his devilish business he is, alas, too often successful. Before he attempted the separation of Job from his God, he had succeeded with Adam and with Cain, and afterwards with Saul and with Judas, and a multitude of others. There is no man in all the earth that annoys Satan so much as the "perfect man." He directs all his energy against the praying, sacrificing man. While Jesus Christ was on the earth, the forces of Hell were continually meeting Him in one form or another. The names given to Satan in the Scriptures are strongly indicative of his character and purpose. He is the Adversary; the Accuser of the brethren; the Murderer; the Prince of darkness; the Prince of this world; the roaring lion. He is the god of this lost world; the ruler of its darkness. He is the opposer and the accuser of the brethren; the liar against the truth, and the murderer of souls. "Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

IV. His Power. That Satan is capable of great power as well as great wrath is unquestionable. But he is utterly powerless to touch a child of God, or anything that he has, without His permission. Satan was allowed to send his messengers, one after another, to buffet Job, just as he was afterwards permitted to do with the Apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 12:7), and blessed be God, with much the same result. Although the Devil may be allowed at times to sift, he is not allowed to devour the wheat: "Behold all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand" (Job 1:12). So far, but no farther. Then when this adversary made his second challenge, the Lord said, "Behold he is in thine hand, but save his life" (chap. Job 2:6). It was a long rope this

roaring lion got, and he used every inch of it. He had got access to everything but the spirit of this evil-hating man, and having received liberty to exercise his fiendish art, we soon discover where the secret of his power lies. He finds his mighty weapons in the Sabeans, the Chaldeans, the lightning, and the wind (Job 1:15-19). That he should be able to commandeer such forces is a revelation of his wonderful power and resources. The Devil has two arsenals, one in the heavens, and the other in the earth, namely, the elements, and the hearts of ungodly men. Such an enemy is not to be trifled with.

V. His Manner of Working. His first act is, to get himself away out of the presence of God. "So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord" (Job 1:12). Satan, and all his host, seen and unseen, whether they be men or demons, love the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil. He has a great task before him- to break down a perfect man's confidence in his God- so he waits for the best time to make the attack. That opportune day arrived when Job's "sons and daughters were eating and drinking in their eldest brother's house" (Job 1:13). To get at Job, the Devil had to break down the outside fences first; this he did by prevailing upon men to steal his oxen, his asses, his camels, and to kill his servants. Little, perhaps, did these men think that when they were helping themselves to the property of Job, they were the agents of the Devil carrying out his diabolical ends. The same spirit is now working in the children of disobedience (Ephesians 2:2). Ungodly men are tools lying ready at hand for the work of Satan. He entered Judas just because he was a fit person for the accomplishment of his fiendish purposes against the Son of God. He sent fire from the heavens, and burned up the sheep, to make Job believe that it was a judgment from God. Satan surely thought this was a master-stroke, when the servant whom he had spared to carry the tidings went and said, "The fire of God is fallen from Heaven, and hath burned up the sheep" (Job 1:16). If Satan can only get God's people to believe when the time of affliction and testing comes, that God is against them, he has gained a victory. He was very careful to spare one, who might run to Job, saying, "I only am escaped alone to tell thee." The I's here are most emphatic. The method he adopted in breaking the news to Job was in itself devilish. The Devil's wheat is all bran. King Canute promised to make the man who would kill King Edmund, his rival, the highest man in England; he fulfilled his promise by hanging him on the highest tower in London. We fight not against flesh and blood, but against "wicked spirits," which use flesh and blood as their instruments in seeking to overthrow our faith in God. We are not ignorant of his devices: give no place to the Devil.

JOB'S TRIALS.

Job 1:13-22; Job 2:1-10.

"Satan desires us, great and small,

As wheat to sift us, and we all are tempted.

Not one, however, rich or great.

Is by his station or estate exempted."

-Longfellow.

The very name of Job means persecuted. In his unique trials he is the prototype of Christ. Every perfect man will have his Eden to enjoy, his Isaac to sacrifice, and his wilderness of severe and

prolonged testing. It is through much tribulation that we enter into the kingdom of God's greater fullness and power. No affliction for the present is joyous, but grievous, but, nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby. Was there ever a man more exercised about his troubles than Job? But meanwhile we shall look at-

I. Their Purpose. Two cross-purposes find their centre in Job. The one was Divine, the other was Satanic. Satan said, "Doth Job fear God for nought?... Put forth Thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse Thee to Thy face" (Job 1:9-11). Satan did not believe that any man would remain true to God if bereft of all material and earthly enjoyment. If Job staggered under such a test, Jesus Christ did not. He had not where to lay His head. He was "the Man of Sorrows," yet He always did those things which were pleasing to His Father. Job, being utterly unconscious that he was being used in this fashion as a test case, must have felt it as a severe trial of his faith. Well the Devil knows, that if men are going to overcome the world by faith, his power is broken, and his kingdom lost. It has been so since the beginning; those who would fear God, and eschew evil, must fight the good fight of faith.

II. Their Nature. The character of Job's troubles was of the worst kind. There were no half measures. Every separate trial was a complete catastrophe. There was the-

1. LOSS OF PROPERTY. His "seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred asses," were all suddenly stolen, or burned up with fire from Heaven. The richest man in the east had in one day become a bankrupt. That in itself would have driven many a one into absolute despair.

2. LOSS OF FAMILY. Seven sons and three daughters all killed by one terrific stroke (Job 1:19). This judgment must have been "a great deep" to the upright, sensitive soul of Job (Psalms 36:6). There is no natural law by which such workings of the providence of God can be understood. The dominion of faith, for the spirit of man, is beyond nature.

3. LOSS OF HEALTH. "Satan went forth and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown" (chap. Job 2:7). He was covered with a loathsome disease; there was no soundness in his flesh. Like Lazarus, he was "full of sores." This bodily affliction, like the others, came suddenly. He had no premonition of the approach of this fearful malady-no time to fortify himself even by prayer against the assault. Satan had permission to touch his flesh, and he touched every inch of it. With the exception of the Lord Jesus Christ-for in all things He has the pre-eminence-it is questionable if ever any other mortal was so sorely tried. If there was not something supernatural about faith in God, it could not possibly survive such a shock.

4. LOSS OF POSITION. The "greatest man in the east" has now become the most loathsome object in the east. He who sat among princes is now sitting "among ashes" (chap. Job 2:8). He has been stripped of everything but his life.

5. LOSS OF SYMPATHY. "Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God and die" (Job 1:9). His wife, the only comfort left him, turns out to be a canker. She cannot understand faith in God in circumstances like these. Fair-weather Christians always get shipwrecked in a storm like this. This taunt through his wife was the Devil's last weight to break the back of Job's integrity. It was the poisoning of his last earthly spring of consolation. Job has at last sounded the abyss of his sufferings; he has found the bottom of this great deep. His is now "a

lifeless life," a finished monument to that great master of the malignant art. And this is the master many take pleasure in serving. To serve sin is to be the slave of the Devil.

III. Their Effect. The immediate result of those awful trials which stripped Job naked of every earthly comfort was a clearer revelation of the inward, spiritual man. "He fell upon the ground, and worshipped, and said, The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the Name of the Lord" (chap. Job 1:20-21). These words, spoken by this pre-eminent sufferer, have come down as a legacy to the bereaved in every generation since then; on many tombstones they may be read as the language of deep, heart-felt sorrow and submission. "The Lord hath taken away." Job saw the Lord behind the Sabeans and the Chaldeans who fell upon his flocks. "In all this did not Job sin with his lips" (chap. Job 2:10). That no murmur escaped those burning lips in such a furnace proves how completely he had given himself and all that he had to God. "What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Has the Giver of all good not the right to withhold that good or His own pleasure? What have we that we have not received? Job may not be a prophet, but he has "spoken in the Name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience" (James 5:10). There is a life that does not consist of the things which we possess; it is infinitely superior to them and independent of them. After getting a glimpse behind the scenes of the purpose of Job's trials, let us by faith count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations (trials), knowing that the testing of your faith leads to power of endurance (James 1:2-3).

JOB'S COMFORTERS-ELIPHAZ

Job 4-7

"How that to comfort those that mourn

Is a thing for saints to try:

Yet, haply, God might have done less

Had a saint been there-not I.

"Alas! -we have so little grace,

With love so little burn,

That the hardest of our works for God

Is to comfort those that mourn."-Faber. The beauty and meaning of some pictures are best seen and understood at a distance. We can see deeper into the meaning of Job's sufferings than either Job or his comforters could see. From our sun-lit mountain top, we look down upon these friends as all working in the darkness, just as, perhaps, some of the angels of God may look down upon us in pity as they see us vainly striving to find out the reason why God in His providence so deals with us. The great fundamental lesson of the book of Job is "Have faith in God." These comforters cannot be charged with hardness of heart, or of having impure motives. Men that could "lift up their voice and weep" at the sight of Job's condition, and sit in company with him for "seven days and seven nights" were surely not void of real sympathy and compassion. Their weakness and their sin lay in their self-confidence. Each seemed sure that he was laying his finger on the cause of Job's downfall, although his experience was a new thing in the providence of God. To us, their eloquent

reasonings is a powerful evidence of the utter inability of the "wisdom of this world" to explain or to understand the mysteries of Christian experience.

Job began this great wordy warfare by opening his mouth and "cursing the day wherein he was born" (chap. Job 3:1-3). Satan had said, "Touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse Thee to Thy face." Job went perilously near the fulfilling of the Devil's prediction, when he "cursed his day," but yet he did not curse his God. Many a one has been constrained, through sin and suffering, to curse the day of their first birth, but history has never told us of one who had any desire to curse the day of their second birth. Man that is born in sin is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward, but the man that is born again is born into the kingdom of peace. During those long, weary, seven days the gold of Job's character seemed to become dim, and the most fine gold changed, for he did speak unadvisedly with his lips (chap. Job 2:10). In the day of darkness and trial let us beware of that "unruly evil," the tongue. This opening speech of the suffering patriarch betrays a soul overwhelmed with bewilderment. It has many questions. Yet this outburst of agony has taught many to be still under the mighty hand of God. It is no mere hyperbole to say that the sufferings of Job, like the sufferings of Jesus Christ, were for the good of others. The Bible would have been much poorer if there never had been the conflict and the patience of Job. It will be impossible in these brief notes to grasp anything like the full meaning of those great torrent speeches. We shall only attempt to catch a word here and there that might help us to understand the book, and to enter into a deeper experience of the things of God.

I. The Speech of Eliphaz (chaps. 4, 5).

1. "IF WE ASSAY TO COMMUNE WITH THEE, WILT THOU BE GRIEVED" (chap. Job 4:2). Eliphaz begins very tenderly; he feels that the wound to be dressed is very deep and painful. One needs the tongue that is learned by experience to speak a word in season to him that is so weary and heavy-laden. It is a solemn and gracious work to commune with the sorrowing, but let such missionaries see that their own hearts are at the same time in communion with God, or they may but aggravate the anguish.

2. "THY WORDS HAVE UPHOLDEN HIM THAT WAS FALLING ... BUT NOW.. THOU FAINTEST" (Job 4:3-5). This friend knew Job's past life, and ventures to remind him of how he had been a means of blessing to others in their time of need. This was but a small spark of light for Job's great darkness, but still there was a glimmer in it. To tell a man that he once was rich will not console him much now that he is bankrupt. It is easier to speak cheering words to the tempted than to bear the temptation. The comforters of others need at times to be comforted. "They that wait on the Lord shall.. not faint."

"Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent?" (Job 4:7). This saying is like a double-edged sword, it cuts both ways. It may mean, if you were innocent, as you profess to be, you would not have been perishing in this fashion; or, because you are innocent, it is impossible for you to perish. The Lord knoweth them that are His, and how to deliver them out of temptation (2 Peter 2:9). The Lord could do nothing with the guilty Sodomites until the righteous were taken out (Genesis 19:22). The facts of history are well worth remembering.

3. "AFFLICTION COMETH NOT FORTH OF THE DUST.. AS FOR ME, I WOULD SEEK UNTO GOD" (chap. Job 5:6-8, R. V.). Affliction doth not spring up by chance; it is not the sudden

outcome of spontaneous generation. The law of microbes is included here, and if I were you, "I would seek unto God, and unto Him would I commit my cause." What could be better than this? But Eliphaz was not in Job's position, and so it was comparatively easy for him to say what he would do. Still, it is the best thing to do. To whom can we go but unto Him. The Lord alone knew all the reasons why this dark and cloudy day had come. In the day of adversity consider, yes, consider Him who endured contradictions for us.

4. "BEHOLD, HAPPY IS THE MAN WHOM GOD CORRECTETH" (Job 5:17). To be reproved of God is a comforting evidence of His love and carefulness. Every true child of God desires to have their thoughts, feelings, and ways corrected by their heavenly Father. We ought to count it a great privilege to be put right by either His word or His rod.

5. "HE SHALL DELIVER THEE IN SIX TROUBLES; YEA, IN SEVEN" (Job 5:19). "HEAR IT, AND KNOW IT FOR THY GOOD" (Job 5:27). Solomon says that "a just man faileth seven times, and riseth up again" (Proverbs 24:16). Six troubles had overtaken Job, and he had not yet been delivered out of any of them; but God is the God of deliverances. Let not the number of our troubles or our difficulties limit the Holy One. "Hear it." Let not the voices of the world, or an evil heart, so dull the ear that you cannot hear the still small voice of promise (Psalms 34:19).

II. Job's Reply (chaps. 6, 7). The wonderful words of Eliphaz had little effect. Job begins by saying:

1. "OH, THAT MY GRIEF WERE THOROUGHLY WEIGHED." What is more heavy and more difficult to weigh than grief? But what benefit would it bring the distracted sufferer even could he know the full weight and measure of it. His grief, like the grief of Him who agonised in Gethsemane, was both terrible and mysterious.

2. "THE ARROWS OF THE ALMIGHTY ARE WITHIN ME" (chap. Job 6:4). A week ago he said, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away," but now his soul is pierced with the arrows of the Almighty. Still, he does not say with "the fiery darts of the Devil." The arrows have been many and sharp, but they have come from the finger of God (Psalms 38:2). The arrows of the Almighty never miss the mark (Lamentations 3:12), and when they are within us, only He who sent them can remove them (2 Corinthians 5:11).

3. "IS MY FLESH BRASS?" (chap. Job 6:12). God could easily have made our flesh to be as hard, as endurable, and as insensible as brass, and our strength as "the strength of stones," if it had not been good for us to be afflicted. The rod of correction would be useless on a brazen body. He knows the frailty of our frame, and will not lay upon us more than we are able to bear.

4. "CAUSE ME TO UNDERSTAND WHEREIN I HAVE ERRED" (chap. Job 5:24). If this calamity has come upon me because of my sin-as Eliphaz seemed to think (chap. Job 6:8)-then, show me, says Job, where the sin is. Suffering is not always a chastisement or correction, it may be but a narrow gate or a rough road into a place of larger blessing, the Jordan, through which we go into a new land of promise. Job was not conscious of having sinned. The last thing we see him doing, is offering sacrifices for his sons, lest they may have sinned. If in our affliction there is no consciousness of sin, we may be sure God has something new to reveal to us. Wait patiently on the Lord.

5. "I WILL SPEAK... I WILL COMPLAIN" (chap. Job 7:11). This is the language of a spirit in anguish, and a soul in bitterness. We would much rather have heard him say, "I will trust... I will pray." There is a silence and a dimness that savours of unbelief more than submission, but why should a believer in God make up his mind to complain? When the Man Christ Jesus was in an agony He prayed more earnestly. The "perfect man" in the Old Testament comes far short of the perfect Man in the New. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble." It is just as easy to call as to complain.

6. "LET ME ALONE" (chap. Job 7:16). It may at times be hard to bear the weight of the heavy hand of God, but it is infinitely worse to be let alone. What becomes of the branch that is let alone by the tree? What would happen to the child that was left alone by its mother? Ephraim is joined to his idols-let him alone. There is a painless disease that speaks of certain death. As saints or as sinners we know not what we do when we ask God to let us alone. It is of the glory of His grace in His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus that He does not let us alone. There are prayers God graciously refuses to answer.

JOB'S COMFORTERS-BILDAD

Job 8-10.

I. The Speech of Bildad (chap. 8). His manner is abrupt to begin with, and seems less sympathetic than Eliphaz. His argument amounts to this, that unless God sends deliverance speedily we must conclude that both you and your family have been guilty of sinning against God, and that this dire calamity is the just reward of your works. Like Eliphaz, he is in total ignorance of the purpose of Job's trials, but speaks with all the confidence of an oracle. Mark some of his key-notes-

1. "DOTH THE ALMIGHTY PERVERT JUSTICE?" (chap. Job 8:3). Is it possible for God to be unjust? Can He who sits upon a Great White Throne be unrighteous in His dealings with any one? No. But what comfort can an aching, bleeding heart find in this? That the Law is holy, just, and good, is not much of a consolation to a soul smitten with profoundest anguish. The troubled heart yearns for love, and grace, and pity.

2. "IF THOU WERT PURE AND UPRIGHT, SURELY NOW HE WOULD AWAKE FOR THEE" (Job 8:6). If you are all that you profess to be, surely now, when you have got into such a depth of misery, God would arise to your help. The glitter of the cold steel is easily seen in this merciless thrust. How the tender soul of Job must have felt it. It is the silver not dross that the refiner puts into the fire. "Every branch in me that beareth fruit He purgeth it." Joseph was fruitful in the land of affliction (Genesis 41:52). Yet there is truth in Bildad's statement, for "Whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight" (1 John 3:22).

3. "PREPARE THYSELF TO THE SEARCH" (Job 8:8). There is much to be learned from the past, and from God's dealings with the fathers, but that all things are to continue as they were is not the teaching of the Holy Ghost (1 Peter 3:4). Job would "prepare himself" in vain to search for the cause of his sorrows in the teaching of a "former age." Man by searching cannot find out God; it is by trusting that we learn to know Him. The life of faith is on altogether a different plane from the life of reason and of sight. Believe and thou shalt see.

4. "CAN THE RUSH GROW UP WITHOUT MIRE?" (Job 8:11). The Shuhite now says some plain things about hypocrisy. As the rush cannot grow up without mire, neither can a "hypocrite's hope" flourish without being nourished with that which is suitable to it. If Job has still hope, it is because of the mire of his hypocrisy. If "he is still green before the sun's" withering rays it is because he has within him the waters of deceit (Job 8:16). Although "the hope of the hypocrite shall perish" that does not prove that because, through excessive trial, a man's hope has fainted that he is perishing without hope. God pity the man whose trust is only in "a spider's web" (Job 8:14). Hope thou in God.

5. "BEHOLD, GOD WILL NOT CAST AWAY A PERFECT MAN " (Job 8:20). This, like many others of their sayings, is capable of a double interpretation. If you had been a "perfect man" God would not have cast you away like this or, if you are in reality a perfect man, God will not cast you away although you have been brought so low. It is a mercy to know that when others are misjudging you, that God looketh upon the heart. He knoweth them that are His. "He will not forsake His inheritance" (Psalms 94:14). To Bildad's credit let us say, that he closes his address with a word of hope (Job 8:21-22). They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

II. Job's Reply (chaps. 9, 10). Job begins his answer to Bildad by asking a very searching question.

1. "HOW SHALL MAN BE JUST WITH GOD?" (Job 9:2). It is easy to tell a man what he should be, but how is this thing to be done? A man should be just with God, but in what way is this to be accomplished? How is man's iniquity to be put away, and the guilt of his sin cleansed? Who shall make the key that shall fit this lock? On what ground shall a sinner stand righteous before God (r. v.). There is no use of "contending with Him" (Job 9:3). It is a question of how shall we escape. But this question has been fully answered by God Himself who doeth wonders without number (Job 9:10) in the gift and sufferings of Jesus Christ His Son.

2. "HOW SHALL I... REASON WITH HIM" (Job 8:14). He is not a man as I am. What arguments can an unholy man use with a holy God? If it is a question of sin and judgment then there is absolutely no room for man's reasonings. He cannot justify himself (Job 9:20). Although he should wash himself with snow water, yet will he find himself plunged into a filthy ditch, and his own clothes an abhorrence to him (Job 9:30-31). But God's own backsliding children are asked to "Come and reason" with Him, (Isaiah 1:18) and a precious promise is herewith given to such. What God asks for those smarting for their sins is, not to come and reason, but to confess, and forsake their sins.

3. "NEITHER IS THERE ANY DAYSMAN BETWIXT US" (Job 9:33). These well-known words truthfully express the deepest need of a sinful suffering spirit. O for one capable to act as umpire between a mighty God and a miserable soul. One who is Divine and human, one able to lay his hand on both and meet the need of each, satisfying the just claims of God and speaking peace to a troubled heart. This great need has been perfectly met in Jesus Christ for, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2:1-2). "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me" (John 14:6).

4. "I WILL SAY UNTO GOD... IS IT GOOD UNTO THEE?" (chap. Job 10:2-3). Yes, say it unto God. Let the thoughts of the heart come up before Him. There is nothing hid from His eyes, and as

a gracious Father He will even listen to our complaints. Many things may seem bad to us which are "good unto Him." If Job could have but known all the meaning of his sufferings, he no doubt would have said, "Good is the will of the Lord." He had said this before (chap. Job 1:21).

5. "THOU KNOWEST THAT I AM NOT WICKED" (Job 10:7). If our hearts condemn us not then have we confidence toward God. Negative purity is not everything, but it is something. This is not the language of the Pharisee, "I thank God that I am not as other men," it is the honest confession of one who is not conscious of having, through sin, merited such terrible judgments. This is not a boast, but a protest against the idea of punishment, being an explanation of the mystery of his afflictions. We should surely bow with holy reverence, submission, and faith, when His hand is heavy upon us, if our hearts are clean. "The pure in heart shall see God."

6. "REMEMBER... THOU HAST MADE ME AS THE CLAY" (Job 10:9). Then it is not for the clay to resist the wonder working hand of the Divine Potter. He will not reduce the clay to dust; the potter cannot fashion dry dust into a useful vessel. When we have been brought low by the weight of affliction, so low that we feel as if we had been brought back to that condition of soul in which we were at first, when God, by His Spirit, began to operate upon us. Let us believe that His purpose is to make us into "another vessel" more meet for His service; or in other words, when God's vessels are reduced again to clay it is that they might be refashioned for higher and more honourable work. Job's latter days is an evidence of this.

7. "I AM FULL OF CONFUSION, THEREFORE SEE THOU MINE AFFLICTION" (Job 10:15). This is an honest confession: he cannot understand the meaning of this terrible tragedy. He is covered with shame, yet his conscience is clear, but he makes his appeal to the eye of the Omniscient, "See Thou mine affliction." My light is turned into darkness, I cannot see, but see Thou. There is no confusion in the mind of God, no matter how perplexing and inexplicable His providence toward us may be. In the realm of spiritual things, human reasonings can only end in confession. Saul was full of confusion when he said, "What wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). So were many on the Day of Pentecost, when they cried, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, can still bring order out of confusion. Commit thy way unto Him.

JOB'S COMFORTERS-ZOPHAR.

JOB 11-14

The Speech of Zophar. Like the others, he is fully convinced that Job is suffering because of his sins, and like Bildad, he opens his address with some biting questions. He cannot bear to hear Job justifying his "doctrine as pure" and his life as being "clean in thine eyes" (chap. Job 11:4). So he says, as in an agony of soul, "Oh that God would speak!" He is sure that if God would but speak, he and his friends would be justified in all that they said, and Job's secret sins revealed, and all his arguments confounded and put to shame. They found it otherwise when God did speak (chap. Job 42:7). We may know much, but let us remember that we don't know everything. He that exalteth himself shall be abased. But Zohpar goes on to say, "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" A perfection that is "high as Heaven," "deeper than Hell," "longer than the earth and broader than the sea." The soul makes a great find when it finds God, although it may never be able to search out the fathomless depths of His infinite perfections.

This is eternal life, to know Him and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent. The closing part of his speech contains wonderful words and might be called- A HOMILY ON THE WAY OF LIFE.

I. The Needed Work. He mentions three things that are essential to salvation:

1. "PREPARE THINE HEART" (Job 11:13), The heart needs preparation, for it is deceitful above all things. The one good thing found in Jehoshaphat was that he "prepared his heart to seek God" (2 Chronicles 19:3). The best way to get the heart prepared is to yield it unto the Lord (Proverbs 16:1).

2. "STRETCH OUT THINE HANDS." Let the hands of prayer and supplication be stretched toward God. He only can bring about the great deliverance so much needed. He is able to save to the uttermost. Stretch out thine empty, helpless hands to Him, whose mighty hands are outstretched in mercy for the uplifting of the poor and the needy.

3. "PUT AWAY INIQUITY" (Job 11:14). Let the wicked forsake his wicked ways, and his unrighteous thoughts about God, and let him turn, and the Lord will have mercy upon him. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper." Those who would draw nigh to God must confess and forsake their sins. Then, what follows?

II. The Blessed Result. Such heart preparation, and stretching out of hands, will certainly be answered in a copious, soul-satisfying measure. Zophar mentions eight privileges that will be enjoyed.

1. "THOU SHALT LIFT UP THY FACE WITHOUT SPOT" (Job 11:15). Thou shalt have confidence before God, and a clean countenance. All the boil spots of sin and suffering will be taken away (1 John 3:19).

2. "THOU SHALT BE STEDFAST." Established as a house built upon the rock. Taken from the fearful pit, and the feet established in the ways of truth and righteousness.

3. "THOU SHALT FORGET THY MISERY" (Job 11:16). Like Joseph, in the day of his exaltation and glory, thou shalt forget all the toil of the past (Genesis 41:51). In the joy of the new life in Christ, the wretchedness of the old life of sin is forgotten.

4. "THOU SHALT SHINE FORTH... AS THE MORNING" (Job 11:17). Thou shalt not only be illumined, but shall also become a guiding light to others. This new light is not of thine own kindling, but, like the dawning of the day, it is the gift of God-the brightest and the best.

5. "THOU SHALT BE SECURE, BECAUSE THERE IS HOPE" (Job 11:18). Thou shalt have such a hope as will make you and all your higher interests perfectly secure-a hope that maketh not ashamed.

6. "THOU SHALT TAKE THY REST IN SAFETY." Thou shalt have such a rest, as cannot be disturbed by the turmoils of earth-a God-given rest (Matthew 11:28).

7. "THOU SHALT LIE DOWN, AND NONE SHALL MAKE THEE AFRAID" (Job 11:19). Thy salvation will be so perfect that thou shalt be fearless in the face of men or of devils. This is the blessing wherewith the Lord shall bless all those who put their trust in Him.

8. "MANY WILL ENTREAT THY FACE" (Job 11:19, margin). The face that has been lifted up to God, and cleansed and brightened, is always attractive.

Job's Reply. His answer to Zophar occupies three chapters, and has reference to the unanimity of his three friends in condemning him through a false judgment of his case. "No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom will die with you" (chap. Job 12:2). Perhaps if they had prayed more and argued less, they all would have come sooner to a better understanding of the whole case. As long as they trusted their own wisdom, and depended on the skill and force of their own reasonings, they were all "physicians of no value" (chap. Job 13:4). Their prescriptions were worthless, because their diagnosis was wrong. In this world of mysteries we cannot judge moral principles by physical symptoms. Job's well-known saying in chapter 13, Job 14:15, expresses the true attitude of the soul in the midst of such a storm of bewildered suffering, "Though He slay me-or is slaying me-yet will I trust-or wait for Him." Knowing as we do the Divine purpose in Job's calamities, it makes it much easier for us to say, like the Psalmist, "Yea, though I walk in the shadow of death, I will fear no evil" (Psalms 23:4), or with the apostle, "I am persuaded that neither death... nor any other creature shall be able to separate me from the love of God" (Romans 8:38-39). In the last part of his speech the patriarch deals with man in general (chap. 14). This portion might be fitly entitled-

WHAT IS MAN?

It has been said that "man was made to mourn." This chapter begins with "man" and ends with "mourn." But hear the voice of this man of sorrows.

1. Man! HE "IS FULL OF TROUBLE" (Job 14:1). His troubles are so numerous that he is brimful of them. "He is as a rotten thing" (chap. Job 13:28). Who can bring a clean thing out of this? (Job 14:4). Who is able to prescribe for such a complication of troubles as man's? What a bundle of miseries God has to deal with in saving man.

2. Man! HE "FLEETH ALSO LIKE A SHADOW" (Job 14:2). As the cloud shadows rush along the hillside like breathless spectres, so man hurries on from the mystery of birth to the mystery of death. Here he has no continuing city. He cometh forth like a flower, to be seen and felt by a few, and cut down.

3. Man! HIS DAYS AND MONTHS ARE NUMBERED (Job 14:5). The limit of his life has been fixed by God. He knoweth not when the end will be. He has not even authority for saying, "I will do so and so to-morrow."

4. Man! HE "DIETH AND WASTETH AWAY" (Job 14:10). He soon becomes insensible to the pains or pleasures of earth, his mental and physical powers speedily waste away. He has scarcely attained maturity when the wasting process begins.

5. Man! HE "GIVETH UP THE GHOST, AND WHERE IS HE?" (Job 14:10). He yieldeth up his spirit as one who cannot keep it longer, but where has he gone? Where is he? He must be somewhere. The where depends on the character of that spirit (see Luke 16:22-23).

6. Man! HE "LIETH DOWN, AND RISETH NOT TILL THE HEAVENS BE NO MORE" (Job 14:12). When he lieth down it is till the dawning of the new heavens (Isaiah 65:17). This seemed a long way off to Job, but it is not so far away now (1 Thessalonians 4:14-16).

7. Man! "IF HE DIE, SHALL HE LIVE AGAIN?" (Job 14:14). "There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again" (Job 14:7), and how much better is a man than a tree? Job was not without the hope of immortality; he knew that after his body had been destroyed by worms, that he would yet-in another body-see God (chap. Job 19:25-26). This question finds its perfect answer in Revelation 20:12 : "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God." THE WORK OF THE DEVIL

Job 16:7-14

In this book we see much more than "the patience of Job;" we are face to face with the dreadful deeds of the Devil; for just now Job is in the hand of Satan, but with this Divine limitation, "Save his life" (chap. Job 2:6). The upright patriarch would fain see the hand of God in it all, and this constrains him to say something about God, that coming from other lips would be sheer blasphemy; but God graciously overlooks it all. He knows that His servant is entirely in the dark as to the purpose and cause of his sufferings. By the Lord's permission, Satan was the cause of all his sorrows. Job, in the midst of his hopeless misery, is a finished specimen of the Devil's workmanship. His purpose and business is to kill and to destroy. It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living Devil. The "god of this world" is also a "consuming fire." Our God consumes the chaff and the dross, but this god would burn up the wheat and the silver. The Lord delights to give, but Satan glories in taking away. Note here some of his devices-

I. He Separates from the Best Company. "Thou hast made desolate all my company" (Job 16:7). His family was cut off, and even his wife became strange to him. The fellowships in which he formerly delighted had all been broken up by the hand of the enemy, and his new friends were all miserable comforters. This is what happens when any child of God falls into the condemnation of the Devil through yielding to sin. Christian fellowship is made desolate, and the company that he keeps, in his backsliding state, are miserable helpers in his time of need. Satan is a professional schismatic. Beware of him in the church and in the family.

II. He Disfigures the Face. "Thou hast filled me with wrinkles" (Job 16:8). The joy and peacefulness that used to beam in the countenance of Job has now given place to gloom and discontent. Those who walk in fellowship with the Lord have their faces transfigured with the heavenly light, but those in the power of the Devil have often his own dark image stamped upon their faces. The Devil will so mar and blacken the face that the man is ashamed to lift it up unto God. This satanic change has often been observed in the countenance of backsliders. The wrinkles of sullen despair and God-defiance are easily seen. That face that should be illumined with the glory of God, becomes an index of the darkness of death.

III. He Brings Leanness into the Life. "My leanness beareth witness to my face." No wonder the face gets wrinkled and disfigured when the soul is being starved to death. When the Devil gets a man out of touch with God he will soon get him out of touch with His Word. The Devil's corn is all bran, and his wheat nothing but chaff. His dupes mistake quantity for quality; they may eat much, but still leanness "riseth up in them." No servant of sin can know anything of the soul-satisfying fullness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

IV. He Takes Advantage of the Helpless. "He teareth me in his wrath; he hateth me; he gnasheth upon me with his teeth" (Job 16:9) This language is highly figurative, but most terribly expressive.

Satan can show no mercy, the weaker we are the better for him. Job has been, for the time, handed over to him to be tested, and he makes it his business to pile on sorrow upon sorrow and agony after agony. If he gets possession of a boy he will tear him and cast him into the fire and into the waters (Mark 9:22), he hath no compassion on the helpless lad. If he even gets hold of the helpless swine, he will hurl them out into the sea. To be without Christ is to be without power and without a defence against the wiles and wrath of the Devil. Tears have no effect on him (Job 16:16).

V. He Breaks Asunder, and Shakes to Pieces (Job 16:12). Job "was at ease" in his prosperity, like a ship at sea with a fair wind, but suddenly the ship was overtaken with a crushing tempest, and driven furiously on the rocks, and broken asunder, and shaken to pieces by the violence of the waves. Whenever Satan gets hold of the helm of the life he seeks to make a shipwreck of the faith. He will break the soul asunder, separating all he can get of it from God and spiritual things, and shake in pieces the future prospects of his victims.

VI. He has Many Helpers. "His archers compass me round about" (Job 16:13). The Devil has many angels, or demons, waiting his bidding to surround the soul, guarding every way of escape, and ready to shoot their fiery darts at every attempt made for liberty and salvation. It is no easy matter for some to escape out of the hands of this Giant Despair. His archers are sharp-eyed, and have had long practice in dealing with fugitives. They know when and where to hit to be most effective. Men and women that are likely to do damage to his kingdom are specially watched. His most zealous servants usually prove, when delivered, his bitterest enemies. No garrison of demons can hinder a soul for a moment when the overcoming blood of Christ is trusted.

VII. He Uses Powerful Tactics. "He runneth upon me like a giant" (Job 16:14). He does not trifle with his opportunities. When he sees a chance of overcoming any upright man, he runneth like one in haste to catch a felon, and grips at once with a giant hand. He lingers about the gates of the soul, with luring temptation and bewitching enticement, until he gets a gate open, then he rushes in like a giant, to overthrow the citadel. He is a strong one, and seeks to get possession of the goods of man's soul, and then make peace, a peace that means certain death and destruction. But a stronger than he has come to spoil him of his goods, establish a new order of things, making peace and inaugurating the Kingdom of Heaven. "Resist the Devil and he will flee from you." Job longed for "One that might plead for a man with God." To us, Jesus Christ is that One (Job 16:21).

TERRIBLE PROSPECTS

Job 18:5-18.

Bildad begins his second speech, if anything, more exasperated than the others at the reasonings of Job. His wickedness must be very great he thinks, when he still persists in justifying himself in their eyes, and maintaining his integrity in the sight of God. The Shuhite's description of the dreadful calamities that are sure to come upon the wicked, and those that "knoweth not God" (Job 18:21), is most graphic and appalling in its fullness and truthfulness, but utterly wasted on the innocent patriarch. Still, we feel thankful to Bildad for these burning words. As a description of the condition and prospects of those who are living in lawlessness toward God, it is one of the most powerful within the compass of the Bible. The keynote of this terrible speech is found in the last sentence of it: "And this is the place (portion) of him that knoweth not God" (Job 18:21). See what

this portion is. It implies-

I. Darkness. "The light of the lawless shall be put out, and the spark of his fire shall not shine" (Job 18:5). The light of the ungodly is of their own making; it is but the sparks of the fire which they themselves have kindled, and which shall not shine when abiding light is needed (Isaiah 50:10-11). This light is in their own eyes, and when their eyes grow dim, and faint, and blind, their candle is put out, and darkness settles down in the tabernacle of the soul. How different it is with the man of faith! He can say, "The Lord my God who hath lit my candle, He will enlighten my darkness" (Psalms 18:28).

II. Disappointment. "The steps of his strength shall be straitened, and his own counsel shall cast him down" (Job 18:7). The confidence of the self-righteous and the ungodly is in their strength and their wisdom, but both shall utterly fail to bring them into their desired haven. The steps of his strength shall be suddenly shortened and hindered, so that he will be compelled to give up the objects of his pursuit, and sink down like a weary exhausted traveller who has lost his way and finds it impossible for him to reach his home. "His own counsel shall cost him dear." His boasted wisdom shall turn out to be his confusion. The counsel he has given to others shall cover his own face with shame, when he staggers and falls under the burden of his own folly and failure. "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." By the wisdom of this world God is not known.

III. Danger. The position of the ungodly is so fraught with dangers that the fowler's vocabulary is exhausted in describing them. "His feet in a net.... the gin shall take him by the heel.. the noose (R. V.) shall prevail against him.... the snare is laid for him... a trap set for him in the way" (Job 18:8-10). Satan uses every possible means to prevent that man who "knoweth not God" from escaping out of his hands. But it is with "his own feet" that a man walks into the Devil's net. It is when he yields to temptation that the noose "prevails against him." He falls into the snare of the Devil, because he walks in the Devil's territory. If he neglects the salvation of Jesus Christ, there is no escape for him; but by trusting Him the snare will be broken, and his soul shall escape like a bird.

IV. Dread. "Terrors shall make him afraid on every side" (Job 18:11). He may say peace, peace, but the time will come when terrors shall break in upon him from every side. Terrors behind him, and terrors in front of him; the past, the present, and the future, all full of dread. Terrors crowding in upon him, and "chasing him at his heels," like so many beasts of prey (Job 18:11, R. V.). What an awful experience, to go into eternity and up to the Judgment Throne of God, chased by the sins and iniquities of a God-neglected life. The terrors of the Lord must follow close upon the "heels" of the sinner. The guilty man's feet are never swift enough to outrun the pursuing justice of God.

V. Desolation. "The firstborn of death shall devour his strength, root up his confidence, and bring him to the king of terrors" (Job 18:13-14). What a sorrowful plight to be in: strength devoured, confidence rooted up, and face to face with the king of terrors. The firstborn of death is like that disease, or physical disorder, which is the forerunner of death, and is gradually eating up the strength, and tearing the hope of health up by the roots, and bringing the life under the dominion of temporal death. Spiritually the firstborn of death is unbelief, that forerunner of eternal separation from God and Heaven, which devours all strength for the service of Christ, roots up all real confidence before God, and brings the soul into the bondage and dread of the king of terrors (Mark 16:16). After death the judgment. The Lord, the righteous Judge, upon the great White Throne will

be the King of Terrors to all who have rejected His redeeming grace (Revelation 6:15-17).

VI. Despair. "His roots shall be dried up:.... his remembrance shall perish:... he shall be driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world" (Job 18:16-18). Could words present a more dismal picture than this? The "place of him that knoweth not God" is indeed the place of dispair. His roots shall be dried up, because they are not in God, but in the barren wastes of self and the world (Malachi 4:1). His remembrance shall perish, because his name is not written in the Lamb's book of life. He shall be driven from the light of the Gospel into the darkness of hopeless despair. He shall be chased out of the world as unworthy to live in it, as one unfit for the Kingdom of Heaven, and as one who is as loath to leave this world as Lot's wife was to leave Sodom.

VII. Destruction. "Destruction shall be ready for his halting" (Job 18:12, R. V.). All that destruction means is here personified as a powerful enemy. Keeping step with the man that knows not God, watching, and waiting for that moment when death shall cause him to halt, that he might have the opportunity of accomplishing his dreadful work. To the ungodly, death means destruction. It is the destruction of all his coveted fellowships, of all his boasted possessions, of his joy, of that false peace with which he comforted himself, of his hope for time and eternity. It is the destruction of all the faculties of his soul for the seeing or enjoying of those pleasures which are at God's right hand. His god was his belly, his glory was his shame, and his end is destruction.

LIGHT IN DARKNESS.

Job 19:25-27.

Job's soul was sorely vexed with the words of his would-be comforters. "These ten times have ye reproached me," he says. Anybody with enough hardness of heart can easily reproach another in the day of their downfall. "If ye will magnify yourselves against me," he continues then, "know now that God hath overthrown me" (Job 19:5-6). The overthrowing was the work of the Devil, and it was complete, permitted by God, as was the crucifixion of Christ, yet the work of "wicked hands." It is most interesting to notice that it was after Job had experienced the weakness and deceitfulness of all earthly kinships, that the vision of the kinsman-Redeemer came upon his desolate spirit. Surely this is the work of the Spirit of God, it is absolutely true to the manner of the Holy Spirit in New Testament times. The unsatisfactory nature, the insufficiency and inability of all earthly friendship to meet the needs of a sinful, sorrowful soul, must be fully realised, ere the glories of the kinsman-Redeemer can be fully appreciated. "I know that my Redeemer liveth" (Job 19:25). Who but the Lord Jesus Christ was ever able to record such a melancholy list of broken friendships as Job does in this chapter. Hear what he says about them: "My brethren are far from me... mine acquaintance are estranged from me... my kinsfolk have failed, my familiar friends have forgotten me... my maids count me a stranger... my servant gave me no answer... my breath was strange to my wife... all my inward friends abhorred me" (Job 19:13-19). There was not one arm of flesh left on which he could lean, when this new light dawned upon him constraining him to say, "I know that my kinsman-Redeemer liveth," and that apart from my flesh I shall have God on my side (r. v.). We are cautioned by some commentators not to read too much into these words, but we are bound to take them as they stand, and believe they mean all that they say. The teaching of the Spirit of God is not limited to the conditions and circumstances of men. The language of Job here is full of prophetic meaning, and is rich in spiritual consolation. We can at least easily read into these words-

I. The Fact of Redemption. "My Redeemer liveth." What a relief for the oppressed and bewildered soul to turn from the failing kinships of earth to the unfailing Kinsman above, who ever liveth to make intercession for us. Yes, Job, out of all your troubles this Kinsman-Redeemer will yet deliver you. He shall redeem thy life from destruction, and crown thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies. He vindicates the cause of all who put their trust in Him. He who redeems and purchases the soul by His own blood lives for the salvation and vindication of His own. That He, the eternal Son of God, should condescend to be our Goel (kinsman) is the mystery and marvel of infinite grace.

II. The Joy of Personal Assurance. "I know." He knew that all his earthly friends had forsaken him, but he also knew that his Kinsman in Heaven, the living One would ultimately prove Himself to be good and faithful. There were some things Job did not know. He knew not the reason why he had been so suddenly stripped of every earthly comfort, and crushed down to the dust with a load of sorrow, but he knew and believed that "my Redeemer liveth," and liveth to make all things work together for good to them that love Him. He could scarcely talk now of my brethren, my kinsfolk, my friends, my servant, for they had all forsaken him, but he could say "my Redeemer." When heart and flesh fail, God will be the portion of the believing soul. It will still be sweet to say, "my Redeemer," when all the joys and friendships of this world have to be left behind.

III. The Prospect of His Appearing. "I know... that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." All that this meant to Job we cannot say, but he surely believed in the personal appearing of his great Kinsman-Redeemer on the earth. Now we know that this prophecy hath been fulfilled, and that the Redeemer hath come, and by the sacrifice of Himself has put away sin-the seed of the woman hath bruised the serpent's head-and by His own blood hath provided a ransom price for the souls of men. The earth needed Him, and He hath identified Himself with its sins and sorrows by standing on it and dying for it. To us these words are still prophetic, and we look for the appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who shall yet as King of kings stand in the latter day upon the earth.

IV. The Hope of a Beatific Vision. "Though worms destroy this body, yet without my flesh shall I see God" (R. V. margin). The flesh is the veil that hides the vision of God from the spirit of man. Even the Redeemer's flesh had to be rent asunder as a veil, ere the new way of entrance could be made for us (Hebrews 10:20). Paul's way of putting it is, "Absent from the body, present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8). When He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. "The pure in heart shall see God." If there be no God to see, why should the purest of hearts have this longing and hope strongest within them? It surely does not follow, that because a man is good and upright, he is in greater danger of being deluded and deceived in the most important of all questions-that of future hope.

V. The Confidence of Final Satisfaction. "Whom I shall see on my side.. and not as a stranger" (Job 19:27, R. V., margin). God's present dealings with Job are to him full of mystery and contradictions. All things seem to be against him, but when apart from his flesh he sees God, he knows that he will find that God all along has been on His side, making all things work together for his good. He will not see Him as a stranger, but as a faithful Kinsman-Redeemer. Here "we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face." What we know not now we shall know hereafter. Our present circumstances may be as perplexing to human reason as Job's was to him; but with the

vision of our Divine Kinsman before us, we are assured that in love He is doing all things well. "I shall be satisfied when I awake" (Psalms 17:15) in the presence of His likeness. THE WICKED MAN'S PORTION

Job 20:29.

Zophar winds up this speech, which is full of the horrors which belong to a life of ungodliness, with these words: "This is the portion of a wicked man from God" (Job 20:29). It is interesting to find that this is the view of wickedness held by these wisest of men, away back in times before the law was given. The word "wicked" here is lawless, and refers to those who are not restrained in any way through the knowledge or fear of God. The description still holds good of the man that obeys not the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I. His Triumph shall be Short (Job 20:5-7). He does triumph in a way; he has "joy," he has "excellency," and his head seems to "reach unto the clouds." His success is of such a nature that failure and ruin looks like an impossibility. But his triumph is short, his joy is but for a moment, his excellency shall perish like his own dung. Like the Egyptians, these lawless ones say, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide, my lust shall be satisfied; but God shall blow upon them, and they shall sink like lead in the mighty waters of death and destruction" (Exodus 15:9-10). Permanent victory only belongs to those who "Overcome by the blood of the Lamb."

II. His Sin shall Abide with Him. "His bones are full of the sin of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust" (Job 20:11). David dreaded this terrible experience when he prayed, "Remember not the sins of my youth" (Psalms 25:7). SiN is a most uncomfortable bedfellow to lie down with in the grave. No human power can shake it off. It seeks to cling to the soul in death, in resurrection, in judgment, and in eternity. To die in sin is to die out of Christ, and to meet Him with a sin-stained resurrection body.

III. His Moral Appetite shall be Vitiated. "Wickedness sweet in his mouth... yet the gall of asps within him" (Job 20:12-14). He finds that sweet to his taste which he knows shall prove bitter to his conscience. Through practice and force of habit he now clings to the things which, in his innermost nature he condemns. His moral senses are so blunted and perverted that he calls bitter sweet, and sweet bitter. The lie of Satan is more pleasant to him than the truth of God. He loves darkness rather than light, and prefers the broken cisterns to the Fountain of living water.

IV. His Precious Things shall all be Disgorged. "He hath swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up again" (Job 20:15). Many a valuable thing he hath swallowed for the satisfaction of his own lust and passion. Much goods have been laid up for the future, as a gourmand would stuff his stomach against coming want, but he shall vomit them up again, as one who is sickened by them, and finds himself unable longer to keep them. The things which formerly delighted him, and in which he trusted for future strength and succour, will suddenly become, soul-sickening and turned into a vomit. The riches of Christ will never be so parted with.

V. His Abundance shall not Satisfy. "In the fullness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits" (Job 20:22). No matter how much a man may have of the world's riches and honours, he shall still be in straits if the "one thing needful" is lacking-personal acquaintance with God. Sufficiency of perishing things cannot meet all the needs of an imperishable spirit. The rich man mentioned in Luke 12 was in straits when he said: "What shall I do?" But he was in a greater strait when God

said unto him: "This night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall these things be?"

VI. His Treasures shall be Found to be Darkness. "All darkness is laid up for his treasures" (Job 20:26, R. V.). What an inheritance this is, reserved for those who die rebels against the grace of God. Darkness laid up for him-all darkness, nothing but darkness-as the reward of his earthly life and labours. Complete disaster is secretly lurking in the future for him. His treasures are not in Heaven, and outside the light of God's presence there is nothing but the blackness of darkness. He loved the darkness of a godless life rather than the light of a godly life. Now all is darkness! The seed sown has brought forth its harvest of blackness.

VII. His Iniquity shall be Revealed. "The Heavens shall reveal his iniquity" (Job 20:27). Even "the earth shall rise up against him." The heavens and the earth shall combine to carry out the unerring word of God. "The Lord will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts" (1 Corinthians 4:5). "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed" (Luke 12:2). Every unforgiven sin and crooked thing shall be made manifest by the searchlight of Heaven; then who that Have died without Christ shall be able to stand when He appeareth as the Judge of the quick and the dead? No Achan will ever be able to bury his sins deep enough that the eye of God will not see them. The portion of the wicked (lawless) is indeed a miserable portion, but, thank God, it may be exchanged for a better portion, if, like Mary, he will choose now the "better part" (Luke 10:42). THE PRAYER OF THE WICKED.

Job 21:14-15

In Job's reply to Zophar's last speech, he shows that material prosperity is not sufficient evidence that a man is morally righteous, for the wicked "become old and are mighty in power." But in these verses he lays bare the secret thoughts of the ungodly and lawless soul by putting this prayer into their mouth. The godless man of the world would not perhaps audibly dare to use these words, but nevertheless they are practically the sentiments of his every-day life. Look at- I. The Meaning of It. It reveals a-

1. DREAD OF GOD'S PRESENCE. "They say unto God, Depart from us." Their carnal mind is enmity against God. They fear His presence as the owl does the approach of the sun, or as the thief dreads the daylight. As a gracious Saviour, they may say to Him, "Depart," and He may leave their coast, but, as a Judge, they will yet hear Him say, "Depart from Me."

2. DISLIKE AT GOD'S WAYS. "We desire not the knowledge of Thy ways." They are wedded to their own ways, and are not willing to forsake them (Isaiah 55:7). The knowledge of God's ways would make them more miserable in their own sinful ways. They cover their heads with the mantle of ignorance, and say darkness is better than light. Though His ways are pleasantness and His paths peace, their minds are so blinded by the god of this world, and their spiritual appetite so vitiated, that they have no desire for them.

3. DENIAL OF GOD'S CLAIMS. "What is the Almighty, that we should serve Him?" They do not even say, "Who," as Pharaoh did, but "What," as if He were a creation of man, instead of the Creator of all. The Almightiness in their estimation is in the "we." What is He that we should serve Him. This exalting of self above all that is called God is the essence of Satanic opposition. Those who make it their business to serve themselves are morally unfit for the service of God. "Ye cannot serve two masters."

4. DISBELIEF IN GOD'S LOVE. "What profit shall we have if we pray unto Him?" They have no faith in God as a loving Father ready and willing to answer the cry of the needy. They have no consciousness of real need, and so have no faith in prayer. Like the Laodiceans, they have "need of nothing," not even of Him who stands knocking outside their door. They also said in their own way, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways," by keeping the door closed against His entrance. "Ye have not because ye ask not." Men ought always to pray and not to faint.

II. The Cause of It. "Therefore they say unto God," etc. The occasion of it is found in the foregoing verses. In their worldly prosperity they had many marks of the goodness of God, yet they said unto God, "Depart from us," etc. (R. V.). This lawless spirit manifests itself in the grossest ingratitude and thanklessness. The prosperity of the wicked is a mystery to those who know not that "the wicked have their portion in this life." Observe the nature of that prosperity as it appeared to the afflicted patriarch.

1. THEIR INFLUENCE IS GREAT. "The wicked become old, yea, are mighty in power" (Job 21:7). Long years after this the Psalmist said the same thing, "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree" (Psa. 37 35). The godly man seeks to spread the knowledge of God, but the godless, selfish worldling spreads himself. The world loves its own, and admires the man who is able to spread himself like a green bay tree, although he should starve to death all the lesser plants that seek an existence beneath his shade.

2. THEIR AFFLICTIONS ARE FEW. "Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them" (Job 21:9). They don't seem to be afflicted as other men. Grey hairs don't seem to come so quickly upon their heads. They are quite unaccustomed to the yoke of discipline. The rod of Divine chastisement does not visit them because they are not harnessed to the will of God, but are, like the wild asses, doing their own pleasure. They have a liberty, but it is the liberty of the lawless, the freedom of the rebel. The rod and staff of the Great Shepherd does not guide them, so they rush on comfortably to destruction. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth."

3. THEIR POSSESSIONS ARE MULTIPLIED. "Their bull gendereth, and faileth not; their cow calveth, and casteth not her calf " (Job 21:10). "Behold the ungodly... they increase in riches" (Psalms 73:12). They add house to house, and land to land, and offer sacrifices to their own genius (Habakkuk 1:16). The rich fool had not where to bestow his goods. The meek shall yet inherit the earth, but meanwhile it seems to be largely the portion of the godless.

4. THEIR CHILDREN ARE HAPPY. "Their children dance... and rejoice at the sound of the organ" (Job 21:11-12). Well, God bless the "little ones," why should they not be happy? They have not yet become positively lawless by actual transgression. They are in ignorance of the enmity that lurks in the heart of that father to the being and grace of God. But they are in great danger of following in the steps of their world-deluded parents, by setting their affections on the things of earth and neglecting the eternal treasure. This picture of the ungodly is very attractive to many. No wonder the Psalmist said, "I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked (they are not in trouble as other men... their eyes stand out with fatness; they have more than heart could wish)... UntiL I went into the sanctuary of God and saw them in the light of His presence; then understood I their end" (Psalms 73:3-17). They who said, "Who is the Almighty, that we should serve Him!" "shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty" (Job 21:20). What an awful cup awaits those

who refuse the cup of salvation. The rich man died, and in Hell he lifted up his eyes. Better far to lift them up now.

ACQUAINTANCE WITH GOD.

Job 22:21-30.

In closing his third speech, Eliphaz talks like a New Testament prophet. The phraseology is, of course, old, but the teaching is up-to-date, and the moral order in which the truths are presented are almost apostolic. His words suggest-

I. A Great Need. "Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace" (Job 22:21). Acquaintanceship with God is the first step toward peace. A theoretical knowledge of God cannot satisfy the heart. Acquaintanceship implies a personal intimacy. After Adam, through sin, had separated himself from God, a new acquaintanceship had to be formed. Divine friendship had to be set up on a new basis (Genesis 3:15). Sin implies separation and enmity; acquaintanceship implies reconciliation and peace. No man now can be said to be acquainted with God who is a stranger to the Lord Jesus Christ, who bore the combined image of God and of man. He who was God manifest in the flesh, hath made peace by the blood of His cross. Kiss the Son lest He be angry with thee, and ye perish in the way. "This is life eternal that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

II. A Plain Way. The way back into the favour and fellowship of God is very simple and easy to the willing heart. It is stated here in two words: "Receive!" "Return!" "Receive the law from His mouth... and return to the Almighty" (Job 22:22-23). Receive into thine heart the word that has come from His mouth, believe what He hath said about sin and salvation, and return to God by yielding your will to Him, and resting your soul upon His finished redemption. We can now read into the words of Eliphaz a much deeper meaning than he could at that time understand. Receive the word of the Gospel and return, not to a creed or a church, but to the living God.

III. A Manifold Result. To be closely acquainted with any great personality will certainly affect our manner of thinking and acting; how much more when we are acquainted with God. There will be-

1. A RENEWAL OF THE NATURE. "Thou shalt be built up" (Job 22:23). The spiritual nature of man has been so broken down by sin that it is a complete ruin. Apart from the knowledge and grace of God, he can never build himself up as a temple of God. It is when we come into the light of His presence that we get rebuilt, and made new creatures. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature." "We are His workmanship, created (anew) in Christ Jesus." Return unto Him just as you are, and He shall build thee up.

2. GREAT RICHES. "The Almighty shall be thy treasure" (Job 22:25, R. V.). The gold of Ophir is but the dust of the earth compared with the riches that are in Him. Material things cannot meet the needs of an immaterial spirit. Our eternal spirits need the adorning of the eternal God. Your little life shall be filled up out of His infinite fullness. When you get truly acquainted with Him, you will find that Himself is sufficient for thee. To know God is to be a spiritual millionaire. "My God shall supply all your need," (Php_4:19), not only with His gifts, but with Himself. We have this treasure in the earthen vessel when we are filled with the Holy Spirit.

3. UNFAILING JOY. "Then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty" (Job 22:26). Only the pure in heart who see God can find their delight in Him. The unrenewed in nature will still seek after the world's broken cisterns, which cannot hold water enough to quench the thirst of the soul. Those who find their delight in God have the purest of all pleasures from a source which can never fail. "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the reconciliation."

4. BOLDNESS OF ACCESS. "And shalt lift up thy face unto God." When we become the children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, it is but natural that we should lift up our faces unto our Father. The consciousness of unforgiven sin hinders many from lifting up their faces unto God (Luke 18:13). Those who see no beauty in Him who was the Man of Sorrows, hide, as it were, their faces from Him. The open face turned to God is the evidence of a soul at peace with Him. "Our fellowship is with the Father."

5. ANSWERED PRAYER. "Thou shalt make thy prayer unto Him, and He shall hear thee" (Job 22:27). What a privilege! The ear of the Almighty God always at your lips to hear thee when thou speakest unto Him. Speak out the desires of thy soul, and wait patiently on Him. "If we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him" (1 John 5:15).

6. FRUITFUL TESTIMONY. "Thou shalt also decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee" (Job 22:28). The word of thy testimony in His Name shall be made to stand firm. His word shall not return unto Him void. New eyes will be given thee to see wondrous things, and thy tongue shall speak forth things which God will make to come to pass (Jeremiah 23:28).

7. WALKING IN THE LIGHT. "The light shall shine upon thy ways." Thou shalt not walk in darkness, for the guiding light of His presence shall be with thee. His Holy Spirit will guide thee into the truth, which always illumines the heart and mind. Just now Job was enveloped in thick darkness, but, by yielding Himself unreservedly to God, light would arise, and he would yet walk with a light step in the sunny paths of peace.

8. ABILITY TO HELP OTHERS. "When men are cast down, then thou shalt say, There is lifting up" (Job 22:29). We must be lifted up ourselves before we attempt to lift up others. There be many who are "cast down" through sin and shortcoming, disappointment and failure, many who need this cheering message, "There is lifting up." When crushed and broken spirits are saying, "Who will show us any good?" it is the privilege of those whose faces have been lifted up to God to carry the uplifting Gospel of Jesus Christ, who was "lifted up," that He might draw men to Himself. The man of God is the only man that has the real message of hope for fallen humanity. THE OUTSKIRTS OF GOD'S WAYS

Job 26:6-14.

Job's three comforters said much, and did the best they could, but their remedies never touched the disease. They were as blind men seeking to lead a blind man. In the previous chapter, Bildad, whose great arguments have all been already spent in vain, has his last little say which closes the whole case for him and his friends. Now when they have exhausted themselves, Job begins his great and final oration, which occupies the following six chapters. These wonderful words bear ample proof that although Satan had brought such ruin and desolation upon Job, he had no power to touch his living spirit within. His mind remained clear, which doubtless made his anguish all the

more keen. In brief but striking language we have here parts of His ways set before us. If these are but the "outskirts." (r. v.)-the ripple on the shore of the Divine doings, what must it be to get into the centre of the operations of God. What, then, are these merely out-lying acts of the great Creator of all? Here they are-

I. "Hell is naked before Him" (Job 26:6). Sheol, or the shady world of spirits, lies uncovered before His gaze. His eyes pierce the gloom of that awful abyss called "the bottomless pit." If I make my bed in Hell (Sheol) Thou art there-there in justice and judgment. No darkness, no matter how dense, can cover a human soul from the holy eye of God (Psalms 139:8-11). If Hell is naked before Him, so is your heart and mine. There is many a human heart that is little else than a miniature Hell, yet it, with all other things, is naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do (Hebrews 4:13).

II. "He Hangeth the Earth upon Nothing" (Job 26:7). Some seem to be afraid lest we should read into these words more than was meant by the afflicted patriarch, lest we credit Job with knowing more about astronomy than he really did. He surely meant what he said when he said, "He hangeth the earth upon nothing." He could not mean that He hangeth the earth on something. The statement is scientifically accurate, although made thousands of years before the fact was discovered by science. But the point is, this wonderful balancing of worlds in space is but one of the outworks of this wonder-working God. Job may not know anything about the law of gravitation, but, if moved by the Spirit of God, he speaks worthy of God. The Spirit of truth is always in advance of the discoveries of men.

III. "He Bindeth up the Waters in His Thick Clouds" (Job 26:8). The seemingly fickle clouds are God's. He binds them together with invisible bands so that they cannot be rent to pour out their treasures until He unties them. How often have we seen those great water-carriers rolling along the heavens, and piled up at times like huge bales of wool. "Great and marvellous are Thy works, O Lord."

IV. "He Closeth in the Face of His Throne" (Job 26:9. R. V.). Behind all the laws and forces of nature, Job sees the throne of God. The whole visible creation is as a veil spread over the face of His eternal throne, but the glory and majesty of the Divine Personality, who ruleth over all, shines through this cloudy covering. The material world is like the pillar of cloud in the wilderness. God is in the midst of it. Clouds and darkness are round about Him (Psalms 97:2).

V. "He Describeth a Boundary upon the Face of the Waters" (Job 26:10, R. V.). The waters of the great deep are in the hollow of His hand, and by His infinite wisdom He has marked out that line which we call the horizon, where the sea and sky seem to meet and kiss each other. God sets His limitations to every earthly thing. So far, but no farther; but the Spirit-taught soul looks beyond to the things which are eternal and lie hidden in the depths of eternity.

VI. "He Stirreth up the Sea with His Power" (Job 26:12, R. V.). The same mighty hand that pushed back the rolling flood and made "dry land" that the Israelites might pass over, still controls the restless billows (Psalms 74:13).

VII. "He Smiteth through Rahab" (Job 26:12, R. V.). Rahab stands for pride and arrogance. By His understanding is human pride smitten through. The wisdom and power of God, even as seen in the visible creation, ought to pierce the arrogance of man. But how much more ought the wisdom

and love of God, as seen in the Cross of Christ, stay the enmity of the carnal mind. Rahab is condemned already.

VIII. "He hath Garnished the Heavens by His Spirit" (Job 26:13). The same Spirit who beautified the heavens now beautifies the soul in whom He dwells. "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." His moving is always for the glory of God, whether it be in the heart or in the heavens. Bildad said, "Yea, the stars are not pure in His sight." But Job takes a different view of that work which at the beginning was pronounced "good." When the beauty of the Lord our God is put upon us, we are clean and beautiful in His sight. The Spirit of God is a wonderful artist. He who beautified the heavens can beautify thy life.

IX. He hath Subdued the Swift Serpent (Job 26:13, R. V.). Whether this swift fleeing serpent is the Devil, or the forked lightning-flash, it matters not, both are under His control. Neither of them can fly so fast that God cannot at any time pierce them through with His arrow. The forked lightning is an apt emblem of the movements and terrible character of Satan, but he is a conquered foe.

What a mighty God our God is, when these are but the outskirts of His ways, part of the fringe of the great garment of His works. In these parts of His ways, Job adds, we hear but "a small whisper of Him" (Job 26:14, r. v.). From the visible creation there comes an unmistakable "whisper of Him," which any attentive ear may hear. The voice may be "small," but it is the voice of God. In creation, we hear the small whisper of the goodness of God; but in Christ, the loud cry of an agonising heart of love. This God who in times past whispered into the dull ears of men, through the marvellous works of His hands, now speaks with a loud voice through the death of His Son. "God in these last days hath spoken unto us by His Son" (Hebrews 1:2). "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Consider the two cries of Christ: John 7:37; Matthew 27:46.

PRICELESS WISDOM.

Job 28:12-28.

In this chapter Job continues his wonderful parable. He has just been showing that there is a place where gold and silver and precious stones can be found (Job 28:1-6), and how that men by searching and digging and overturning (Job 28:9-10) bring these hidden treasures to light, but as these can never meet all the needs of a human heart, he goes on to ask this great question of world-wide interest, "But where shall wisdom be found?" (Job 28:12). A man may be loaded with the treasures of earth and yet be a fool (Luke 12:19-20). The soul of man cannot find its perfect satisfaction even in the very best that this world can yield it. Wisdom is the chief thing; with all thy getting, get wisdom.

I. Its Nature. Wisdom is not something we can put on like a garment. Wisdom is character; it is the quality of being wise; it is a condition of heart, and has to do with our relationship to God. It begins with fearing the Lord (Job 28:28), and grows as the knowledge of God increases. If Job had not "Christ, the wisdom of God" in his mind when he spoke these beautiful and far-reaching words, doubtless the guiding Spirit of God had, for they are brimful of New Testament meaning to all who are wise in Christ. Men have no difficulty in finding the wisdom of this world, which is foolishness with God, but a man is not truly wise until he becomes a partaker of the wisdom of God.

II. Its Unearthliness. "Where is wisdom to be found? and where is the place of understanding?" Where is this knowledge of God to be got? this wisdom of heart that enables a man so to act before God and men that it will bring satisfaction to his own soul, good to his fellows, and glory to God. Where? It is not found "in the land of the living" (Job 28:13). This barren wilderness of human beings cannot produce it. "The depth saith, It is not in me; and the sea saith, It is not with me" (Job 28:14). No created thing, or one, can offer to a thirsty soul this satisfying gift. Out of the land, and the depths, and the sea, men have brought multitudes of valuable things, but the wisdom that maketh wise unto eternal life has never yet been found there, although generation after generation have followed in diligent search. These are all as broken cisterns which cannot hold this heavenly water. Is there no answer to this cry of Job, "Where is the place?" Yes, that place is called Calvary, where Christ the wisdom of God is offered to a world perishing for lack of knowledge.

III. Its Preciousness. The language here concerning wisdom is sublimely graphic, if we read it with our eye on Him who is the wisdom of God.

1. IT CANNOT BE PRICED. "Man knoweth not the price thereof" (Job 28:13). What man on earth would dare to attempt to reckon up the value of the Lord Jesus Christ? "In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3)-"unsearchable riches."

2. IT CANNOT BE BOUGHT. "It cannot be gotten for gold" (Job 28:15). All the wealth of the world could never purchase the wisdom of God. It would be an insult to God, even if man had the power, to offer Him a whole world of gold as a price for His Son. Even the gold of man's righteousness is as filthy rags when offered as a recompense to God.

3. IT CANNOT BE EQUALLED. "The gold and the crystal cannot equal it" (Job 28:17). "The price of wisdom is above rubies; the topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it" (Job 28:18-19). The world's best cannot be compared with this gift of God. The joy of finding rubies and diamonds cannot equal the joy of finding the wisdom of God in Christ Jesus.

4. IT CANNOT BE EXCHANGED. "The exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold" (Job 28:17). Nothing can take its place. There is no substitute or equivalent for heavenly wisdom. Nothing will ever stand in Christ's stead.

5. ITS POWER CANNOT BE DOUBTED. "Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof" (Job 28:22). We have here the testimony of wisdom's enemies. The fame of this wisdom is that it saves from "destruction and death." They have heard the tidings to their cost.

IV. Its Discovery. Another question is asked, "Whence then cometh wisdom?" (Job 28:20), and the answer is, "God understandeth the way thereof, and He knoweth the place" (Job 28:23). The way is the way of love and mercy, the place is the place where Christ was crucified. Only God could understand how the deep eternal need of man can be fully met. He only could unveil the secret of everlasting bliss. He alone knew where this soul-satisfying treasure could be found. Deliver from going down to the pit, I have found the Ransom. It will put a new meaning into Job 28:27 if you read "Him" instead of "it." "He did see Him, and declare Him; He prepared Him, yea, He searched Him out." Then "unto man He said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding" (Job 28:28). To be made a recipient of this wisdom, we must so fear the Lord that we shall submit ourselves entirely to Him, and so hate evil that we shall depart from it. Foolishness and evil go together; wisdom and holiness are twin sisters. "Whence then cometh

wisdom?" Christ is made of God unto us wisdom, which is accompanied with righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. "With all thy getting, get wisdom" (Proverbs 4:7). THE MAN IN GOD'S STEAD.

Job 33

After the words of Job were ended, and the three men had ceased to answer him, Elihu-God is He-broke forth in holy wrath at the manner, or spirit, in which the great controversy had been carried on. Job had been more inclined to justify himself than God, and his three friends had condemned him without discovering a cause (chap. Job 32:1-3). Elihu had evidently been a silent listener during the whole debate; but now, though young, he would unburden his soul before them all. This young man was not one of the "three friends" who came to comfort Job; he is an independent witness-an outsider, so to speak-specially fitted by God to throw fresh light upon the mystery of the whole case, or, at least, to put a new emphasis into some of the phrases commonly used. This is what the "man of God" always does. He does not speak a new language; he does not coin ear-tickling sentences, he speaks plain words with a new power. Elihu, then, comes before us as a typical Spirit-filled man, and as such we shall look at-

I. His Character. This apostle of the Old Testament will compare favourably in many ways with the great apostle of the New Testament. Of course, in judging Elihu by the light of New Testament teaching, we must never lose sight of the fact that we are putting a meaning into his words that perhaps Job or his friends or himself could not understand. But it is a wonderful evidence of the consistency of the Holy Spirit's work and words all down through the ages. He never contradicts Himself. If the Spirit of God fashioned and taught Elihu, He must, in some measure, reveal the same features of a Spirit-filled life to-day. Light is light, although it is 3000 years old. What are some of these features?

1. HE IS A SPIRIT-MADE MAN. "The Spirit of God hath made me" (Job 33:4). This may be true, in a general sense, of all men, but it is true, in a very special and unique sense, of the real "man of God." He is born by the Spirit- quickened by the Spirit into a new life. He is a new creation after the image of God by the Holy Ghost. God needs new vessels for the new wine of His Gospel.

2. HE IS A SPIRIT-INSPIRED MAN. "The breath of the Almighty hath given me life." This also may be true, in a measure, of every man, but it is a marvellous description of the new life in God. Those dead in sin need the breath of God to put new life into them (Ezekiel 37:9). Those quickened by the Spirit of God are possessed by Him and inspired, as by the very warmth of the breath of the living God dwelling in them. They can say: "I live, yet not I, but Christ, who is the life of God, liveth in me; the breath that I now breathe is the breath of the Almighty; the spirit that I now have is animated by the Spirit of God." Christ breathed on them and said: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost."

II. His Position. Job longed for a "Daysman" (Job 9:33). Elihu is bold enough to say: "I am according to thy wish in God's stead" (Job 33:6). It was a great statement to make, but the man who is appointed by God to stand in His stead ought surely to know it, and should not be ashamed to confess it before men. Did not the Apostle of the Gentiles say: "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God?" The man in God's stead is "an interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man what is right for him" (Job 33:23 R. V.). He himself is an example and interpretation of the invisible God. His

business is to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and to exhort others to seek these first. He knows nothing about flattering men with self-pleasing titles (chap. Job 32:22), the claims and character of Him whose he is and whom he serves are ever before him. An interpreter of God's mind and will must first be a partaker of that mind and will. We must drink deeply of this water of life, if we would become springs of living water for others. Every spirit-possessed man is an interpreter for God, and such interpreters are needed, for "the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:11). A man may have all the wisdom of the world, and yet be unable to interpret the things of God. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

III. His Message. He it is who can say with the utmost confidence, "God speaketh" (Job 33:14). He knows in his own soul that God hath spoken to him, and that He can still speak in divers ways to the slumbering spirits of men, that He may draw man away from his evil and delusive purpose (Job 33:15-17). This is a comforting truth to those who seek the salvation of others, that God in answer to prayer can speak to men "in dreams and visions of the night." Even then He can open the ear, and seal instruction in their hearts. So, the man of God is a man of faith and hope. But he has also a very definite message to deliver. What is that message? There is in it-

1. REDEMPTION. "Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom" (Job 33:24). God hath found the ransom-the atoning sacrifice in the Man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5-6), so He calls upon all those who stand in His stead to say to that man going down to the pit of darkness and death, "There is deliverance." He, as it were, commands His servant and interpreter to "deliver him" who is on the way to the pit, on the ground that He hath found and provided the Ransom. Apart from the power and virtue of the Cross of Christ, there is no message of salvation from the pit to give. "The Son of Man came.... to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28).

2. REGENERATION. "His flesh shall be fresher than a child's" (Job 33:25). This may be figurative language, but it expresses most forcibly the radical change which is wrought by God's redeeming power. Like Naaman-after he had dipped himself seven times in Jordan-he was made a new creature. What the waters did for the famous Syrian captain, the atoning blood of Christ now does for those who believe Him-makes clean. The redemption that is in Christ Jesus not only "satisfies thy mouth with good," but also "thy youth is renewed like the eagle's" (Psalms 103:5).

3. FELLOWSHIP. "He shall pray unto God, and He shall be favourable unto him; and he shall see His face with joy" (Job 33:26). After redemption and regeneration comes the privilege of praying and rejoicing in the favour of God. Yes, the pure in heart shall see God's face and rejoice- that face of love and mercy which has been unveiled to us in Jesus. "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." "Our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son" (1 John 1:3).

4. TESTIMONY. They who would preach redemption to others should themselves be examples of its regenerating power. The words here are full of evangelical fervour and personal experience. "He singeth before men, and saith, I have sinned and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; He hath redeemed my soul from going into the pit, and my life shall behold the light" (Job 33:27-28, R. V.). His past life was profitless, because it was one of perversion; but now, being redeemed, he lives in the light of the truth. This man who is as one in "God's stead" was once a sinner like others, but by grace was he saved. "Such were some of you, but ye are

washed." The personal element must have a place in the preaching of the Gospel. THE LORD ANSWERED.

Job 38:1; Job 40:1-5.

"Man's extremity is God's opportunity." It was when the words of Job and his friends were ended that the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind. God's answer is always final. There is no appeal. The book of Job, like the books of the Old Testament, closes with the Theophany -the appearance of God. Here, as when He sent His Son, Gods last plea was the manifestation of His own character. Although God answered Job out of the whirlwind, we need not infer that the voice was like a roaring, uprooting tempest, but that the arguments used had a whirlwind effect upon the spirit of Job, completely lifting him out of his present condition of mind into a better way of thinking.

I. Job's Prayer. "Answer Thou me. How many are mine iniquities and sins? Make me to know my transgression" (chap. Job 13:22-23). He was set on maintaining his own way. He had lived, no doubt, in all good conscience before God, but there was now a tendency to boast of his integrity, as if it were something independent of the grace of God. If I have sinned, he says, make me to know the number and nature of my transgressions. God's answer to Job reveals the fact that his iniquities lay in a different direction than what he supposed. He is not charged with actual transgression, but he is overwhelmed with a sense of his own ignorance and impotency. His self-confidence has been rebuked and withered up.

II. God's Answer. "Then the Lord answered Job" (chap: Job 38:1). God's answer comes in the form of an avalanche of questions. There are fifty-seven in chapters 38 and 39 alone. Every question seems to bring with it a flash of self-blinding light. Each interrogation is in itself a revelation and an education to the wavering patriarch. All His "hast thous" and "canst thous" are evidences of what He has done and can do. These questions are so many revelations of God's wisdom and power-of His perfect control of "the ordinances of Heaven" (chap. Job 38:33), or of what we call natural phenomena. Those who would find fault with the providence of God should study this divine declaration. The Lord's first question is enough to take Job's breath away: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" (Job 38:4). His word is truly as a "hammer and a fire." Think of these burning inquiries: "Hast thou commanded the morning?" "Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea?" "Hast thou walked in the secret of the depth?" "Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow?" "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades?" "Knowest thou the ordinances of Heaven?" "Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds?" "Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go and say unto thee, Here we are?" The wisdom of man is but foolishness with God, as the brightest of earth's lights is but a black spot in the face of the sun. So man at his best is but a vile speck in the presence of the glory of God.

III. Job's Confession. "Behold, I am vile: what shall I answer Thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth Once have I spoken; yea, twice; but I will proceed no further" (chap. Job 40:4-5). Job's boasted greatness, like the tower of Babel, ended in utter confusion when God appeared. As long as we compare ourselves with men like ourselves there may be occasion for glorying, but let God speak, then the hand is laid upon the mouth. "Behold, I am vile," for this mouth of mine has been speaking the God-dishonouring thoughts of my mind, but I will "proceed no further" along this way of self-confidence and self-assertiveness. I will lay mine hand upon my mouth, and bow in silent submission to the word and will of the Lord my God. The Lord is in nature as in a holy temple; let

all the earth keep silence before Him. God who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake unto the fathers by the prophets, and to Job through the whirlwind of natural phenomena, has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son. The voice is the same, but the revelation is vastly different. What have we to say for ourselves in the presence of the Cross of Christ? Here every boastful mouth must be stopped. Although in self justification, I have spoken once, yea, fifty times, "but I will proceed no further" when I see sin in the light of the sufferings and death of the only begotten Son of God. "Behold, I am vile;" my righteousness, in the glare of His light, has turned out to be but "filthy rags." "God be merciful to me a sinner." THE BLISSFUL END

Job 42

The storm-tossed soul of Job has got anchored at last in the harbour of God's manifest goodness. As a traveller he has been passing through a dark and dreary desert, hearing anon the howling of ravenous beasts, but is now entered into the light and joys of home. Through much tribulation he entered into this new kingdom of honour and blessing. All great spiritual attainments are reached through suffering. It was so with Moses, Abraham, Joseph, David, Daniel, and Christ. The disciple is not greater here than his Master. "If we suffer, we shall also reign." Now the great climax of Job's history has been reached, but there is about it more of the quietness of a birth than the shock of a revolution. The storm of words is over; the calm of His "Peace be still" has settled upon the troubled waters. In the closing act of this powerful drama there is-

I. Confession. Job began his brief answer to the Divine appeal by saying, "I know that Thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from Thee." Thou canst do everything, and Thou dost see everything. Thou art omnipotent and omniscient. The whole universe, visible and invisible, is under Thy control, and naked and bare before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. As man is to be judged by his works, so may the Lord be judged by His. By His works ye shall know Him. "The heavens declare His glory, and the firmament showeth forth His handiwork" (Psalms 19:1). But what does the Cross of His Christ declare? What handiwork does the firmament of His infinite love and mercy shew forth? In the matter of salvation, as well as creation and government, "I know that thou canst do everything."

II. Revelation. "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee" (Job 42:5). It is one thing to hear another speak about God; it is a very different thing to see Him by the revelation of His own word, spoken personally to the heart, as Job had now seen Him. The sum of the Lord's answer to Job was a manifestation of Himself through His word. The voice of God brought the vision of God to the patriarch's faith. He saw God by the hearing of faith. "Believe, and thou shalt see" (John 11:40). "The Word of God is quick and powerful,...and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" of man, and is also a revealer of the thoughts and intents of the heart of God. This is the mystery of the incarnation. "The Word which was God was made flesh and dwelt among us,...full of grace and truth." Christ, the Word of God, was to a suffering world the revelation of God. You may have often heard of Him, but has your eye yet seen Him?

III. Humiliation. "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6). Self-abhorrence is the natural consequence of coming face to face with God. When Isaiah saw the Lord upon a throne high and lifted up, he also abhorred himself, saying, "Woe is me!... because I am a man of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:5). Oh, these lips! It was Job's lips that had been acting as traitors in the cause of God. But the lips are only the instruments of the heart and will. Where is

boasting when the truth of God comes home to the heart? It is excluded. Saul of Tarsus found this out when the light of the exalted Son of God fell upon him on the way to Damascus. Then he abhorred himself and repented.

IV. Intercession. "My servant Job shall pray for you; for him will I accept" (Job 42:8). Job's friends did all that human wisdom and eloquence could do for a man overwhelmed by the power of the Devil, and that was nothing. This kind goeth not out but by prayer and sacrifice. "My servant," sweet words to the perplexed and bruised sufferer. It is easy for us to thrash others with our scourge of words, whose prayers we need to save us from our sins. What a privilege and responsibility rests upon the servant of the Lord: "Him will I accept." What an encouragement to those who have found favour with God, to plead for others. This ministry belongs to every one who has been reconciled to God. In this Job is a type of our Lord Jesus Christ, who maketh intercession for us, and whom God heareth always, and in whom we are accepted (Hebrews 10:10-14).

V. Emancipation. "The Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends" (Job 42:10). To Job's "miserable comforters," and to himself, praying was much more effectual than arguing. Is it not always so? His friends had misjudged him, but he had all the more need to pray for them. In so doing, the Lord loosed him from the bondage and power of Satan, and made him once more a free man. The Devil had him chained as with iron bands, but God honoured prayer as the means of deliverance. Praying for his friends implied a willingness to forgive them and a readiness to return blessing for cursing. Such an attitude of soul, and such a work of grace, cannot but bring greater liberty and blessing into the life of the suppliant. "First be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matthew 5:24),

VI. Satisfaction. "The Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before..The Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning" (Job 42:10-17). Satan has been defeated, and the mercy and truth of God hath triumphed. James said, "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy" (James 5:11). Yes, the the end of all God's dealings with us is mercy. While the number of Job's sheep, camels, oxen, and asses was doubled, it was not so with his sons and daughters. He had but the same number that he had before, perhaps implying that his former family were not lost, but only "gone before"-still his, although on the other side of the Jordan of death. If Job was seventy years old when he lost all, his years were also doubled, for he lived after this "an hundred and forty years" (Job 42:16). The Lord's measure is always "heaped up and running over." Those to whom He shows His salvation will be satisfied with long life, yea, eternal life (Psalms 91:16). No one would covet Job's sufferings, but who would not say, "Let my last end be like his." Judge not before the time. If God hath begun a good work in you, He will carry it on till the day of perfection. Comfort one another with these words.

Psalm

Studies In The Psalms

THE HAPPY MAN

Psalm 1

This First Psalm is a fitting introduction to the sacred Psalter. It constitutes almost a perfect epitome of the whole book. Like the sermon on the mount, it begins with the word "Blessed." The word is in the plural, and has been rendered, "O the happinesses of the man," etc. He is not only blessed, but blessed with all spiritual blessings. This happy man comes before us in a twofold aspect:-

I. His Negative Character. There are some things that he will not do; not because law and judgment dares him to do them, but because he has got something better to enjoy, and a positive hatred in his heart for ways and things that are at enmity with the mind and will of God.

1. HE DOES NOT WALK IN THE COUNSEL OF THE UNGODLY. He knows that "the way of the ungodly shall perish," and he keeps out of it. The counsel of the ungodly is to walk in the broad way that leadeth to destruction. His manner of life is not directed by the wisdom of this world, but by that wisdom which cometh from above.

2. HE DOES NOT STAND IN THE WAY OF SINNERS. The ungodly may mean those who live in ignorance of God, but sinners are those who deliberately transgress against the light. To abide in their way of doing things is to show an attitude that is more at home with the way of sinners than merely walking in the counsel of the ungodly.

3. HE DOES NOT SIT IN THE SEAT OF THE SCORNFUL. Those who begin to walk in the counsel of the ungodly are in danger of ending in the seat of the scornful. This seat is the chief seat in the kingdom of Satan. There is no promotion beyond this. In a few hours, the Apostle Peter ran through all this experience, from walking in the counsel of the ungodly to the seat of the scornful. He sat by the fire and denied the Lord with oaths and curses, but when he was converted he strengthened his brethren. Those who scorn at the things of God and His Christ walk after their own lusts (2 Peter 3:3).

II. His Positive Character. He is-

1. JOYFUL. He has many blessings, but "his delight is in the law of the Lord" (Psalms 1:2). The Christian life is not one merely of giving up this or that, but it is entering into a new and happy inheritance in the Word of God. True, the prodigal had to give up some things ere he could possess the best robe and enter into the joys of a happy home. But what were they? The swine troughs and his rags. The Word of the Lord is a land flowing with milk and honey. "Here everlasting streams abide, and never withering flowers." It is indeed a "delightsome land." All who love the Lord will find delight in His Word.

2. THOUGHTFUL. "In His law doth he meditate day and night." In the day of prosperity, and in the night of adversity, he makes the Word of God the man of his counsel. Meditation on the word of truth is as needful to our spiritual health and strength as mastication is for the physical.

Like Elijah's servant, we may need to look again and again before we see the cloud like a man's hand. "What think ye of Christ?" The Lord expects us to think deeply into these things which He hath caused to be written for our learning. There is no book in all the world that yields such a harvest of blessing to the humble student as the Bible. The testimony of Thomas a Kempis was, "I have no rest, but in a nook, with the Book."

3. HOPEFUL. "He shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water" (Psalms 1:3, R.V.); He is full of expectation, because his circumstances are so very favourable. He is "like a tree that spreadeth out her roots by the river." While other trees are being starved and stunted by drought, his roots are being fully satisfied; buried in the streams of God's truth, and mercy, and grace. He has a meat to eat that others know not of. All whose delight is in the law of the Lord are as trees planted by streams of living waters. The roots of faith and love feed in these life-giving streams.

4. FRUITFUL. "That bringeth forth its fruit in its season." The fruit is according to the character of the tree, and is always in season. Men do not gather grapes of thorns. His roots being in the rivers of God, he has abundance of life, so that fruit-bearing is the natural and simple result. Being filled with the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit is manifested (Galatians 5:22-23). The man who is ready, as opportunity offers, to bear testimony for Christ, will bring forth fruit in his season. Being filled out of the river of life, he will be filled with the fruits of righteousness (Php_1:11).

5. BEAUTIFUL. "Whose leaf also doth not wither." There is a vital connection between the root and the leaf. Dry roots soon bring the dry rot into the leaf. Men cannot see the roots of the Christian character, but they can see the leaf, and the hidden condition of the roots may be judged by the outward appearance of the leaf. The outward life will be fresh and green when the inward life is pure and full. Withered leaves are signs of a withered life. When our testimony for Christ and His truth loses its freshness and power, we may be sure that there is something wrong with the roots, for the streams never run dry. It is the Spirit's purpose to put the beauty of the Lord our God upon us.

6. SUCCESSFUL. "Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper:" or, whatsoever the tree produceth shall come to maturity. The bud, and the blossom, produced by the Spirit of life, will come to perfect fruition. "All cry and no wool," does not belong to the sheep of His pasture. The purposes of God begotten in the heart of Joseph, ripened into perfection, for the Lord was with him and made it to prosper (Genesis 39:23). Our Lord could say, "I have finished the work Thou gavest me to do." And He has left us an example that we should follow His steps. If it be God who worketh in us both to will and to do, then what soever we do shall prosper, for He who hath begun the good work will carry it on, until the day in which it is perfected.

III. The Contrast. "The ungodly are not so" (Psalms 1:4). No, they are far from it. The ungodly are the lawless ones who have no delight, or reverence for the law of the Lord; They are a law unto themselves, and the fruits of their own character and deeds shall be reaped by them. They are not likened to a tree planted, but to chaff driven. They have neither root, nor life in themselves. Chaff had once a close connection with the wheat, and may, in its outward aspect resemble it, but it is a

dead worthless thing, to be burned with unquenchable fire (Matthew 3:12). "The way of the ungodly shall perish" (Psalms 1:6). The chaff has no power to resist either the wind or the fire. The lawless, like chaff, are driven about with every wind of doctrine, popular opinion, or worldly success; they have no connection with, or capacity for receiving of those streams of life, that flow so copiously in the hidden Kingdom of God. They shall not stand accepted in the judgment nor be numbered with the congregation of the righteous (Psalms 1:5). Only "he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:17). How helpless the empty chaff is before the driving force of the wind. There is no refuge for it. "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness; but the righteous hath hope in his death." "Every plant which My heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up" (Matthew 15:13). The way of the ungodly must perish, because it is the way of pride, pleasure, unbelief, and Christ rejection. It is the way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end is death. "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." THE TRIUNE TESTIMONY

Psalm 2

In the book of the Acts, Peter and Paul both quote this Psalm as having reference to David, and also to the Lord Jesus Christ as the exalted Son of God. Paul refers to it as the Second Psalm (Acts 4:25; Acts 13:33). Undoubtedly a greater than David is here. This Psalm is separated into three divisions, and these different sections contain the testimony of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; the declaration of God the Ruler, God the Mediator, and God the Comforter. Let us hear them-

I. The Voice of God the Sovereign. In Psalms 2:1-6 it is God who speaks. His words reveal the attitude of the nations toward Himself, and His attitude toward them as rebels against His law and His Son. These words of the Lord contain an exhibition of-

1. HUMAN ENMITY AND FOLLY. Why do the nations rage, and their representatives-kings and rulers-take counsel together against the Lord and His Anointed? There can be no denial of this, for the charge is made by Jehovah Himself, who judgeth not by the outward appearance, but who looketh upon the heart. Man, in all his madness and folly, never imagined a more "vain thing" than when he thought by breaking the bands of His law and casting away the cords of His love, he could enjoy liberty and prosperity. To cast off His yoke which is easy, and His burden which is light, is to put on the iron shackles of diabolical rule and eternal despair. God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, that He might deliver us from all our enemies. Why rage against the Lord and His Anointed? Because the carnal mind is enmity against God. They will not have this Anointed One to reign over them. These words also reveal-

2. DIVINE DERISION AND DEFIANCE. "He that sitteth in the Heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." Jehovah, as the Ruler of the world, is at rest in the highest Heaven. The rage of a tumultuous people can no more hinder Him in the fulfilment of His purpose than the howling of dogs can arrest the progress of the moon. "Yet," despite all their wrath and rebellion, He has set His King upon His holy hill of Zion. With wicked hands men crucified the Lord's Anointed, but God raised Him from the dead and enthroned Him at His own right hand in the Heavens. The resurrection of Christ is God's derisive answer to the rage and hatred of men against His Son: As the waves of the sea put to defiance the silly mandate of King Canute, so shall the irresistible purposes of God roll over the proud purposes of men, and "vex them in His sore displeasure" (Psalms 2:5). It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, as Pharaoh's

host fell into the Red Sea. In derision He shall laugh at them; in wrath He shall speak to them; and in His sore displeasure He shall vex them. Who shall comfort those whom God hath purposely vexed? The policy of Mr. Blatchford was "to fight and defeat the churches," but He that sitteth in the Heavens shall laugh, and have all such in derision; for until He is defeated the gates of Hell shall not prevail against His Church.

II. The Voice of God the Son (Psalms 2:7-9). Hear now the language of the Anointed One who shall reign until all His enemies are put under His feet. In David, these words were not fulfilled in their literal and complete sense, but in David's Lord they shall be perfectly accomplished. This statement from the lips of Him who is the Mediator between God and man is full of deep significance. The meaning may be summed up under these four words.

1. REVELATION. "I will declare the decree." The decree may here stand for the covenant, or the purpose of God in His Son, with relation to the ungodly nations. In Christ the Word of God was made flesh and dwelt among us; the Only Begotten of the Father hath declared His mind and will, for the law of God was written in His heart.

2. SONSHIP. "The Lord hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son." Sonship, in a very unique sense, is emphatically taught, but there is no attempt to explain the mystery. Jehovah never said to any of the angels, "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee" (Hebrews 1:5). What "this day" may mean is difficult to understand. But it surely points to the fact that this relationship of Fatherhood and Sonship was entered into for the definite purpose of redemption. These words are referred to by Paul, as being fulfilled when God raised up Jesus from the dead (Acts 13:33). Spoken as they are in this Psalm by the Son, they may be prophetic of that notable day when He would be begotten from the dead, declaring Him to be the Son of God with power (Romans 1:3-4).

3. TRIUMPH. "I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession." The Son of God did not come into this world on a matter of speculation. He had the promise of God the Father that a people would be given Him, and finally, as King of the nations, He would have dominion from sea to sea, and "from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Psalms 72:8). The prophet Daniel saw the Ancient of Days giving Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him. "The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand." Surely our interests also are safe enough in His hands.

4. JUDGMENT. "Thou shalt break them-lawless nations-with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Psalms 2:9). When He comes, whose right it is to reign, He shall put down all ungodly rule and authority. In judgment will He establish righteousness in the earth. The kings and rulers of the earth take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed. But the Lord shall have them in derision, for "the kingdoms of this world shall become the Kingdom of our Lord and His Christ" (Revelation 11:15). Christ is the Man Child brought forth to rule all nations with a rod of iron (not in grace, but in unyielding righteousness), and has now been caught up unto God, and to His throne (Revelation 12:5). This same Jesus shall come again

III. The Voice of God the Spirit. In Psalms 2:10-12 we have a different tone. It is more like the voice of wounded love and entreaty. It is the Holy Spirit's work to convince of sin, and to guide into all truth. "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." He says-

1. BE WISE. "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings" (Psalms 2:10). Seeing that the Son of God will bring you into judgment, be wise now, while the day of your trial lasts. "Behold, now is the accepted time." Submission to God and His Son is the highest wisdom. They are wise who build on this rock.

2. BE INSTRUCTED. "Be instructed, ye judges of the earth." The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. Don't be so puffed up with pride as to refuse Him who speaketh from Heaven. Be willing as a child to sit at the feet of the Son of God and learn of Him. Receive the word at His lips. "Search the Scriptures." Gregory the Great said, "The Bible is God's heart in God's words."

3. BE RECONCILED. "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry." To kiss the Son is to lay hold of Him in an act of love and devotion. He who so kisses the Son kisses the Father also (John 5:23). The Holy. Spirit does not speak of Himself, but pleads with foolish, ignorant men to be reconciled to God lest they "perish in the way" (r.v.). Be reconciled to God, for God hath made Him (Christ) to be sin for us... that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

4. BE HUMBLE. "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling" (Psalms 2:11). Having given the Son the kiss of confession, and received from Him the kiss of forgiveness, we should serve the Lord with holy fear all the days of our life (Hebrews 12:28). Rejoice in His forgiving grace, but tremble at the thought of falling back into the lawlessness of the self-life. Serve the Lord with that holy reverence which fears lest it should offend Him in any way. Be obedient to His word, ready to do whatever your Lord may appoint. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit" (Ephesians 4:30). A SONG OF SALVATION

Psalm 3

The historical ground-work of this Psalm is found in the fifteenth chapter of Second Samuel. David's beloved son, Absalom, steals the hearts of the men of Israel, and then rebels against his father. It is a most humbling and distressing experience to discover that your own flesh, whom you had nourished and cherished, has become your most deadly enemy. What Absalom became to David, self, or the carnal mind, will sooner or later become to us, if, like him, we fall into temptation and sin. The flesh warreth against the Spirit. This Psalm may profitably be read with the Seventh of Romans. The Psalmist here suffers the agonies and joys of a soul passing from death into life; or from the power of the enemy into the liberty and gladness of God's salvation. Several things may be noted:-

I. His Enemy. They were numerous. "Many are they that rise up against me" (Psalms 3:1). They were exultant. They said, "There is no help for him in God" (Psalms 3:2). That soul is in a sad plight indeed, that is shut out from the "help of God." But sin-blinded men are incapable of forming a right judgment of such a case as this. They threw the same taunt in the teeth of our Lord while He hung helpless upon the Cross. "He trusted in God: let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him." What looks like failure and defeat, in the eyes of our enemies, may be but God's method of leading us into a larger experience of the riches of His grace.

II. His Faith. "But Thou O Lord art a shield about me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head" (Psalms 3:3, R.V.). While the unbelievers are saying, "There is no help for him in God," the believer is rejoicing in the consciousness that God is round about him as a shield of defence, and

that he is even now in God. Being in God, God becomes his glory, and the Lifter up of his head. My Shield, my Glory, my Lifter. He endures, like Moses, by seeing Him who is invisible. The heart that trusteth in Him will be helped (Psalms 28:7).

III. His Testimony. "I cried unto the Lord, and He heard me; I laid me down and slept; the Lord sustained me" (Psalms 3:4-5). Selah. This is a comforting word. He prayed, the Lord heard him, and so delivered him from all his fears and anxieties, that he was able to lie down and sleep peacefully, because the Lord sustained him. The prayer of faith shall save the fearful as well as the sick. The apostle James says, "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray" (James 5:13). He shall be kept in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on the Lord (Isaiah 26:3). This "Selah" at the end of Psalms 3:4 is most significant, when contrasted with the one at the end of Psalms 3:2. The word is supposed to be a musical sign, a pause, and used here to arrest attention. The word occurs in the Psalms 73 times. The language of Psalms 73:4 contradicts and belies the statement in Psalms 73:2. So these "Selahs" should be solemnly emphasised. Christian experience gives the lie to infidelity.

IV. His Courage. "I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about" (Psalms 3:6). Why should he fear the forces of evil which surrounded him, while he knew that Jehovah was about him as a shield. The man of holy vision is a man of courage. The servant of Elisha was full of fear when he saw the Syrian host encamped round about them, so he cried, "Alas my master, how shall we do?" But confidence and courage came into his heart after his eyes were opened (2 Kings 6). Joshua "feared not" after the "Captain of the Host" revealed Himself to him. As an old writer has said: "It makes no matter what our enemies may be, though for number, legions; for power, principalities; for subtilty, serpents; for cruelty, dragons; for vantage of place, a prince of the air; for maliciousness, spiritual wickedness. In Christ Jesus our Lord, we shall be more than conquerors." "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). .

V. His Victory. "Thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; Thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly" (Psalms 3:7). The Lord never smites a man behind his back. The cheek that was burning with pride and arrogance, will be made to burn with shame and dishonour. The teeth of the ungodly are often sharp and merciless, seeking to tear the character of the godly man to pieces: but the Lord can break their teeth, so that they become perfectly harmless. The salvation of God's people belongeth unto the Lord (Psalms 3:8). We are ready to forget this, and to cease to work out in our daily life, that which God the Spirit hath wrought in us. It is ours to trust, it is His to smite. Vengeance belongeth unto Him. The enemy may count us, as they counted Christ, sheep for their slaughter; and though for His sake we are killed all the day long, yet are we "more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (Romans 8:37). Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

WHOLESOME WORDS

Psalm 4

This psalm is dedicated to the leader of those who use stringed instruments. It is indeed a psalm of life. There are in it notes that speak of sadness, gladness, and madness. The various conditions, or seasons, of the life year are here, in a way, represented. We shall try and gather up the truth taught as having reference to three classes of individuals.

I. Words of Encouragement to the Believing. This testimony of the psalmist should be an inspiration to every child of God. What God did for him He can still do for those who put their trust in Him. What was that?

1. HE MADE HIM FREE. "Thou hast set me at large when I was in distress" (Psalms 4:1, R.V.). Through fear and distress, he had been like one in a prison, but the Lord set him at liberty. It is when men are at their wit's end, that they are made to see the salvation of God. We are shut up to faith that we might be brought out into a large place. To be set at large by the saving grace of. God is a great deliverance.

2. HE MADE HIM GLAD. "Thou hast put gladness in my Heart" (Psalms 4:7). The gladness of a harvest time is not to be compared with the gladness of a great spiritual deliverance. "Corn and wine," the richest of earth's blessings, come far short of the "joy of the Lord." God put gladness in the heart, by the manifestation of His grace and power on our behalf. Although we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice, with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

3. HE MADE HIM SAFE. "Thou Lord makest me dwell in safety" (Psalms 4:8). He could lie down, and sleep the sleep of peace; for the Lord gave him that sweet assurance of His protecting care, that all fear fled. "The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him" (Deuteronomy 33:12). Free, Glad, and Safe, is the condition of all, who by faith have received the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are set apart by the Lord as His own peculiar, personal treasure (Psalms 4:3).

II. Words of Rebuke to the Unbelieving. There are three things those "Sons of men" were guilty of, and for which the psalmist rebukes them. Three sins which many of the unbelieving "sons of men" in our own day are guilty of.

1. PRACTISING RIDICULE. "How long will ye turn my glory into dishonour?" (Psalms 4:2, R.V.). The glory of David was in that he trusted and hoped in the Lord (Psalms 3:3). Any fool may mock at faith, as he may mock at sin. The man must be morally mad who would attempt to make confidence in God appear to be. a dishonourable thing. Yet some do it.

2. LOVING VANITY. "How long will ye love vanity?" They love vanity who love that which is worthless to satisfy, that which is uncertain, that which has the appearance of being what it is not-the world. The experience of Solomon stands as a warning and a rebuke to all who set their hearts on earthly things. Anything and everything that occupies the place Christ should have, is vanity (1 John 2:15).

3. SEEKING FALSEHOOD. "How long will ye..seek after falsehood" (Psalms 4:2, r.V.). One does not need to go far in search of falsehood. He will find it in his own heart. To seek falsehood, for its own sake instead of the truth, is a positive proof of a mind at enmity with God. The false and deceitful heart seeks food convenient for it. Christ is the truth; true and honest hearts will seek Him. "Without are dogs...and every one that loveth a lie" (Revelation 22:15, R.V.).

III. Words of Entreaty to the Anxious. Let us now hear as with trumpet tone, a call to-

1. STAND. "Stand in awe, and sin not" (Psalms 4:4). Stop, before you go any further in sinful unbelief, and consider where, and what you are. Stand in awe at the thought of disobeying God's Word (Psalms 119:161). Stand in awe at the thought of the wages of sin (Romans 6:23). Stand in awe at the thought of opportunities lost, the uncertainty of life, and the certainty of judgment. Stand

in awe as you think of the infinite love and mercy of God towards sinners, in the sufferings and death of His Son. Stand in awe, lest ye should resist the gracious stirrings of His Holy Spirit and die in your sin.

2. COMMUNE. "Commune with your heart upon your bed, and be still." Have a quiet time with your own heart. Examine yourself. "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (1 Corinthians 11:31). The heart is deceitful. Commune with it, find out its motives, search into its desires, and cross-question its purposes. In the solitude of the bed-chamber, and in the stillness of the night, there is a favourable opportunity of finding out the true character of our own hearts. "Prove your own selves" (2 Corinthians 13:5). The bed and the heart are fields in which many startling discoveries have been made, many great battles fought, and many victories lost and won-bloodless battles, whose issues reach away into the depths of eternity.

3. SACRIFICE. "Offer the sacrifices of righteousness" (Psalms 4:5). As the result of standing and communing, there are sure to be revelations. Things to be given up, or offered unto God as sacrifices. Then let the sacrifice be righteous. Let there be a willing and wholehearted surrender to the will of God. There are sacrifices, like Absalom's which are not righteous, but only a hypocritical performance, to blind the eyes of the God-fearing, and secure some personal advantage (2 Samuel 15:12). Your reasonable service is to present yourselves unto God, "for ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price." Let us not forget Him, who did offer unto God the sacrifice of righteousness, when He offered Himself without spot. He hath left us "an example that we should follow His steps."

4. TRUST. "Trust in the Lord." Trust and obey, there is no other way. The standing in awe, and the communing with the heart should lead to faith or it will end in failure. Trust is a very simple and sweet word, associated as it is with the greatest of all names, Jehovah, and the most precious of all privileges and blessings. Any child can understand it, but does any man, or angel in Heaven, understand to the full all the possibilities that lie within it, as the link that binds the soul to the Eternal God?

PRAYERFUL PURPOSES.

Psalms 5:1-8.

Those who believe in set forms of prayer can find no justification for such a practice in the Book of Psalms. There is throughout the whole book a blessed disregard for all such mechanical and stultifying conventionalities, because the prayers of the psalmists are the utterances of burning, agonising hearts. Every variety of form is adopted, according to the varied needs of the soul. We shall note- I. His Requests. There are four definite petitions. He prays-

1. That his WORDS may be attended to. "Give ear to my words, O Lord." We don't always wish the Lord to mark our words, they are at times such poor vehicles of our soul's desires. But the psalmist meant every word that he uttered in the Divine ear. Beware of vain words. We are not heard for our much speaking.

2. That his MEDITATION may be considered. "O Lord, consider my meditation." There may be abundance of eloquent words where there is no real exercise of soul, no true spirit of prayer. The Lord hath said, "Come, let us reason together." Surely to reason out a matter implies serious and

deliberate thinking. Our prayer-words should be the outcome of solemn meditation on the whole inner condition and circumstances of the soul. God not only heareth the words, but He looketh upon the heart. It has been said that "Prayer without fervency is like hunting with a dead dog."

3. That his CRY may be heard. "Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King and my God" (Psalms 5:2). These are three expressive "Mys." "My Cry, My King, My God." The meditation is the source, the words are the channel, but the cry is the force with which the stream of prayer rushes on. It is possible to have correct words, and deep thinking, and yet no real intensity of heart, no agony of soul. It was when God heard the "Cry of the Israelites" that He sent deliverance (Exodus 3:7). The cry is unto Jehovah, as his King and God, as his Ruler and Creator. As He who fashioned his being, and governs his life. This consciousness of subjection and ownership gives intensity and hopefulness to the cry of need. It was with kindred, but deeper feelings, that Christ cried on the Cross, "My God, My God."

4. That in RIGHTEOUSNESS he might be led. "Lead me, O Lord, in Thy righteousness, because of mine enemies" (Psalms 5:8). Newberry reads it, "because of mine observers." We need leading into the righteousness of God because of those who are watching our words and our ways, that they, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father in Heaven. This He is willing to do for His Name's sake (Psalms 23:3). "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:6).

II. His Resolutions. Earnest praying will lead to earnest acting. Our Lord said, "He that heareth and doeth these sayings of Mine, I will liken him unto a wise man" (Matthew 7:24). The psalmist resolves that-

1. IN THE MORNING HE WOULD PRAY. "My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning" (Psalms 5:3). Let each opening day be met with an open heart. God hears the voice of the bird in the morning, why not thine? Morning by morning let the keys of your life be put into the hands of your Lord and Master. The morning voice must be specially sweet to Him, who, "in the morning, rising up a great while before day, went into a solitary place, and there prayed."

2. IN EXPECTATION HE WOULD LOOK. "In the morning will I order my prayer unto Thee, and will keep watch" (Psalms 5:3, R.V.). Like Daniel, he would open his window and look toward the Holy City. He would order his prayer, as Elijah ordered the sacrifice upon the altar on Carmel, and kept watch for the coming fire; or as when he prayed for the rain, and told his servant to go again and watch for the cloud like a "man's hand." We direct our letters to our friends at a distance, and "keep watch" for the postman. In the welldoing of praying and watching be not weary, "for in due season ye shall reap if you faint not."

3. IN GRACE HE WOULD COME. "But as for me, in the multitude of Thy loving-kindness I will come into Thy house" (Psalms 5:7, R.V.). The praying spirit longs for closer fellowship with God. He believes, that through the great loving-kindness of God, he would yet have the joy of fellowship and service in His house. He does not look upon this privilege as being the result of any merit of his own, but all according to the goodness of God. The house of God not made with hands, can only be entered through the mercy and grace of Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:1-6).

4. IN FEAR HE WOULD WORSHIP. "In Thy fear will I worship toward Thy holy temple." The earthly temple had not yet been built, but David would worship toward the throne of His Holiness. Worship is the highest possible form of service. Praying, serving, worshipping. We first pray in the outer court, at the altar of sacrifice. We serve in the holy place, but in the holiest of all we worship. The voice of testimony should frequently give place for the silence of adoration. In His strength we serve, in His fear we worship. What Satan asked of Christ, Christ expects from us. "Worship Him" (Matthew 4:9) and the Kingdom shall be thine.

POWERFUL PLEAS

Psalm 6.

The chief reason why the Psalms are so full of praise is because they are so full of prayers. In this Psalm we have a troubled soul using some powerful arguments with God, giving us an example of prevailing importunity. He mentions-

I. The Anger of the Lord. "O Lord, rebuke me not in Thine anger." His sensitive soul is deeply alarmed at the thought of the awfulness of God's anger, and the hotness of His displeasure (Psalms 6:1). He is terrified at the possibility of deserving his chastening in wrath. Serve the Lord with fear.

II. His Own Weakness. "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak" (Psalms 6:2). A real consciousness of our own impotency will give urgency and point to our pleadings.

III. His Own Sorrowfulness. "My soul is sore vexed, but Thou, O Lord, how long?" (Psalms 6:3). His was no mere lip-praying; the depths of his soul were stirred up; there was agony in his cry.

IV. The Mercies of God. "Oh save me for Thy mercies' sake" (Psalms 6:4). This is a mighty plea in the eyes of Him whose Name is the Lord God "Merciful." He who "delighteth in mercy" will not be deaf to this cry.

V. The Profitlessness of Death. "In death there is no remembrance of Thee," etc. (Psalms 6:5). This is true of those spiritually dead. Plead for quickening that ye might be saved from a God-forgetting state of soul.

VI. The Significance of Tears. "I water my couch with my tears" (Psalms 6:6). Jesus also wept, and God can never forget tie value of such pure heart-drops of grief and silent witnesses of love.

VII. His Own Hatred of Iniquity. "Depart from me all ye workers of iniquity" (Psalms 6:8). He further pleads his separateness in spirit from the ways and methods of the ungodly.

VIII. His Own Faith in God. "The Lord hath heard... the Lord will receive my prayer" (Psalms 6:8-10). The answer had come into his heart; he believed the message, and rested on the faithfulness of God. "Go thou and do likewise." IN THE FACE OF THE FOE

Psalm 7.

Learn from this Psalm how to behave when face to face with wicked men, and the principles and forces of unrighteousness.

I. Trust. "O Lord my God, in Thee do I put my trust" (Psalms 7:1). Keep the shield of faith ever bright with constant use. "Happy is He who hath the God of (wayward) Jacob for his help" (Psalms 146:5).

II. Pray. "Save me from all them that persecute me" (Psalms 7:1). Call upon God to arise, and to lift Himself up for your defence (Psalms 7:6). It is His prerogative to execute righteousness and judgment for the oppressed (Psalms 103:6).

III. Search. Search yourself and your ways, lest this trial may have come upon you because of iniquity (Psalms 7:3-4) Let God also search your heart and your hands, lest there may be some hidden hindrance to His help (Psalms 66:18).

IV. Testify. "The Lord shall judge the people" (Psalms 7:8). Don't be afraid to speak out and declare His righteousness, even when His providence seems most against thee, for the Lord doth reward us according to the cleanness of our hands (Psalms 18:20).

V. Confess. "My defence is of God, which saveth the upright in heart" (Psalms 7:10). Although the enemy may say, "There is no help for Him in God," make full confession of Him as your present and all-sufficient Saviour.

VI. Warn. "God is angry with the wicked every day, if he turn not He will whet His sword" (Psalms 7:11-12). Don't be intimidated by their threatenings or scorn. Warn them that the axe is laid at the root of all fruitless trees (Matthew 3:10). The sword of the Lord is never sharpened in vain.

VII. Praise. "I will praise the Lord according to His righteousness, and will sing praise to the Name of the Lord Most High" (Psalms 7:17). Fearless trust is sure to end in fullness of praise. "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." THE EXCELLENT NAME

Psalm 8

"How excellent is Thy Name in all the earth." These, are the first and last words of this Psalm, and may be taken as the keynote. His Name stands for all the riches and glory of His character. The glory of it is "above the Heavens," although the Heavens are a reflection of it (Psalms 19:1). This wondrous glory, the glory of infinite grace, can also manifest itself through such weak things as "babes and sucklings" (Psalms 8:2; Matthew 11:25). God hath been pleased so to choose weak things that the might of the worldling might be confounded (1 Corinthians 1:27). But the glory of this Name, which is seen in the "moon and the stars"-the work of His fingers (Psalms 8:3)-finds its chief manifestation in "man," insignificant as he is, when contrasted with the greatness of the material heavens. "What is man that Thou art mindful of him?" (v; 4). See how the excellency of His Name is revealed in His dealings with man. It is seen-

I. In the Character of Man. "Thou hast made him a little lower than God" (Psalms 8:5, R.v.). Made after His image, but a "little lower." How near God has come to man in imprinting His own likeness in Him. What ravages sin hath wrought that this holy temple should become the workshop of the Devil. Grace restores to sonship.

II. In His Mindfulness of Him. "What is man that Thou art mindful of Him?" The mindfulness of God is another manifestation of the excellency of His character. He is mindful of man in all the arrangements of His material creation and providence. This gracious mindfulness began before

the foundation of the world, when in His purpose the Lamb was slain. What is man that his highest interests are for ever in the mind of God?

III. In the Honour given Him. "Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour; Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands" (Psalms 8:5-6). All things were put under him, till sin entered, then the crown fell from his head, and had to be given to another, even Jesus, who was made for a little while lower than the angels; who, after the sufferings of a substitutionary death, was crowned with glory and honour (Hebrews 2:8-9). How excellent is the Name of Him who sought to put such glory on the head of man!

"How poor, how rich, how abject, how august, How complicate, how wonderful is man."

IV. In His Sacrifice for Man "What is man...that Thou visitest him? In a very deep and real sense, God hath visited man in the Person of His only beloved Son. Man, in his sin and shame, could not visit God in peace, but in the excellency of His Name, and at an awful cost, He hath visited man. Visited him in his hopeless distress, bringing with Him and offering to him a perfect remedy for all his sins and sorrows. "Lord, what is man that Thou shouldest set Thine heart upon Him?" (Job 7:17).

I WILL, FOR THOU HAST

Psalms 9:1-10

It is good when our "I wills" find their motive power in the "Thou hasts" of God. In this Psalm there is- I. A Joyful Purpose, This purpose was-

1. TO PRAISE GOD. "I will praise Thee, O Lord" (Psalms 9:1). Praise is surely the expression of a full and satisfied heart. The salvation accomplished for us by Jesus Christ is such as demands continual praise (Hebrews 13:15).

2. TO TESTIFY FOR GOD. "I will shew forth all Thy marvellous works." His wonderful works of grace are well worthy of being shown forth by the lips and lives of all who have experienced the power and riches of them.

3. TO REJOICE IN GOD. "I will be glad and rejoice in Thee" (Psalms 9:2). This gladness is something deeper than that produced by the mere increase of corn and wine (Psalms 4:7). It is the joy of the Lord, because it is joy in God (Php_4:4).

II. A Powerful Reason This reason, like the purpose, is threefold,

1. Because of His FAITHFULNESS. "Thou hast maintained my cause" (Psalms 9:4). It is His to maintain the cause of the afflicted and the poor in spirit (Psalms 140:12). When our cause is the cause of God, it will be stoutly maintained by Him.

2. Because of His POWER. "Thou hast rebuked the heathen" (Psalms 9:5). All the pride and possessions of the ungodly "shall flow away in the day of His wrath " (Job 20:28). Heathenish thoughts and practices are rebuked in the presence of the Lord.

3. Because of His MERCY. "Thou Lord hast not forsaken them that seek Thee" (Psalms 9:10). God, in all the riches of His grace and power is ever within the reach of the wholehearted seeker

(Jeremiah 29:13). The great Deliverer of the past, is the same Deliverer for the present and the future.

III. An Inspiring Hope This is-

1. The Hope of ENDURANCE. "The Lord shall endure for ever" (Psalms 9:7). The blessings of God's grace are as lasting as God Himself. As long as He endures, His redeemed ones will be enriched with the Divine life and fullness. "Ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

2. The Hope of RIGHTEOUSNESS. "He shall judge the world in righteousness" (Psalms 9:8). Unrighteousness, the fruit of the mystery of sin, is ever with us, but "He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom He hath ordained" for this purpose (Acts 17:31). "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

3. The Hope of SALVATION. "The Lord shall be a refuge for the oppressed " (Psalms 9:9). For those oppressed with inward sin or outward trouble. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble." They are safely kept whose life is hid with Christ in God.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WICKED

Psalm 10

When God, as the light of His people, hides Himself (Psalms 10:1), the ungodly owls of darkness are sure to manifest themselves. They are-

I. Boastful. "The wicked boasteth of his heart's desire" (Psalms 10:3); although that desire is for things forbidden of God and destructive to his own soul. Even the man that boasted in his lawful riches was branded by God as a fool (Luke 12:20), "The desire of the wicked shall perish" (Psalms 112:10).

II. Perverse. "He blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth" (Psalms 10:3). They honour men accord ing to the amount of their possessions, instead of the pureness of their lives. They call light darkness, and darkness light. Like Balaam, they love the wages of unrighteousness.

III. Proud. "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God"-will not require it (r.v. Psalms 10:4). In his pride and self-confidence, he has no sense of his need of God. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.

IV. Godless. "God is not in all his thoughts" (Psalms 10:4). Every day he plays the fool, by practically saying, "There is no God." No matter how much God in His providence may be doing for him, in his own soul and character he is utterly godless, guilty, and hopeless.

V. Blind. "Thy judgments are far above out of his sight" (Psalms 10:5). He is so short sighted, that he cannot see the marvellous workings of God in nature or in grace. Like the man with the muck rake, the crown of glory is out of his sight, because he is blinded by the love of this world.

VI. Self-confident. "He saith in his heart, I shall not be moved" (Psalms 10:6). Because sentence against unbelief and evil workers is not executed speedily, they imagine themselves secure. But while they say, Peace and safety, sudden destruction cometh upon them. In wrath God shall move them-move them out of their very graves, into a hopeless eternity (Revelation 20:12-13).

VII. Deceitful. "Under his tongue is mischief....he lieth in wait as a lion to catch the poor...he humbleth himself that the helpless may fall" (Psalms 10:7-10, R.V.). The principle of righteousness is not in him. His smooth words have under them the poison of sinful lust. If he croucheth in lowliness, it is that he might devour as a lion. His heart is deceitful, and his life can be nothing else.

VIII. Deceived. "He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten; He will never see it" (Psalms 10:11). But "God hath seen it, for He beholdeth mischief and spite, to requite it with His hand" (Psalms 10:14). In deceiving others, he deceives himself. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked, whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7). A BLESSED AND SORROWFUL CONDITION.

Psalm 11.

The state of the righteous and the wicked are set before us here in striking contrast.

I. The Condition of the Righteous. They are-

1. TRUSTFUL. "In the Lord put I my trust" (Psalms 11:1). Their confidence is not in themselves, but in the Lord, and, though He slay them, yet will they trust in Him. They knew the Name of the Lord as a strong tower, they ran into it, and are safe (Proverbs 18:10).

2. DESPISED. The ungodly deride them, saying, "Flee as a bird to your mountain" (Psalms 11:1, Psalms 9:9). Yes, thank God, they have a mountain to flee to; but where will they flee to when the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness? They may bend their bow now and "shoot at the upright in heart" (Psalms 11:2), but where shall they flee when God whets His sword and bends His bow? (Psalms 7:12).

3. TRIED. "The Lord trieth the righteous" (Psalms 11:5). It is because that He is righteous that He trieth the hearts of men (Psalms 7:9). He tried Abraham, and the blessedness of the man that endureth temptation came upon him (James 1:12). Wood, hay, and stubble are never put into the fiery furnace of trial (Daniel 6:23).

4. LOVED. "The righteous Lord loveth the righteous" (Psalms 11:7). The compassionate eyes of the Lord are ever over the righteous, and His ears open unto their prayers (1 Peter 3:12). Loved with an everlasting love, a love that is stronger than death, and that the many waters of this world's sins and sorrows cannot quench.

II. The Condition of the Wicked.

1. THEY SECRETLY OPPOSE THE RIGHTEOUS. "They make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart" (Psalms 11:2). "They shoot their arrows, even bitter words, that they may shoot in secret at the perfect" (Psalms 64:3-4). Their carnal minds are at enmity against God, and all that is God-like in His people. But every hidden thing shall be revealed.

2. THEIR ACTS ARE SEEN BY THE LORD. "His eyes behold, His eyelids try the children of men" (Psalms 11:4). Their secret purposes are naked before Him with whom they have to do. Even now they suffer for their evil-doing, for "the face of the Lord is against them" (Psalms 34:16). All that the "face of the Lord" stands for is set against their principles of life.

3. THEIR MANNER OF LIFE IS HATED BY THE LORD. "The wicked and him that loveth violence, His soul hateth" (Psalms 11:5). God loved a world of sinners, but the Cross of Christ is the expression of His infinite hatred of sin. To love wickedness and hate righteousness is to be in league with the Devil, and become a fit subject for the wrath of God. God is angry with the wicked every day.

4. THEIR FINAL PORTION IS FEARFUL. "Upon the wicked He shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup" (Psalms 11:6). The wider the cup of iniquity, the greater the portion of curse. This rain of snares will entrap every guilty foot, and this fire and tempest will search out every hidden thing (Psalms 75:8).

HELP, LORD.

Psalm 12

In this psalm we have a loud cry to the Lord for help in backsliding times. To whom can we go, when the tongues of pride and vanity are clamouring so loudly that the testimony of God's people can scarcely be heard. Our help cometh from the Lord, He giveth power to the faint. The psalmist gives us many reasons for thus calling upon the help of the Lord. "Help, Lord-

I. For the Godly Man Ceaseth" (Psalms 12:1). Godliness has never been popular amongst men. In proportion to the fewness of their number, and the weakness of their character, will wicked men and the powers of darkness prosper. "Ye are the salt of the earth; if the salt lose His savour, wherewith shall it be salted?"

II. "For the Faithful Fail." In such times of testing and general backsliding, the faithful are in great danger of letting go their grip of God and drifting down with the polluting stream. To fail in our faithfulness to God and men, in such adverse circumstances, is always a great temptation. Then is the time to cry "Help, Lord.

III. For Vanity, Flattery, and Deceit are Prevalent (Psalms 12:2). This is a threefold cord that can only be broken by the help of God. In the absence of godliness, vanity, flattery, and deceit, are the natural outcome of the unrenewed heart (Romans 5:9).

IV. For Men's Confidence is in Themselves. They say, "With our tongue we will prevail; our lips are our own; who is lord over us?" (Psalms 12:4). Confidence, was never put to a baser use than this. The tongue is a mighty weapon, but when ungodly men hope to prevail by it, it is but an "unruly evil, full of deadly poison!" "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." Such self-confidence is sure to lead to the denial of the Lordship of Christ.

V. For Thou hast Promised. "For the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord" (Psalms 12:5). The promises of God are always a powerful plea for help. The ungodly are "strangers to the covenant of promise," but let us see that we don't act as if we were strangers to them. His promises are given that they might be claimed.

VI. For Thy Words are Pure (Psalms 12:6). There is no possibility of corruption and deceit in them. His words are "as silver tried in a furnace on the earth, purified seven times" (r.v.). The words of the Lord are pure, enlightening the eyes (Psalms 19:8). The eye-sparkling power of the Word of God is being constantly proven. Every answered prayer, every promise received, has an

eye-enlightening effect. "He is faithful that has promised."

VII. For without Thy Help, Wickedness shall Prevail. "The wicked walk on every side, when vileness is exalted among the sons of men" (Psalms 12:8, r.v.). The world loves its own. The power of the presence of God, in His people, and with them, is a standing rebuke to all vileness. All our efforts, apart from this, will be utterly useless. "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord." "Help, Lord!"

HOW LONG, LORD?

Psalm 13.

The preceding psalm is a cry for help: to the psalmist this help seems long in coming. One has to learn to wait as well as pray. Such varied experiences are needed for the discipline of the soul. The language of this psalm is- I. The Language of Anxiety. He is concerned about-

1. THE DIVINE FORGETFULNESS. "How long wilt Thou forget me, O Lord?" (Psalms 13:1). God is mindful of His people, but sometimes His dealings with us may seem as if He had forgotten. Prayers are long in being answered, and the supernatural may for a time have disappeared from our lives.

2. THE FELT WANT OF HIS PRESENCE. "How long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me?" Those who never miss the absence of the face of God are more to be pitied. It may be our own iniquities and sins that hide him from us (Isaiah 59:2); but, if not, though He hide His face for a moment, we are still assured of His everlasting kindness (Isaiah 54:7-8).

3. HIS OWN IMPOTENCY. "How long shall I take counsel in my soul?" (Psalms 13:2). Cast upon his own resources, he finds them altogether unavailing. Even the best and wisest of men, when left to themselves, are poor indeed. He longs to get out of himself into the wisdom and strength of God. To be fruitful, we must abide in Him.

4. THE POWER OF HIS ENEMY. "How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?" The absence of the power of God, implies the presence of the power of the enemy. How long shall mine enemy triumph? Just so long as the face of God is unseen. Thy face Lord will we seek; that face revealed to us, in the face of Jesus Christ.

II. The Language of Intercession. He now pleads for-

1. THE CONSIDERATION OF HIS CASE. "Consider and hear me, O Lord my God" (Psalms 13:3). There is a holy familiarity about this request. He who said, "Come, let us reason together," condescends to deal with us as a man. The case that is stated fully will by Him be considered carefully.

2. ENLIGHTENED EYES. "Lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death" (Psalms 13:3). The influence of Divine light is to awaken from death (Ephesians 5:14). The absence of spiritual light, like the natural, means barrenness and death. The eyes of our understanding need to be enlightened ere we can know what is the hope of His calling, the riches of His inheritance, or the exceeding greatness of His power (Ephesians 1:18-19).

III. The Language of Confession. He makes confession of his-

1. FAITH. "I have trusted in Thy mercy" (Psalms 13:5). What else can any needy soul trust. Having trusted His mercy in the past, we will trust it still. It is a mercy that His mercy is available.

2. HOPE. "My heart shall rejoice in Thy salvation." "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." He rejoices in hope, at the remembrance of His past mercies, saying, "I will sing unto the Lord, because He hath dealt bountifully with me" (Psalms 13:6). The God who hath delivered will yet deliver, so faith may sing, even while it seems, in the providence of God, as if He had forgotten. Yet, how long, Lord?

GENERAL CORRUPTION

Psalm 14

Although this Psalm is by no means the most popular, it has the unique honour of appearing twice in this book (Compare Psa. 53). The utter failure of man, in the sight of God, needs to be emphasised. See here-

I. Human Folly. "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." Humanity as a whole is that fool; it is practically atheistic: The word "fool," it is said, comes from a term which means the act of withering. The sin-withered deceitful heart of unbelief departs from a living God, and would seek to justify self by saying, "No God."

II. Divine Scrutiny. "The Lord looked down from Heaven," etc. What for? To see if there were any seeking the advancement of science, art, or philosophy? No, to see if there were any that did understand their true condition, and seek God (Psalms 14:2). The chief concern of God about man is, that he seeks not Himself. "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found."

III. Universal Failure. "They are all gone aside (all grown sour), all together become filthy: none that doeth good, no, not one" (Psalms 14:3). Sour and filthy; like savourless salt, good for nothing. This is a terribly sweeping indictment, but it is a Divine one. God here speaks of what He saw; we may pretend to see something different, but His judgment will stand (Romans 3:10-12).

IV. Practical Ungodliness. "Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat of My people, and call not upon the Lord" (Psalms 14:4). Even in the midst of general, moral corruption, God has never been without a witness. The characteristics of the workers of iniquity are the same to-day as of old: ignorance of God; hatred of His people; unbelief-"they call not upon the Lord." To reject the knowledge of God is to be rejected by Him (Hosea 4:6).

V. Salvation Needed. "O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion," etc. (Psalms 14:7). Backsliding Israel, like the sinners of to-day, needed to be "redeemed out of all his troubles" (Psalms 25:22). The Deliverer, who is able to turn away ungodliness, must come out of Zion (Romans 11:26)-out from the presence of God, and the place where His eternal honour dwelleth. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." THE HEAVENLY CITIZEN

Psalm 15

This Psalm might be called "The Song of the Sojourner." A question is asked, "Lord, who shall sojourn in Thy tent? Who shall dwell in the hill of Thy holiness?" In the answer given we have the

characteristics mentioned which must belong to the spiritual pilgrim, who would abide in the fellowship of God (Revelation 7:14-15). He must be-

I. Upright in his Walk. "He that walketh uprightly." "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked" (1 John 2:6). They must walk by faith who would walk uprightly in the midst of a wicked and perverse generation. God can have no fellowship with unrighteousness.

II. Truthful in his Heart. "Speaketh the truth in his heart" (Psalms 15:2). Their hearts must be clean who would abide in the tabernacle of Him who "looketh upon the heart." "The pure in heart shall see God." When the truth is not in the heart, the lips are prone to be deceitful.

III. Charitable to his Neighbour. "He backbiteth not with his tongue....nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour" (Psalms 15:3). A truth-loving heart never uses a backbiting tongue. He cannot help hearing reproaches against his neighbour, but he does refrain from "taking them up." If evil reproaches were but let alone by God's people they would soon rot.

IV. Careful of his Company. "In his eyes a vile person is contemned, but he honoureth them that fear the Lord" (Psalms 15:4). Like Mordecai, he can offer no respect to the vile and haughty Haman. He is a companion of all them that fear the Lord. He who walks with God, as Noah and Enoch did, will be separate from sinners.

V. Faithful to his Promise. If he swears or gives his solemn promise to do a thing, he will do it, even to his own hurt, and change not (Judges 11:35). This faithfulness is but a faint imitation of the faithfulness of Him, "who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the Cross" (Hebrews 12:2). "Having loved His own, He loved them unto the end."

VI. Merciful in his Dealings. "He taketh no reward against the innocent" (Psalms 15:5). He will not seek to take advantage of the ignorant or the poor; he will not be guilty, as some lawyers are, of taking a reward against the innocent. To him bribery is robbery. He will not wear Christ's livery and deny Him honest service (Numbers 22:18).

VII. Stablished in his Character. "He that doeth these things shall never be moved." The storms and floods of earth cannot move him out of his place, because his life is rooted in the will of God. He is like a tree planted by rivers of water; ye shall not know when drought cometh. This is the man who abides in the tabernacle of God's service, and who dwells in the holy hill of His presence.
A GOODLY HERITAGE.

Psalms 16:5-11.

"The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup...yea, I have a goodly heritage."

I. The Nature of It. It is-

1. LARGE. "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance." The infinite wealth of the character of God Himself is the portion of the believer's cup. No wonder that he has to say, "My cup runneth over." "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul" (Lamentations 3:24); "I know whom I have believed," saith the apostle (2 Timothy 1:12).

2. PLEASANT. "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places" (Psalms 16:6). Experiences that would otherwise have been desert wastes, have, by the presence and goodness of God become "pleasant places." In this portion we are made partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. These are the ways of pleasantness and the paths of peace.

3. ETERNAL. "The Lord is the portion of my cup" (Psalms 16:5). It will take all eternity to dip up this river of pleasure with the little cup of our life. The portion is divinely suited to the needs of the eternal spirit of man. God's gift of eternal life is the gift of Himself.

II. The Effect of It. The conscious possession of such a goodly heritage must powerfully influence the life. There will be-

1. Praise. "I will bless the Lord who hath given me counsel" (Psalms 16:7). All who have been counselled by His Holy Spirit, and constrained to believe in, and yield themselves to God, have very much to bless Him for. "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you" (John 15:16).

2. Fellowship. "I have set the Lord always before me...He is at my right hand." "Always before me." What an inspiration and comfort in the midst of all the trials and turmoils of life! What a source of restfulness of spirit, with regard to all that was before him! If the miser, or prosperous man of the world, loves to set his possessions before him, so does the man of God; but how different their nature and results.

3. Stability. "Because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." The man who always sets the Lord before him is little likely to be moved away from the hope of the Gospel. All the popular winds of adverse doctrine cannot move him. His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.

4. Gladness. "Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth" (Psalms 16:9). His heart is glad, because it is healed and satisfied. This is not an attempt at rejoicing, like many of the world's "get-ups"; it is the natural or inevitable consequence of a certain condition or attitude of soul. "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:11).

5. Guidance. "Thou wilt shew me the path of life" (Psalms 16:11). Though this holy path of life may be narrow, the trusting soul is confident that He will reveal it moment by moment, and step by step. The path of the high Christian life is the path of continual faith and continual obedience. Day by day we need to be shown the path He would have us follow

6. Hope. "In Thy presence is fullness of joy; in Thy right hand are pleasures for evermore" (r.v.). Although now the sons of God, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him." Although His presence is with us now, we have not yet passed into the fullness of the blessing of His presence in the glory-land. He holds in His right hand, reserved for us, "pleasures for evermore." "Blessed Hope!" (Titus 2:13).

PRAYER AND TESTIMONY

Psalms 17:1-8, Psalms 17:15.

There must always be a vital relationship between prayer and testimony. Those who are most powerful in prayer are most likely to give the most powerful testimony. The songs of David are just about equalled with his prayers, Influence for God springs out of influence with God. Observe

here- I. The Things Asked from God. David prays for-

1. DIVINE ATTENTION. "Hear the right, O Lord, attend unto my cry" (Psalms 17:1). It is for the glory of His Name that He attends to the righteous cry of His children. God has a quick ear to "hear the right." No mother or physician can give such close attention to our need as our heavenly Father.

2. DIVINE UPHOLDING. "Hold up my goings in Thy paths" (Psalms 17:5). He knows that it is not in man to direct his steps (Jeremiah 10:23). By the help of His gracious hand we are kept from stumbling. Our footsteps will slip when we cease to lean upon His strength. He is able to keep the feet of His holy ones (1 Samuel 2:9, r.v.).

3. DIVINE MANIFESTATION. "Shew Thy marvellous loving-kindness" (Psalms 17:7). He pleads for a further revelation of God's character in His kindness, loving-kindness, marvellous loving-kindness. It is so excellent that it constrains men to put their trust under the shadow of His wings (Psalms 36:7). This marvellous loving-kindness finds its perfect manifestation in and through Jesus Christ.

4. DIVINE PROTECTION. "Keep me as the apple of the eye; hide me under the shadow of Thy wings" (Psalms 17:8). They will surely be securely kept who are hidden beneath His wings, and guarded as the apple of the eye. His pinions are long and powerful, and one is more jealous of the eye than any other part of the body. The strength and the carefulness of God are more than enough to save from our "deadly enemies!"

II. The Testimony Given for God. We are assured by the Psalmist that God had-

1. PROVED HIM. "Thou has proved mine heart" (Psalms 17:3). The heart, that is so prone to be deceitful, must first be dealt with. The good seed is only fruitful in a "good and honest heart" (Luke 8:15).

2. VISITED HIM. "Thou hast visited me in the night" (Psalms 17:3). The heart is proven that it might be visited in mercy and grace. He visits in the night of quiet restfulness, in the night of darkness and sorrow. He knows when to visit, and what to bring. "Behold, I stand at the door" (Revelation 3:20).

3. TRIED HIM. "Thou hast tried me, and findeth no evil purpose in me" (r.v., margin). The trial of your faith is precious; when perfectly sincere, it will be to His praise and glory (1 Peter 1:7). When our hearts or secret purposes condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.

4. SUSTAINED HIM. "By the word of Thy lips, I have kept me from the ways of the violent" (Psalms 17:4, R.V.). By taking heed to His Word, any young man may cleanse his way (Psalms 119:9). We are kept by the power of God through faith-faith in His word. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. The prayer of our Great High Priest was, "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

5. ANSWERED HIM. "I have called upon Thee, for Thou wilt answer me, O God" (Psalms 17:6, R.V.). He testifies that the reason why he prays is because God answers Him. "Let your requests be made known unto Him" (Php_4:6).

6. SATISFIED HIM. "I will behold Thy face..I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness" (Psalms 17:15). Such a glorious prospect is enough to make the heart sing for joy, even now, when we but see through a glass darkly. God's likeness is His best and greatest gift. The more like Him we become now, the deeper will our soul satisfaction be. THE GOD OF SALVATION

Psalms 18:1-3.

From the heading of this Psalm we learn that it was written as a song of deliverance. The first three verses contain a manifold revelation and a manifold obligation.

I. The Revelation. This is a revelation of the character of Jehovah as a Saviour. In Psalms 18:2 eight terms are used that are suggestive of so many aspects of His saving grace- 1. For REFUGE, He is My Rock. The unchangeable Rock of Ages.

2. For PROTECTION, He is My Fortress. "His Name is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe." "The Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him" (Psalms 24:7).

3. For OPPRESSION, He is My Deliverer. "Deliver us from evil, for Thine is the Kingdom, and the power" (Matthew 6:13).

4. For WORSHIP, He is My God. It is written, "Him only shalt thou worship."

5. For WEAKNESS, He is My Strength. They that wait upon the Lord shall exchange strength. "My strength is made perfect in weakness."

6. For DEFENCE, He is My Buckler. Put on the whole armour of God, and over all the buckler, or shield of faith.

7. For POWER, He is My Horn. "All power is given unto Me; go ye therefore." Who shall resist Him?

8. For PROSPECT, He is My High Tower. Those seated in heavenly places have got a delightful view. From their high tower they can see the land that is "fairer than day."

II. The Obligations. Such marvellous privileges of grace have also gracious responsibilities. What are they? To-

1. LOVE HIM. "I will love Thee, O Lord" (Psalms 18:1). The first and great commandment was: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." Surely such manifestation of His love should constrain us. Let it be also a thing of the will (1 Corinthians 13:13).

2. TRUST HIM. "In Him I will trust" (Psalms 18:2). God has done everything for us, and is willing to be everything to us, but when there is no heart trust, the door of the soul is barred against Him.

3. PRAISE HIM. "Who is worthy to be praised" (Psalms 18:3). Those who "call upon the Lord" are most likely to praise Him. He is worthy. Think of all He hath done, and of His longsuffering mercy. "Worthy is the Lamb, to receive glory and honour." THE GREAT DELIVERANCE

Psalms 18:4-20.

This most majestic Psalm was sung by David, not as a king, but as "the servant of the Lord." The keynote is struck loudly at the beginning. "I will love the Lord...I will trust the Lord...I will call upon

the Lord...so shall I be saved." Love, trust, prayer, assurance. If there are great heights here, there are also terrible depths. To lift from the deepest depth, up to the highest height, is the glory of the grace of this Deliverer. While this Psalm records the experiences of a soul passing from death unto life, it is also prophetic of the sufferings, the death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. The Need. His need was great for He was compassed about with the -

1. "SORROWS OF DEATH" (Psalms 18:4). To a soul without hope these sorrows are most pungent. It is the sorrow of losing every earthly blessing, of entering into the darkness of despair. The Philippian jailer felt the pangs of them. (Acts 16:30).

2. SORROWS OF MEN. "Floods of ungodly men made me afraid." In times of soul conviction, the enemy is sure to come in like a flood. The world's mind and ways are against the purpose of his heart.

3. "SORROWS OF HELL" (Psalms 18:5). "THE CORDS OF SHEOL WERE ROUND ABOUT ME" (R.V.). Fearful cords that would drag the soul down to eternal death. The joys of Heaven are best known by those who have felt the "sorrows of Hell."

II. The Confession. "In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God" (Psalms 18:6). He was in real distress, and so his prayer was unfeigned, and his confession wholehearted. When a man's distress is as keenly felt as this, he has no hope of saving himself by any work he can do, or by anything he can give. The sorrows of Hell make sin-convicted souls feel that only the power and grace of almighty God can meet their need.

III. The Deliverance. In answer to this cry of distress he says that-

1. "HE CAME DOWN" (Psalms 18:9). To do this, He had to bow the Heavens. The language here is prophetic of the coming and sufferings of Christ. There are always signs and wonders wrought when He comes down in answer to the agonising cry of human need (Psalms 18:7-8).

2. "HE TOOK ME, HE DREW ME OUT OF MANY WATERS" (Psalms 18:16). If we are to be drawn out of the many waters of our sins and sorrows, He must take hold of us, and we must be perfectly submissive to His drawing power. Resist not the grace of God. When He does take hold, it is unto a perfect salvation.

3. "HE DELIVERED ME FROM MY STRONG ENEMY" (Psalms 18:17). Your adversary, the Devil, is a strong enemy, but a stronger than he has come to seek and to save (Hebrews 2:14-15).

4. "HE BROUGHT ME FORTH ALSO INTO A LARGE PLACE" (Psalms 18:19). Whom the Lord sets free are free indeed. Out from the power of Satan, into the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is indeed "a large place," for it stretches into the ages of eternity. It takes a large place to meet all the aspirations of an immortal spirit. Resurrection ground.

5. "HE DELIGHTED IN ME" (Psalms 18:19). He delivers because He delights in saving the objects of His love. "He loved me and gave Himself for me." His is no mechanical, or perfunctory salvation. He "delighteth in mercy." Our trust in Him delights His soul.

6. "HE REWARDED ME" (Psalms 18:20). "He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." He never said to any, "Seek My face in vain." A clean heart, and clean hands, the Lord will

recompense (Psalms 18:24). "O taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalms 34:8). THE GOD OF DELIVERANCES

Psalms 18:25-39.

I. His Manner of Working. He reveals His-

1. MERCIFULNESS TO THE MERCIFUL (Psalms 18:25). "With the merciful Thou wilt shew Thyself merciful." The mercifulness of men can never rise to the mercifulness of God. Human mercy is to be measured by the Divine.

2. PERFECTION TO THE PERFECT. "With the perfect man, Thou wilt shew Thyself perfect" (r.v.). The perfection of men is to be seen in the light of the perfection of God. The man with the "upright heart" desires this, "Shew me Thy glory."

3. PURITY TO THE PURE. "With the pure Thou wilt shew Thyself pure" (Psalms 18:26). The pure in heart shall see a God that is infinitely purer. The desire after holiness is thus encouraged by this promise.

4. FROWARDNESS TO THE FROWARD. "With the froward Thou wilt shew Thyself froward." The frowardness (lit.) of man, turning away from God, will be met with the frowardness of God. If man chooses to be perverse toward God, then they have the perversity of God to deal with.

5. PURPOSE IN SO DEALING WITH MEN. "For Thou wilt save the afflicted, but the haughty Thou wilt bring down" (v, 27, R.V.). If there is in us a mercifulness, a perfection, or a purity that is unreal, then the manifestation of His character is to rebuke pride and lead to repentance. His purpose is to save honest seekers, and to bring down the proud boasters.

II. His Manifold Mercies. All God's gifts are deliverances.

1. He gives LIGHT. "Thou wilt light my lamp..My God will lighten my darkness" (Psalms 18:28). In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

2. He gives COURAGE. "By Thee I have ran through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall" (Psalms 18:29). Troops of troubles and walls of difficulties need not hinder the man of faith.

3. He gives STRENGTH. "It is God that girdeth me with strength" (Psalms 18:32). Loins girded with the Word of God will be strong to do exploits.

4. He gives STABILITY. "He maketh my feet like hinds' feet" (Psalms 18:33). The hind is sure-footed, and can walk and leap with safety in slippery places.

5. He gives WISDOM. "He teacheth my hands to war" (Psalms 18:34). We war not with flesh and blood, but with principalities... and wicked spirits. For this battle Divine wisdom is needed.

6. He gives PROTECTION. "Thou hast given me the shield of Thy salvation" (Psalms 18:35). The salvation of God is a shield as long as our life, and as broad as our need.

7. He gives HONOUR. "Thy gentleness has made me great." The gentleness of almighty grace brings wonderful promotion to the whole nature of the spiritual man.

8. He gives VICTORY. "Thou hast girded me with strength; Thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me" (Psalms 18:39). "Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." "Great deliverance giveth He" (Psalms 18:50). THE WORD OF GOD

Psalm 19

While the Heavens declare the glory of God, the Bible declares His will. The speech of the Heavens is silent, "their voice is not heard" (r.v.). But even His eternal power and Godhead can be understood by the things that are made (Romans 1:19-20). We have to come to the written and Incarnate Word for the doctrine of God. In Psalms 19:7-9 six different terms are used to express the fullness and preciousness of His word.

I. It Converts the Soul, because it is perfect (Psalms 19:7). It takes a perfect instrument to accomplish such delicate and powerful work as this. The soul needs conversion; the sword of the Spirit can do it (James 1:18).

II. It Makes Wise the Simple, because it is sure (Psalms 19:7). It is sure because it is given by inspiration of God (2 Timothy 3:15). It makes wise unto salvation all who are simple enough to believe it.

III. It Rejoiceth the Heart, because it is right (Psalms 19:8). It is the right thing for all the needs of the heart, so the heart rejoices in the receiving of it. The poor, hungry soul that finds great spoil (Psalms 119:16). "Thy Word was the joy of my heart" (Jeremiah 15:16).

IV. It Enlightens the Eyes, because it is pure (Psalms 19:8). As the weary Jonathan had his eyes enlightened by partaking of the honey, so doth new light and vigour possess us when we taste the pure honey of His Word. The eyes are opened to see wondrous things. "Every word of God is pure." "Thy Word is a lamp" (Psalms 119:105).

V. It Endureth for Ever, because it is clean (Psalms 19:9). It is the very thing a young man needs to cleanse his way (Psalms 119:9). It is uncorruptible, and so endureth for ever. It does, and can, offer everlasting life, because the word itself is everlasting.

VI. It is Altogether Righteous, because it is truth (Psalms 19:9, margin). It is altogether right-right in its every warning and demand, counsel and promise. It is not only true, it is the truth, and, therefore, cannot possibly be wrong on any point.

VII. It is Most Desirable, because it is better than gold, and sweeter than honey (Psalms 19:10). It is better than the best, and sweeter than the sweetest of all earthly things.

VIII. It is Most Needful, because it both warns and rewards (Psalms 19:11). It warns both servants and sinners of the danger and doom of unbelief. It assures the obedient of a glorious reward. It is both a law and a Gospel, a hammer and a fire, a beacon light, and bread from Heaven.

INTERCESSION AND CONFIDENCE

Psalm 20

While it is good to pray for ourselves, it is gracious to pray for others. A powerful incentive to intercessory prayer is a satisfied and thankful heart.

I. An Example of Intercession. Here are seven requests that the Psalmist would put into prayerful lips. A sevenfold blessing which God is able to bestow.

1. "The Lord HEAR thee" (Psalms 20:1). It is a wonderful privilege to have the God of Heaven bending His ear like a fond mother to the confidential whisperings of a child.

2. The Lord DEFEND thee (Psalms 20:1). To be defended by "the Name of the God of Jacob," is to have power with God, and to prevail (Genesis 32:28).

3. The Lord HELP thee. "Send thee help from the sanctuary" (Psalms 20:2). Help from the place of His holiness is sanctifying help. Provision was made for this (1 Kings 8:44-45).

4. The Lord STRENGTHEN thee. "Strengthen thee out of Zion," by the supplications of the people of God. Perhaps the oneness of the body of Christ may be suggested here.

5. The Lord REMEMBER thee (Psalms 20:3). "Remember all thy offerings," all thy gifts, and sacrifice for Him. May He have thee in everlasting remembrance. "I know thy works and labour of love."

6. The Lord SUPPLY thee. "Grant thee thy heart's desire" (Psalms 20:4, R.V.). To obtain this, there must be a delighting in the Lord (Psalms 37:4). "The desire of the righteous is only good" (Proverbs 11:23).

7. The Lord FILL thee. (Psalms 20:5). They are truly filled who have all their petitions fulfilled. "He filleth the hungry with good."

II. An Example of Confidence. A confidence-

1. In the SALVATION of God. "We will rejoice in Thy salvation" (Psalms 20:5). It is a salvation worth rejoicing in, because of its greatness, its costliness, and its fullness.

2. In the CAUSE of God. "In the Name of our God we will set up our banners." The banner of truth (Psalms 60:4), of victory, of progress. His Kingdom cannot be moved.

3. In the FAITHFULNESS of God. "Now know I that the Lord saveth His anointed" (Psalms 20:6). Blessed are they that know this joyful sound. This is experimental knowledge of Divine faithfulness.

4. In the NAME of God. "Some trust in chariots, but we will remember the Name of the Lord" (Psalms 20:7). To remember His Name is to remember His revealed character, and this is all sufficient to faith (2 Chronicles 32:8).

5. In the POWER of God. "They are brought down... but we are risen" (Psalms 20:8). He casteth down the proud, but the lowly in heart He lifteth up. Hold fast the confidence which you had at the beginning. Pray and trust. THE JOY OF SALVATION

Psalm 21

The prayers in the preceding Psalm seem to find their fulfilment in the first nine verses of this Psalm. The one appears to be the perfect complement of the other, when compared verse by verse. "In Thy salvation," he says, "how greatly shall he rejoice" (Psalms 21:1). Note then- I. The

Joys of the Saved. In this state of blessedness there is the joy of-

1. HEART SATISFACTION. "Thou hast given him his heart's desire" (Psalms 21:2). God's great salvation is for the heart. He only knows to the full its nature and its need.

2. ANSWERED PRAYER. "Thou hast not withholden the request of his lips." What a privilege to ask and receive of Him who is the Creator of the universe, and the Father of our spirits.

3. PROVIDENTIAL GOODNESS. "Thou preventest (goeth before) him with the blessings of goodness" (Psalms 21:3). The God of goodness goeth before him with his blessing, and goodness, and mercy followeth after him (Psa. 23).

4. CROWNED WITH HONOUR. "Thou settest a crown of pure gold upon his head." All the glory of this world cannot be compared with the pure gold of Divine favour (Matthew 4:8).

5. ETERNAL LIFE. "He asked life of Thee; Thou gavest him length of days for ever and ever" (Psalms 21:4). "The gift of God is eternal life." His gift, like Himself, belongs to the eternal ages.

6. DIVINE FELLOWSHIP. "Thou hast made him exceeding glad with Thy countenance" (Psalms 21:6). This is the presence that brings fullness of joy (Psalms 16:11). The reconciled countenance of God is the most soul-gladdening vision that man can ever have. Our fellowship is with the Father, etc.

7. PERFECT ASSURANCE. "Through the mercy of the Most High, he shall not be moved" (Psalms 21:7). He knows in whom he has believed, and is persuaded that He will keep.

8. SONGS OF PRAISES. "So will we sing and praise Thy power" (Psalms 21:13). His saving and satisfying power is worthy of our loudest song, for it will be our longest, for as the God of salvation we shall praise Him for ever.

II. How this Salvation is Received

1. BY ASKING. "He asked life of Thee, and Thou gavest it" (Psalms 21:4). "If thou knewest the gift of God, ye would ask of Him" (John 4:10). "Ask and ye shall receive."

2. BY TRUSTING. "The king trusted in the Lord" (Psalms 21:7). Without faith it is impossible to please Him (John 3:36).

III. The Miseries of the Unsaved. They shall be-

1. FOUND OUT. "Thine hand shall find out all Thine enemies" (Psalms 21:8). Those who reject His Word of mercy will be apprehended by the hand of justice.

2. SORELY TROUBLED. "Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of Thine anger" (Psalms 21:9). Despised and rejected love must be met with fury and indignation. The "wrath of the Lamb" awaits those who tread under foot the "blood of the Lamb."

3. MISERABLY DISAPPOINTED. "They intended evil... they imagined..which they are not able to perform" (Psalms 21:11). In different ways, men still command that the sepulchre of Christ be made sure, but all such devices result in wretched failure. No matter how often men, by their wicked works and ways, crucify and bury Christ God will raise Him from the dead. No wisdom or

counsel can stand that is against the Lord (Proverbs 21:30). "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). HIS SUFFERINGS AND GLORY

Psalm 22

This is a prophetic declaration of "The sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow." It is not only "The Psalm of the Cross," but also of the Crown and the Kingdom. These sufferings cannot be David's. Who "pierced his hands and feet?" Who "parted His garments, and cast lots upon His vesture?" (Psalms 22:18). These words are the tender breathings of the Holy Spirit, through this holy man of old. Here the Spirit testifies beforehand the sufferings of Christ.

I. The Nature of His Sufferings. He was-

1. DESERTED. "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Psalms 22:1-2). This is a mysterious and awful why. The question of sin and judgment is in it. He was forsaken of God because "He was made a curse for us."

2. REPROACHED. "A reproach of men, and despised of the people" (Psalms 22:6). Although God hid His face from Him, there was no reproach on His part. The reproach and the scorn came from wicked men, for whom He suffered.

3. DERIDED. "Commit thyself unto the Lord...let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighteth in Him" (Psalms 22:8, R.v.). They mocked at His faith in God as a vain thing. They laughed at His weakness, as an evidence of failure and presumption.

4. EMPTIED. "I am poured out like water" (Psalms 22:14) He emptied Himself and became of no reputation. He poured out His soul unto death. He gave all that He had.

5. HUMBLED. "Thou hast brought Me into the dust of death" (Psalms 22:15). He was brought to the dust, through His own voluntary humility. "He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death."

6. PIERCED. "They pierced My hands and My feet" (Psalms 22:16). They nailed Him to a Cross. They crucified the Lord of Glory.

7. SHAMED. "I may tell all my bones...They part My garments among them." The death of the Cross was the most painful and shameful of all deaths (John 19:23-24). They put Him to an open shame. "He suffered for us, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18).

II. The Glory that was to Follow.

1. THE DECLARATION OF HIS NAME. "I will declare Thy Name" (Psalms 22:22; see Hebrews 2:12). "Wherefore," because of His sufferings and death, "God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name that is above every other name." The preaching of His Name is the preaching of His holy and wondrous saving characters.

2. THE ASSURANCE OF HIS GRACE. "He hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted" (Psalms 22:24). "The meek shall eat and be satisfied" (Psalms 22:26). Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. "My grace is sufficient for thee." "Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight in fatness" (Isaiah 55:1-2).

3. THE TRIUMPH OF HIS CAUSE. "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord...for the Kingdom is the Lord's, and He is the Ruler over the nations" (Psalms 22:27-28, R.v.). The rejected King shall yet rule over the earth (Zechariah 14:9). "The kingdoms of this world shall become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ" (Revelation 11:15). He died for us, that He might be Lord both of the living and the dead. "Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever" (Matthew 6:13). THE ALMIGHTY SHEPHERD.

Psalm 23.

Among all the Psalms, the twenty-third is the "pet lamb" of the flock to many. Beecher called it the "Nightingale Psalm, small, and of a homely feather, singing shyly out of obscurity; but, oh! it has filled the air of the whole world with melodious joy." After the Psalm of the Cross comes the Psalm of Life, and fullness of blessing. The path of this pilgrim is like the shining light that shineth more and more till the day of perfection. Let us follow him step by step. There was-

I. Decision. "The Lord is my Shepherd." His personal choice was made as to whom he would follow. He would not follow his own heart nor the blind reasonings of men; he would claim Jehovah as his Saviour and Guide and not be ashamed to say so.

II. Assurance. "I shall not want." The godless, although strong as young lions, do lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good. "My God shall supply all your need." He has his Shepherd's promise, and he believes it.

III. Rest. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, and beside the waters of rest" (margin). The rest of faith in the Lord is a rest that is calm and refreshing. He does not say "rest," without leading into the best place where it can be found-in His love-green pastures.

IV. Restoration. "He restoreth my soul." If through self-confidence, or discontent, we should stray from His paths of greenness, He is gracious enough to forgive and restore. He, only, can restore the backsliding soul (1 John 1:1).

V. Guidance. "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness." The paths that are right may not always be the paths that seem easiest. Bunyan's pilgrims found it "easy going" over the stile which led to the castle of Giant Despair. His leading is for His own Name's sake.

VI. Courage. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." The shadow of death is a dreadful thing to the man whose portion is in this life. But there is no evil to fear when the Shepherd is near (Isaiah 43:2).

VII. Fellowship. "Thou art with me." The heavenly pilgrim is always in good company. The Lord stands by when all men forsakes (2 Timothy 4:16-17). His presence is always sufficient at all times.

VIII. Comfort. "Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." The club and the crook of the shepherd were the instruments of defence and deliverance. What they were to the sheep, the Word of the Lord is to us. It is a club to beat off our enemies, and a crook to guide or lift those who have fallen into a pit or ditch. The sword of the Spirit doth comfort me.

IX. Provision. "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." He knows when and how to feed His flock. We have a meat to eat that they know not of.

X. Enduement. "Thou anointest my head." This anointing, or unction from the Holy One, is significant of authority and power. Kings and priests were anointed. Ye are a kingdom of priests unto God (Acts 1:8).

XI. Satisfaction. "My cup runneth over." The God of grace gives good measure, pressed down, shaken together, heaped up, running over. The holy anointing must go before the overflowing (see John 7:37-38).

XII. Prospect. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me...and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." Goodness to supply, and mercy to forgive, all the days of this life; and a mansion is prepared beyond this life, where we shall be for ever with the Lord (John 14:1-3).

Psalm 23 (again).

1. Beneath me, "green pastures." 2, Beside me, "still waters." 3, With me, "my Shepherd." 4. Before me, "a table." 5, Around me, "mine enemies." 6, Upon me, "anointing." 7, After me, "goodness and mercy." 8, Beyond me, "The house of the Lord."- Selected. THE ASCENT OF MAN

Psalms 24:3-6.

In the twenty-second Psalm we have the Lord's sorrowful descent to man. Here is the way of man's ascent to the Lord.

I. The Goal. "The hill of the Lord...His holy place." The hill of the Lord is the holy place of His presence. Mount Zion stands for the tabernacle or habitation of God (Psa, Psalms 55:1). The highest ambition of the soul should be the fellowship of God-the fellowship of Him to whom the earth belongs, and the fullness thereof (Psalms 24:1).

II. The Way. "Who shall ascend?" The way of sin and impurity is downward, but the way of holiness is ever upward. The ascent of this mount is the ascent of every faculty in man. No one can climb this hill without having their own moral, spiritual, and intellectual being invigorated.

III. The Pilgrim. The characteristic features of this hill-climber are given:-

1. His HANDS must be clean. "He that hath clean hands." Not hands washed in water, like Pilate's, but washed in innocency, like David's (Psalms 26:6). We cannot ascend to Him with the lie of a deceitful motive in our right hand. Let the wicked forsake his ways, and let him return to the Lord. The laver stood outside the door of the tabernacle, at which the approaching priest must wash his hands.

2. His HEART must be pure (Psalms 24:4). Holiness is something that has to do with the heart, and without holiness no man shall see the Lord. "The pure in heart shall see God." It is with the heart that man believeth unto righteousness. It is when the seed of the Kingdom falls into an "honest heart" that it brings forth fruit.

3. His SOUL must be humble. "Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity." When vanity, or spiritual pride, gets into the soul, then there is an end to growth in grace. If we would ascend into

the holy hill of the Divine likeness, there must be no vain lifting up of ourselves.

IV. The Attainment. "He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation." The blessing of perfect rightness with God is a crown of life within the reach of every spiritual pilgrim. The blessing of the Lord embodies every needful and desirable thing.

V. The Application. "This is the generation of them that seek Him" (Psalms 24:6). This is the character and attitude of the true seed of Abraham-the father of the faithful. This is the generation that belongs to the re-generation. These are the marks of the children of God, who climb the hill of holiness into the Father's house.

ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PRAYER

Psalms 25:1-11

The Psalms have been called by Dr. A. Murray "The prayer book of God's saints." In this book, the spirit of prayer, and the spirit of praise are twin spirits; they are indivisible. This psalm would teach us how to pray.

I. Elements of Prayer.

1. WHOLEHEARTEDNESS. "Unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul" (Psalms 25:1). What is the use of lifting up our voice, or our eyes, unto God, if the soul is not in them. God's ear is not to be charmed by such soulless music. We find Him when we seek Him with the whole heart.

2. FAITH. "O my God, I trust in Thee." We cannot taste the goodness of the Lord by mere talk; the tongue of the soul must touch Him. Faith is the hand that lays hold of His promise.

3. DESIRE FOR HIS WAYS. "Shew me Thy ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths" (Psalms 25:4). This implies a forsaking of our own ways (Isaiah 58:6), and a readiness to follow His footsteps. "Yield yourselves unto God."

4. DESIRE FOR HIS TRUTH. "Lead me in Thy truth, and teach me" (Psalms 25:5). This must be the longing of that heart in which the Holy Ghost is, for "when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide into all truth" (John 16:13). A craving after the mind and will of God, is a powerful factor in prevailing prayer.

5. DESIRE FOR HIS HONOUR. "For Thy goodness' sake, O Lord" (Psalms 25:7). "For Thy Name's sake, O Lord" (Psalms 25:11). To plead His Name is to plead His nature. His goodness stands for His character (see Exodus 33:18-19; Exodus 34:5-6). When He "sanctifies His great Name among the heathen" (Ezekiel 36:23), He makes Himself known as the Lord God, merciful and gracious. "If ye ask anything in My Name I will give it."

6. PATIENCE. "On Thee do I wait all the day" (Psalms 25:5). Let your requests be made known unto God, but let patience also have her perfect work. There is no virtue in waiting, unless we are waiting on Him. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew strength."

7. CONFESSION. "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions" (Psalms 25:7). There must be no hiding of sin; no glossing over the trangressions of earlier days. Those who would deal with a holy and righteous God must be perfectly honest in the purposes of their heart.

"God is not mocked."

II. Encouragements to Prayer. "Let your requests be made known unto God."

1. Because He is GOOD AND UPRIGHT (Psalms 25:8). God is love, and God is light. The goodness of a Father is here associated with the uprightness of a righteous sovereign.

2. Because He TEACHES SINNERS (Psalms 25:8). What condescension: the Almighty God willing to become the sinner's teacher. His desire is to lead us in His way. He teacheth savingly and to eternal profit.

3. Because He GUIDES THE MEEK (Psalms 25:9). He does not guide a man because he is rich, or learned, for all cannot attain to these, but any man may be meek, and learn heavenly wisdom.

4. Because "ALL THE PATHS OF THE LORD ARE MERCY AND TRUTH unto such as keep His Word" (Psalms 25:10). Mercy and truth, constitute the daily need of the heavenly pilgrim. Mercy, to forgive, and to cleanse; truth, to guide, to strengthen, and to satisfy. To get out of the Lord's paths, is to get out of the channel of supply.

FEATURES OF A WHOLE HEARTED CHRISTIAN

PSALM 26

I. He Desires to be Tested by God. "Judge me, O Lord...Examine me, O Lord" (Psalms 26:1-2). It is a small matter to him, to be judged of men, who seeks the judgment of God. He who can pray, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts," lives above the fear of man (Acts 23:1).

II. He has Faith in God. "I have trusted also in the Lord, therefore I shall not slide" (Psalms 26:1). God has become the greatest reality in the world to his soul, and in Him he hath put his trust. His heart condemns him not, because he has confidence toward God (1 John 3:21).

III. He Adheres to the Word of God. "I have walked in Thy truth" (Psalms 26:3). To walk in His truth is to walk in His way, and so walk in the light. He chooses the will of God as revealed in His Word, rather than the imaginations of his own heart.

IV. He Separates Himself from the Enemies of God. "I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers" (Psalms 26:4). The evil communications of the worldling corrupt the good manners of the child of God. "Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate."

V. He Offers Sacrifices unto God. "I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass Thine altar, O Lord" (Psalms 26:6). The sons of Aaron washed their hands at the laver ere they compassed the altar of incense (Exod. 30). The man that had to leave his gift at the altar and be reconciled to his brother was taught to first wash his hands (Matthew 5:23). "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit."

VI. He Testifies for God. "That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all Thy wondrous works" (Psalms 26:7). He is most thankful and willing to tell of that most wonderful work of God in his own heart and experience. "Great and marvellous are Thy works, O Lord;" Thy works of mercy and grace in the sinful souls of men; Thy work of redemption by the Cross of Thy beloved

Son.

VII. He Loves the House of God. "I have loved the habitation of Thy house, "and the place where Thy glory dwelleth" (Psalms 26:8, R.V.). He loved the house because of Him who dwelt therein. When his soul thirsts for the "courts of the Lord" it is because he was thirsting for the "living God" (Psalms 84:1-2). They are idolaters who love the habitation of God rather than God Himself.

VIII. He Praises God. "In the congregation will I bless the Lord" (Psalms 26:12). He is not ashamed to praise the Lord with his whole heart (Psalms 3:1). He has often asked the Lord to bless him, but he does not forget to "bless the Lord." "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me" (Psalms 50:23).

THREEFOLD CORDS

Psalm 27

The thoughts in this most precious Psalm seem to run in triplets.

I. A Threefold Need (Psalms 27:1).

1. LIGHT. "The Lord is my light." The world needs light. Christ is the light of the world. Satan hath blinded the minds of men.

2. SALVATION. "The Lord is...my salvation." He took me from a fearful pit.

3. STRENGTH. "The Lord is the strength of my life." He established my goings. This threefold need is met only in the Lord (Php_4:19).

II. A Threefold Desire (Psalms 27:4).

1. To "DWELL in the house of the Lord." To dwell in His house is to "Abide in Him." It is an expression of holy affection for the Lord Himself.

2. To "BEHOLD the beauty of the Lord." This was the good part that Mary chose, when she sat at the feet of Jesus. To learn of Him is to behold His glory.

3. To "INQUIRE in His temple." If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God. The temple door of the Holy Scriptures is always open to inquirers. Counsel not with the ungodly (Psalms 1:1) III. A Threefold Privilege (Psalms 27:5).

1. HIDDEN IN HIS PAVILION. In the time of trouble, sheltered in the great pavilion of His special providence (Romans 8:28).

2. SECRETED IN HIS TABERNACLE. In the secret of His presence, as well as His power, doth He hide from the pride of man. The life that is hid in God can never be found out by His enemies.

3. SET UPON A ROCK. His feet, or ways, are established on a sure foundation. His life is not built up on the shifting sands of human theories.

IV. A Threefold Assurance (Psalms 27:8-10).

1. OF HIS FACE. "When Thou saidst, Seek ye My face; my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." The pure in heart shall see the face of God in His Son, in His Word, and in His Providence.

2. OF HIS FELLOWSHIP. "Thou hast been my help; leave me not." He hath said, "I will never leave thee," so that we may boldly say, "The Lord is my Helper" (Hebrews 13:5-6).

3. OF HIS FAVOUR. "When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." The Good Shepherd carries the weary, or forsaken lambs in His arms. Those who forsake their father, the Devil, will find favour with the Lord (Hosea 14:3).

V. A Threefold Prayer (Psalms 27:11-12).

1. FOR TEACHING. "Teach me Thy ways." His ways are ways of pleasantness. He teacheth savingly.

2. FOR GUIDANCE. "Lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies." We are best able to use "plainness of speech" when our feet are walking in a plain path. We walk by faith, and not by sight.

3. FOR DELIVERANCE. From "The will of mine enemies." As David has his Doig, and Christ His Judas, and Paul his Coppersmith, so every true servant of God may have those from whom he needs deliverance.

VI. A Threefold Encouragement (Psalms 27:13-14).

1. TO BELIEVE. "I had fainted unless I had believed." Troubled on every side, yet not distressed (2 Corinthians 4:8-10), because our faith is in God. Peter fainted while on the water because he doubted.

2. TO WAIT. "Wait on the Lord." Wait on Him because the expectation of faith is from Him (Psalms 62:1-5). All who truly wait on Him will yet be able to say, "Lo, this is our God" (Isaiah 25:9).

3. TO WORK. "He shall strengthen thine heart, be of good courage." "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it" (Ecclesiastes 9:10), for His strength is made perfect in weakness. A STRIKING CONTRAST

Psalm 28

This Psalm opens with a strange request, "Be not silent to me: lest" (Psalms 28:1-2). It is not every one who dreads the miseries of a silent God. They must have had deep experiences of God who get so alarmed at His silence. Alas, for those who interpret His silence as meaning peace. Note the contrast here- I. The Character of the Wicked. They are-

1. MISCHIEVOUS IN THEIR NATURE. "They speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts" (Psalms 28:3). They may have fair lips, but the poison of asps is under their tongues. Their hearts are deceitful. "Full of wounds... and putrifying sores."

2. FOOLISH IN THEIR ACTIONS. "They regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of His hands" (Psalms 28:5). They are indifferent to their highest and best interests. They heed not the voice of God in creation and in grace. The operation of His hand in providence, and in their own individual lives is systematically disregarded. "A brutish man knoweth not" (Psalms 92:5-6).

II. The Character of the Godly. They are-

1. PRAYERFUL. "He hath heard the voice of my supplications" (Psalms 28:6). God is not silent for ever to the cry of His people. Although at times He may answer "never a word," yet the pleading saint knows that He hears every word. "Pray without ceasing."

2. BOASTFUL. "The Lord is my strength and my shield... and I am helped" (Psalms 28:7). He is full of boasting, but not in himself, his boast is in God. He will glory in the Lord, because He hath done great things for him.

3. TRUSTFUL. "My heart trusted in Him." The heart of man finds its true refuge and source of supply in the heart of God. It is the sum of all blessedness when our hearts answer to the heart of our Heavenly Father. With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.

4. JOYFUL. "My heart greatly rejoiceth." The trusting heart is sure to be a joyful heart. Faith in God produces joy in God. A happy heart is a continual feast.

5. PRAISEFUL. "With my song will I praise Him." The Christian's hero is Christ. His song shall be of Jesus. This is the "new song" put into the heart and lips of those redeemed by grace.

6. HUMBLE. "He is the saving strength of His anointed" (Psalms 28:8). He is. What have we that we have not received? It is because of what He is, not because of what we are, that we glory in the Lord. All is yours, for ye are Christ's and Christ is God's.

7. HOPEFUL. "Save Thy people, and bless Thine inheritance, feed them, and lift them up" (Psalms 28:9). They confidently expect that all God's people will be saved, blessed, fed, and lifted. What an encouragement this is for others to trust in Him. There will be a great lifting up when the Redeemer and Bridegroom appears (1 Thessalonians 4:17). THE POWERFUL VOICE

Psalm 29

In the preceding Psalm David speaks of the "operation of His hands;" here, amidst the terrors of a thunderstorm, he sings of the voice of the Lord. The Psalmist does not confound nature with the personality of God. He "gives unto the Lord the glory due unto His Name" (Psalms 29:2). The voice of the Lord is not a mere noise, it is a message. This voice we hear in all the riches of its majesty and glory in the person of His Son. "God hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." This voice of the Lord, in its "breaking," "making," "dividing," "shaking," and "discovering" power may prefigure the influence and effects of the voice or Word of Jesus Christ. It is a-

I. Universal Power. "The voice of the Lord is upon the waters" (Psalms 29:3). Metaphorically, these waters may represent the nations of the earth. The voice of God's word is for every people, tribe, and tongue. "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature."

II. Majestic Power. "The voice of the Lord is full of majesty" (Psalms 29:4). There is a God-like dignity about the Bible which belongs to no other book, it is full of majesty. The Gospel of Christ is the power of God to every one that believeth. The word of God asserts its own majestic character by being "quick and powerful." It has all the nobility of "Spirit and life."

III. Breaking Power. "The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars" (Psalms 29:5). The strongest of nature's growths are bowed and broken by its pressure. "Is not My Word a hammer?" Saul in Jerusalem, was like a cedar in Lebanon, but on the way to Damascus he was broken down.

IV. Separating Power. "He maketh them (cedar branches) to skip like a calf" (Psalms 29:6, R.V.). His Word can not only break down, but can also break into pieces; separating branch from branch, tearing them away from their roots. A storm of Divine truth makes havoc with old associations and conservative habits and manners.

V. Dividing Power. "The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire" (Psalms 29:7). Every word of God is a flame of fire, and He can divide them as the lightning flashes are divided. He can make His tongue of flame to rest upon every holy head (Acts 2:3). God's Word makes great distinctions. It is a divider of soul and spirit, of sinners and saints. The voice of the Lord is a terror to some, it is heavenly music to others.

VI. Shaking Power. "The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness" (Psalms 29:8): Yes, the wilderness, in all its desolation, barrenness and hopelessness; whether that wilderness is your heart, your home, or your city, the power of the Word of God can shake it, and make it to tremble into a transformation (Isaiah 35:1-7).

VII. A Life-giving Power. "The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve" (Psalms 29:9). Because of the awfulness of God's thunderings, the hinds, through terror, were made to calve. It is when God's Word thunders and lightens most, that Zion's travail for the birth of souls becomes greatest. It is by His mighty Word of truth that souls are still being "born again."

VIII. Stripping Power. "The voice of the Lord... strippeth the forest bare" (Psalms 29:9, r.V.). The hidden depths of the heart of the forest are laid bare by His discovering voice. The Word of God is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. The fig-leaves of man's covering cannot stand this storm.

IX. God-glorifying Power. "In His temple everything saith glory" (Psalms 29:9, R.V.). Every iota in the great temple of nature saith "glory." So doth every thing in the temple of His revealed Word-Jesus Christ. So ought every thing in the temple of these bodies, which are His. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory." Not one thing of all that He hath spoken shall fail, everything shall say "glory." A SONG OF SALVATION

Psalm 30.

"Thou hast lifted me up" (Psalms 30:1). This may be regarded as the key note of this Psalm, sung at the dedication of the house of David. The salvation of God is fitly expressed by a lifting up? He was lifted up-

I. From the Power of his Enemies. "Thou hast raised me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me" (Psalms 30:1, r. V.). The grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men, lifts up the believing soul out of the kingdom of darkness and tyranny, into the Kingdom of light and liberty. More than conquerors, over self and sin through Him who loved us.

II. From all his Diseases. "Thou hast healed me" (Psalms 30:2). Only He who forgiveth all our iniquities, can heal our diseases (Psalms 103:3). A nature that is morally unsound can only be cured by moral and regenerative influences. "The Blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin."

III. From the Place of Death. "Thou hast brought my "soul from the grave" (Psalms 30:3). Sheol was the abode of the dead. Speaking figuratively, he had by the grace of God been delivered from

a state of spiritual death. There are many souls that are as dead to the things of God as if they were in their graves. It is the Spirit that quickeneth.

IV. From Going Down to the Pit. "Thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit" (Psalms 30:3). Or, "Thou hast separated me from among them that go down to the pit" (see R.V., margin). He was saved from the company and influence of them that were perishing in their sins. Deliver from going down to the pit, for I have found the ransom.

V. From Weakness and Failure. "Lord, by Thy favour Thou hast made my mountain to stand strong" (Psalms 30:7). By God's grace the mountain of his faith had been made to stand strong. His strength had been made perfect in weakness. Unbelief says, "I shall die in my nest" (Job 29:18), but faith says, "My mountain is strong."

VI. From Sorrow and Sadness. "Thou hast turned my mourning into dancing. Thou hast loosed my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness" (Psalms 30:11, r.v.). Our God transforms the inner life of Zion's mourners, by giving them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness (Isaiah 63:1).

VII. From Praiseless Silence. "To the end that my glory may sing praise to Thee, and not be silent" (Psalms 30:12). There are those who profess to know God, but they glorify Him not as God, neither are they thankful (Romans 1:21). He hath saved us with a great salvation that our praises may abound unto Him, and not be silent (Ephesians 5:19-20). THE BLESSED LIFE

Psalm 31.

There are bright rays of light, and dark gloomy shadows here. But the blessed life can be lived in the midst of "nets," "lying vanities," and "lying lips." It is in circumstances like these that we can best prove the saving grace of God. Let us try and catch some of the features of the life of faith as revealed in this song. There was-

I. Confidence. "In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust" (Psalms 31:1). The blessed life must have its source in God, who is blessed for evermore. We do not begin to live till we trust in Him (John 3:36). To receive by faith the life-giving One is to receive the right of Sonship (John 1:12).

II. Committal. "Into Thine hand I commit my spirit. Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth" (Psalms 31:5). The redeemed spirit must be entirely committed to the Redeemer. "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price." The life of faith is a life of continual and unreserved surrender to the will of God. Self-sacrifice in the will of God is a very different thing from self-sacrifice outside that will.

III. Confession. "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble,...my strength faileth..I am forgotten as a dead man, I am like a broken vessel" (Psalms 31:9-12). It is no new thing for a man to feel nothing but weakness, and worthlessness, after he has solemnly and heartily given himself to God. It may be very painful to discover that, instead of strength and fullness, there has come the consciousness that we are but as dead men, and broken vessels! But these are the first evidences that the consecration has been real and effectual. Crucified with Christ, having the broken and contrite heart.

IV. Petition. "My times are in Thy hands, deliver me...make Thy face shine upon Thy servant" (Psalms 31:15-16). Having committed his spirit and his "times" into the hand of God, he now pleads for the shining of His face. God requires perfect honesty of heart, in confession and in prayer. The shining of His face is the perfect remedy for those who are "forgotten as a dead man." The longing of every holy heart is for the "light of His countenance" (Psalms 4:6).

V. Adoration. "Oh, how great is Thy goodness" (Psalms 31:19). Those who are wholly yielded to God will find their soul's satisfaction in the goodness of God. The ripest fruit of faith is adoration. The goodness of God in His Son Jesus Christ is so great that we must admire and adore.

VI. Praise. "Blessed be the Lord: for He hath shewed me His marvellous kindness" (Psalms 31:21). Although the tongue can never express the overwhelming sense of God's goodness, that at times fill the soul, yet it cannot remain silent. Bless the Lord, O my soul, Praise Him, praise Him for His marvellous works of love and mercy. Join now in the new and everlasting song, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

VII. Exhortation. "O love the Lord, all ye His saints. ...Be of good courage" (Psalms 31:23-24). The heart that is full of the goodness of God will eagerly long for others to love Him, trust Him, serve Him, and to hope in Him. O ye separated ones, love the Lord, and let love lead to courage in His service, and He shall strengthen your heart. The blessed life is a life of faith in God for ourselves, and of faith in His Gospel for others.

SAVED AND KEPT

Psalm 32

This well-known Psalm might be studied in the light of the ninth chapter of the Acts. It describes the experiences of a soul passing from the sorrows of conviction into the joys of salvation. There is- I. The Need of Salvation.

1. SIN IMPLIED. "Transgression...sin..iniquity" (Psalms 32:1-2). Three words that describe three different phases of guilt. Those who would reckon with God must face the question of sin. All have sinned. All have gone astray (Isaiah 53:6).

2. SIN DISCOVERED. "Day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture was changed as with the drought of summer" (Psalms 32:4, R.V.). He tried to keep silence, but the heavy hand of God made him "roar all the day long." It is hard to kick against the pricks of God's goading truth. The moisture of the natural man quickly dries up when the convicting breath of God's Spirit comes.

3. SIN CONFESSED. "I acknowledged my sin unto Thee" (Psalms 32:5). As long as the prodigal son tried to cover his sin, he did not prosper, but when he cried, "Father, I have sinned," he found mercy. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us" (1 John 1:9.).

4. SIN FORGIVEN. "Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Psalms 32:5). Now he has entered into the "blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." God's forgiving grace goes deep down, taking all guile out of the spirit (Psalms 32:2). Not only forgiven, but renewed in the inner man.

II. The Blessedness of the Saved. They are-

1. HIDDEN. "Thou art my hiding place" (Psalms 32:7). God Himself becomes their refuge and hiding place. Hidden from the strife of the foolish and poisonous tongues of men, and from the day of His wrath, against all ungodliness, your life is hid with Christ in God.

2. TAUGHT. "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go" (Psalms 32:8). The forgiven ones are to be all taught of God, who teacheth saving, from the ways of error, and to profit, both for this life, and that which is to come. Ye have the anointing of the Holy One, and need not that any man teach you (1 John 2:27).

3. GUIDED. "I will guide thee with Mine eye." Sweet promise, as it implies that His eye is to be always upon us for good, so that we may see His face and enjoy His fellowship. We are not to be guided like the ignorant horse, or stubborn mule, with bit and bridle, but like obedient children, who can read the mind of God, in the eye of His Word.

4. GUARDED. "He that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about" (Psalms 32:10). "Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance" (Psalms 32:7). Compassed about with mercy and songs of deliverance; what a blessed environment. The heart garrisoned with forgiving mercy and songs of triumph. What a contrast to the "tribulation and anguish" that surrounds the soul of the evil doer (Romans 2:9).

5. GLADDENED. "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice... and shout for joy" (Psalms 32:11). Not unto us, but unto Thy Name, be all the glory. He begins by taking us up out of the fearful pit of sin, then puts the new song in our mouth. Praise to our God! "Rejoice in the Lord alway, for He changeth not."

REJOICE IN THE LORD

Psalms 33:1-12

There are abundant reasons here why God's people should "Shout for joy in the Lord" (Newberry). It is a blessed choice to leave the doubters and join such shouters. The source of the believer's joy is not in the world, nor in themselves, but in the Lord. They sing unto Him a "new song" (Psalms 33:3), because they have been made new creatures, who enjoy new delights. They rejoice in the Lord because of-

I. His Word. "The Word of the Lord is right" (Psalms 33:4). It is the right thing for the souls and lives of men, because of its converting and enlightening power (Psalms 19:7-8). The Word of God is powerful, for by it the Heavens were made (Psalms 33:6). It is the incorruptible seed that endureth for ever.

II. His Works. "All His works are done in truth" (Psalms 33:4). Every stone built by Him is perfectly plumb. All His works are perfect. All His works in grace, as well as in creation, are done in truth. He is a just God, and a Saviour. If Christ is the way and the life, He is also the truth. To be saved by grace is not to be saved at the expense of truth, for "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1).

III. His Lovingkindness. "The earth is full of the loving-kindness of the Lord" (Psalms 33:5, R.V.). Everywhere, to those who have eyes to see, the tokens of His goodness may be seen. But it is in Christ Jesus that His marvellous loving-kindness finds its fullest manifestation. Yet in the earth, the

outer court of His temple, "He maketh the sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45). "God loved the world" (John 3:16).

IV. His Power. "Let all the earth fear the Lord...for He spake, and it was done, He commanded and it stood fast" (Psalms 33:8-9). Man may make void God's word, but He never speaks in vain. What He hath promised, He is able also to perform. Power belongeth unto God, and He giveth power to the faint, therefore, rejoice in the Lord.

V. His Knowledge. "The Lord bringeth the counsel of the nations to naught. He maketh the thoughts of the people to be of none effect" (Psalms 33:10, R.V.). It is a joy of God's children, that He knows all about the secret desires of the ungodly, and that He taketh the wise in their own craftiness (1 Corinthians 3:19). "Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it for good" (Genesis 50:20). He can sanctify adverse things to the furtherance of the Gospel (Php_1:12-13).

VI. His Faithfulness. "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations" (Psalms 33:11). The thoughts of His heart, revealed in His Word, shall stand for ever. Man is famous for his "vain thoughts," but precious are Thy thoughts, O Lord, because they are infinitely great, and good, and true, and faithful.

VII. His Grace. "Blessed is..the people whom He hath chosen for His own inheritance" (Psalms 33:12). Grace is not an after-thought with God, it belongs to His eternal character, it is an essential attribute of His nature, for we are chosen in Him, before the foundation of the world, and now blessed with all spiritual blessing in Christ (Ephesians 1:3-4). The grace that hath chosen us is to be made sufficient for us, therefore rejoice in the Lord, and again I say, rejoice.

JUBILIATION

Psalms 34:1-10

In the original, the verses of this Psalm begin with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, indicating, perhaps, that special care has been bestowed on its composition. The occasion of it-when David played the fool before Abimelech-was anything but creditable to the king. Nevertheless he would joyfully praise the Lord for His great deliverance. These words seem to be the expression of a soul in an ecstasy of delight. The more keenly we feel our own foolishness and guilt, the more loudly shall we praise the God of our salvation. About this exuberant joy, note- I. The Nature of It. It is-

1. SPIRITUAL. "I will bless the Lord" (Psalms 34:1). God is a spirit, and the spirit that finds its highest and deepest delight in "blessing the Lord," has something infinitely better than natural riches.

2. CONTINUAL. "I will bless the Lord at all times, His praise shall continually be in my mouth." At all times and in all circumstances He is ever the same, so that our praises should never cease. Even the earth yields its increase to a praising people (Psalms 67:5-7).

3. UNSELFISH. "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His Name together" (Psalms 34:3). The praiseful heart longs for others to join in, and share the happy service.

II. The Causes of It. He had experienced Divine-

1. INTERPOSITION. "I sought the Lord and He heard me" (Psalms 34:4). Another testimony to the power of prayer. The God of law is also the God of grace.

2. SALVATION. "Delivered me from all my fears... saved out of all his troubles" (Psalms 34:4-6). We must needs be saved from all our sins to be saved from all our fears. The salvation of God goes down to the "uttermost" of human need, and lifts to the "uttermost" of Divine grace.

3. PROTECTION. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him" (Psalms 34:7). As the mountain was full of horses and chariots to the opened eyes of Elisha, so doth the power of God encompass His people as with a tabernacle (Psalms 27:5).

III. The Influence of It. This holy joy constrains-

1. TO INVITE. "O taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalms 34:8). The sweetness of the Gospel of God, like the sweetness of honey, is best explained by tasting it. Those who have proved its preciousness, long for others to share its blessedness.

2. TO AFFIRM. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in Him...They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing" (Psalms 34:8-10). They confidently testify to the goodness and faithfulness of God, because of their own experience.

3. TO EXHORT. "O fear the Lord, ye His saints... Come ye children hearken unto Me" (Psalms 34:9-11). The note of warning must be sounded, as well as the notes of invitation and personal testimony. It is as needful for saints to fear the Lord as for children to hearken to the voice of those who know Him and can teach the way of life (Psalms 34:12). AN EXPERIENCED TEACHER

Psalms 34:11-22

"Come, ye children, hearken unto Me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord" (Psalms 34:11). To teach the fear of the Lord is to teach how to know the Lord, and live in the enjoyment of His favour and presence. As children then, let us sit down at the feet of this great teacher and learn what he has to say about the way of life and blessedness. As a man of experience, he sets forth the truth in order. He speaks-

I. About Desire. "What man is he that desireth life" (Psalms 34:12). The anxiety of the soul must be after the right and proper object to begin with. The heart that longs to "see good" has come to the gate of the narrow way.

II. About Evil. "Keep thy tongue from evil...depart from evil" (Psalms 34:13-14). Those who would seek life must be ready to be separated from all their sins. To run this race every weight and sin must be laid aside (Hebrews 12:1). Let the wicked forsake his way, etc.

III. About Peace. "Seek peace" (Psalms 34:14). He does not teach us that we should make peace, but seek it. Christ hath made peace by the Blood of His Cross. Seek the peace of God, and follow peace with all men (Hebrews 12:14).

IV. About Prayer. "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry,...the righteous cry and the Lord heareth" (Psalms 34:15-17). Apart from the Lord Jesus Christ no man is better able to instruct in the art of prayer than David. God and prayers were tremendous realities to him. "Ask and ye shall receive."

V. About Nearness. "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart" (Psalms 34:18). Let us give special heed to this teaching. Broken-heartedness is a condition of true fellowship with God. He knoweth the proud afar off. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit" (Psalms 51:17). The Holy One that inhabiteth eternity dwells with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit (Isaiah 57:15).

VI. About Affliction. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all" (Psalms 34:19). The Lord's people are not saved from afflictions, but saved in them, as Daniel was in the den of lions, and the Hebrews in the furnace of fire. "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Troubled on every side, but not distressed (2 Corinthians 4:8).

VII. About Perseverance. "None of them that trust in Him shall be condemned" (Psalms 34:22, R.v.). None shall pluck them out of My hand, He is able to keep from stumbling all those that trust in Him. By faith we are saved from guilt and sin, by faith are we kept day by day from the condemning influences that are ever about us and within us. "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6).

FALSE WITNESSES

Psalm 35.

If any man would live godly, he must suffer persecution,

I. His Cowardly Enemies. "False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge that I knew not; they rewarded me evil for good (Psalms 35:11-12). In mine adversity they rejoiced" (Psalms 35:15). In this he became a partaker of the sufferings of his Lord (Matthew 26:59-61). Even because of love, some will become our adversaries (Psalms 109:4). Those who are out of sympathy with Jesus Christ will be out of sympathy with His faithful followers.

II. His Attitude Towards Them. "But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth...and my prayer returned into mine own bosom" (Psalms 35:13). All those, so called, imprecations in this Psalm should be read in the light of this statement. He who fasted and prayed for his enemies, when they were in trouble, was not likely to pronounce curses upon them. As Newberry points out, these "texts" should be read in the future tense. "They shall." Well David knew what the future would be of those who raised false charges against God's people, and who rejoiced at their halting (Psalms 35:15, R.V.). Our Lord's command is, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you,...and pray for them that despitefully use you," even although your prayer should "return into your own bosom," as it sometimes does.

III. His Petitions to God. "Strive Thou, O Lord, with them that strive with me...and stand up for mine help" (Psalms 35:1-2, R.v.). He pleads for-

1. DIVINE ADVOCACY. "Strive thou with 'them." The servant of Christ must not strive, seeing that he has an advocate with the Father who is Jesus Christ the Righteous. Vengeance belongeth unto the Lord; commit thy ways unto Him. God is our refuge.

2. DIVINE DELIVERANCE. "Lord, how long....rescue my soul from their destructions" (Psalms 35:17). He who is our Redeemer and Lord will not fail to rescue the souls of His trusting ones from

all the destructive plans and purposes of His and our enemies. His Name was called Jesus because He shall save.

3. DIVINE JUSTICE. "Judge me, O Lord my God, according to Thy righteousness" (Psalms 35:24). Those who have found refuge in His mercy will find strength in His righteousness. "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you" (2 Thessalonians 1:6).

IV. His Joyful Resolution. "My soul shall be joyful in the Lord..All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto Thee" (Psalms 35:9-10). "My tongue shall speak of Thy righteousness, and of Thy praise all the day long" (Psalms 35:28). When we make our appeal to God, we must in confidence leave the matter in His hands, rejoicing that He is able, and praising because He will. Those who are joyful in the Lord are best able to speak of His righteousness.

UNDER HIS WINGS

Psalms 36:5-9.

The Psalmist begins here by laying bare the secret thoughts and intents of the wicked man's heart. "There is no fear of God before his eyes; he flattereth himself in his own eyes" (Psalms 36:1-2). Does the denial of God not always spring from the desire for self-flattery? How different it is with those who are joyfully resting beneath the shadow of His wings. Note the-

I. Attitude Mentioned. "Under the shadow of Thy wings" (Psalms 36:7). They are there because they have "put their trust" in the Lord their God. There is no other way of getting under the saving, protecting power of God but by faith. It was because Ruth believed that she found refuge under the wings of the Lord God of Israel (Rth_2:12). The feathers of God's wings are the words of His Gospel. "His truth shall be thy shield" (Psalms 91:4; Matthew 23:37).

II. Reasons Given. "Therefore" (Psalms 36:7). This word suggests the wherefore-

1. "Thy MERCY is in the Heavens" (Psalms 36:5). Being in the Heavens, it is high enough to overtop all the altitudes of human guilt. "As far as the Heavens is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him" (Psalms 103:11).

2. "Thy FAITHFULNESS reacheth unto the skies" (Psalms 36:5, R.V.). The clouds may come and go, but the sky, in all its purity, remains eternally the same, so with the faithfulness of God. He is faithful that hath promised, and that faithfulness will not fail till the objects of it reacheth the skies (1 Corinthians 1:9).

3. "Thy RIGHTEOUSNESS is like the mountains of God" (Psalms 36:6, R.V.). The righteousness of God! Who can rise up to it? It is like the great mountain top that pierces the clouds, where no human foot has ever trod. Who can by searching find out God? But He hath made Christ to be unto us Righteousness, even the righteousness of God, which is unto all and upon all them that believe.

4. "Thy JUDGMENTS are a great deep" (Psalms 36:6). If His righteousness is as high as Heaven, His judgments are as deep as Hell. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" There is no escape from His justice but under the wings of His mercy.

5. "Thy LOVINGKINDNESS is precious" (Psalms 36:7, R.V.). Precious indeed is the loving-kindness of God, who in the Person of His Son hath spread the wings of His proffered grace over a perishing world. "Herein is love."

III. Blessings Enjoyed. All those who are under His wings are in the place of-

1. ABUNDANT SATISFACTION. "They shall be abundantly satisfied" (Psalms 36:8). The Hebrew word is "watered" (r.v., margin). The provision of His grace will be found amply sufficient for those who hide in Him. He shall make them to drink of the river of His own pleasure (Psalms 36:8, Psalms 36:1.). "At His right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Jesus cried, "If any man thirst let him come unto Me and drink." To come to Him is to come to the "fountain of life" (Psalms 36:9; John 4:14).

2. CLEARNESS OF VISION. "In Thy light shall we see light" (Psalms 36:9). In the light of His presence we see clearly the light of His truth. To trust in Him is to pass out of darkness into His marvellous light. In His marvellous light, we see light, on sin, on self, on death, on immortality, and eternal life (John 8:12).

COUNSELS FOR CHRISTIANS.

Psalms 37:1-9.

In Newberry's "Englishman's Bible" there are seven words in these verses printed in heavy letters, indicating that they are emphasised in the Hebrew. Those words stand out as stepping stones into the blessed life of faith and fullness. Here they are-

I. Fret Not. "Fret not thyself because of evil-doers" (Psalms 37:1). Be not envious at the foolish, when you see the prosperity of the wicked (Psalms 73:3). Be content with such things as ye have. Knowing that "all things work together for good to them that love God." All things are yours, for ye are Christ's.

II. Trust. "Trust in the Lord, and do good" (Psalms 37:3). To be content, without trusting in the Lord, is no virtue, it is imbecility or madness. God's amen is given to our faith, "Verily thou shalt be fed." Faith is an active grace, therefore be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises (Hebrews 6:12).

III. Delight. "Delight thyself also in the Lord: and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart" (Psalms 37:4). We may well question our trust, if it does not lead to "delight in the Lord." We cannot delight in Him, unless we believe that He is the chief and perfect good of the soul.

IV. Commit. "Commit thy way unto the Lord...and He shall bring it to pass" (Psalms 37:5). Where there is perfect trust and delight in the Lord, there will surely be a perfect committal of ourselves, and all our ways and purposes unto Him. The life that is wholly committed will be free of all anxious thoughts (Matthew 6:25). We are encouraged to cast all our care upon Him, for He careth for us (1 Peter 5:8).

V. Rest. "Rest in the Lord" (Psalms 37:7). This rest is the result of a wholehearted committal. In this quietness and confidence ye shall find your strength (Isaiah 13:15). Rest in the Lord, for the battle is not your's, but His.

VI. Cease. "Cease from anger and forsake wrath" (Psalms 37:8). If your trust is in the Lord, cease from self and from man. Wrath and strife are the works of the flesh (Galatians 3:19-20). "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls" (Proverbs 25:28).

VII. Wait. "Wait upon the Lord" (Psalms 37:9). "Wait patiently for Him" (Psalms 37:7). This word is most needful. After having committed all to Him, and ceased from our will and way, there is a danger of growing weary in welldoing. Wait, "Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise" (Hebrews 10:36). They that wait upon the Lord shall have such manifestations of Himself as shall renew their strength.

SEVEN CHARACTERS, AND THEIR PORTION

Psalms 37:10-37

It is what men are, not so much what they think, say, or do that determines their character, relationship, and portion in the sight of God.

I. The Evildoer: he shall be cut off (Psalms 37:9). "Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days" (Psalms 55:23). Like chaff, the wind shall drive them away.

II. The Meek: he shall inherit the earth; and delight himself in the abundance of peace (Psalms 37:11). The meekest Man the world ever saw "had not where to lay His head," but He and His followers shall yet judge the world.

III. The Lawless: the Lord shall laugh at him (Psalms 37:12-13). Those who refuse to obey the call of God's grace, and cast away the cords of His commandments from them, shall be rewarded with the laugh of His derision (Psa. 2).

IV. The Righteous: the Lord shall uphold him (Psalms 37:17). Those who bear the image of the Heavenly Father shall be upheld with His everlasting arms.

V. The Good: the Lord shall order his steps, and delight in his way (Psalms 37:23). The walk that is ordered by the Lord will be a delight to His heart. The "good man" seeks to get the highest good, and to do the greatest good.

VI. The Saint: he shall not be forsaken; he shall be preserved for ever (Psalms 37:28). God can never forsake His holy ones, since the Holiest One of all was forsaken on their behalf. They shall be preserved for ever, for they are the heirs of eternal life (1 Peter 1:5).

VII. The Perfect: his end is peace (Psalms 37:37). His end shall be perfect peace, because the peace of God already rules in his heart". The peace of God which passeth all understanding can never pass away. In these leading words we may easily trace a gradation of experience in the Godly life. The meekness of contrition, the righteousness of faith, the goodness of grace, the saintship of holiness, and the perfection of glory. THE RIGHTEOUS MAN

Psalms 37:10-34

As compared with the "righteousness of God," by nature "there is none righteous." The truly righteous man is the man whose iniquities are forgiven, whose moral nature has been "made

straight" and who now lives the upright life. The blessedness of such a man is here beautifully portrayed.

I. His Little is Blessed. "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked" (Psalms 37:16). Although there is but little meal in his barrel, it never goes done. With his little, he has always the blessing of the Lord which maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow (Proverbs 10:22).

II. He is Upheld by the Lord. "The Lord upholdeth the righteous" (Psalms 37:17). His strength is not in himself, but in the faithful and strong hand of his God (Isaiah 41:10). He is upheld upon the sinking billows, like Peter, where no faithless feet can ever go. "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:32). He maketh my feet like hinds' feet, to stand in slippery places.

III. His Inheritance is Everlasting. "The Lord knoweth...the upright; and their inheritance shall be for ever" (Psalms 37:18). If he has little on the earth, he has "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven" (1 Peter 1:4.). Being an heir of God, he is an heir of the eternal joys and glories that belong to Him; pleasures that are at God's right hand for evermore.

IV. He is Merciful and Gracious. "The righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth" (Psalms 37:21). He has learned by the example and Spirit of his Lord, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." He has had mercy and grace shewed him, and as he has freely received, he freely gives.

V. He is Never Forsaken. "I am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (Psalms 37:25). This old man's testimony is most precious and encouraging; he had never seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed in destitution. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved and thy house" (Acts 16:31).

VI. He is Endowed with Heavenly Wisdom. "The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom...the law of his God is in his heart" (Psalms 37:30-32). When the Word of God is hid in the heart, then out of the good treasure of the heart he can bring forth good things (Matthew 12:35). "It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which is in you."

VII. The End is Peace. "Behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace" (Psalms 37:37). He does not need to pray, like Balaam, "Let me die the death of the righteous," for he has already peace-the peace of God-and the blessedness of the peacemaker is now his; he is a child of God (Matthew 5:9). "My peace I give unto you" (John 14:27).

VIII. His Salvation is All of God. "The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord...because he trusts in Him" (Psalms 37:39-40). He is saved by grace, through faith. There is nothing in himself to boast of; his life-long salvation is the result of his life-long trust in the mercy and power of his God and Saviour. As Daniel was "taken out of the den, with no manner of hurt found upon him, because he believed in his God" (Daniel 6:23) so will He save us from this present evil world, because we trust in Him.

SIN'S MISERIES, AND THE WAY OF ESCAPE

Psalm 38

ThIs Psalm of "Remembrance" which reminds us of a boiling pot, in which there are many unsavoury ingredients, is in marked contrast to the preceding Psalm. We may partly misunderstand David, if we forget that he acted not only as king of Israel, but also as Israel's national poet. This is the language of one who remembers the horrors of the pit out of which he has been dug. It fitly describes-

I. The Miseries of Sin. Sin, when it is finished bringeth forth death. See here how it operates in the awakened sinner. There is-

1. CONVICTION. "Thine arrows stick fast in me" (Psalms 38:2). It is not at the sinner God shoots at so much as at his sins His arrows are sharp and pierce to the core of the evil. The Word of God is a discerner of the heart.

2. DISORDER. "There is no soundness in my flesh" (Psalms 38:3). His whole moral nature was discovered to be diseased, and out of order. This is a most humbling revelation. The heart has been found out as a deceitful traitor, and all its actions discovered to be polluting and disorderly.

3. UNREST. "Neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin" (Psalms 38:3). The strongest features in his character were shaken and troubled at the thought of sin. The whole fabric of his moral nature was disturbed. Real conviction of sin is as an earthquake in the soul-universal disturbance.

4. OPPRESSION. "Mine iniquities are...as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me" (Psalms 38:4). Too heavy for me? yes, but not too heavy for Him, who bore our sins on His own body to the tree. What can a man do with a burden that is too heavy for him, and who cannot cast it off? O wretched man! who shall deliver?

5. CORRUPTION. "My wounds stink and corrupt because of my foolishness" (Psalms 38:5). This is no exaggerated figure of speech; it is the sober statement of one who has seen and felt sin in its true character and effects. There is no balm in Gilead, no physician on earth that can heal those deep-seated festering wounds.

6. HELPLESS. "I am feeble and sore broken" (Psalms 38:8). His whole nature was completely benumbed, and powerless to throw off the foul malady. "Without strength" is the condition of all under the torpid blight of sin.

7. DARKNESS. "As for the light of mine eyes, it has gone from me" (Psalms 38:10). All the light of hope he had before has died out. Darkness covers the face of his deep.

II. The Way of Escape

1. CONFESSION. "I will declare my iniquity" (Psalms 38:18). A full declaration is needed. He that covereth his sin shall not prosper, but "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive."

2. CONTRITION. "I will be sorry for my sin" (Psalms 38:18). This is the godly sorrow that worketh repentance to salvation. The confession that does not spring from contrition of heart is mockery. It is he that confesseth and forsaketh his sin that finds mercy.

3. FAITH. "In Thee O Lord do I hope: Thou wilt hear, O Lord my God" (Psalms 38:15). "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9-10).

TAKE HEED

Psalm 39

This resolution of the psalmist to "take heed to his ways" is a note of reminder to us. Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. Mark those things which, like David, we should give special attention to. I will take heed to-

I. My Ways (Psalms 39:1). I will scrutinise my motives, my habits and manners. I will not think them right because they are my ways. I will search out whether they are in harmony with God's word and ways.

II. My Mouth. "I will keep my mouth with a bridle (muzzle) while the wicked is before me" (Psalms 39:1). God is often judged by the ways and mouths of His people, therefore there is need at times for the muzzle. The man that offends not in word is a perfect man (James 3:2). Walk in wisdom toward them that are without (Psalms 141:3).

III. My Heart. "My heart was hot within me" (Psalms 39:3). Blessed are the hot in heart where the holy fire burns while they muse on the things of God, for their tongues shall speak of His praise. Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, or a lukewarm heart of indifference.

IV. My End. "Lord make me to know mine end" (Psalms 39:4). What shall my end be? is a most important inquiry. Balaam desired that his last end may be like the righteous, but he did not take heed to his end, so he fell numbered with the enemies of God.

V. My Days. "Behold Thou hast made my days (lifetime) as hand-breadths" (Psalms 39:5, R.V.). As our lifetime is made up of a few hand-breadths, we have need to take heed to each one of them; to "number them that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Psalms 90:12).

VI. My Hope. "My hope is in Thee" (Psalms 39:7). Take heed that your hope is in the Lord, and not in yourself or your circumstances. We are saved by hope, but hope that is seen is not hope (Romans 8:24). Those whose hope is in God will be filled with all joy and peace in believing, for He is the God of hope (Romans 15:13).

VII. My Transgressions. "Deliver me from all my transgressions" (Psalms 39:8). To transgress is to backslide; to fail to take heed to it is to fall from grace, and allow sin to have dominion over us (Romans 6:14). Although we may fall, we may rise again for the Lord is the Deliverer of His people.

VIII. My Prayer. "Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear to my cry; hold not Thy peace at my tears" (Psalms 39:12). Take heed to your prayers, see that they are the sincere expression of your inmost heart, and that they are offered in no cold and formal manner. They are all the better of being soaked with tears.

SAVED AND SATISFIED

Psalms 40:1-5

The first few Verses of this favourite Psalm give us the experiences of a soul passing from darkness into light- from the miseries of a lost condition into the joys of a full salvation. He was-

I. Distressed. In "an horrible pit" and "miry clay" (Psalms 40:2). Our sins are the cords by which we are let down into the dismal darkness to sink in the mire. It is an horrible awakening when one makes the discovery that this is their condition. The pains of Hell get hold of such.

II. Heard. "He inclined unto me, and heard my cry" (Psalms 40:1). What a mercy that this pit is not bottomless, and that the gracious ear of God is still within reach. Jonah cried out of the belly of Hell and was heard.

III. Saved. "He brought me up" (Psalms 40:2). His arm is not shortened that it cannot save, it is long enough and strong enough to lift the penitent sinner, "up out of" the pit of horrors and the treacherous mire. Others may divert and amuse the imprisoned soul, God only can bring him out.

IV. Established. "He set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings" (Psalms 40:2). It is a mighty deliverance, from the sinking miry clay of our own thoughts to the rock of God's eternal truth, and to have our ways so established that we are kept from falling back into our former condition. The Lord thy keeper.

V. Gladdened. "He put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God" (Psalms 40:3). This new song belongs to the new life of faith. It is a song of praise unto the Lamb who is worthy, for He was slain and has redeemed us to God by His blood (Revelation 5:9). He puts this song only into the mouths of those whose feet He has set upon the rock.

VI. Used. "Many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord" (Psalms 40:3). The change is so great that many can't help seeing it; it is so manifestly of God, that they will be led to fear and to trust in the Lord. The testimony of a sound, happy, consistent life, must be fruitful.

VII. Satisfied. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord...Thy wonderful works...Thy thoughts to usward... if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered" (Psalms 40:4-5). He is satisfied that the man who trusts in the Lord has entered into the blessed life. He finds that the works, and thoughts of God, on his behalf, are so wonderful and numerous, that they are unspeakable. When the eyes of our understanding have been enlightened, then we may know what is the hope of His calling, and the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe (Ephesians 1:18-20).

MESSIANIC FEATURES

Psalms 40:6-10

There is much in this Psalm that might have been fitly spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ. Some of these statements can hardly be applied to David (Psalms 40:6-8). Surely the Holy Spirit, the Revealer of Christ, rested upon the Psalmist when he uttered these prophetic words. There are here some- I. Features of His Character. In him there was the-

1. OPENED EAR. "Mine ears hast Thou opened" (Psalms 40:6). When the slave had his ear bored it was a token of entire submission to his master's will (Exodus 21:6). The Lord God bored the ear of His Son, and He was not rebellious, neither turned He back (Isaiah 50:4-5). This figure is used to denote the entire devotion of the Son to the Father's will.

2. SURRENDERED LIFE. "Burnt offering and sin offering hast Thou not required; then said I, Lo, I come" (Psalms 40:6-7). When there were no more sacrifices required at the hands of the Jewish priesthood, then Christ came. He came, not to offer sacrifices for sin, but to give Himself, an offering unto God. His life was yielded to God for the purpose of redemption. He is "the end of the law for righteousness" (Romans 10:4).

3. FULFILLED WORD. "In the volume of the book it is written of me" (Psalms 40:7). All that was written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets and in the Psalms concerning the Messiah, found their perfect fulfilment in Him (Luke 24:44). So ought His Word to be fulfilled in us.

4. EMBODIED LAW. "Thy law is within my heart" (Psalms 40:8). He not only obeyed the law, but the law of His God was so deeply engraven in his heart as to constitute His very nature. His meat was to do the will of Him that sent Him (John 4:34). This is what the Holy Ghost seeks to do in us, by making us partakers of the Divine nature.

5. JOYFUL SERVANT. "I delight to do Thy will, O my God" (Psalms 40:8). It is a delight to do His will, when His Word is hid in the surrendered heart (Romans 7:22). This is the secret and character of the "holy life," when the self-will is lost in the delightsomeness of the will of God.

6. FAITHFUL PREACHER. "I have preached righteousness: I have not refrained: I have not hid: I have declared: I have not concealed" (Psalms 40:9-10). As a faithful witness, He kept back nothing that was profitable. Having the Spirit of the Lord upon Him, He preached the Gospel to the poor (Luke 4:18-19). He was manifestly declared to be an epistle of God.

II. Aspects of His Ministry. Christ's life and teaching was a revelation of the-

1. RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD. "I have published righteousness" (Psalms 40:9, R.v.). The law and the prophets witnessed to the righteousness of God, but Jesus Christ alone can impart it to all them that believe (Romans 3:21-22).

2. FAITHFULNESS OF GOD. "I have declared Thy faithfulness" (Psalms 40:10). Every miracle that Christ performed, every prayer that He uttered, was a declaration of the faithfulness of His Father to His Son, and to His Word. He walked by faith, and received from God all that He needed, thereby proving His faithfulness.

3. SALVATION OF GOD. "I have declared...Thy salvation" (Psalms 40:10). Salvation through the grace of God was the central theme of our Lord's ministry. This salvation which began to be spoken by the Lord: how shall we escape if we neglect it? (Hebrews 2:3).

4. LOVINGKINDNESS OF GOD. "I have not concealed Thy loving-kindness" (Psalms 40:10). God is love, and His love and kindness had a new unveiling in the gift of His Son. Jesus Christ never concealed the fact that Himself was the expression of the loving-kindness of the Father to a perishing world. "Last of all He sent His Son." Herein is love.

5. TRUTH OF GOD. "I have not concealed...Thy truth" (Psalms 40:10). The truth as it is in the character of the Father has been manifested to us in the character of the Son. No essential feature belonging to the nature of God was concealed by Him. He is the Truth; neither more nor less can be said of Him than what is said of God: "I and My Father are one." Let us thank God that He who is the Truth, is also the Way and the Life. THE BLESSEDNESS OF CONSIDERING THE POOR

Psalms 41:1-3 (see next Psalm)

The word "blessed" here is in the plural, "Oh, the blessednesses" of such.

I. He will be Delivered in time of trouble (Psalms 41:1).

II. He will be Preserved and kept in life (Psalms 41:2).

III. He will be Blessed upon the earth (Psalms 41:2).

IV. He will be Saved from his enemies (Psalms 41:2).

V. He will be Strengthened in time of weariness (Psalms 41:3).

VI. He will be Comforted in time of sickness (Psalms 41:3). THE SUFFERINGS AND CONSOLATIONS OF THE SAINT

Psalms 41:4-13

According to the Hebrew divisions, this Psalm ends the first Book.

I. His Sufferings. He suffers from- 1. EVIL SPEAKING. "Mine enemies speak evil of me" (Psalms 41:5).

2. EVIL THINKING. "When shall he perish?"

3. EVIL WHISPERING. "They whisper together against me" (Psalms 41:7).

4. EVIL PLOTTING. "They devised my hurt."

5. EVIL WORKING. "Lifted up his heel against me" (Psalms 41:9).

II. His Consolations. He is comforted with the- 1. KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. "But Thou, O Lord" (Psalms 41:10).

2. FAVOUR OF GOD. "I know that Thou favourest me" (Psalms 41:11).

3. FAITHFULNESS OF GOD. "Mine enemy doth not triumph over me."

4. POWER OF GOD. "Thou upholdest me" (Psalms 41:12).

5. PRESENCE OF GOD. "Thou settest me before Thy face" (Psalms 41:12).

DEEP CALLETH UNTO DEEP

Psalms 42:1-7.

The key words to this pathetic Psalm are, "My Soul" and "My God." These are two great deeps, and the one calleth unto the other. The natural phenomenon referred to in Psalms 42:7, "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts," may have awakened this line of thought and expression. The deep, dark cloud, calling unto the deep sea, by the voice of a whirlwind, creating a waterspout, that may have burst in the hills, flooding the river, and again making for the deep of the sea. Two deeps; one above, and one beneath; the God of heaven, and the soul of man. "As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God." Deep calleth unto deep.

I.-MAN'S SOUL IS A GREAT DEEP. As a spiritual and immortal being, there is in him almost fathomless depths.

1. There is a great deep of NEED, "My soul thirsteth." This deep saith, satisfaction is not in me. No. Apart from God "darkness is upon the face of the deep." The Godless soul of man is but a yawning gulf of emptiness and thirst. This well is deeper than Jacob's.

2. There is a great deep of POSSIBILITY. In another place the Psalmist says, "The heart is deep" (Psalms 64:4). There is a great depth of capacity in it for pain or pleasure, weal or woe. The depth of its capacity is the depth of its possibility. Who can reckon up the full capabilities of a human soul?

3. Man's soul is also a great deep of RESPONSIBILITY. Being an immortal spirit, eternal consequences are involved in its thoughts and actions.

II. -GOD IS A GREAT DEEP. The Living, Almighty, Self-existent and Eternal God. Who can by searching find out the limits of the Almighty?

1. HIS THOUGHTS are deep (Psalms 92:4). His thoughts are perfectly consistent with His character. They come out of the great depths of His Infinite mind.

2. HIS WISDOM and KNOWLEDGE are deep. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable." (Romans 11:33-34). God is the "deep thinker," and in the great depth of His wisdom and knowledge there is for us an unsearchable depth of riches.

3. HIS LOVE is deep (Ephesians 3:18-19). We need to be rooted and grounded in it, to be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is its breadth, and length, and depth, and height. His love is as deep as His fathomless heart. The love that gave Jesus to die.

4. His RESOURCES are deep. He clave the rock and gave them water to drink out of the great depths (Psalms 78:8-15). In Christ, our Spiritual Rock, there dwelleth all the fulness of God. He is able to do exceeding abundantly.

III. -THE ONE DEEP CALLETH UNTO THE OTHER. The deep of man's need calleth unto the deep of God's fulness; and the deep of God's fulness calleth unto the deep of man's need. Between our emptiness and His all-sufficiency there is a great gulf, but, thank God, it is not yet fixed. Deep calleth unto deep. The deep mercy of God needs our emptiness, into which it might pour itself. Man needs God, God needs man. Nothing can fully meet the depth of our need but the depth of His Almighty fulness. Out of His depths hath He cried unto me: Out of my depths have I cried unto Him (Psalms 130:1). This is the mind and work of the Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth the deep things of God. Then, my soul, "Launch out into the deep," and "dwell deep."

THINGS TOUCHING THE KING

Psalm 45

The King referred to here, who is called "God," and whose throne is "for ever and ever," can be none other than the Messiah. The heart of the writer is so filled with the riches of such a soul-warming vision that it overflows like a boiling pot (Psalms 45:1, r.v.). A full heart makes a ready or eloquent tongue. A clear soul-ravishing sight of the glories of Christ, and His Bride, the

Church, is the best preparation for a powerful testimony (Acts 4:20). Note what these "things" are.

I.-HIS BEAUTY. "Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into Thy lips" (Psalms 45:2). He is the chiefest among the thousands, in earth or in heaven. His mouth is most sweet, because of the grace that has been poured into His lips. No man ever spake like this Man. He is fairer than the children of men, because He is the express and unsullied image of the heavenly Father, full of grace and truth.

II. -HIS SWORD. "Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O most mighty" (Psalms 45:3). Beauty and might are gracefully wedded in the Person of Christ. On his lips, grace; on His thigh, a sword. The Word of God is either grace that saves, or a sword that severs. This sword is two-edged.....dividing.....and discerning (Hebrews 4:12). During these days of grace and salvation, the sword is upon the thigh of Him who is most mighty, but the time shall come when it shall be in His hand (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9).

III.-HIS CAUSE. "Because of truth and meekness and righteousness" (Psalms 45:4), Christ, in vindicating truth, meekness, and righteousness, is vindicating His own character and our need. He is the Truth. He is meek and lowly in heart. He is the Lord our righteousness. The untruthful (not true to God, and men), the proud, and the self-righteous, are opposed to the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ. To love the truth, to possess a meek spirit, and to act righteously is to be in harmony with His will, in line with His purpose, and in the likeness of His character.

IV.-HIS ARROWS. "Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies" (Psalms 45:5). The King knoweth His enemies. His arrows are sharp, and they go straight to the heart, where the enmity and deceit lurks. They cut so deep that no earthly remedy can heal the wound (Acts 2:37). These arrows are as swift as light, as straight as truth, and as unerring as the wisdom of God. Sooner or later they shall reach every heart at enmity with the King.

V.-HIS THRONE AND SCEPTRE. "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of equity is the sceptre of Thy kingdom" (Psalms 45:6, R.v.). The seat and method of His government are eternally the same. His throne is the symbol of eternal dignity, and His sceptre of everlasting righteousness. Every attribute of His kingly character is in favour of righteousness, and opposed to wickedness (Psalms 45:7). This is He who was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Therefore God hath anointed Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied. His Divinity is undeniable.

VI.-HIS GARMENTS. "All Thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces" (Psalms 45:8). All His vestments have an unmistakable heavenly fragrance about them, because they are His. He is in them. His presence gives a new perfume to every environment. All the doctrines of His Word are as His sweet-smelling garments, that speak of the fulness and freeness of the riches of His grace. Although our eyes see Him not, yet are we conscious of the nearness of His presence by the fragrance of His garments.

VII.-HIS QUEEN. "At Thy right hand doth stand the queen in gold of Ophir" (Psalms 45:9, r.v.). The queen of the Kingly Son of God is the Church, which is the Bride of the Lamb; her destined place is at His "right hand," and her adorning is with the purest golden glory. Through His grace He will present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Seeing that the marriage of the Lamb is coming, it becometh the Bride to make herself ready (Revelation

19:7-8).

VIII. -HIS DAUGHTER." The King's daughter in the inner part of the palace is all glorious" (Psalms 45:13, R.v., marg.). This Bride occupies the unique relationship of being both queen and daughter. He calls her "My sister, My spouse." She is a daughter because born of God; she is a queen, because, with Him (Christ) she is seated in heavenly places, crowned with honour and glory. In the inner palace of the King she is now all glorious, who once like Him, and for Him, was despised and rejected of men (Isaiah 61:10). She can now truly say, "The King hath brought me into His chambers; we will be glad and rejoice in Thee" (Ca. Psalms 1:4). Have you accepted His loving invitation, and put on His proffered wedding garment? (Matthew 22:11).

PRICELESS POSSESSIONS

Psalm 46.

This is the song of the Christian warrior. All who have put on the whole armour of God, to resist the principalities and powers of evil, will, like Luther, sing it often. Each note of this Psalm is an inspiration There are in it-

I.-AN INFALLIBLE REFUGE. "God is our Refuge and Strength." The life that is "hid in God" is surely as safe as God can make it. The eternal spirit of man needs the "Eternal God as a Refuge" (Deuteronomy 33:27). To hide in God, is to hide in His Love, and in His Mercy, and in His Power. This means not only perfect safety, but also perfect self-abandonment to God, to His will and work.

II. -AN IMMOVABLE CONFIDENCE. "Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed," etc. (Psalms 46:3-4). What has the removing of the earth to do with a soul that is dwelling in God? His house is built on the eternal Rock, therefore the rain, floods, or winds cannot shake it (Matthew 7:25). The Lord, in whom we trust, is "Mightier than the noise of many waters." Let not the din of the world's tumult drown this sweet note of restfulness.

III.-AN INFINITE SUPPLY. "There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God" (Psalms 46:4). New rivers of delight flow out for the soul that has found its refuge in God; they drink now of "the river of Thy pleasures" (Psalms 36:8). They are led by the still waters of God's great thoughts, and refreshed and strengthened by the living streams of eternal truth. The supplies for the new man are found in his new hiding place (Isaiah 32:2).

IV.-AN UNFAILING COMFORT. "God is in the midst.....God shall help....He uttered His voice.....The Lord of Hosts is with us" (Psalms 46:5-7). His abiding presence is our continual protection, and the guarantee of rest in service (Exodus 33:14-15). When God, by His Spirit, is in the midst of thee, and when He uttereth His voice, then the earth, and the things of the earth melt.

V.-AN ASSURING PROSPECT. "Come, behold..... what desolation He hath made.....He maketh wars to cease," etc. (Psalms 46:8-9). There is here a backward look and a forward look. He hath made desolations of men's works and ways in the past, and He will yet break, and cut to pieces, the instruments of destruction, and make wars to cease, unto the end of the earth (Isaiah 2:4). The angelic song at the Nativity, "Peace on earth and goodwill among men," will yet be perfectly fulfilled at the coming of the King.

VI.-A PEACEFUL ATTITUDE. "Be still, and know that I am God." Only those who have faith in God can possibly be still, when circumstances are apparently adverse. But it is in this stillness of soul that we learn to know God. "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength" (Isaiah 30:7-15). Stand still and see the salvation of God. Hush; and let God utter His voice.

VII.-A TRIUMPHANT RESULT. "I will be exalted..... I will" (Psalms 46:10). The Lord above shall be exalted in that day, when He becomes the Refuge and Strength of His people. It is so now, in our individual experience; it will be so then, in His coming kingdom, when He shall be all and in all to His own. THE GREAT CHANGE

Psalm 51

David had grievously sinned, and Nathan, at the command of God, had done for him what the Holy Spirit does for us. "Convinces of sin." The penitential language of this Psalm is always appropriate on the lips of a soul passing out of the agonies of conscious guilt, into the joys of forgiving grace.

I.-CONFESSIONS. Here it was deep and real "I acknowledge my transgressions." There was no further attempt to cover it up. "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned." He is conscious that his secret sin was an open insult to the name and character of God, as every sin is. "Thou desirest truth in the inward parts" (Psalms 51:6). He feels now more keenly than ever that God looketh on the heart. Hypocrisy, like faith and truthfulness, is a thing of the heart (Luke 11:39). It is to such confessors that the Faithful and Just One gives forgiveness and cleansing (1 John 1:9).

II.-PETITIONS. Where there are such confessions there will also be petitions. The vessel of the heart needs not only to be emptied of the evil, but filled with the good. His first petition is for the-

1. MERCY OF GOD. "Have mercy upon me, O God" (Psalms 51:1). Nothing but mercy can meet his case, and that mercy must be the mercy of God. No convicted sinner would dare to ask for justice or righteousness, only the self-righteous are presumptuous enough to think of this. Then he pleads for-

2. CLEANSING FROM SIN. "Wash me thoroughly... and cleanse me from my sin" (Psalms 51:2). The remedy must be as thorough as the disease. Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. God's infallible cure for the guilt and pollution of sin is "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son." (1 John 1:7).

3. EXPIATION FROM GUILT. "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean" (Psalms 51:7). "Expiate me by a sin offering" is another rendering. The hyssop had to do with the blood of the lamb (Exodus 12:22). God's forgiveness is always on the ground of expiation. If the conscience is to be purged from dead and sinful works, it must be by "the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God." (Hebrews 9:14).

4. REGENERATION OF HEART. "Create in me a clean heart, O God" (Psalms 51:10). The remedy would not be perfect that only dealt with past sins and present guilt; the heart which is "deceitful and wicked" must be changed. The clean heart is a new creation. It is a heart destitute of the love of sin, and filled with the love of God. It is a condition described in the New Testament as being "born again" (John 3:3).

5. RENEWAL OF SPIRIT. "Renew a right spirit within me." With the new heart comes the new spirit within us, and upon us (Ezekiel 36:25-27). There cannot be the right spirit where there is not the clean heart. The hearts that were purified by faith were filled with the Holy Ghost (Acts 15:8-9). The absence of the right spirit is the evidence of indwelling sin.

6. RESTORATION OF JOY. "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation" (Psalms 51:12). As a backslider, this joy had faded out of his life, but with the new heart and right spirit it was sure to return. At least, the way was open now for the return of this bright bird of Paradise into his life. Sorrow may endure for the night of confession, but joy cometh in the morning of forgiveness and renewal. There is a joy in His salvation, a joy that should never be lost.

7. PRESERVATION BY HIS POWER. "Uphold me with Thy free Spirit" (Psalms 51:12). Now that he has been set free from the law of sin and death, he longs to be kept in this condition of spiritual freedom. "Hold Thou me up." As one who had been burned with the fire of sin, he now dreads it. Although we have had the cleansing power of His blood, we still need the upholding power of His Spirit. He is able to keep us from falling.

III.-RESULTS. Where there has been a decided work of grace, signs will follow. He had-

1. A DESIRE TO WIN SOULS. "Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways; and sinners shall be converted (turned) unto Thee" (Psalms 51:13). When, by experience, we have learned "Thy ways," we have something worth teaching; something that transgressors need to know. It is a great work to convert a sinner (James 5:19-20). If God hath blessed us, it is that we might be made a blessing. He that winneth souls is wise.

2. A DESIRE TO PRAISE GOD. "O God of my salvation; my tongue shall sing aloud of Thy righteousness;" and again, "O Lord, open Thou my lips, and my mouth shall shew forth Thy praise" (Psalms 51:15). Those saved by the Lord have a double debt to pay. They are debtors to the unsaved-to teach them His way - they are debtors to God, to praise Him. "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me" (Psalms 50:23). A BLESSED EXPERIENCE

Psalms 57:1-2

In these two verses the way of salvation is set before us in a very expressive manner. Observe there is-

I.-DANGER. "Until these calamities be overpast." Saul was threatening the life of David, but his danger was nothing compared to the danger of those who are under the threatening judgments of God. His wrath against sin is a terrible calamity for the sinner (John 3:36).

II.-PRAYER. "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me." This is the language of one who is very sensible of his danger and need. Mercy is the crying need of those who have been awakened to a sense of their real condition. "God be merciful unto me, the sinner."

III.-PROVISION. "The shadow of Thy wings." How gracious is our God, that He should stand, as with outstretched wings, waiting and willing to receive and shelter all who take refuge beneath them." O Jerusalem.... how often would I have gathered..... as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings" (Matthew 23:37). The shadow of His wings means the shadow of God.

IV.-FAITH. "My soul trusteth in Thee; yea, in the shadow of Thy wings will I make my refuge." The outspread wings of divine grace can only save those who trust and accept. "Ye would not" was the only hindrance in the way of Jerusalem sinners being saved. If the Israelites could not enter into the joy of the Promised Land, it was "because of unbelief" (Hebrews 3:19).

V.-DELIVERANCE. "I cried unto God..... that performeth all things for me." God's salvation is perfect. He performeth every needed thing. It is His way, that when He begins a good work in you, to perform it until the day of Jesus Christ (Php_1:6). Salvation is of the Lord.

WAITING UPON GOD

Psalms 62:1-8

Twice in this Psalm does David speak of his soul "waiting" or being "silent unto God" (r.v., marg.). This silence is profoundly significant. It is about as ominous in us as when it was in heaven for the "space of half an hour." It is so difficult for us, at times, to be perfectly still before God, as an instrument whose silent cords wait the divine touch. Let us think of-

I. -HIM, ON WHOM WE SHOULD WAIT. "My soul waiteth upon God." My soul, pause and think of Him at whose door thou dost wait. He that cometh to God, must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. Wait on Him as the Israelites waited on the moving of the Pillar of Cloud. To move without Him is to move without the promise and the presence. To wait God's guidance and incoming for power and progress, is as the seaman, waiting on the rising of the tide, and the deepening of the river channel, that he may go forth in safety with his precious cargo.

II.-WHY WE SHOULD WAIT ON GOD. Because of what He is. "He only is my Rock, my Salvation, my Defence" (Psalms 62:2). It may seem an awkward figure of speech to be waiting on a "Rock," but the sense is of tremendous importance. It is to wait on the coming of irresistible strength and stability. He alone is to be our Strength, our Saviour, and Defender. I need Him as "my Rock" (Strength), to stand in the midst of all the evil forces of the world. I need Him as "my Salvation," to deliver me from the subtle temptations and lusts of the flesh. I need Him as "my Defence," to save me from the wiles and fiery darts of the devil. "My soul wait thou only upon God" (Psalms 62:5).

III.-HOW WE SHOULD WAIT. We should wait as those who expect the fulfilment of His Word, and the manifestation of His character. "My expectation is from Him....I shall not be moved." (Psalms 62:5-6). It is the believing and expectant heart that looks for the opened windows of heaven, and the poured-out blessing (Malachi 3:10). "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it" (Psalms 81:10). It is only when every other door is closed, and every vain desire of self silenced, that we are in a position to prove Him, and to say truly, "My expectation is from Him." When we are thus shut up to faith in Him, we may also say, "I shall not be moved." They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.

IV.-THE RESULT OF WAITING UPON GOD. There will be a clear and encouraging testimony to His faithfulness. "Trust ye in Him at all times, pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us" (Psalms 62:8). From experience he can say to the people: At all times, trust Him, for all things pour out your heart to Him; for He is a refuge, and a present help to those who wait upon Him. They that wait upon Him are blessed, and made a blessing to others.

THIRSTING FOR GOD

Psalms 63:1-8

This is the language of the Psalmist while wandering in the wilderness of Judah. It is an experience which is typical of those who have discovered their real need in the wilderness of this world's unsatisfactory pleasures and profits.

I.-THE NATURE OF THIS THIRST. "My soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee" (Psalms 63:1). It is the thirst of an aching spirit, and an impoverished life. Man is a soul; he is a spirit. There is a yawning gulf within his being, that all the material blessing of the world cannot fill. This soul thirst is an internal evidence of its kinship with God.

II. -THE OBJECT OF IT. "My soul thirsteth for Thee....longeth for Thee." Only those who know God will thirst after Him. The hart panteth after the waterbrook, because it knoweth the refreshing efficacy of the flowing stream. There are souls that are smitten with intense thirst, but they know not what they really need, so they rush to the broken cisterns, that can hold no water. They will not acknowledge that it is God they need. O living, restless soul, it is the living, restful God you need (Psalms 42:2).

III.-THE CAUSE OF IT. "In a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." The land in which we dwell is in itself a dry, thirsty place-there is no water in it; absolutely nothing belonging to it that can meet this deep soul-need of man. Our best environments, apart from the enjoyment of the presence of God, is but a howling wilderness to the awakened. A clamouring emptiness, that only mocks the true hunger of the soul. This world offers the thirsty one everything but the one thing needful.

IV.-THE MOTIVE OF IT. "To see Thy power and Thy glory" (Psalms 63:2). This is a bold and large demand. What a satisfactory vision; to see the power and glory of God; to see the power of His saving grace and the glory of His matchless character. In the sanctuary of His Holy Word, this refreshing revelation is made. In the Person of His Son, His power and glory can be seen. If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink (John 7:37).

V.-THE CONFIDENCE OF IT. "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness" (Psalms 63:5). Where this thirst has been created, it is the forerunner of rich and lasting blessing. God Himself becomes the portion of whosoever so seeks Him. He makes them to drink of the river of His pleasures (Psalms 36:8). The soul is not to be satisfied with theological bones, but with marrow, and fatness; the "finest of the wheat."

VI. -THE GUIDANCE OF IT. "My soul followeth hard after Thee" (Psalms 63:8). When once the thirsty roots of a tree find the river, they follow after it. Those who have found soul-satisfaction in God will abide by the "Fountain of living waters." If we have found in Him full salvation, let us follow hard after Him in consecrated service. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.

JOYFUL IN GOD

Psalm 66

The soul that has thirsted for God, and found satisfaction in Him, will surely make a joyful noise to Him. We may shew forth our joyfulness in God-

I. -BY PRAISING HIS NAME. "Sing forth the honour of His name" (Psalms 66:2). His name is all that He Himself is (Isaiah 9:6). Sing out His glorious grace; His everlasting love and Almighty power. It will take all eternity to shew forth all the honours of that wonderful name.

II. BY GLORYING IN HIS WORKS. "Come and see the works of God" (Psalms 66:5). The Lord hath done great things for His people Israel (Psalms 66:6-7). Has he not done great things for us? His work of salvation is both "honourable and glorious" (Ps. III, 3). Think of the pit out of which ye have been digged, and let your joy in God abound.

III.-BY CONFESSING HIS FAITHFULNESS. "O bless our God..... which holdeth our life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved. Thou hast tried us... Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place" (Psalms 66:8-12). There have been temptations; there has been the furnace of trial, that has tested us as silver. There have been the "net," the "fire and water," but, praise His name, the end has been "a wealthy place." He is faithful who hath promised.

IV.-BY YIELDING TO HIS CLAIMS. "I will go... I will pay....I will offer" (Psalms 66:13-15). "Go" into His House of worship; "pay" the vows of consecration; "offer" the sacrifice of service. The joy of worship ought to be accompanied with the joy of sacrifice and service. Arise, and go up to Bethel, the place of vision and consecration.

V.-BY PERSONAL TESTIMONY. "Come and hear..... and I will declare what He hath done for my soul" (Psalms 66:16). Those who have no testimony for God, know nothing of the joy of God. It is those who have "received the Atonement," that joy in God, through the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:11). The Psalmist's testimony is threefold. First.-To the fact of his own joyfulness. "He was extolled with my tongue" (Psalms 66:17). Second.-To the fact that God does answer prayer, "God hath attended to the voice of my prayers" (Psalms 66:19). Third.-To the fact that an unclean heart hinders prayer. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psalms 66:18). "Make a joyful noise unto God." A CRY OF DISTRESS

Psalms 69:1-5

This Psalm ought to be read, on our knees, as coming from the lips of the suffering Son of God. In the opening verses we may hear the cry of a soul in utter desperation for the salvation of God. The reasons for it are very apparent. There was a sense of-

I.-DANGER. "Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul" (Psalms 69:1). His soul is like a vessel in a stormy sea that had sprung a leak. The waters of sorrow and fear have come in upon him. He had been struggling hard to keep them out, but has failed. The waters have prevailed, and the danger is great. A ship in the sea is natural, but the sea in a ship is dreadful.

II.-HELPLESSNESS. "I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing" (Psalms 69:2). In the deep miry sea of sin a man can do nothing else but sink, for there is absolutely "no standing" there. A man must get out of this horrible pit before his feet can stand on the rock. The law of sin and death, like the law of gravitation, can do nothing for us while in the miry deep. "There is no standing."

III.-HOPELESSNESS. "I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me" (Psalms 69:2). The waters came into his soul, now he is come "into deep waters." And, like one sinking within the tide mark, the billows begin to dash over him. The figure used here is most expressive to describe the sinner's inability to deliver himself from the guilt of his own sin. He might as well attempt to turn the tide as the wrath of God against sin.

IV.- WEARINESS. "I am weary of my crying." He speaks now as a child that has grown utterly tired and exhausted by its own efforts. We are not heard merely because of our much crying. We have to get to an end of our praying self, as well as our working self.

V.-THIRSTINESS. "My throat is dried." This figure is that of a man ready to perish in a burning, sandy desert. His crying has brought only a deeper sense of need. Floods overflowing him, yet dying of thirst. These are the agonies of a soul struggling for deliverance from worldliness and sin (Isaiah 55:1-2).

VI. -BLINDNESS. "Mine eyes fail while I wait for my God." He is now like one on a watch-tower, whose eyes are weary and dim through eagerly straining after something that he has failed to see. No hopeful discovery can he make. In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.

VII.-ENEMIES. "Mine enemies....are mighty" (Psalms 69:4). They are also numerous as "the hairs of mine head." The enemies of the human soul, in its quest after God and salvation, as mighty as "Principalities, Powers, and Wicked Spirits." And more in number than the hairs of the head. It is a great escape from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God. The whole condition, then, is one of intense impotency and hopelessness, apart from the grace and power of God.

VIII-CONFESSION. "O God, Thou knowest my foolishness, and my sins" (Psalms 69:5). Confession is needed. Our sins are there, there in our own hearts, like drowning waters; there around us like the deep mire. Our foolishness must also be confessed; in getting into the mire and hoping to save ourselves by an agonising effort. God knows it, therefore hide it not. Make full and frank acknowledgment to Him.

IX.-PETITION. "Save me, O God" (Psalms 69:1). "My prayer is unto Thee, O Lord, in an acceptable time (Psalms 69:13) ....Deliver me out of the mire....and out of the deep waters (Psalms 69:14) ... Draw nigh unto my soul and redeem it" (Psalms 69:18).

1. It was offered to the right One. "Unto Thee, O Lord."

2. It was for the right purpose. "Salvation and deliverance out of the mire."

3. It was in the right season. "An acceptable time" (2 Corinthians 6:2). A JOYFUL TESTIMONY

Psalms 71:15-24

There is in it-

I.-SALVATION. "My mouth shall shew forth Thy righteousness and Thy salvation" (Psalms 71:15). How could he shew forth His salvation if he had not experienced it?

II.-RESOLUTION.. "I will go... and I will make mention" (Psalms 71:16). The saved ought to go, and go in "His strength," making mention of His character (Rom. I, 16).

III.-CONFESSION. "O God, Thou hast taught me" (Psalms 71:17). This is a thankful acknowledgment of His grace and wisdom. It is the privilege of the saved to be "taught of God" (John 14:26).

IV. -PETITION. "Now also when I am old... forsake me not; until I have shewed Thy strength and Thy power" (Psalms 71:18). This is a grand "Old Age Pension," to be able, when "grey-headed," to shew forth the strength and power of God. Why should the aged lose their spiritual freshness? The Vine is still the same, if the branch abides it will be fruitful.

V.-ADORATION. "O God, who is like unto Thee?" (Psalms 71:19). Those who have witnessed, and experienced, the great things of God, cannot but be filled with adoring gratitude.

VI. -EXPECTATION. "Thou....shalt quicken me again.....Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side" (Psalms 71:20-21). He had seen "great and sore troubles," so he expects to receive great and precious blessings. This is the language of one who knows by experience God's searching, gracious methods with His own.

VII.-EXULTATION. "I will praise Thee.... will sing with the harp.....My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto Thee....My tongue shall also talk of Thy righteousness all the day long" (Psalms 71:22-24). Oh, how great, how satisfying, is the goodness of our God. Taste and see. He is the Fountain of Life. Bless the Lord, O my soul (Psalms 103:2-4). THE MILLENNIAL REIGN

Psalm 72.

This wonderful Psalm is called "A Psalm of Solomon," but a greater than Solomon is here. The reign of Solomon, the king's son, was doubtless one of comparative peace and righteousness, but "All kings did not fall down before him," nor did "All nations serve him," nor shall "the whole earth be filled with his glory." But all will be literally fulfilled when the Son of God appears in power and great glory. What are the characteristics of this blessed age, as revealed in this Psalm? There will be-

I.-UNIVERSAL RIGHTEOUSNESS. "He shall judge Thy people with righteousness" (Psalms 72:2). This righteousness is the righteousness of God (Psalms 72:1). The righteousness of men is as filthy rags compared with this. "Behold a king shall reign in righteousness" (Isaiah 32:1). The law shall come from His lips, and shall never be thwarted by the selfish cross-purposes of man. "He shall break in pieces the oppressor" (Psalms 72:4). The greed of the miser and the haughty pride of the tyrant shall be crushed by the power of His judgment. The poor in spirit shall be the blessed ones in His kingdom (Matthew 5:3). All presumptuous rule and authority shall be put down when he reigns.

II. -UNIVERSAL REVIVAL. "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth" (Psalms 72:6). He, like the rain, shall come down from heaven. He shall come down in a time of great need upon the mown grass. Grass that has been mown is in great danger of being burned up at the roots. He shall come as showers that water the earth. Showers indicate distinct seasons of definite blessing. The effect of long-delayed rain is the renewal of the whole face of Nature; the result of His coming upon a mown humanity will be a mighty reviving and refreshing from the presence of the Lord. Everything shall live whither this river cometh (Ezekiel 47:9).

III. -UNIVERSAL PROSPERITY. "In His days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace" (Psalms 72:7). The burden of national armament will, then, be rolled away (Isaiah 2:4). Righteousness, not force, will be the popular governing principle in "His days." Wickedness, and deceit, in every form, like unclean bats, will not be able to shew face in the bright day of His glory. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

IV. -UNIVERSAL DOMINION. "He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and.... unto the ends of the earth" (Psalms 72:8). Every other kingdom shall be broken in pieces (Daniel 2:24). Then shall the heathen be given Him for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession (Psalms 2:8). He came that "the world, through Him, might be saved" (John 3:17). Every knee shall yet bow to Him, and every tongue confess Him as Lord.

V. -UNIVERSAL SUBJECTION. "The kings.... shall bring presents.....and other gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him. His enemies shall lick the dust" (Psalms 72:9-11). The tongues of many scoffers are eloquent now, but they shall lick the dust when He cometh (Micah 7:17). The world needs a Ruler. As the queen of Sheba, hearing of the fame of Solomon, came to prove him, so shall the kings of the earth be constrained to come to Him who is the King of kings, and Lord of lords. The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ (Revelation 11:15). He shall reign for ever and ever.

VI. -UNIVERSAL BLESSING. "There shall be an handful of corn.....the fruit shall shake like Lebanon....the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. His name shall endure for ever...and men shall be blessed in Him. All nations shall call Him blessed" (Psalms 72:16-17). When the city flourishes like the grass, there will be no place found for the slum. Men are blessed in Him now by faith, men shall be blessed in Him then by sight; and so blessed that all nations shall call Him blessed, because He is the universal Blesser (Ephesians 1:3). Then will be fulfilled the angelic saying in Luke 2:14.

VII. -UNIVERSAL GLORY. "Blessed be His glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with His glory" (Psalms 72:19). The glory of this name which now transfigures the soul, will then transfigure the world. For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea (Habakkuk 2:14). This is the work of Him who is "glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders." A GREAT PROBLEM SOLVED

Psalm 73

In judging things by their outward appearances, the Psalmist says, "My feet were almost gone; my steps had well-nigh slipped" (Psalms 73:2). These are "perilous times" for the trusting soul, when the Providence of God seems to contradict the Word of God. As in the vision of Ezekiel, so in God's dealing with men, there are "wheels within wheels."

I. -THE PROBLEM. It was great and complex. Here are some of the things that staggered his senses.

1. He saw the prosperity of the wicked (Psalms 73:3).

2. He saw that they had "no bands (pangs) in their death" (Psalms 73:24).

3. He saw that they are not "troubled..... and plagued like other men" (Psalms 73:5).

4. He saw that "pride was to them as a chain ornament about their neck" (Psalms 73:6, R.v.) 5. He saw that "they have more than heart could wish" (Psalms 73:7).

6. He saw that they "speak loftily and set their mouth against the heavens" (Psalms 73:8-9).

7. He saw that they were wilfully ignorant of God, saying, "How doth God know?" (Psalms 73:11).

Then he adds, with something like irony in his tone, "Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world" (Psalms 73:12). Is it in vain, he asks, that I have "Cleansed my heart and washed my hands in innocency?" (Psalms 73:13). Does it matter nothing what a man is? Is there no principle of righteousness overruling the affairs of men? Does it pay best to be wicked and God-defiant?" For all day long have I been plagued" (Psalms 73:14). The problem of the sufferings of the righteous, and the prosperity of the wicked, is ever before us. Judged from a merely mundane standpoint, the mystery is insoluble. The man of the world, whose eyes stand out with fatness, can say, sneeringly, "How doth God know?"

II. -THE SOLUTION. "When I thought how I might know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God, and considered their latter end" (Psalms 73:16-17, r.v.). The whole situation is, indeed, "painful," apart from the revelation of "the sanctuary of God." But when considered in the light of that revelation from God, which bears directly upon "this latter end," things are seen, in their true perspective. In His light we see light clearly. Things take on a new and different character when seen in the light of Eternity. Temporal prosperity may only be the primary and deceptive symptoms of a fatal disease. In this holy and enlarged vision He saw- 1. That they were "set in slippery places" (Psalms 73:18).

2. That they would be "cast down into destruction. "

3. That they would "become a desolation in a moment" (Psalms 73:19, R. v.).

4. That they would be "utterly consumed with terrors. "

5. That God would "despise their image" (Psalms 73:20). This new view withers up the roots of envy. Who would covet the position of a man who was to be famous for an hour, and a fool for a year? The wicked have their portion in this life, but are miserable bankrupts in the end (Luke 16:25).

III. -THE SOUL RESTED. Having now seen the puzzling problems, as it were, with new eyes, he makes full confession of his "foolishness" and "ignorance, " and declares himself as a beast before God. Beastly eyes can only see the earthly and the outward (Psalms 73:22). The ungodly live but the life of the "brutish man" (Psalms 92:6); but why should the godly judge such things, from a brutish man's standpoint? Having discovered his mistake, and acknowledged his foolishness, he proceeds to reckon up the blessings which belong to him as a man of God, in contrast to the portion of the man of the world. What are they?

1. He has the companionship of God. "Nevertheless, I am continually with Thee, Thou hast holden me by my right hand" (Psalms 73:23).

2. He says, "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel" (Psalms 73:24).

3. He is sure that God will "Afterwards receive Him to glory." This is a very different afterward than that referred to in Psalms 73:18.

4. He feels that there is "None upon the earth that he desires beside Thee" (Psalms 73:25). The brutish man knows nothing of this earthly blessing.

5. He is confident that although his "flesh and heart faileth, God is the strength of his heart and his portion for ever" (Psalms 73:26).

6. He knows by experience that it is "good for him to draw near to God" (Psalms 73:28). It is good for us that we can draw near to Him.

7. He testifies "I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all Thy works" (Psalms 73:28). Social problems seen in the light of God's sanctuary must lead to a fresh and fuller declaration of the mighty works of God.

CONDITIONS OF BLESSING AND FAILURE

Psalms 81:8-16

These words in this part of the Psalm are of tremendous significance, as they contain God's own testimony unto His people as to what He expected from them; as to what they should have expected from Him; and as to why they failed to receive His choicest blessings.

I.-A MERCIFUL ENTREATY. He pleads with them (1) to "Hearken unto Me" (Psalms 81:8). He must have the attentive ear, if divine wisdom and power are to be imparted. (2), "There shall no strange god be in thee." He entreats that nothing should be allowed to take His place in the heart's affection, or as an object of confidence. It is surely easy to yield all for Him, when He offers to be all to us. (3), To "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it" (Psalms 81:10). A "wide mouth" means large expectations. The proof that He is able, and willing, to meet the largest demand that our faith can make, is in this: "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt." He who can save to the uttermost, can satisfy to the deepest. Hearken, Believe, Expect.

II. -A GRACIOUS PURPOSE. The love that delivered our souls from the pit of sin longs to enrich us with the gifts of His grace. He says, "Oh that my people had hearkened unto Me, and walked in My ways" (Psalms 81:13), then He would have done three things for them. 1. He would have subdued their enemies (Psalms 81:14). Victory would have been theirs if they had followed Him. It is dishonouring to Him that His people should be in bondage to the powers of darkness. 2. He would have made the haters of the Lord submit unto Him. (Psalms 81:15). They would have been used in bringing their souls to God. His people's unbelief hindered Him from subduing and conquering His enemies. A solemn lesson for us. 3. He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat, and satisfied them with honey out of the rock (Psalms 81:16). His purpose is to subdue enemies, save sinners, satisfy saints.

III. -A SORROWFUL COMPLAINT. "But My people would not hearken to My voice; and Israel would none of Me" (Psalms 81:11). They rejected His word by not hearkening to His voice, and in rejecting His word they rejected Himself, "would none of Me." How gracious is our God, that He laments the lack of opportunity to bless His people. His word and Himself are so vitally connected, that to refuse the one is to reject the other.

IV.-A MISERABLE CONDITION. "So I gave them up into their own hearts' lusts; and they walked in their own counsels" (Psalms 81:12). To be "given up" by Him, because of stubbornness and unbelief, means utter defeat in the presence of the foe; the enemies are not subdued. Sinners are not converted unto God, and there is no feeding on the "finest of the wheat" no glad satisfaction, with "honey from the rock." A powerless, and a fruitless Church, is the painful evidence that God's voice is being unheard and unheeded, and that we are "walking in our own counsels," guided by the wisdom of men, to the neglect of the wisdom of God. Those who are more anxious for the words of men than the Word of God, are preferring chaff to the wheat. Men fed on chaff make poor soldiers. God's desire is to make His people "more than conquerors." "Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat ye that which is good." THE REASON WHY

Psalms 86:1-7

Here are seven reasons urged by this petitioner why God should answer him. There are many objective reasons arising from God's own character and promises, but those here are all subjective. There is-

I. -MY NEED. "O Lord, hear me; for I am poor and needy." Our poverty and helplessness is a powerful plea at the door of infinite mercy and grace.

II.-MY GODLINESS. "Preserve my soul, for I am godly" (Psalms 86:2). This is no empty boast; to be godly is to seek the glory of God. This godliness is profitable as an agreement in prayer. Many ask amiss for lack of it.

III. -MY FAITH. Save Thy servant that trusteth in Thee. Faith can honestly make an appeal to the faithfulness of God. His trusting servant shall doubtless triumph in His saving power (Isaiah 26:3).

IV.-MY IMPORTUNITY. "For unto Thee do I cry all the day long" (Psalms 86:3, R.V.). This is another powerful element in prayer. Has not our Lord declared that "because of his importunity he shall give him as many as he needeth."

V.-MY WHOLEHEARTEDNESS. "Rejoice the soul of Thy servant; for unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul." (Psalms 86:4). The soul of true prayer is the lifting up of the soul (1 Samuel 1:15). An undivided heart is a conquering heart.

VI.-MY EXPERIENCE. "For Thou, Lord, art... plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon Thee" (Psalms 86:5) His past experience and knowledge of the character of God is another reason for expecting present help.

VII.-MY ASSURANCE. "I will call upon Thee; for Thou wilt answer me" (Psalms 86:7). "I will, for Thou wilt." This is the confidence that is never put to shame. Believe, and thou shalt see. A WORKER'S PRAYER

Psalms 90:12-17

This Psalm, which begins the fourth section of this book, is entitled "A Prayer of Moses, the man of God." The petitions offered in these closing verses are suggestive of the Christian worker's needs. He prays for-

I.-INSTRUCTION. "Teach us to number our days, that we may get us an heart of wisdom" (Psalms 90:12, R.V.). Wisdom is the principal thing (Prov. 4, 7); those who are taught to number their days of service on earth will seek it, and they that are wise redeem the time. We need divine teaching on this point to save us from folly and frivolity.

II.-RESTORATION. "Return, O Lord, how long?" Fellowship with Him has been lost, and the loss is keenly felt, which is a hopeful sign. The Lord is ready to return to the help of His servants "when He seeth that their power is gone," and there is none to help (Deuteronomy 32:36). The restoration of His presence is the restoration of the soul.

III.-SATISFACTION. "O satisfy us early with Thy mercy." His mercy can satisfy, and it will come early when there is true repentance toward God. His compassions fail not. His purpose is to satisfy (Psalms 36:7-8).

IV.-COMPENSATION. "Make us glad according to the days wherein Thou hast afflicted us." This is a bold request. But the height of our joy will be according to the depth of our mourning (Psalms 126:5-6). The depth of the valley is measured by the altitude of the hills. The arm that is strong to smite is equally strong to save. The long night of trial will surely have a long day of triumph.

V.-MANIFESTATION. "Let Thy work appear.....and Thy glory" (Psalms 90:16). He is but a poor servant of God who does not intensely long for the unmistakable appearance of His work and glory. This is the clamant need of the Church in these backsliding days. His servants ought to see His working, and to have His glory upon them (r.v.).

VI.-SANCTIFICATION. "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us" (Psalms 90:17). Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power, in the beauties of holiness (Ps.110, 3). The sum of God's character is "Holiness." The Holy One of Israel. As the flower is beautified by the sun, so must all be adorned with the glory of His presence. This is the will of God, your sanctification.

VII.-CONFIRMATION. "Establish Thou the work of our hands upon us." Our work needs to be established by God, as well as our feet (Psalms 40:2). What is the value of our work, if the Lord is not working with us, and confirming the work? (Mark 16:20). "My speech and my preaching," says the Apostle, "was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." This was the divine confirmation that "their faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." How are we to know that our work is of God, if He does not bear witness, as of old, both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His will? (Hebrews 2:3-4). THE FRUITS OF LOVE

Psalms 91:14-16

"Because he hath set his love upon Me, therefore"

I.-I WILL DELIVER HIM. The first fruit of a surrendered heart is salvation. Freedom from the guilt and power of sin. The law is fulfilled in one word, "Thou shalt love." David set his heart on God; see how God delivered him I (1 Samuel 17:50). So with Joseph, Daniel, and Paul.

II.-I WILL EXALT HIM. "Set him on high" (Psalms 91:14). After salvation comes exaltation; or rather, to be saved is to be exalted: taken out of the fearful pit. If we have been crucified with Christ we have also been raised together with Him.

III.-I WILL ANSWER HIM (Psalms 91:15). What an inspiring promise this is! Let your requests be made known unto God. Here is His own assurance that if you have set your love upon Him, He will answer you. If love to Him is our motive, then we shall not ask amiss (James 4:3).

IV.-I WILL BE WITH HIM. This is the promise of His fellowship in the day of our trouble. If He is with us then we can fear no evil (Ps. 23). God knows that His abiding presence is a continual necessity for guidance, strength, and victory.

V.-I WILL HONOUR HIM. We honour Him by setting our love upon Him. So "Them that know Me I will honour" (1 Samuel 2:30). Seek the honour that comes from God only; and His special favour will be manifested in your life (John 12:26)

VI.-I WILL SATISFY HIM. He shall be satisfied with "length of days" (marg.), which, to us, implies the privilege of everlasting joy and service. Our days upon the earth, if lived in His love, will be as long as are needful for the honour of His name. He gives to His own eternal life, and they shall be satisfied when they awake in His likeness.

SING UNTO THE LORD

Psalms 95:1-8

There are many groans in the Psalm, but there are also those spontaneous outbursts of wholehearted praise to God, that could only come from souls full to overflowing with love and thankfulness. "O come, let us sing unto the Lord"- I. -HOW SHALL WE SING UNTO THE LORD?

1. JOYFULLY. "Make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation" (Psalms 95:1). That Rock was Christ (1 Corinthians 10:4). He is worthy to be praised. Be joyful, not doleful, in the Lord.

2. THANKFULLY. "Let us come....with thankfulness" (Psalms 95:2). Have you not very much to be thankful for? Think of what He has done for you, in you, with you, and promised to you. Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.

II. WHY SHOULD WE SING UNTO THE LORD? Because-

1. He is OUR SALVATION (Psalms 95:1). He Himself is our salvation, and this salvation is firm as a "Rock," He is ours because we have trusted Him, and are safe.

2. He is GREAT. "The Lord is a great God, and a great King" (Psalms 95:3). He is our loving God, and everlasting King (Jeremiah 10:10); the God of our salvation, and the King of our redeemed lives. "One is your Master, even Christ."

3. He is STRONG. "In His hand, deep places; the strength of the hills is His" (Psalms 95:4-5). The strength of the hills is His, and He is yours, in whose hand the deep places are. All power is given unto Me. "Go ye therefore" (Matthew 28:18-19).

4. He is HOLY. "O come, let us worship.... let us kneel before the Lord our Master" (Psalms 95:6). Ours is a holy privilege to kneel before Him, and worship. We are not only workers, but worshippers. The spirit of humble adoration is our best fitness for service. It is on bowed knees that the victory is gained (Ezra 9:5; Daniel 6:10; Ephesians 3:14).

5. He is GRACIOUS. "We are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand" (Psalms 95:7). How gracious is our God to call us the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand. How green and refreshing His pastures are; how safe and happy are the sheep that's guided, fed and protected by His hand. See how God pastured His people even in "the wilderness," and led them into the green fields of Canaan "I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of mine."

NOTES IN THE NEW SONG

Psalm 99

In the last verse of Psalm 96 we read "He cometh, for He cometh to judge the earth." In the first verse of Psalm 97: "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice." Now this Psalm begins with "O sing unto the Lord a new song.... for His holy arm hath gotten Him the victory." (1), The Coming; (2), The Reigning; (3), The Rejoicing. In this new song there is the-

I.-Note of WONDER. "He hath done marvellous things" (Psalms 98:1). "Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders" (Exodus 15:11; Revelation 15:3). The Incarnation, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection are wonders of the highest order. Wonders of grace.

II.-Note of VICTORY. "His right hand, and His holy arm hath gotten Him the victory." His holy arm may represent His Son (Isaiah 53:1). His right hand- the Holy Spirit. By His arm and hand is salvation accomplished (r.V.). It is Christ that redeemeth; it is the Spirit that quickeneth.

III.-Note of MERCY. "The Lord hath made known His salvation (Psalms 98:2). He has not only provided salvation by grace, but has also published it abroad in mercy. Every invitation of His Gospel, every copy of the Bible, every Spirit-inspired messenger, is a proof of God's desire that men should know the joyful sound of His salvation (Isaiah 45:21-22; Mark 16:15).

IV.-Note of FAITHFULNESS. "He hath remembered His mercy and His faithfulness" (Psalms 98:3, r.v.). He who was faithful to the Israel of God, will be faithful to the Church of God. Faithful is He that called you. What His mercy hath promised, His faithfulness will perform. Believe ye that I am able to do this?

V. -Note of GRACE. "All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God" (Psalms 98:3). This, of course, is prophetic, and will be actualised when "The Lord reigneth." See the abounding grace of our God in seeking the salvation of "all the ends of the earth." All flesh shall see the salvation of God (Luke 3:6). Meanwhile, whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

VI.-Note of PRAISE. "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord....rejoice and sing praise" (Psalms 98:4). This note of adoration is the keynote of the "New Song," (Revelation 5:9-12). Because the Salvation of God has been great and marvellous, let the praise be loud and long.

VII.-Note of HOPE. "For He cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness.....and the people with equity" (Psalms 98:9). We, according to His promise, look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness (2 Peter 3:13-14). The whole creation shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, when the children of God enter into their glorious liberty (Romans 8:21).

This is the self-purifying hope (1 John 3:3). O sing unto the Lord this new song. THE BLISSFUL LIFE

Psalm 100

The metrical version of this psalm has been recognised almost by universal consent as the churches' National Anthem. It is a psalm of blissful experiences. There is-

I. A BLISSFUL KNOWLEDGE.-"Know ye that the Lord He is God." It is a great thing to know assuredly that the Jehovah of the Bible, in whom we trust, is the God of the whole earth, and of the whole universe.

II. A BLISSFUL RELATIONSHIP.-"It is He that hath made us, and we are His." "We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture" (r.v.). With regard to our character, we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:10). With regard to our safety and provision, we are the sheep of His Pasture (John 10:27-28).

III. A BLISSFUL SERVICE.-"Serve the Lord with gladness, come before Him with singing" (Psalms 100:2). You would almost think from the appearance and tone of some religious meetings that we should serve the Lord with sadness, and come before Him with whining, His service is joyful when His servants are holy and hopeful.

IV. A BLISSFUL FELLOWSHIP.-"Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise" (Psalms 100:4). To enter within His gates and courts was to come into the place of personal communion. Since our Great High Priest went into the holiest, through the rent vail, this privilege of fellowship is now ours continually.

V. A BLISSFUL OBJECT.-"His Name" (Psalms 100:4). As there are fathomless depths of riches in Nature, so are there boundless depths of spiritual wealth in His Name. His Name is Wonderful. His Name is a Strong Tower. To know His Name is to trust in Him.

VI. A BLISSFUL TESTIMONY.-"The Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting. His truth endureth" (Psalms 100:5). The Lord is good-He is Love. Can anything be more desirable? His mercy lasts; it is neither fickle nor uncertain. His truth stands unchanged and unchangeable. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so."

REASONS FOR BLESSING THE LORD

Psalms 103:1-5

Call upon thy soul to bless the Lord, to bless His holy Name, because-

I. HE PROVIDETH ALL HIS BENEFITS.- "All His benefits!" What does this all mean? Nothing that would benefit man hath He kept back. In the gift of His Son He hath pledged Himself to supply all our need (1 Timothy 6:17).

II. HE FORGIVETH ALL INIQUITIES.-Because of His infinite compassion, He keeps mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity. He must either punish iniquity or forgive it, He cannot change its character. Light can have no fellowship with darkness.

III. HE HEALETH ALL DISEASES.-Iniquities refer to acts, but the disease to the polluted spring from whence the acts came. Every part of man's moral nature is diseased. "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." But His healing power, the blood of Christ, cleanseth from all sin. See Psalms 107:17-22.

IV. HE REDEEMETH FROM DESTRUCTION (From the pit, R.V., Marg.). He not only forgives and heals, but delivers from the sphere of darkness and disease; brought into a purer atmosphere, into the Kingdom of His own dear Son, and so saved from unclean and destructive influences.

V. HE CROWNETH WITH LOVING KINDNESS.-The loving kindness of God makes a very beautiful and comfortable crown for the head. Those who have been healed of all their diseases will be crowned with honour in their life and testimony (Psalms 5:12).

VI. HE SATISFIETH WITH GOOD.-"All His benefits" are spread out for the blood-washed soul. They shall be "made to drink of the river of His pleasures" (Psalms 36:8). The pure in heart shall see God. God only can satisfy with good, and only those saved and healed by the Lord can be satisfied with that which is pure and good. The carnal mind cannot love the things of God. Redemption implies capacity for good.

VII. HE RENEWETH LIKE THE EAGLE.- The eagle renews its youth by an outward regeneration. The soul that has been saved and satisfied is regenerated both within and without. Those born from above have youth renewed, because they are a new creation in Christ Jesus.

BELIEVERS' PRIVILEGES

Psalms 105:1-4

In these few verses there is a sevenfold privilege indicated.

I. GIVING THANKS TO HIM.-"O give thanks unto the Lord." The giving of thanks implies the consciousness of great favour bestowed. "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift."

II. CALLING UPON HIM-"Call upon His Name." Liberty of access to Him, and to plead His own Name, is a greater privilege than we have ever yet realised. John 14:14.

III. WORKING FOR HIM.-"Make known His deeds among the people." His mighty acts of grace, in Christ Jesus, are well worthy of being made known. The people are perishing for lack of such knowledge. Preach the Word.

IV. SINGING TO HIM.-"Sing unto Him, sing psalms unto Him." Yes, make a joyful noise unto the Lord, who hath done such great things for us. In heaven, with thundering voice, the harpers harp with their harps (Revelation 14:2). Worthy is the Lamb now to receive the praises of our hearts and lips.

V. MEDITATING ON HIM.-"Meditate ye on all His wondrous works" (r.v., Marg.). There is a time to speak, and a time to sing, but there must also be a time to think. "Think on these things." One of our Lord's last words to His disciples was: "Remember Me." See Malachi 3:16.

VI. GLORYING IN HIM. -"Glory ye in His Holy Name." To glory in His Name is to glory in Himself. We may well glory in Him, who is all glorious in Himself, and whose love and grace have been

poured into our desolate lives, that we might be saved and satisfied.

VII. TESTIFYING FOR HIM.-"Seek the Lord, and His strength. Seek His face evermore." Those who have seen His blessed face, in Jesus Christ, cannot but counsel others to seek it. His face is His favour, it is worth seeking for, it is for "evermore." The Lord and His saving strength is the clamant need of the human soul. "Seek the Lord while He may be found." THE GOD OF DELIVERANCES

Psalm 107

In this psalm we have a four-fold picture of "the redeemed of the Lord" (Psalms 107:2).

I. FROM WEARINESS TO REST (Psalms 107:4-8). - Here are three words which fitly express the substance of each section-Destitution, Petition, Salvation; or, Need, Prayer, and Deliverance.

1. THEIR DESTITUTION. They were "wanderers in the wilderness," as those who had lost their way, in "solitary ways," bye-paths, perplexed and wearied. They were "hungry and thirsty," their souls clamouring for what they could not get. "Their soul fainted in them," sank down in despair. Utter failure of works.

2. THEIR PETITION. "Then they cried unto the Lord" as a last resort. Shut up to faith. Heaven's ear, like heaven's door, is always open to the cry of need.

3. THEIR SALVATION. "He delivered them." He only could. How? By leading them forth by "the right way." Led into truth, out of error and deception, that they "might go to a city of habitation," to a place of fellowship and plenty. Oh, praise Him for His goodness.

II. FROM DARKNESS INTO LIGHT (Psalms 107:10-15)-

1. THEIR CONDITION. They were sitting "in darkness," they knew not where they were. They were "in the shadow of death"-a place of imminent danger. "In affliction and iron"-a condition of painful bondage. And this because they "rebelled against the words of God" they were defeated; "heart brought down with labour." They were helpless. "None to help."

2. THEIR PETITION. "Then they cried unto the Lord." It was high time. What a mercy that they had some one to cry to who is mighty to save.

3. THEIR SALVATION. "He saved them..... brought them out of darkness...and broke their bonds asunder." In His deliverance there is light and freedom. Ephesians 5:8; Luke 4:18. Oh, praise the Lord for His goodness.

III. FROM SICKNESS TO HEALTH (Psalms 107:18-21).-

1. THEIR CONDITION. "Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat." They were so sick of their old life and its pleasures that nothing belonging to it was enjoyed. "They drew near unto the gates of death." Dying of starvation. Results of deep conviction.

2. THEIR PETITION. "Then they cry unto the Lord." This is the cure for those that are sick of the world and its mocking pleasures. Isaiah 55:2.

3. THEIR SALVATION. "He saved them." He despised not any. How this was done. "He sent His Word, and healed them." His Word believed is always efficacious in the soul (Matthew 8:8). He "delivered them from their destructions." His healing powers rescue the life from death and destruction.

IV. FROM DANGER TO SAFETY (Psalms 107:23-31).

1. THEIR DANGER. "They stagger like a drunken man." Driven to and fro, tossed with tempest. Mental bewilderment. They are "at their wits' end." At the point of utter despair. Undone. "Their soul is melted." All courage and hope gone. Woe is me. Who shall deliver me?

2. THEIR CRY. "Then they cried unto the Lord." It takes a lot to make some men stagger God-ward.

3. THEIR DELIVERANCE. "He bringeth them out," as He brought Israel out of Egypt when at their "wits' end." "He maketh the storm a calm" when He comes aboard the troubled soul (Matthew 8:26) "He bringeth them into their desired haven." Whom He bringeth out, He desires to bring in. Out of the Kingdom of Satan into the Kingdom of His dear Son. Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness and wonderful works. THE WORKS OF THE LORD

Psalm 111

As is the workman, so is the work. The works of the Lord are-

I. GREAT (Psalms 111:2).-They are as unsearchable as Himself. All His works praise Him, because they are a credit to the Worker. This is evident in His work of Creation, Redemption, and Providence (Psalms 104:24). His work is great in every sense as to quality, variety, utility, and Eternity.

II. DESIRABLE. "Sought out of all them that have pleasure therein" (Psalms 111:2). His works are expressions of His thoughts, and such thoughts are very deep and precious (Psalms 92:5). What depth of thought there is in the Redemption by Jesus Christ. How earnestly this work is sought out by all them that have pleasure therein. It is a profitable search.

III. HONOURABLE.-"His work is honour and majesty" (Psalms 111:3, R.V.). There is a becoming dignity about the work of Creation and Redemption that reflects great honour on the Worker. The salvation of Jesus Christ by the Cross brings eternal glory to His Name. "The Lord is holy in all His works," and notably in the work of the Cross.

IV. MEMORABLE.-"He hath made His wonderful works to be remembered" (Psalms 111:4). His works of grace and mercy in behalf of His people are to be held in everlasting remembrance. Who can forget the day of their conversion to God, the day of deliverance from guilt and sin, and the dawn of His light and peace in the soul?

V. POWERFUL. "He shewed His people the power of His works" (Psalms 111:6). Israel saw the mighty power of His working in their salvation from Egypt, in their passing through the Red Sea, and across the opened Jordan, and in the downfall of the walls of Jericho. But what hath God wrought for us, and in us? Hath He not shewed us the power of His work by the Cross for us, and by the Holy Spirit in us?

VI. TRUTHFUL. "The works of His hands are truth and judgment" (v, 7, R.V.). They are in perfect truthfulness to the needs of the case. His work of grace and of salvation is exactly what we need, and all we need. Just and true are the ways of the King of saints (Revelation 15:3). He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

VII. ETERNAL. "They stand fast for ever and ever" (Psalms 111:8). Man's works, like himself, will wither like the grass, but the Word and work of the Lord shall stand for ever. Our righteousnesses rot like filthy rags, but the work of His regenerating Spirit, the renewing of the Holy Ghost, stands fast for ever. I give to My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish. It is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure. "His work is perfect."

WHAT SHALL I RENDER?

Psalm 116

"What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" (Psalms 116:12). This is a deeply personal and sensible consideration.

I. WHAT ARE HIS BENEFITS TOWARD ME? There is-

1. AN INCLINED EAR. "He hath inclined His ear unto me" (Psalms 116:2). He hath not turned His ear away from me, but, like an anxious father, He hath bent His head to listen to the cry of His child. What a precious privilege to have the listening, sympathetic ear of God.

2. DELIVERANCE FROM DEATH (Psalms 116:3). "Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling" (Psalms 116:8). We have this victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:55-57; Romans 6:23).

3. BOUNTIFUL TREATMENT. "The Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee" (Psalms 116:7). Out of His own fulness and in infinite grace hath He supplied all your need. Luke 15:22-23.

4. FREEDOM FROM BONDAGE. "Thou hast loosed my bonds" (Psalms 116:16). The bonds of sin, doubt, and fear have been snapped. Liberty to serve with gladness the Great Deliverer.

II. WHAT SHALL I RENDER UNTO HIM?

1. I WILL LOVE HIM (Psalms 116:1). "We love Him because He first loved us." I will yield Him the affection of my heart because He hath loved my soul out of the pit of corruption.

2. I WILL CALL UPON HIM. Yes. "As long as I live" (Psalms 116:2). This is a very expressive way of shewing our gratitude to God. This method would not serve with man.

3. I WILL REST IN HIM. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul" (Psalms 116:7). I will shew my confidence by resting my soul entirely in Him. This He desires. Matthew 11:28-29.

4. I WILL WALK WITH HIM (Psalms 116:9). I will order my daily life in all its details as before His eyes. To this life was Abraham called (Genesis 17:1). I will choose Him as my constant companion (2 Corinthians 5:7).

5. I WILL SPEAK FOR HIM (Psalms 116:10, R.V.). I will testify to what He hath done for my soul. My lips shall speak His praise, and my tongue shall not be silent.

6. I WILL TAKE FROM HIM (Psalms 116:13). We render honour to Him by taking more from Him. This is not after the manner of men. I will shew Him how much I appreciate His grace by drinking more deeply of the "Cup of Salvation."

7. I WILL OFFER TO HIM. "I will offer to Thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving... I will pay my vows unto the Lord." (Psalms 116:17-18). The sacrifice of thanksgiving may not seem a very costly gift, but it is well pleasing unto God (Hebrews 13:15-16). Render to Him the calves of your lips (Hosea 14:2). And let the vows of devotion and service made to Him be duly paid in the presence of His people. THE "I AM'S" IN PSALM 119

It has been said that this Psalm "Contains the anatomy of experimental religion, the interior lineaments of the family of God." Its twenty-two sections, are so many strings of pearls, linked together by the letters of the Hebrew Alphabet, and representing every phase of Christian experience. It is a song of joy and rejoicing in the Word of God, which is referred to under ten different names. Luther set a high value on this Psalm, declaring that he "would not take the whole world in exchange for a leaf of it." Note some of the "I am's."

I. -"I AM A STRANGER IN THE EARTH" (Psalms 119:19). There is nothing in all the earth that can fully meet the needs of a "Man of God." He has not where to lay his heart, as Christ had not where to lay His head. Holy men of old "All died in faith declaring plainly that they seek a country" (Hebrews 11:13-14). The man of the world is no stranger in the earth, it is his home; but the Christian's citizenship is in heaven.

II.-"I AM A COMPANION OF THEM THAT FEAR THEE" (Psalms 119:63). Strangers in a foreign land, who have come from the same country, naturally draw one to another (Malachi 3:16). These, in fellowship with God, should be found in fellowship with one another. Surely those who are to be our companions in eternity should be our choice companions now. Such a testimony is greatly needed.

III.-"I AM BECOME LIKE A BOTTLE IN THE SMOKE" (Psalms 119:83). Through adverse circumstances I am like a shrivelled "Wine-skin" (Joshua 9:4). A bottle in the smoke is in the place of trial and testing; while in this evil world, the Christian must come into contact with its smoky influence, and must patiently endure as seeing Him who is invisible like the Hebrews in the fiery furnace: and like Job.

IV.-"I AM THINE, SAVE ME" (Psalms 119:94). Though in the smoke of perplexity and helplessness, it is comforting to be able to say "I am Thine." Thy property, (Acts 20:28), Thy workmanship (Ephesians 2:10), He can as easily save us in the smoke, as the youths in the furnace of fire, and also from it, without the smell of it on the garments.

V.-"I AM AFFLICTED; QUICKEN ME" (Psalms 119:107). "He suffered... that He might succour them that are tempted" (Hebrews 2:18). Divine quickening is the remedy for a sorrowing, sinking soul. The affliction may be heavy, but with His "abundant life" there will be an easy victory. He quickens the languid heart by His word of promise and spirit of power.

VI.-"I AM AFRAID OF THY JUDGMENTS" (words) (Psalms 119:120). Every truly quickened soul will tremble at His Word, and into such, He will look, (Isaiah 66:5). It is a characteristic of the tender obedient child. All heaven must be astonished at those who do not fear the Lord

(Revelation 15:4). This is not the fear that hath torment.

VII.-"I AM THY SERVANT" (Psalms 119:125). Thy willing slave, since Thou hast ransomed me from the slavery of sin (Romans 6:16-20), as Thy servant, "give me understanding," teach me what Thou wilt have me to do-not my will, but Thine be done.

VIII.-"I AM SMALL AND DESPISED" (Psalms 119:141). This is his own, and the world's estimation of the servant of God. Small, compared with the full stature of Jesus Christ, and despised as He was; but fear not thou worm Jacob; I will help thee saith the Lord. He can use small things. THE "I WILL'S" IN PSALM 119

I.- "I WILL PRAISE THEE" (Psalms 119:7); ("Give" thanks unto Thee" R.V.). To this great end are the people of God formed (Isaiah 43:21). The qualification for it is "Uprightness of heart." The means to this end is the saving grace of God.

II.- "I WILL OBSERVE THY STATUTES," (Psalms 119:8, R.v.). An heart that is right with God, will be attentive to His words. The observer of the times must be an observer of His truth-to be wise.

III.- "I WILL MEDITATE IN THY PRECEPTS" (Psalms 119:15). The ungodly are not so; they would cast these cords from them, but His Words are deep, and sweet to the obedient heart. "Thy words were found and I did eat them." The result was joy and rejoicing (Jeremiah 15:16), see John 1:14.

IV.-"I WILL DELIGHT MYSELF IN THY STATUTES" (Psalms 119:16). The meditating heart will soon be a delighted one. Ainsworth reads it. "I will solace and recreate myself." His words both comfort and renew, in midst of life's worries and sorrows.

V.-"I WILL RUN THE WAY OF THY COMMANDMENTS" (Psalms 119:32). Those who "observe, meditate and delight" in His Word, will soon be found running in the way, with an heart greatly enlarged. "Following afar off," or "Faint yet pursuing," is the condition of many. They who run this race keep looking unto Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life (Ezra 7:9).

VI.-"I WILL WALK AT LIBERTY" (Psalms 119:45). Augustine said "I gave my will to mine enemy, and he made a chain, and bound me with it." Those who give their will to Christ are free indeed (John 8:31). Sin is slavery; Obedience to His Word is Liberty (John 8:34).

VII.-"I WILL SPEAK OF THY TESTIMONIES .... AND NOT BE ASHAMED" (Psalms 119:46). Those who walk at liberty through Him, will surely speak freely for Him (Daniel 3:16-18.) It was so with Paul (Romans 1:16). Preach the word, and be not ashamed, remember (Mark 8:38; Revelation 21:8).

VIII. -"I WILL GIVE THANKS AT MIDNIGHT" (Psalms 119:62). Blessed are all they who can rise up in the midnight of their sorrow and gloom, and give thanks unto the Lord. See Acts 16:24-25; the darkness and the light are alike to Him.

IX.-" I WILL NEVER FORGET THY PRECEPTS" (Psalms 119:93). No, never! for Thy words have brought light, and life, and sustenance to my soul. They shall guide me into eternity and abide with me there. " They are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). I shall never forget them, because I shall never forget Thee.

SOME "I HAVE'S" IN PSALM 119

I.-" I HAVE GONE ASTRAY LIKE A LOST SHEEP" (Psalms 119:176). A lost sheep can do nothing else but go astray (Isaiah 53:6). Think of what we wander from, in going astray-from God and His Word: think of where we wander to. The Shepherd's purpose is to seek and save the lost.

II.-"I HAVE SOUGHT THEE WITH MY WHOLE HEART" (Psalms 119:10). This is the right object, sought in a right manner (Psalms 27:4). For the sheep astray, there is only the "wormwood and the gall" (Sam. __Samuel__3:19) of weariness, danger, and disappointment. In Him is life. Seek the Lord.

III.-"I HAVE REJOICED IN THE WAY" (Psalms 119:14). In the way of His testimonies there is joyful deliverance, His ways are ways of righteousness. Faith leads into the promised land of the "unsearchable riches of Christ." Stand, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way (Jeremiah 6:16).

IV.-" I HAVE DECLARED MY WAYS" (Psalms 119:26). "My ways," no matter how crooked, foolish and fruitless they have been, it is good to declare them all in His ear. We must declare His ways to others, but our own wayward ways to Him.

V.-" I HAVE CHOSEN THE WAY OF FAITHFULNESS" (Psalms 119:30, R.V.). This is a courageous and needful choice. He hath chosen to be faithful to us; why should we not choose to be faithful to Him? The choice is to be made, between faith, and faithlessness; between Barabbas and Christ. He stuck to His choice (Psalms 119:31).

VI.-" I HAVE REMEMBERED THY NAME" (Psalms 119:55) The Name of the Lord is a wonderful solace "in the night of trouble and perplexity;" for what God is, that is His name (Exodus 34:5-7). As ointment it has been poured forth in the person and work of His Son.

VII.-" I HAVE BELIEVED THY COMMANDMENTS" (Psalms 119:66). This is a noble confession. What mischief and failure are constantly being produced in Christian living for lack of faith in the Words of God. The Lord hath promised, and "I have believed." Can we so say?

VIII.-" I HAVE REFRAINED MY FEET FROM EVERY EVIL WAY" (Psalms 119:101). There are many evil ways that may look pleasant and profitable, but are not in keeping with His Word. We walk by faith, not by sight. The easy way may be an evil way, like Bunyan's pilgrims in By-path meadow. It was "easy going," but it led to Doubting Castle. To "keep His Word," we must refrain our thoughts and actions from the ways of the ungodly.

IX.-"I HAVE LONGED FOR THY SALVATION" (Psalms 119:174). The daily Salvation of the Lord is an experience much to be longed for. We should long for it in all its fulness. Those who hunger and thirst after such righteousness, shall be filled. We also long for the salvation of the Lord, when we long for the salvation of the sinner. Surely the saved will long for this. Those who long for His coming again long for His final salvation. MY SOUL, A WEANED CHILD

Psalms 131:2.

1. My Soul is as a Child-helpless. But confident in a Mother's love, having had experiences of her special care.

2. My Soul is as a weaned child-Suffering. The mystery of an unexpected refusal; a new method of treatment.

3. My Soul is as a weaned child-submissive. The gift denied, but the Mother embraced. The rest of faith and love.

REASONS FOR PRAISE

Psalm 138

"I will praise Thee with my whole heart" (Psalms 138:1).

1. Because Thou Answeredst me (Psalms 138:3).

2. Because Thou didst Encourage me (R.V.), 3. Because Thou wilt Revive me (Psalms 138:7).

4. Because Thou shalt Protect me (Psalms 138:7).

5. Because Thou wilt Perfect that which concerneth me.... (Psalms 138:8).

SELF-EXPOSURE TO GOD

Psalms 139:23-24

1. Search me, for I seek Thy Salvation.

2. Know me, for I seek Thy Fellowship.

3. Try me, for I seek Thy Service.

4. See me, for I seek Thy Comfort (R.V. marg.).

5. Lead me, for I seek Thy Guidance.

PRAYER AND ARGUMENT

Psalms 143:8-11

1. Cause me to Hear: for in Thee do I trust (Psalms 143:8).

2. Cause me to Know: for I lift up my Soul unto Thee.

3. Deliver me (for) I flee unto Thee to hide me (Psalms 143:9).

4. Teach me: for Thou art my God. . . (Psalms 143:10).

5. Quicken me: for Thy Name's Sake. . . (Psalms 143:11). A TESTIMONY

Psalms 144:1-2

Blessed be the Lord, for He is- 1. My Strength in my helplessness.

2. My Kind One (marg.) in my destitution.

3. My Fortress: my refuge of Safety.

4. My High Tower in my days of darkness 5. My Deliverer, when my enemy oppose.

6. My Shield: when fiery darts are about.

7. My Confidence: "In Whom I trust."

PRAISE THE LORD

Psalms 146:8-10

Here are seven reasons why He should be praised:

1. He looseth the Prisoners. The prison speaks of guilt and bondage. Christ came to preach deliverance to the Captives (Luke 4:18). Whom the Son makes free are free indeed. See Acts 12:7.

2. He openeth the Eyes of the Blind. This implies moral and spiritual darkness. The "recovering of sight to the blind," was another feature of Christ's mission (Luke 4:18). Believe and thou shalt see.

3. He raiseth the Bowed-down. Those like the woman in the Gospel who "could in no wise lift up herself" (Luke 13:11), bowed with the burden of grief or guilt, the deformity of sin, He raiseth up-by His Word of cheer and Arm of Power (2 Corinthians 7:6).

4. He Loveth the Righteous. Those who are right with Himself, and for Himself, will be loved by Him (John 14:23). He draws nigh to those that draw nigh to Him.

5. He Preserveth the Stranger. He deals with the stranger, as with the fatherless and the widow (Deuteronomy 27:19; Jeremiah 7:6-7). Alike, helpless and destitute, "Ye are no more strangers" (Ephesians 2:19).

6. He Upholdeth the Fatherless and Widow (R.V.) His loving heart beams through His merciful eyes. Our helplessness is no hindrance to His power.

7. He turneth the Way of the Wicked upside down. He disapproveth the devices of the crafty (Job 5:12). The way of the ungodly, with all its pleasures and expectations shall perish (Psalms 1:6). Upside down is a very positive and complete change.

Proverbs

WISDOM'S CALL

Proverbs 1:20-29

The book of Proverbs is said to "Represent the very science of practical philosophy." It is divided into two sections; Chapters I.-IX., Wisdom's Ways, and chapters X.-1I., Wisdom's Words. These words "The fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7) may be taken as the keynote of the book. They occur thirteen times. These Proverbs are literally "Comparisons" in practical "parables." The Wisdom personified here (Proverbs 8:12) stands for the highest intellectual sagacity, and the purest moral character, and finds its perfect fulfilment in the Person and Character of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is "The Wisdom of God," and who is "made of God unto us, Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption." In this cry of Wisdom, let us hear the cry of Christ. We can hear in it the voice of-

I.-COMPASSION. "Wisdom crieth without.... in the streets, in the openings of the gates" (Proverbs 1:20). The message is for the "man in the street," as well as the ruler at the gates. It is the compassionate cry of infinite mercy and fulness (John 7:37). This voice seeks to ring in every street, city, and county. It is the cry of God's Evangel to a perishing world. Three classes are addressed-the "Simple," the "Scorner," and the "Fool." The weak, the wayward, and the worthless: He came, not to call the righteous, but sinners.

II.-REPROOF. "He crieth.....how long, ye simple ones... Turn you at my reproof" (Proverbs 1:22-23). These three classes are typical. (1). The Simple are rebuked for being easily led; yielding themselves thoughtlessly to the influence of others, and not taking time to "Stand still, and ask for the good old paths." They are the willing dupes, in mind and heart, to unprincipled or ungodly men. (2). The Scorner is reproved for his delight in scorning! Taking pleasure in ungodliness is about the climax of human guilt. Such glory in their shame, for the sake of a fetid applause, they receive from a corrupt humanity. (3). The Fool is charged with "hating knowledge!" At enmity with Wisdom. He loves the darkness rather than the light, which is abundant proof of his madness. He hates Wisdom, because it is opposed to his supreme folly. Such are the attitudes of many toward Christ.

III.-ENTREATY. "Turn ye at my reproof" (Proverbs 1:23). Wisdom, like Christ, calls, and entreats, but will not compel. "Turn ye." The responsibility is with the hearer. He appeals to the will: to the reason. "Come now, and let us reason together saith the Lord." Regeneration is the work of the Spirit, but conversion- turning about-is the work of man. "Repent, and be converted," is His command. "Turn ye! turn ye, for Why will ye die?" Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life. Your face is away from Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; turn you at My reproof.

IV.-PROMISE. "Behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, and I will make known my words unto you" (Proverbs 1:23). He will meet the real need of the Simple, the Scorner, and the Fool, by imparting to them His own regenerating Spirit, and making them to receive and understand His precious, soul-satisfying words. He promises, not to change their circumstances, but to transform

their character. God's law is perfect, and so is His remedy for the silly, sneering, sinful souls of men. Salvation is of the Lord.

V.-LAMENTATION. "I have called, and ye refused..... and would none of my reproof" (Proverbs 1:24-25). This is the language of wounded love, like that in Matthew 23:37. His "call" was refused, His "stretched out hand" was disregarded, His "counsel" was set at naught. His "reproof" they would have none of. His "Call," His "Counsel," His "Entreaty," and His "Reproof" had been alike fruitless, because of the stupidity and hardness of their heart. He willeth not the death of any, but how sad that many should prefer death to life.

VI.-JUDGMENT. "Because.... ye refused....I also will laugh at your calamity." "I will mock when your fear cometh," etc. (Proverbs 1:26-29). There is nothing more certain than this, that fear cometh upon all the ungodly sooner or later. Those who have wilfully rejected His call of Mercy, will find their Call of Fear rejected. Christ had His Calamity on the Cross, the Christ-despiser will have his when He sees Him on His Throne. The depths of the horrors of perdition may partly explain the depths of the horrors of the Crucifixion. Here deep calleth unto deep. Man's crowning crime is: that he hates the knowledge of God, and chooses not His fear (Proverbs 1:29). Behold now is the day of Salvation; now is the seed-time of eternal life. In vain shall we call upon Him in the winter of Judgment, if we neglect the summer of His Grace and Mercy.

WISDOM'S PRECIOUSNESS

Proverbs 3:13-20

Christ is the Wisdom of God, and to them that believe He is precious. Those who have put on Christ have such an adorning that all the material glories of earth are not to be compared with it. "She is more precious than rubies." From these verses we may learn something of her, or His-

I.-GREATNESS. The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth" (Proverbs 3:19). "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,... All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:1-4). "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works, in wisdom bast Thou made them all." God, by Jesus Christ, created (Ephesians 3:9). God, by Jesus Christ, Redeemed.

II.-RICHES. "Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left riches and honour" (Proverbs 3:16). The treasures of true Wisdom are the treasures which belong to Jesus Christ. "Length of days," "Riches," "Honour." Everlasting life, unsearchable riches, and the Right Hand of God. In Him is Life, and the treasures of Wisdom and knowledge, and all the fulness of God; He is crowned with glory and honour. With long life doth He satisfy those to whom He hath shown His Salvation (Ps. 91-16).

III.-INFLUENCE. Wisdom has a mighty influence.

1. On the HEART. "Happy is the man that findeth Wisdom" (Proverbs 3:13). The yoke of Wisdom is easy, her burden is light. To find the Wisdom of God is to find rest to the soul, light to the eyes, and joy to the heart. To find Wisdom (Christ) is to find the holy, blissful, all-conquering will, and mercy of God. A man cannot make such a find without being renewed in the whole inner man.

2. On the LIFE. "The merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver" (Proverbs 3:14). Those who find Wisdom, find a new object in life, and a new sphere of action. To trade with Christ, and work for Him, is more profitable than the best investment on earth. "The gain thereof is better than fine gold."

III.-DESIRABILITY. "All the things thou canst desire are hot to be compared unto her" (Proverbs 3:15). It is not possible for you to desire anything better than this. Paul knew this when he said:"What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." You may desire great and many things, but the affections of the heart can never be set on a more worthy and needful-object than the Wisdom of God, as revealed in His Well-beloved Son. Wisdom's "ways" are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace" (Proverbs 3:17). By faith Moses desired the better part, when he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt. Christ is the gift of God, covet earnestly this best gift. Those who have Him, though poor, yet can make many rich, as having nothing, yet possessing all things. "Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get Wisdom. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee" (Proverbs 4:7-8)

IV.-ACCESSIBILITY. "She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her" (Proverbs 3:18). How can I, so weak and foolish, get possession of this Wisdom? It is not for scholars, but for sinners. Lay hold on eternal life. She is not only life to those who lay hold upon her, but "a tree of life," a well of water springing up; not only a stream of blessing, but a fountain within; Accessible! Yes. Whosoever will may come. Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out. Incline thine ear unto Wisdom, and apply thine heart; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness (see chap. Proverbs 2:1-6). Now then, "take fast hold of Wisdom, let her not go; keep her, for she is thy life" (Proverbs 4:13). "Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of men" (Proverbs 8:4).

WISDOM'S CHARACTER

Proverbs 8:12-36

Here again, as in chapter Proverbs 2:20-22, we have in the opening verses of this chapter a revelation of Wisdom's agonizing attitude towards men. The voice of Wisdom, like the light of the sun, is unto all men. This voice, like the voice of the sun, may be silent, but it is withal the Voice of God, because it is the voice of Character. The world may close its ears to the cry of the Christ, but it cannot stifle that pleading voice. "Unto you O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of men."

How Christ-like are the characteristics of Wisdom. Observe-

1. Wisdom's Personality. "I wisdom dwell with prudence" (Proverbs 8:12). Here the Personality is divine; qualities are claimed which belong properly to the Eternal Son. God is Love, God is Light, and God is Wisdom.

2. Wisdom's Powers. "I have strength. By me kings reign, and princes decree judgment" (Proverbs 8:14-16). His name shall be called Wonderful, the Mighty God. The Everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of earth, never is weary; and He giveth power to the faint, and increaseth the strength of the helpless (Isaiah 40:28-29). There is no power but of God. All power is given unto Me.

3. Wisdom's Offer. "Those that seek me diligently shall find me" (Proverbs 8:17, R.V.) If any man love Me, he shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself unto him. Heavenly Wisdom is imparted to the open, diligent heart. Christ reveals Himself as a reward to the

diligent seeker. Ye shall find Him when ye shall search for Him with all your heart (Jer, 29, 13). Seek ye first the Kingdom of God. Behold, now is the accepted time.

4. Wisdom's Wealth. "Riches and honour are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold" (Proverbs 8:18-19). Her riches can only be given with honour; her durable riches with righteousness. Christ's unsearchable and eternal riches are connected with His holy and eternal righteousness. To be eternally rich we must be eternally right. In Him all fulness dwells. "Wherefore do ye spend money (wealth) for that which is not bread? and labour for that which satisfyeth not. Hearken diligently unto Me," etc. "counsel thee to buy of Me, gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich" (Revelation 3:18).

5. Wisdom's Grace. "I lead in the way of righteousness....That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance. And I will fill their treasures" (Proverbs 8:20-21). Not only are her hands full of riches, but her heart is full of love and mercy, seeking to lead others into the joyful possessions of her treasures. It is not difficult for the anointed eye to see Jesus here. He leads into Righteousness, that He might lead into an incorruptible inheritance. Oh! the riches of that Grace which "causes us to love Him" that we might be made partakers of His infinite riches, and so have the treasury of the heart filled out of His fulness (Romans 5:17).

6. Wisdom's Testimony. The wonderful language used in this passage (Proverbs 8:22-31) could only come truthfully from the lips of one who was, and is, co-equal with God.

He was possessed by Jehovah in the beginning (Proverbs 8:22). He was exalted from everlasting, or ever the earth was (Proverbs 8:23).

He was brought forth, before the fountains, the mountains, or the hills (Proverbs 8:24-25).

He was present when God prepared the heavens, etc. (Proverbs 8:26-29).

He was with God as a Master Workman, and was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him (Proverbs 8:30, R.V.). His delight was with the Sons of Men (Proverbs 8:31). This was the Word that was made flesh, and dwelt among us. This is the One, who being in the form of God, took upon Him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.

7. Wisdom's Counsel. "Now, therefore, my sons, hearken unto me; for blessed are they that keep my ways" (Proverbs 8:32, r.V.) "This is My Beloved Son, Hear ye Him." What a privilege to hear His words, and to receive His invitation. Oh, the madness of turning a deaf ear to Him. The blessing that maketh rich is to be found in Him, His ways are ways of pleasantness, as well as safety.

8. Wisdom's Promise. "For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord" (Proverbs 8:35). Life and divine favour are alone to be found in Him who is the Wisdom of God, and the Power of God. "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no man cometh unto the Father but by Me. I am come that ye might have life. He that hath the Son hath life."

9. Wisdom's Warning. "He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul. All they that hate me love death" (Proverbs 8:36). To sin against God is to make for self-destruction. To kick against His goadings is to wound our own feet and prefer death to life. We sin against Him when we refuse to believe His Word and submit ourselves to Him. In so sinning against Him, against His love and

merciful pleadings, we wrong our own soul by compelling it to abide in a condition of spiritual darkness, guilt, and condemnation. Your sin of unbelief and rebellion may not wrong God, but is a terrible wrong to your own soul.

WISDOM'S PROVISION AND INVITATION

Proverbs 9:1-6

In this chapter we have not only the pressing call of Wisdom, but also the clamorous invitation of Folly (Proverbs 9:13). The foolish woman seeks to imitate her who is the expression of the Wisdom of God. The wonder-workings of God will always have their counterfeits in the workings of the devil. The one leads to the heights of heaven, the other to the "depths of hell" (Proverbs 9:18).

Wisdom's Provision. The provision indicated here is sevenfold. There is-

1. The House. "Wisdom hath builded her house" (Proverbs 9:1). It is a house of Refuge, and a place of holy and heavenly fellowship. It is large, and in every way fitted for its great purpose, and perfectly becoming the character of the builder. See Ephesians 2:20-22; 1 Peter 2:5.

2. The Pillars. "Wisdom hath hewn out her seven pillars." The pillars indicate strength and stability. Seven is the perfect number. This building is supported by that which is perfect in character. Here are seven pillars which belong to this spiritual Temple, The Lord God: (1), "Merciful"; (2), "Gracious"; (3), "Long-suffering"; (4), "Abundant in goodness and truth"; (5), "Keeping mercy for thousands"; (6), "Forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin"; and. (7), "Will by no means clear the guilty" (Justice). Exodus 34:6. The doctrines of Jesus Christ are pillars of truth, and are as stable as the attributes of God.

3. The Sacrifices. "Wisdom hath killed her beasts." Wisdom hath made her sacrifices. Ample provision could only be made through the shedding of blood, the forfeiture of innocent life. God so loved the world that He gave His Son. It pleased the Lord to braise Him. He hath put Him to grief. In this sacrifice there was the pouring-out of divine love, and life. Wisdom hath done it, although man in his ignorance and pride of intellect would protest against it.

4. The Wine. "Wisdom hath mingled her wine." The wine mixed by the wisdom of the world can only bring "woe, sorrow, contention, babbling, wounds, and redness of eye" (23-30). This is neither worldly wine, nor a worldly mixture. It is Wisdom's own wine, and Wisdom's own mixture. The wine is pure, and the spices are pure, the blend is the richest that thirsty, languid souls can ever drink. Christ's wine of joy is mingled to suit each individual case. It is always a wholesome mixture. The Lord hath another mixture for a different class of people (Psalms 75:8).

5 The Table. "Wisdom hath furnished her table" (Proverbs 9:2). The wisdom of God hath put upon the table of His grace every needful blessing. His table is well furnished. My God shall supply all your need. Many don't realise their manifold need, and so cannot appreciate the value of Wisdom's provision.

6. The Servants. "Wisdom hath sent forth her maidens" (Proverbs 9:3). The feast being ready the heralds of His grace are sent forth with free invitations. Wisdom hath her own servants, as well as her own house, and a table. Salvation is of the Lord.

7. The Call. "Wisdom crieth upon the highest places of the city." It may be the servant's voice, but the call is that of "Wisdom." We are ambassadors for Christ. It is God that beseeches by us (2 Corinthians 5:20). The call is urgent, it is from the highest places of the city that all may hear. It is a Call. 1. To Turn. "Turn in hither." It implies conversion from the broken cisterns of the world to the well-furnished table of the Lord. 2, To Come. "Come, eat of My bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled" (Proverbs 9:5). Come and eat of that which the Wisdom of God has so abundantly provided, the bread of strength, and the wine of gladness and inspiration. 3, To Forsake. "Forsake the foolish and live" (Proverbs 9:6). Folly saith: "Stolen waters are sweet" (Proverbs 9:17). The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord. 4, To go. "Go in the way of understanding" (Proverbs 9:6). Having turned to the Lord and received of His gifts, we now go in His way, learning of Him. He shall guide you with all truth when you follow Him, leaning not on your own understanding (Proverbs 3:4-7). Come and take, then go and work.

Ecclesiastes

ETERNITY IN THE HEART: A KEY TO ECCLESIASTES

Chapter Ecclesiastes 3:11

Newberry's rendering of this text enables us to see the meaning of this book in a clearer light." He hath set eternity in their heart, without which no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end." The word translated "world" here only occurs in one other place, where the meaning is ages, or eternity. This book deals with "things under the sun": the mundane things of earth, seen in the light of Nature's revealer. The "Preacher" begins with "Vanity of Vanities," then proceeds to demonstrate the truthfulness of his convictions. He gave "his heart to search out," and to "see all the works that are done under the sun," and to "prove" his heart with every earthly good. He made "great works," and "withheld not his heart from any joy." Yet he pronounced it "all vanity and vexation of spirit." So deeply did he drink of all the waters of the world's pleasures that he said: "What can the man do that cometh after the king?" (Ecclesiastes 2:12). What man can have any chance of satisfying his heart with the material things of earth, when he, the richest and wisest man on earth, failed? Why did he fail so miserably after such an earnest, favourable and exhaustive experiment? Here is the answer: "God hath set eternity in the heart." That which belongs to eternity cannot find its counterpart in those things which are only temporal. Although there is "a time" to every purpose under the heavens, there is nothing circumscribed by time that is not "vanity and vexation of spirit" to that which is eternal. As God hath set eternity in the heart, He means to set eternal things there. Observe-

I.-THE FACT OF IT. "Eternity is in the heart." In its very constitution, as the workmanship of God. The heart, here, may stand for man's essential character, as distinct from the lower animal creation. When Duncan Matheson prayed, "Lord stamp eternity upon my eyeballs," he was uttering words which revealed the most profound characteristic of the human soul. God hath set eternity in the heart by setting there the thought of it, the desire after it, kinship to it, and capacity for it.

II.-THE EVIDENCE OF IT. The evidence of this truth is apparent in the universal belief in immortality found among the early Egyptians. Babylonians, Persians, Hebrews, Hindus, Chinese, South Sea Islanders, Druids and Celts. But perhaps one of the most convincing proofs of it may be seen in the universal restlessness of the human heart. Towards the things of this world, like the sea, it is ever crying: "Give, Give," and never fully satisfied therewith. One of the wealthiest men in modern times declared to a friend" I am not to be envied; How can my wealth help me? I would give you my millions if you could give me your youth and health." Youth and health in themselves could only enable him to repeat his own and Solomon's abortive experiment. "Man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth," but in the things which God possesseth. Surely the capacity of the human heart for the love and fellowship of the eternal God is an argument of no mean force. The heart's desire, in its truest and best moments, is for the "things which are eternal." Even pagan philosophers have acknowledged this." "The presage of a future

life," says Cicero, "is most discoverable in the greatest and most exalted souls." When the glamour of sunny circumstances vanishes in some calamity or domestic affliction, then the deeper and more enduring instincts of the soul assert themselves.

III.-THE PURPOSE OF IT. "Without which no man can find out the work that God maketh." It takes the attribute of eternity in the heart to contemplate the character of God and His work Eternity in the heart is-

1. A Witness to the Eternity of God. It has been set there as a testimony to the fact of His eternal Personality, and man's kinship to Him.

2. A Protest against Worldly-mindedness. Just as a man can profit nothing by gaining the world, and losing his life, so the eternity in the heart can only be deceived by loving and resting on the things of time- he layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God (Luke 12:19-21). Those who "mind" earthly things" are enemies of that Cross which stands for heavenly and eternal things.

3. An Incentive to seek eternal things.. The fact that God hath set eternity in the heart, is surely meant to be a powerful incentive to seek those things which are above. "Like draws to like."

4. An Evidence of God's love. Let the deep in the heart call unto the deep that is in God. God hath set that deep there that He might fill it out of the deep of His own infinite fulness.

5. A Warning against the neglect of Salvation. To neglect eternal salvation is to choose eternal death. Eternity is in your heart whether it is found or lost. "Son, daughter, give Me thine heart." He who hath set eternity in it is best able to meet and satisfy its every need. THE SONG OF SONGS

Christ's Desirableness, Chapter Son_1:4

This "Song of Songs which is Solomon's" is seldom sung by self-seeking souls. To many carnal Christians it is either too mystical or spiritual to be of any practical interest. It is a Song parable of Love, or spiritual friendship, and must be interpreted as such. The language is uniformly metaphorical, perhaps, that it might be easily and growingly applicable to spiritual relationships. The two leading personalities assume the character of Bridegroom and Bride, suggestive at once of Christ and the Church. This is confirmed by the intenseness of the language used throughout by both parties, revealing deep and tender feelings. The first to speak is the Bride. This sudden outburst of burning desire reveals- I.-HER ESTIMATION OF HIS CHARACTER. She declares that-

1. His love is better than wine. She knew this because she had had some experience of it. Wine here stands for the exhilarating and luxurious pleasures of the world. But His love is more effectual, coming from a better source, and producing better and more lasting results. Wine is man-made, love is of God (Romans 8:38-39).

2. His Name is an ointment poured forth. His name is His character, a precious ointment, that contains all the ingredients needed to heal the wounds of humanity (Acts 3:16). This ointment hath been poured forth in Word, and in blood, that its efficacy may be tested and enjoyed (2 Corinthians 8:9). This pouring forth of saving virtue implies God's generosity and man's opportunity and responsibility. "Therefore do the virgins (pure hearts) love Him," while the harlots pass Him by. It is to the glory of Christ that He is loved by the purest of minds. The savour of His name is eternally

satisfying (Acts 4:12). "Unto you which believe He is precious."

II.-HER DESIRE FOR HIS APPROVAL. She longs for-

1. His Personal favour. "Let Him kiss me," etc. Him.... me. Her aching heart, empty and lonely, yearns for a token of His love. Nothing else can satisfy. It is not enough to hear of His love, or see others rejoicing in it, "Let Him kiss me." Personal contact needed. His kiss is a token of affection, favour, and friendship. This grace can only come from Him. God breathed into Adam-kissed him-and he became a living soul. Matthew 4:4.

2. His Personal Influence. "Draw me, we will run after Thee" (Son_1:4). Having been reconciled, she longs to follow. Christ is God's magnet to draw souls to Himself (John 6:44). His influence over the life should be an unceasing draw. He draws by His Word and His Cross, wherever He is "lifted up." This prayer of the Bride is a proof of her love for Him, and devotion to Him. Her self-denial will affect others, "we will run." The more powerfully our lives are influenced by Christ the more swiftly shall we run after Him, and the more likely are we to move others. It is better to draw than to drive. If His influence does not draw us after Him, there are other influences that will certainly draw us from Him. He will have a willing people in the day of His power.

III.-HER EXPERIENCE OF HIS FELLOWSHIP. Her prayer has been answered. He has drawn and she did run, and the results have been abundantly satisfying. We now find her-

1. Companying with Him. "The King hath brought me into His chambers" (Son_1:4). These chambers represent His own personal possessions. All His unsearchable riches are at her disposal. His peace, His rest, His joy, His wealth, what a portion? These present possessions represent the full Salvation Christ desires to give those who lovingly follow Him. He brought her in, she never could have entered His chambers without His liberty and guidance. The way into the Holy of Holies is now open to every blood-washed Spirit-led soul (Php_3:12-14).

2. Rejoicing in Him. "We will be glad and rejoice in Thee." With loving kindness has she been drawn, and with infinite plenty hath she been satisfied. The Bridegroom did it all for her, so she will rejoice in Him. It is always with gladness and rejoicing that anyone is brought into this King's palace (Psalms 45:15). There is no night there; it is a banqueting-house, with a canopy of love. All my springs, both the upper and nether-for soul and body-are in Thee.

3. Testifying of Him. "We will make mention of Thy love" (Son_1:4, R.v.). His love, like Himself, cannot be hid. His love, like Jonathan, constrained Him to strip Himself for our adorning (2 Corinthians 8:9). Shall it not also constrain us to speak forth its praise? At this world's "Babel Streams" the heavenly minstrel can only sit and weep if he has no other fountain opened. Make mention of His love, for it is better than the world's wine. It is not a plant that grows among the weeds of Nature's garden, it is an exotic from above (Romans 5:5). The "upright" love Him, although the learned and the fashionable may reject Him (1 Corinthians 6:29).

"O cold ungrateful heart, that can from Jesus turn,

When living fires of love within His heart doth burn."

Song Of Solomon

HER CONFESSION AND APPEAL

Chapter Son_1:5-7

I.-HER CONFESSION. "I am black, but comely." To many this is a seeming contradiction, if not a perfect absurdity, but it is a very fit expression of the twofold nature of the Bride's character, even although she has been brought into His chambers of wealth and beauty. She describes herself as-

1. "Black as the tents of Kedar." These tents of Kedar, or of the Bedouin, who led a nomadic life in Arabia, were blackened by the sun, and uncomely. Like our own carnal mind it is black, and can be nothing else.

2. "Comely as the curtains of Solomon." The graceful and costly curtains of Solomon could only be seen from within. The king's daughter is all glorious within, if the outward appearance should look black in the eyes of others. In the flesh life there is no good thing, but in the Spirit life there is the beauty of the Lord. While in our sins, we, like the Ethiopian in his native land, were unconscious of our blackness. But wondrous grace, her blackness did not disqualify her for receiving His Comeliness. See Ezekiel 16:14 for the secret of perfect beauty.

II.-HER EXPLANATION. She suffered from different causes. "I am black," she says, because-

1. "The sun hath scorched me" (Son_1:6, R.V.). Look not with disdain upon me. I am black because I have been long and severely exposed. If we had been born and brought up in Africa the sun would have blackened us too. How many are born into conditions where they are morally blackened ere they know what it means. Christ does not despise us although the complexion of our character may have been changed by exposure and sin.

2. "My Mother's sons were incensed against me" (R.V.). Her "Mother's sons" may represent those unspiritual church members, which are her professed brothers and sisters. They don't like her dusky appearance; they are grieved and angry that she should have such favour shewn her by the King. The proud and the jealous have no appreciation of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Persecuted by your own household.

III.-HER OCCUPATION. "They made me the keeper of the vineyards." This looked like a very lowly task for the bride of a king. She offered no objections; she willingly gives herself to the service of the thankless for His sake. Although the task was common and arduous she humbly accepts the situation. Those who love the Lord and are beloved by Him will have their pride and patience tried in their service for Him. "Mine own vineyard," she says, "have I not kept." Was she to blame for this? We think not. The word "But" supplied here, which is not in the Hebrew, has had much to do with the misunderstanding of the statement. A free rendering might be "They made me guardian of that which belonged to others, and so devoted was I to their interests that I sacrificed my own. She made herself of no reputation, denying herself for the good of others. This is the true attitude and business of the Church. In this Christ Himself has set us an example. "He saved

others, Himself He could not save." Self-forgetting love is the chief mark of the Bride of Christ and the real motive to all missionary enterprise. There are, of course, those who are so engrossed about the vineyard of the body that they neglect the vineyard of the soul.

IV-.HER APPEAL. "Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth" (Son_1:7). It was first "Kiss me," then "Draw me," now it is "Tell me." This indicates progressive experience. The appeal is to Him who is the object of her soul's love. There is "none other name" to her. Those who love the Lord must love Him with the whole heart. She makes three requests-

1. Tell me where Thou feedest Thy flock. This implies that He has a flock, and that He feeds them. His flock was given Him by the Father, redeemed by His blood, and fed by His Word. He feeds them among the green pastures of His revealed truth. He feeds His flock where He Himself is, as the Bread of Life (John 14:21).

2. Tell me where Thou resteth Thy flock at noon. His people need rest as well as food. She feels her need of both, and seeks after them. Rest at noon from the burdensome heat of wearisome toil and oppressive circumstances. Where does He rest them? Under the shadow of His love and faithfulness.

3. Tell me....Why should I be as one that is vailed, beside the flock of Thy companions? (R.V.). To be a vailed one is to be one unknown to others. The Lord has many companions-Sunday companions-to whom this devoted Bride is unknown. She asks, "Why should I be as one unknown to them, who company with Thee?" Her heart yearns for fellowship with all who profess to love her Beloved. But alas, the true Bride of Christ is still as a vailed one to those who have only the form of godliness denying the power. Why it should be so is often a wonder to the sincere follower of Christ. HIS ANSWER AND ENCOURAGEMENT

Chapter Son_1:8-11

In Son_1:8, the Bridegroom gives His gracious answer to the Bride's urgent request, "Tell me."

I.-HIS WORDS OF APPRECIATION. "O thou fairest among women." He knows how to speak a word in season to the weary. What constitutes beauty in His sight may be unattractive to the purblind multitude. To her He is the "Chiefest;" to Him she is the "fairest." The deciding factor is love and personal devotedness. So is it with Christ and His Church.

II.-HIS WORDS OF COUNSEL. In answer to her question He now tells her-

1. Where she is to go. "Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock." The footsteps of His flock in every age have been the footsteps of faith as taught in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. To "go forth" in this direction implies a definite act of the will, and a readiness to be separated from all that would hinder It is along this path that He feedeth His flock. "Seek the old paths, where is the good way," and beware of the "New" (John 14:6). New revelations, and New theologies that are not in accordance with the "footsteps of the flock" are to be rejected and avoided.

2. What she is to do. "Feed thy kids beside the shepherd's tents." The kids are the young of the flock in which she has become specially interested. Personal devotion to Christ leads to an earnest desire after the good of others. Our Lord's "Lovest thou Me" was accompanied with "Feed My lambs," and always is. The kids were to be associated with the flock, and so are to be fed

"beside the shepherd's tent." Their tents were pitched for the convenience of the flock. The place where the shepherd feeds his sheep is the place where to feed the lambs, and what is "green pastures" to the one will be "green pastures" to the other. There is but one Lord, one faith.

III.-HIS WORDS OF COMPARISON. "I have compared thee... to a steed in Pharaoh's chariot" (Son_1:9, r.v.). This is His comparison, and must be full of significance. It suggests-

1. Soundness. The King would have no blemished steed in His chariot. The blind and the lame had no place there. In God's service, moral, spiritual, and intellectual soundness is required. Salvation from the deformity of sin needed-

2. Dignity. The royal steed must be dignified in its every action. A slovenly, cumbrous gait does not become such. The servant of Jesus Christ must walk worthy of the Lord. "Lift up your heads." Your citizenship is in heaven.

3. Strength. Pharaoh's chariot steed is no weakling; it is clothed with power, and can smell the battle afar off (Job 39:25). Paul's soul was prancing like a steed when he said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me."

4. Activity. Always ready for action is another characteristic of the full bred, highly-developed steed. Liveliness of disposition belongs to the perfect man in Christ Jesus. "Ready to every good work" (Titus 3:1). Always abounding in the work of the Lord.

5. Submissiveness. The steed in the kingly chariot, with all its pomp and power, is very sensitive and obedient to the guiding hand. So is the Bride under the constraining love of Christ and His Holy Spirit. Willing and Obedient.

6. Honours. The steed of Pharaoh's chariot was called to Royal service. It was associated with the king for his work and pleasure. Bearing him whither he would. We are also co-workers together with Him, who is King of Kings. Called to bear His name among the heathen (Acts 9:15). Take My yoke upon you. THE BLESSED FELLOWSHIP

Chapter Son_1:12-17

After the Bride's request and the Bridegroom's answer and encouragement, comes a season of refreshing communion.

I.-WHERE? "At the King's table" (Son_1:12). The King has a table-that which displays His marvellous provisions-the Word. The King "sits" at His Table" (R.V.) ready to welcome each invited guest. It would be an unsatisfying table if the King Himself were not there. Such is the "Lord's Table" (Luke 12:37). The Scriptures, as the table of the King, testify of Him. Great God, what a spread.

II.-HER EXPERIENCES. She declares, while the King sat at His table-

1. That His spikenard sent forth its fragrance (Son_1:12, R.V.). As this sweet-smelling shrub, in a congenial atmosphere poured forth its fragrance, so in the warmth of His presence, her afflictions flowed out copiously. When His Spirit is received in fulness, then the love of God, and love to God, will be shed abroad in our hearts.

2. That her Beloved was to her as a bundle of myrrh. The more love we have for Christ, the more fragrant and precious will He become to us. Not only myrrh, but as a bundle of it. We are told that Eastern ladies carried myrrh in their bosoms to impart fragrance to the person. Christ in the heart, makes a fragrant life. To some He is but a "root out of a dry ground." To them that believe, He is precious.

3. That His position was on her heart. "A bundle of myrrh... that lieth betwixt my breasts" (13, R.V.). Betwixt the breasts is the seat of the heart- the place where Christ delights to rest. He dwells in the heart by faith (Ephesians 3:17).

III.-HIS WORDS OF COMFORT TO HER. Now the Bridegroom responds to the glowing testimony of the Bride. She has honoured Him; He honours her. He says-

1. "Thou art fair" (Son_1:15). She has become very pleasant in His eyes. Those to whom Christ is precious, are precious to Christ. The more beauty we can see in Jesus, the more of His beauty will be seen in us. To be fair in His sight is better than being fashionable with the world.

2. "Thine eyes are as doves" (R.V.). The eyes are expressive of character. Id those eyes He sees simplicity and purity. The dove nature is seen in the dove's eyes. How different are the eyes of the hawk and the fox: the eyes of the unclean and the deceitful. Her whole nature had been subdued into the purest and tenderest devotion. This is the beauty which the King so greatly desires (Psalms 45:11).

IV.-HER WORDS OF RESPONSE TO HIM. She says-

1. "Thou art fair, my Beloved, yea pleasant" (Son_1:16). Fair and pleasant characterises the Bridegroom. Beautiful to the eye, and pleasant to the heart. He satisfies the vision and meets all the needs of the soul.

2. "Our couch is green" (R.V.). The resting place of these mutual beloveds is as pleasant and refreshing as the Love of God. They rest in His Love. They have both been made to lie down in green pastures.

3. "Our House has beams of cedars" (R.V.). The house of the Church, in which both Bride and Bridegroom delight, being built on a Rock; its beams are strong and enduring. Cedar wood is the most durable of timbers-sometimes called shittim wood. The superstructure is built to Stand.

4. "Our Galleries are firs" (R.V.,Marg.). The galleries may refer to steps of ascent, or to a series of balconies for outward prospect. The fragrant firs and the enchanting outlook, that widens the horizon, as they arise, platform above platform. Such is the progressive experience, and growing delight of those who abide in fellowship with Him. Three times over, she uses the word "Our" not "My." What have we, that we have not received from Him, and what is Ours, is also His. It is mutual enjoyment.

TIMES OF REFRESHING

Chapter Son_2:1-7

In His Chambers, and in His Presence, she is in the enjoyment of rich refreshing. "In Thy Presence is fulness of joy." The conversation is the sweetest and most endearing. Notice-

1-HER CONFESSION. "I am a Rose of Sharon, a Lily of the Valley" (R.v.). These words are often quoted as spoken by the Bridegroom, but they are the words of the Bride, and express her lowly opinion of herself. The Rose of the plain and the Lily of the valley were only common, modest flowers. She feels that in herself, she is no better than others. But God hath chosen the poor of this world rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom (James 5:2; 2 Corinthians 8:9).

II.-HIS APPRECIATION. "Asa Lily among thorns; so is My love among the daughters." A lily is the symbol of beauty, of purity, and of humility. To Him, she is a lily arrayed in a beauty more glorious than that of Solomon's, but her position on earth is as one "among thorns." Thorns represent the uncharitable, uncomely, unprofitable, and hurtful. Their tendency is to choke the Word of life-their end is to be burned. The lily is among the thorns, not of them, as the wheat grows among the tares. There were saints in Cesar's household. Their position is one of suffering and testimony.

Ill-HER BLISSFUL TESTIMONY. Observe that it is all of Him. She refers to-

1. His Character. "As the tree (citron or orange) among the trees....so is my Beloved among the sons" (Son_2:3). She is a lily among thorns, He is an orange tree among the fruitless trees of the wood: the sons of men. He is "the Tree of Life." None ever found "nothing but leaves" here. This tree with its thick deep green foliage, and ever ripe and luscious fruit is the coveted place of shelter and refreshing to the weary-burdened, thirsty pilgrim (Isaiah 32:2). This unique tree yields its fruit every month. Let him that is at hirst, come.

2. His Shadow. "I sat under His shadow with great delight." There are other shadows, like Jonah's gourd, under which we may sit with fear. Only under His shadow can we sit with "great delight." Here only is security, love, power, and satisfaction. The fruit of His labour and suffering is sweet; Pardon, peace, and hope. It is sweet to the taste of a weary, hungry, thankful heart. Many have their taste so depraved by eating the deceptive apples of Sodom, that they desire not the fruit of the Tree of Life.

3. His Banqueting House. This is suggestive of joyful company, and abundant provision. The House of Prayer is a banqueting house, where the soul is refreshed and strengthened with His grace and truth, being filled with the Spirit. "He brought me! none else could. He leads me into the place of fulness of blessing."

4. His Banner. "His banner over me was love." This banner is the symbol of His conquering love; under it she has a triumphant entrance. Our liberty of access comes through His prevailing love. "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." This King sets His banner over all His possessions. It is the banner of love, because all the forces of love in His Kingdom are represented by it.

5. His Hands. "His left hand under my head, and His right hand doth embrace me." She who has such a warm place in the heart of His love, will not fail to have a secure place in the hands of His power. His left hand for support, and His right hand for protection. "Underneath are the everlasting arms." He fainteth not. The beloved of the Lord shall dwell is safety by Him (Deuteronomy 33:12). None is able to pluck His loved ones out of His hand (John 10:28-30).

PROOFS OF HIS LOVE

Chapter Son_2:8-13

"The voice of my Beloved" (Son_2:8). She hears His voice, it is the voice of love, a love that delights to manifest itself in unmistakable words and actions.

1. He Comes. "Behold, He cometh." The great distance which separated Him and her, could only be bridged by Him, through infinite love. He comes powerfully, "leaping upon the mountains." He comes joyfully, "skipping upon the hills." He comes to seek and to save.

2. He Stands. "He standeth behind our wall." There is no wall that can keep Him out, but "our wall." The wall of indifference and unbelief. Yet He condescends to stand behind it. Break down this wall, and you will see the King.

3. He Looks. "He looketh in at the windows" (Son_2:9, R.V.). He takes advantage of every opening to get into touch with our needy souls. No lover can be more interested in his sweetheart than He is about His own. Every desire after Him is a window through which He can look into the soul.

4. He Reveals. "He sheweth Himself through the lattice" (R.V.), It is the fondest longing of His gracious heart to shew Himself, in all the wealth of His character, to the lonely loving heart. "He that loveth me... I will manifest Myself to him" (John

5. He Speaks. "My Beloved spake" (Son_2:10) She has no doubt at all that it is His voice she hears. What other voice could be so sweet, so surpassingly charming? There is no mistaking it.

6. He Invites. "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away." He has come that He might take her to Himself, and into the fair summer land of His Grace. "Come away," away from all that harms or hinders, into His ways and works, where there is peace and power. As sinners we go to Him, as disciples we go after Him, as friends we go with Him.

7. He Encourages. The characteristics of spring mentioned here (Son_2:11-13) are metaphorical of the new life. It is spring-time in the soul, when the Sun of Righteousness casts His warm reviving beams upon it. All the blessings of this new life have their source in Him. In these words of cheer, spoken to the Bride by the Bridegroom, we have "The Gospel of Christ," which assures us that-

(1). "The winter (of Death) is past" (Son_2:11). You hath He quickened who were dead. All in Christ are a new creation...All things are become new (2 Corinthians 5:17). Passed from death into life, from winter into summer.

(2). "The rain (of Judgment) is over and gone." As Noah, after the flood, stepped out into a new world, so Christ, by His death on the Cross, brings us out of condemnation into the glorious liberty of "newness of life." (Romans 8:1).

(3). "The flowers (of promise) appear on the earth." After the death and resurrection of Christ, the promises of God, spring up in fresh beauty and power, as plentiful as the flowers of the field." The promise is unto you," pluck these precious gifts, and make your life beautiful and fragrant.

(4). "The time of Singing (Praise) is come." It well becometh the mornings of spring to be vocal with song. The dawn of the new morning of spiritual life is a time when every bird within the cage of our being is set a singing. "Praise ye the Lord," sing and make melody in your heart, for the Lord hath done great things for you.

(5). "The voice of the turtle (Holy Spirit) is heard in our land." While the flowers of promise appear in the earth-offered to all, the assuring voice of the Spirit only is heard in our land; To receive the promised Spirit, as the Comforter and Guide, we must know the Power of His Cross, (Galatians 3:13-14).

(6). The season of Fruitfulness is at hand. "The fig tree ripeneth her green figs, and the vines are in blossom" (Son_2:13). There is now the prospect of a priceless ingathering. This is the stage referred to in John 15:16. Blessing for others must be one of the results of our Union with Him (Hosea 14:8).

(7). The Call is repeated. "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away." Arise, don't keep sitting in the place of darkness and doubt. Thou art "my love, the joy of my heart," come away into the full enjoyment of all this Heaven-sent Spring brings within your reach. In His Presence is fulness of joy. Wilt thou go with this Man?

MUTUAL DELIGHT

Chapter Son_2:14-17

To her, He is the "chiefest among the thousands," to Him, she is the "fairest among women." The fellowship of such must be sweet. Observe here- I.-HER SECURITY. As His own dove-the emblem of purity and affection-she is-

1. "In the clefts of the Rock," for safety (Son_2:14). She dwells on high (Isaiah 33:16), far above the reach of the cruel fowler, in the cleft of the Rock of Ages, kept by the power of God. The strength of Hills, which is His, is also hers.

2. "In the secret places of the ascent" (Newberry), for progress. Her position is one of safety, her privilege is one of advancement. The Rock of defence is frequently associated with the secret place of privilege (Psalms 27:5; Isaiah 33:16). The power of the Spirit is associated with the blood of the Cross. As sons, we are in the cleft of the rock, as servants, we are "in the secret places of the stairs."

II.-HIS LONGING FOR COMMUNION. He desires of her two things, He says-

1. "Let Me see thy countenance....for it is comely." Comely with the beauty that He has put upon it, by satisfying her heart with His love and goodness. Lift up thy face unto God-His heart yearns to see His own light in your eyes, and to have fellowship with thee. Then-

2. "Let Me hear thy voice, for it is sweet." It is sweet to Him to hear thy voice in prayer to Him, in praise of Him, and in testimony for Him. The voice may be weak and trembling, but to Him it is sweet. Let Him hear it often, for there are so many other voices that must be harsh and painful to His gracious ear.

III.-HIS CAREFULNESS OVER THEIR POSSESSIONS. "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vineyards, for our vineyards are in blossom" (Son_2:15, R.V.). The vineyards may represent spheres of service. Into the sacred enclosure foxes, or false teachers, have come (Ezekiel 13:4). There are also "little foxes," playful, innocent things in a way, but they spoil the vines. The Bride and Bridegroom are copartners in this business; what touches the vineyard,

affects them both. If we are vitally united to Christ, we shall be vitally interested in His cause. What is to be done with the foxes? "Take them." Deal with them as foxes.

IV.-HER JOYFUL CONFESSION. "My Beloved is mine, and I am His" (Son_2:16).

1. His, by Grace and Choice. His, because He hath set His love upon me, and hath chosen me as His own. He loved me, and gave Himself for me.

2. His, by Faith and Self-surrender. "I am His!" He gave Himself for me, and I have given myself for Him. Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price. This is a union that is indissoluble in death or eternity.

3. His, until the Day break. Just now, her sphere of action, in fellowship with Him, is among the shadows: but when that great "day" dawns, these shall "flee away." She is His, as really in the place of suffering, as in the day of glory. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadows.... I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me (Psalms 23:4).

4. His, until He comes again. "Turn, my Beloved, and be Thou like a young hart upon the mountains of division" (R.V., Marg.). The young hart can speedily overcome the hills and valleys, which separate. When Christ comes again, He will come "quickly" the mountains that presently hide His visible presence, and divide His waiting people, will flow down at His Appearing. The cry of the Bride is, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." A SORROWFUL NIGHT

Chapter Son_3:1-4

These verses tell us of a lost fellowship, and a midnight search.

1. The Search. "I sought Him." Why? What had happened? Something had separated these lovers. When the Holy Spirit is grieved, fellowship with the Lord is broken. She sought Him because she was deeply sensible of her loss. The more precious the Lord is to us, the more sorrowfully shall we miss His presence.

2. The Time. "By night." It is always night to the loving heart when He is not there. Distance from Christ implies darkness; for He is the Light of Life.

3. The Manner. (1), She sought Him on His bed. The bed is a place of ease and inactivity. But He is not found here; for the search is still in a slothful fashion. (2), She sought Him in the Street, she is out of her bed now, and into Society. But even in the city, she is seeking for the living among the dead. Lost fellowship with Christ is not restored in this manner. (3), She sought Him among the Watchmen (Son_3:3). "Saw ye Him?" Alas, even the Watchmen of Zion are not always in personal touch with Him. She has also to pass them by.

4. The Discovery. "I found Him whom my soul loveth" (Son_3:4). When her own plans and methods and efforts had been exhausted, He revealed Himself unto her. She made this joyful discovery when alone. Mary made a like discovery after a somewhat similar search (John 20:11-16), "I found Him." There was no possibility of her mistaking another for Him. He only could satisfy her loving, trusting heart.

5. The Result. Having found Him, she says- (1), "I held Him." She held Him fast, with the heart grip of faith, like one clinging for very life. She held Him, conscious of her own need, and of His

inexpressible preciousness. (2), "I brought Him into my mother's house." If He had been earlier brought into her mother's house, she might have saved herself this time of weary searching. Fellowship with Jesus Christ is sweet, but it is all the sweeter when He is brought into the home circle. If you cannot bring your mother and your brethren to Jesus, bring Jesus to them. HIS BED, HIS CHARIOT, AND HIS CROWN.

Chapter Son_3:7-11

These words, "Bed, Chariot, Crown," are all emphasised in the Hebrew.

I.-HIS BED. "Behold, His bed." His bed represents the place of divine rest.

1. It was well defended. "Threescore valiant men are about it." The place of His rest is strongly protected. "He shall not fail, nor be discouraged." Neither the power, the number, nor the devices of the enemy can disturb the rest of the Lord. To enter into His rest is to be saved indeed. "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." His defenders are all "expert in war" (Son_3:8).

2. The reason why. "Because of fear in the night." We wrestle not against flesh and blood...but against the rulers of the darkness of this world (Ephesians 6:12). The foes that seek to disturb His rest, and ours, are mighty, but they that are for us are greater. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal.

II.-HIS CHARIOT. This is His "Car of State" (R.V., Marg.). Like the Salvation of the Lord-

1. It was devised by the King. "King Solomon made himself a chariot" (Son_3:9). The plan, the purpose, and the material were all his own devising. So was it with the Chariot of the Gospel. The whole scheme of Redemption is according to the choice and mind of God. Man's thoughts have no place here.

2. It was costly. "He made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom of gold." Solomon was not only the wisest, but the richest man of the age, he only could provide the materials for such a costly Car of State. Silver and gold stands here for preciousness and perfection. The means of our Salvation was indeed a costly provision. Not silver and gold, but the precious blood of Christ.

3. It was comfortable. It was "inlaid with love" (R.V., Marg.). The covering was the purple of royalty, but the lining was that of love. This phrase in itself is ample warrant for seeking spiritual significance in this Song. In this wonderful chariot there is Love all around. What a blessed experience. You have to get inside to know what is the length, the breadth, the depth, and the height of this love, which passeth knowledge.

4. It was for others. "For the daughters of Jerusalem" (Son_3:10). 0! ye daughters of Zion, this is the royal provision for you to take you to the King's palace. Written all round the Chariot of our Salvation, are these words, "Whosoever will, may come." If any man enter in he shall be saved and satisfied.

III.-HIS CROWN. "Go forth... and behold King Solomon with the crown" (Son_3:11). Yes! the chariot paved with love leads to the vision of the crowned King.

1. When did He receive it? It was " in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart." When Christ was resurrected and enthroned, it was the day of His betrothal to His

redeemed Bride, and a day of great gladness to His heart.

2. Who gave Him the Crown? "The crown wherewith His Mother crowned Him." The Mother is the embodiment of Love and grace. God is Love. Love sent Jesus Christ, the Son, and love crowned Him. "On His head are many crowns." Behold your Bride groom cometh, crowned, with glory and honour. Go forth to meet Him, and to be for ever with Him HER PERSONAL BEAUTY

Chapter Son_4:1-6

"Behold, thou art fair, my Love: behold, thou art fair." This is not the Bride's own estimate of herself, but His. The features of the physical body are here used as a similitude of the Church's moral beauty. The outward appearance is taken as an analogy of the inward character.

1. Her Eyes are like dove's. Meek and affectionate. The love of her heart beams out in her eyes. "The light of the body is the eye." Like Him, she is meek and lowly in heart.

2. Her Hair is like a flock of goats. Her hair as a vail of covering gracefully hides her person, as a flock of goats on Mount Gilead. The Bride is modest, not self-assertive, and even her modesty is majestic as the stately march of a flock of goats.

3. Her Teeth are like a flock of ewes that are newly shorn (Son_4:2, R.V.). Numerous as a flock, and clean as a newly-shorn lamb. The teeth of the Bride are not set on edge, after the sour grapes of the world. They are not spoiled by eating that which is not good (Isaiah 55:2). They are not like lion's, for devouring one another.

4. Her Lips are like a thread of scarlet. They have a healthy colour, and are well defined, because they speak the language of the Crucified One. The lips of those who preach the "blood of His Cross" must become like a thread of scarlet.

5. Her Speech is comely. Because it is seasoned with the salt of His Spirit, and because it is the language of a faithful loving heart. The speech of those who speak of Him, who is altogether lovely, must be comely. No corrupt communication can proceed out of her mouth.

6. Her Temples are like a piece of pomegranate. They are well developed, and indicate the highest wisdom. Her Bridegroom is made unto her wisdom and righteousness. Those that are Christ's are wise in Him.

7. Her Neck is like the tower of David (Son_4:4). Strong, straight, and dignified. She is not stiffnecked. The carriage or bearing of the Church of Christ ought to be in keeping with her glorious destiny as the Lamb's wife. Why should the saint walk with his head bowed to the earth, as if he were the conquered foe of the world?

8. Her Breasts are like young roes which feed among the lilies (Son_4:5). The breast is the symbol of Affection. They are like "young roes," because they possess all the vigour of youth, and all the warmth of a first-love. These affectionate desires have pleasant pastures: they "feed among the lilies." He satisfieth the longing soul with good.

9. Her Purpose. "I will get me to the mountain of myrrh... until the day break and the shadows flee away" (Son_4:6). The mountain of myrrh," and "hill of frankincense" fitly represent "heavenly places in Christ Jesus." This is the abiding place of His people now, until the day of His Appearing

break, and the shadows of this earthly life of sorrow and suffering flee away before the glory of His Presence. HER CHARACTER AND INFLUENCE

Chapter Son_4:7-15

The many titles given here by the Bridegroom, to the Bride, are a revelation of His high appreciation of her character and preciousness to Him. His invitation is most expressive, "Come with Me" (Son_4:8). His heart longs for unbroken communion.

1. Come and Walk with Me (Colossians 1:10). Agreement.

2. Come and Talk with Me (Luke 24:17). Prayer.

3. Come and Work with Me (1 Corinthians 3:9). Service.

4. Come and Suffer with Me (Luke 14:26-29). Fellowship.

5. Come and Rejoice with Me (Matthew 25:21). Reward.

6. Come and Dwell with Me (John 14:2-3). Glory. Now observe the various titles used as indicating her character in His sight.

I.-HER CHARACTER. He speaks of her-

1. As a Friend without spot. "Thou art all fair, my friend: there is no spot in thee" (Son_4:7, Newberry). The Church is Christ's friend in this present evil age, and should be holy and without blemish before Him in love (Ephesians 5:27).

2. As the Companion of His Choice. "Come with Me... from the lion's dens; from the mountains of leopards" (Son_4:8). Christ has not only chosen us, but by following Him, we are delivered from the power of those spiritual lions and leopards whose dens are still in high places (Ephesians 6:12).

3. As a Sister and Bride. He calls her "My Sister, my Bride" (Son_4:9). "Spouse" should always be read "Bride" (r.v.). This double relationship comes by birth and betrothal. Like Eve, the Church is "bone of His bones and flesh of His flesh"-Sister-and also God's gift to Him as an helpmeet-Bride. His Incarnation and Resurrection explain these two facts.

4. As a Garden enclosed (Son_4:12). A garden enclosed is a place of private pleasure and profit. The Church is Christ's own private and delightsome property It is well enclosed, protected by the walls of His almighty power and everlasting love. Separated unto Him.

5. As a Fountain sealed. There are treasures and possibilities connected with the Church that have not been revealed. Our life is hid with Christ in God. "When He shall appear then shall we also be manifested with Him".

6. As a Well opened. "A well of living waters and streams from Lebanon" (Son_4:15). While about her there is much that is as yet sealed, or hidden from the eyes of others, there is also much that cannot be hid. The Church of God is a channel through which flows streams of living waters. In each redeemed and satisfied soul there is a well of water springing up into everlasting life (John 4:14).

II.-HER INFLUENCE WITH HIM. What a confession the Bridegroom makes when He says to her: "Thou hast ravished My heart" (Son_4:9). This is the only place where this word is used in the Bible. He had yielded His whole heart to her and she had taken it away (R.V., Marg.). How had she succeeded in so captivating and keeping His heart?

1. With her Looks. "Thou hast ravished My heart with one of thine eyes." Being single-eyed, her whole body was full of heavenly light. Looking unto Jesus with the clear confident eye of faith is delightsome to Him.

2. With her Love. "How fair is thy love... better is thy love than wine" (Son_4:10). Our eye will never ravish His heart, unless He sees our heart in it. Be not deceived, He is not mocked. He who loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, desires to see of the travail of His soul, and to be satisfied in it.

3. With her Lips. "Thy lips, O My Bride, drop as the honeycomb" (Son_4:11, R.V.). The words of her testimony are sweet to Him. The Bridegroom was sanctified in her heart, so she was ready always to give a reason of the hope that was in her (1 Peter 3:15). Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, for no other lips have such a sweet story to tell as they. Honour the Lord with thy lips. HER PRAYER AND HIS ANSWER

Chapters Son_4:16; Son_5:1

I. THE PRAYER. The Bridegroom has just been comparing her to "A garden enclosed... with plants...and pleasant fruits... with trees of frankincense. . . and chief spices" (Son_4:12-15). Now her intense desire is that she, as a garden, might be worthy of Him; and abundantly pleasing to Him, so she prays-

1. For the Coming of the Wind. "Awake, O north wind, and come thou south" (Son_4:16). The Awakening and the ripening influence of the Holy Spirit are urgently needed if our lives are to be fruitful unto God. As the "North wind," He convicts; as the "South," he comforts and guides into all truth, that we may grow in grace and knowledge.

2. For the Outflowing of the Spices. "That the spices thereof may flow out." The spices-or new graces of the character-would not flow out if they were not there. It takes the wind, or breath of the Spirit, to make them flow out right over the walls, in testimony to the riches of His grace (Zechariah 4:6).

3. For the Satisfaction of her Beloved. "Let my Beloved come into His garden and eat His precious fruits" (R.v.). She acknowledges that as a garden she is His; and that all she has, and is, are for Him. What have we that we have not received? It is His desire and should be our delight that He should come into our lives and make personal use of all the products of the Holy Spirit in us. Ye are not your own. The fruits of the unrenewed life are but sour grapes to Him.

II.-THE ANSWER.. To her anxious request He gives a speedy reply-.....

1. He comes. "I am come into My garden" (Son_4:1). He comes into His garden: into the sacred enclosure of the heart, and there manifests Himself, claiming it as His own. "My garden." When we yield ourselves unto God, our members will become weapons of righteousness for Him.

2. He accepts. "I have gathered My myrrh, I have eaten My honeycomb, I have drunk My wine," etc. He has willingly and joyfully accepted for His own use, all that had been so freely offered Him. What is consecrated to Him will surely be accepted by Him, and used for the honour and glory of His name.

3. He invites. "Eat, O friends: drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." See now His eager desire that others should share His precious provision. Let all who are friendly to. Christ, shew their friendliness by accepting of His proffered blessings. Eat. Christ's gifts cannot be received too freely, there is no danger of excess here. "Drink abundantly" (Revelation 22:17). HER SLOTHFULNESS AND ITS SORROWFUL RESULTS

Chapter Son_5:2-8

After a season of "abundant" feasting and fellowship, there is the danger of yielding to selfish ease (Son_5:1). Let not His abounding grace lead to self-confidence and apathy. The experience here is that of a backslider. Why should backsliding follow times of refreshing?

1. Her Sleep. "I sleep, but my heart waketh." This describes a condition of spiritual inactivity while the conscience is still awake. This is not the sleep of death (Ephesians 2:1), but of indifference and neglect. Beware of sinning wilfully after that ye have believed.

2. Her Awakening. The voice of my Beloved knocketh, saying, "Open to Me." She knows that it is His voice that knocketh, but she only hears it in a dreamy fashion. How tender is His call. "Open to Me, My sister, my love, My dove." The door of self-sufficiency now stands between her and Him. See Revelation 3:17-20.

3. Her Excuse. "I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on?" etc. (Son_5:3). A very little thing is an excuse for a backslider. She had put off her coat, and washed her feet, with the intent of self-indulgence. How should she be disturbed, and her purposes thwarted? She has fallen from her first love.

4. Her Repentance. "I rose to open to my Beloved" Revelation 3:5). Her heart moved when she saw His hand put in by the hole of the door (Son_5:4, R.V.). When her heart moved she moved. Backsliding always begins with the heart. If there is even a hole in the door, His merciful hand will find it out, and seek a wider opening.

5. Her Discovery. "I opened to my Beloved, but my Beloved....was gone" (Son_5:6). While she opened the door her hands and fingers "dropped with myrrh" (Son_5:5). His gracious act in putting His hand on the lock made it very pleasant for her to open to Him, but when His fellowship is lightly esteemed it will be withdrawn. Be not deceived, God is not mocked (Hebrews 12:17).

6. Her Self-reproach. "My soul failed when He spake" (Son_5:6). He had spoken to her (Son_5:2), but instead of instant obedience, she began to make excuse (Son_5:3) Now, like Peter, she mournfully remembers her guilt and failure. She knows exactly where the sin lay. She had preferred selfish ease to obeying Him.

7. Her Miserable Condition.-

(1). Fellowship broken. "I sought Him but could not find Him." Sin leads to separation. We may not be conscious of it at the time, but when the Spirit is grieved our communion with Christ is interrupted.

(2). Prayer unanswered. "I called Him, but He gave me no answer." If we would ask and receive, we must abide in Him (John 15:7). She has ceased to be right with Him, so her prayers do not avail (James 5:16).

(3). Testimony lost. "The watchmen found me.... smote me... wounded me.... took away my vail from me" (Son_5:7). So changed was she that the city watchman did not know her. Stripped of her vail, she was brought to both sorrow and shame. Backsliders will always suffer in a measure from faithful watchmen, they must be reproved and rebuked, and made ashamed of themselves that they might more keenly feel their guiltiness in disobeying their Lord and Redeemer.

8. Her Appeal. "I charge you....that ye tell Him that I am sick of love" (Son_5:8). She was cast down, but not destroyed. She pleads with those who are in touch with Him to speak to Him on her behalf- to pray for her. The Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends. It is a Christ-like ministry to make intercession for transgressors. It is wise to seek the help of others, that we might be lifted into a higher, Christian experience. "Brethren, pray for us." But one must needs be "sick of love" to make such a request as this. HER DESCRIPTION OF HIS PERSON

Chapter Son_5:9-16

These "daughters of Jerusalem," as nominal professors, do not help the Bride in her search for her Beloved (Son_5:8). They acknowledge her character as the "fairest among women," but to them her Beloved is no more than any other beloved. It is only a matter of personal choice and devotion. But their question, "What is thy Beloved?" etc., stirred up her deeper emotions to give this full and glowing testimony to His matchless beauty, and incomparable character. She knows Him, whom she has believed.

1. He is white and ruddy (Son_5:10). As a Nazarite He was "whiter than milk, and more ruddy than rubies" (Lamentations 4:7). White and pure as the Son of God, ruddy and healthy as the Son of Man. Divinely pure and beautifully human.

2. He is the Chiefest among thousands. In the building He is the chief Corner-Stone. Among the brethren He is the First-born. Among the resurrected He is the First-begotten. He is the Alpha and Omega The First-born of every creature.

3. His head is as the most fine gold. Here is perfect purity of thought and the perfection of wisdom. His thoughts are not only pure, but very precious.

4. His locks are bushy and black. His is the beauty of divine youthfulness and strength. The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

5. His Eyes are as doves' (Son_5:12). They are full of tenderness and compassion. They are also "fitly set." They see things in their true light (2 Chronicles 16:9).

6. His Cheeks are as a bed of spices (Son_5:13). Lovely, fragrant, attractive. There was that about our Lord that drew and fascinated. Even the children were influenced by it. He is fairer than the

children of men.

7. His Lips are like lilies. They are pure and full of grace; for grace hath been poured into them (Psalms 45:2). They drop sweetness.

8. His Hands are as rings of gold. (Son_5:14, R.V.). Precious and endless in their working. How manifold are Thy works (Psalms 104:24). I have graven thee upon the palm of My band (Isaiah 49:16). Into Thine hand I commit my spirit (Psalms 31:5 :2 Tim. Son_1:12).

9. His Body is as bright ivory (r.v.). Ivory, "overlaid with sapphires," is surely symbolic of purity and incorruptibility. God would not suffer His Holy One to see corruption. On the mount of transfiguration it was seen to be overlaid with sapphires shining like the sun 10. His Legs are as pillars of marble (Son_5:15) They are strong and unfailing. He is the Rock, His work and ways are perfect (Deuteronomy 32:4). He fainteth not.

11. His Aspect is like Lebanon (v.r.). There is a unique dignity about His general appearance that makes Him pre-eminent among the sons of men, as Lebanon among the hills.

12. His Mouth is most sweet (Son_5:16). Never man spake like this Man (John 7:46). Never man had such a message as this Man. His mouth is most sweet, for in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead; full of grace and truth.

13. He is altogether lovely. All the loveliness of God is revealed in Him. What is more lovely than love. God is Love. He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God.

Now, says the Bride, "This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend." Who would not covet such a relationship? THE ANXIOUS INQUIRERS

Chapter Son_6:1-3

It is not to be wondered at that after the Bride's magnificent testimony to His "altogether lovely" character (Son_5:10-16) we should immediately meet with seeking souls. If Christ, in all His glorious fulness, was more frequently preached, there would be no dearth of results.

I.-THE INQUIRERS. These are the daughters or virgins of Jerusalem. They are nominal professors, members of the visible Church, who are as yet strangers to Jesus Christ. Their lives are morally clean, but they have no personal experience of His power and fellowship.

1. Whom they seek. They seek her Beloved. "Whither is thy Beloved turned aside? that we may seek Him with thee." They seek Him of whom they have just heard. Him who is so full of grace and truth, the Mighty to save, and to satisfy. Hearing should lead to seeking. Whom seekest thou? (John 20:15).

2. Where they seek. "Whither is thy Beloved gone. O thou fairest among women." They seek Him through her, who has been made fair through His comelines put upon her. Her fairness was her likeness to Him, which made her testimony all the more effective. Those whose character has not been beautified by the grace of Christ will not be privileged to win souls.

II.-THE DIRECTIONS GIVEN. She is able to tell them where He can be found. He is-

1. In His garden. "My Beloved is gone down into His garden" (Son_6:2). He delights to wander in the garden of His Word, the "Scripture of Truth." There ye shall meet with Him. Every book of the Bible is a "bed of spices."

2. Feeding His flock. "My Beloved is gone down...to feed (His flock) in the gardens." Here He refreshes and strengthens His people, who, like Him, take delight in this garden. "Thy Word was found, and I did eat it." Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

3. Gathering lilies. "Gone down into His garden... to gather lilies." His loved ones are like lilies (Son_2:2), here He gathers them, receiving them to Himself, and making them a delight to His soul. He who gathers the lambs in His arms says, "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out."

III.-HER PERSONAL TESTIMONY. "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine" (v: 3). I am His, because I have given myself to Him. He is mine because He has given Himself for me. He is mine, because I have accepted Him; I am His because He has accepted me. We should be able and ready to give a reason for the hope that is in us to all those that ask. Such personal testimony is always encouraging to anxious inquiries.

SYMBOLS OF HER UNIQUE CHARACTER

Chapter Son_6:4-10

It would seem that each time she extols His virtues, speaking of the goodness and loveliness of His character (Son_6:2-3), He in turn extols the virtues of the Bride. They who honour the Lord shall be honoured by Him. To her, "He is altogether lovely" (Son_5:16). To Him, she is "the choice one" (Son_6:9).

1. Beautiful as Tirzah (Son_6:4). . Tirzah was a royal residence, a place renowned for its beauty (1 Kings 14:19). The Church, true and clean, is a beautiful and delightful residence of her Lord. "I in you." The beauty of the Lord our God upon us.

2. Comely as Jerusalem. " Zion," like the Church, is "the perfection of beauty" (Psalms 50:2). Beautiful for situation, none so favoured and honoured as she. Like Jerusalem, she is well protected, the mountains of God are round about her. The comeliness of her God is upon her (Ezekiel 16:14).

3. Hopeful as the Morning. "She looketh forth as the morning" (Son_6:10). Her prospects are bright Her cause is as the shining light (of the morning) that shineth more and more, until the perfect day dawns. She has a blessed hope (Matthew 13:43).

4. Fair as the Moon. The moon is the chief light of the world in the absence of the sun. Ye are the light of the world. "Occupy till I come." The moon's fairness is but the reflection of the unseen sun. So the Church.

5. Clear as the Sun. While the moon is not so brilliant as the sun, it is equally faithful in fulfilling its appointed mission. The Church ought to be as clear as the Christ in its doctrine, motives, and life. This one thing I do.

6. Terrible as an Army (Son_6:10). This word "terrible" here and in Son_6:4 only occurs once elsewhere in the Bible (Habakkuk 1:7). It means Awe-inspiring as bannered hosts. There are tremendous possibilities in "bannered hosts." Banners here are the symbols of unity, conviction, courage, and confidence. The Church in its goings forth on its divinely-inspired mission, with its unfailing resources, its God-given armour and un-conquered Leader, should be an awe-inspiring sight. Is this what the Church is to-day? THE BRIDEGROOM'S VISIT

Chapter Son_6:11-13

1. The Place. "I went down into the garden of nuts." The Church, as a whole, is compared to a garden, and His people to nuts, whose lives are sweet to Him, and well protected. Our life is hid with Christ in God. He "went down." All His dealings with us implies a going down on His part. He humbled Himself.

2. The Purpose. "To see the fruits" (Son_6:11). And whither the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded. He came seeking fruit, and to see how His green plants prospered. The tree that is planted by the rivers of water should bring forth fruit in its season (Psalms 1:3). Every tree planted by our Lord has river privileges, and is therefore without excuse. In Me is thy fruit found. See John 15:1-5.

3. The Effect. "Or ever I was aware, My soul (desire) set Me among the chariots of My princely people" (Son_6:12, R.v.). Suddenly, His chief desire was to identify Himself with the martial movements of His beloved and princely people. Those who would bring forth fruit unto Him, by their life and testimony, shall have the joy-inspiring presence of their Lord and Saviour. "Lo, I am with you." Pentecost is the expression of His sudden desire to go forth with His princely people in their service for Him.

4. The Call. "Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee" (Son_6:13). "Shulamite" is the feminine for Solomon, and might be rendered, Return, O Solomonite. She is called by the King's own name, as the disciples of Jesus Christ was called "Christians" first at Antioch. Perhaps this call is in response to her anxious inquiry in chapter John 5:8. If His soul is to abide with His princely people, they must with their whole soul return to Him. Fruitfulness is conditioned by His abiding in us, and we in Him."

5. The Question. She now ventures to ask: "Why will ye look upon the Shulamite?" (Son_6:13). What will ye see in her? She has nothing that she has not received worth looking at. It is all by the grace of God that we are what we are. Although "in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." Yet He desires to see His own comeliness and workmanship in us.

6. The Answer. His reply is wonderful. He sees, as it were, "The advance of two companies" (R.V., Marg.). There are before His eyes two great and happy companies, constituting the whole redeemed family of God. A joyful company in heaven, and a joyful company on earth, both singing the song of the conquering blood of the Lamb. Rejoice in the Lord.

WORKERS TOGETHER

Chapter Son_7:10-13

In the first part of this chapter He gives another description of the personal virtues of His Bride. He begins with referring to her "beautiful feet," and ends with comparing her mouth to wine that causeth." the lips of those that are asleep to speak" (Son_7:9). The testimony of the Church ought to lead to the awakening of those that are asleep to speak forth the praise of His glorious Name. There is here-

1. Confession. "I am my Beloved's," and His desire is toward me" (Son_7:10). Joyful and fruitful service is impossible until our own personal relationship with Christ is properly adjusted. If His desires are to be toward me, and His love fill My heart, He must be the beloved of my soul. I must be wholly His.

2. Consecration. "Come, my Beloved, let us go forth into the field," etc. (Son_7:11). Her heart is now enlarged, so she longs to go forth into the field of missionary service. She knows that without Him she can do nothing. She says, "let us go. The "fields," the "villages," and the "vineyards," may represent three aspects of service. The evangelist, the pastor, and the teacher. Whether our work is in the open field, gather ing the villagers, or ministering to the vineyards, we equally need the presence and power of our loving Lord with us.

3. Resolution. "There will I give Thee my love" (Son_7:12, R.v.). If we do not give Him our love, then, in the place of service, with all its trials and difficulties, we are giving him nothing. The love of Christ must constrain us. Are there not those who are more ready to give Him their labour than their love. Here in this world of sin and sorrow, He gave us His love, here, amidst the toil and strife, give Him thy love.

4. Satisfaction. "At our doors are all manner of precious fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for Thee, O my Beloved" (Son_7:13, r.v.). In union with Him, the fruits will be precious and plentiful. The workers' souls will be abundantly refreshed, and fruits will be "laid up" for their Lord and Master, that He may see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied. Just now, we are workers together with Him!

LOVE'S LONGING

Chapter Son_8:1-5

Wherever there is intense love, there will be unmistakable proof of it.

I.-HER PASSIONATE DESIRE is seen in her longing.

1. To have the liberty of a Sister. "O, that Thou wert as my brother, I would kiss Thee, yea, and none would despise me" (Son_8:1, r.v.). She is eager to make a public profession of her love and devotion to Him. It is so becoming to shew love for a brother, without provoking the sneer, or suspicion of others. Why should the public expressions of our love to Christ lead to ridicule, any more than to a brother or a sister? The world understands natural, but not spiritual relationships.

2. To bring Him into her Mother's house. The "Mother's house," or household, may represent the Assembly of His people. The Church at Laodicea had great need of one such to bring the rejected Christ inside. The household of faith should profit by the special individual experience of each.

3. To cause Him to drink of spiced wine. There is a burning desire to refresh and cheer His soul with the best. What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits? The wine of our natural love, spiced with the divine love shed abroad in our hearts, is ever pleasing unto Him.

4. To have her whole person supported and protected by His power. "His left hand under my head, His right hand should embrace me" (Son_8:3). The more we know of the love of Christ, the more shall we seek to trust Him. Those who have taken refuge in the Eternal God shall have underneath them the everlasting arms (Deuteronomy 33:27). The head that is resting on His hand shall be without anxious thoughts (Matthew 6:25).

II.-HER NOTE OF WARNING. "I charge you. . . that ye stir not up my Love until He please" (Son_8:4). She warns the daughters of Jerusalem against saying or doing anything that would tend to produce disturbing influences. True love to Christ is jealous for His Will and Work. We must learn to wait on Him," until He please."

III.-HER MANNER OF WALK. "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness leaning upon her Beloved?" (Son_8:5). The virgin daughters ask this question, one of another, as they look at the walk of the Bride with the Bridegroom. Observe-

1. Where she is; "In the wilderness." It is a picture of "the Church in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38). In the world, but not of it. Pilgrims and strangers on the earth.

2. Where she was going; "Up from the wilderness." This is not our rest; we look for a city, whose builder and maker is God. Up from the sphere of service and suffering to the place of rest and reward.

3. How she went; "Leaning upon her Beloved." Walking with Him, and resting on Him, is the Christian pilgrim's joy and privilege. THE BRIDEGROOM'S WORDS OF COMFORT

Chapter Son_8:5-7

This is one of the most impressive passages in the whole Book. It contains His definition of His own love. He declares-

I.-WHAT HE HAD DONE FOR HER. "I awakened thee" (Son_8:5, r.v.). The first impulse of the new life came from Him. "He first loved us." He found us asleep, and insensible to His nearness, His grace, and His goodness. You hath He quickened who were dead.

II.-WHAT HE DESIRES TO BE TO HER. He pleads with her to set Him-

1. "As a Seal upon her heart." When Christ Himself is fixed on the heart, then the actions of the life become as His signet, revealing the impress of His character (Haggai 2:23). When this seal is on the heart. then every thought and feeling is stamped with His image.

2. "As a Seal upon her arm." When the arm is made bare for service, the Seal of His authority and power should be visible. The Seal of Christ and of His Holy Spirit must first be in the heart for life and love before it can be on the arm for power and service.

III.-WHAT HE HAS FOR HER. Infinite love.

1. A love that cannot die. "It is as strong as death." Death is strong, but it is not stronger than His love. The strength of this love is the strength of the lover.

2. A love that cannot be quenched (Son_8:7). Although the enemy comes in like a flood, it cannot quench this love, which is indeed" A very flame of the Lord" (Son_8:6, r.v.). A fire that shall never go out. "I have loved Thee with an everlasting love." The many waters of sorrow and suffering cannot quench it. Herein is love (1 John 4:9-10).

3. A love that cannot be drowned. "Neither can the floods drown it." It cannot be extinguished, neither can it be overwhelmed or buried in the depths. It will succeed in manifesting itself.

4. A love that cannot be bought. "If a man would give all the substance of his house for it, he would utterly be contemned." (Son_8:7). A man can no more purchase the love of God, than he could purchase the Son of God. All the substance of man, moral or material, is utterly worthless as a price for His love. God doth not sell His love, He commendeth it toward us, while we are yet sinners (Romans 5:7-8). A PLEA FOR OTHERS

Chapter Son_8:8-10

She has just had another and a fuller revelation of His unquenchable love, and the result of it is: anxiety for others. When the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, we will fall in love with the loveless.

I.-THE BRIDE'S INQUIRY. It was regarding "a little Sister" (Son_8:8). Although the unconverted are lower in standing than the children of God, there is still kinship between them-Sisters.

1. The Sister's defect. "She hath no breasts." The breast is emblematic of Affection. She hath no love in her heart. This is a most lamentable condition to be in, but it is exactly the state of every unrenewed soul. No love for Jesus Christ.

2. The difficulty. "What shall we do for our Sister in the day when she shall be spoken for?" Yea, even she will be spoken for by Him whose name is Love, and who died for us even while we were yet sinners. What shall we do for her, who is so loved by Thee, and who has no love in response to Thee? This is a problem that is still with us. He loves the loveless, "I called... ye refused."

II.-THE BRIDEGROOM'S REPLY. There are two possible results.

1. She may be built up. "If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver" (Son_8:9). If there is any stability in her, and if she is willing to receive all that we can give her, then the breasts of her affection will be lifted up like a "turret of silver" (r.v.). Love begets love, we love Him because He first loved us.

2. She may be nailed up. "If she be a door, we will enclose (fix) her with boards of cedar." If she prove as unstable, and as easily moved about with every wind, as an unfixed door, through which all or anything may go, then we will nail her up, and make her to feel her bondage and helplessness. If souls are not won by love, then they will be condemned by the law. The Bride and Bridegroom co-operate in the work of winning souls.

III.-HER PERSONAL TESTIMONY. She now gives a little bit of her own experience-

1. "I am a wall" (Son_8:10, R.v.). I am steadfast and trustful. I will not be moved. I know whom I have believed. This is not vain boasting.

2. "My breasts are like towers." My affections, she says, rise up unto Him like towers in the skies. She loves Him with all her heart.

3. "I, in His eyes. . . found peace" (r.v.). Where there is stability of purpose and a heart of love, there will be the enjoyment of His favour and peace (Colossians 2:7). By the grace of God, I am what I am.

CLOSING WORDS

Chapter Son_8:11-14

In the closing words of this matchless Song we have reference made to-

I.-THE KING'S POSSESSION. "Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon," which means "the place of a multitude" (Son_8:11). The Church, or vineyard of the Lord, is in the place where the multitude is, because it is intended to be a blessing to the multitude.

1. What He did with it. "He let out the vineyard to keepers." This vineyard needs to be kept, and all called of God and empowered with the Holy Spirit, are put in trust with the affairs of their Lord and King. They occupy for Him.

2. Why he let it out. "For the fruit thereof." The purchase of this vineyard cost Him much (Acts 20:28). Those who reap the advantage of it, are responsible to the King. Mark 13:34.

II.-THE BRIDE'S RESOLUTION. "My vineyard, which is mine (myself) is before me; Thou... must have a thousand"-the full amount. Each worker in the vineyard will have reward-two hundred, but Thou must have a thousand. Honour must be given to whom honour is due; but the Lord must be exalted far above all.

III.-THE BRIDEGROOM'S INJUNCTION.

1. To whom spoken? To her "that dwelleth in the gardens" (Son_8:13). She who dwelt in the clefts of the rock" (Son_2:14) now dwells in the gardens of separation and delight. The rock for safety, the vineyard for work, the garden for pleasure.

2. To what purpose? He says to her, "The companions hearken to thy voice: cause Me to hear it." It is good that others should hear our voice in testimony, but it is better that He should hear it in praise and prayer. Thy Redeemer loves to hear thy voice. Cause Him to hear it often.

IV.-THE FINAL INVITATION. This book of "Unvailings," like the book of "Revelation," closes with an earnest cry for the coming of the Bridegroom in His power and glory. "Make haste, my Beloved" (Son_8:14). Come quickly, "like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains." This is the attitude of a faithful loving, longing Bride. This is our hope. "For our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory, according to the working whereby He is able even to subject all things unto Himself." (Php_3:20-21, R.V.). Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

Isaiah

THE GREAT INVITATION

Isaiah 1:1-20

Israel had fallen into degenerate times: and just as "Moses was born" in the time of national darkness and despair (Acts 7:19-20), so did the "Vision" come to Isaiah, the Son of Amos (Isaiah 1:1). God has His own time and way of unveiling human guilt, and Divine mercy. These two pictures are exhibited before us here in this chapter.

I. Their Guilty Condition. They are charged with rebellion. "I have nourished and brought up sons and they have rebelled against Me. " He nourished them and brought them up out of Egypt, and through the wilderness, into a land of privilege and plenty. Yet they rebelled against Him. Have we not also, as a people, been nourished and brought up in a land of Gospel light and privilege? Are we still rebelling against Him? This wretched condition was the result of a certain moral process. There was-

1. INCONSIDERATENESS. "My people doth not consider. " They became more thoughtless and thankless toward their Owner and Provider than the ox, or the ass. When we cease to regard the work of the Lord, and to consider the operations of His hands in our behalf, we have already entered the path of the backslider.

2. PRESUMPTION. "They have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel" (Isaiah 1:4). Their thoughtlessness has resulted in a wilful and deliberate departure from the Living God. When the backslider has determined to have his own will and way there will be a breaking of the Lord's bands, and a casting away of His cords (Psalms 2:3).

3. PERVERSITY. "Why should ye be stricken?... ye will revolt more and more" (Isaiah 1:5). God could not deal with them as sons in chastisement. So far gone were they that they would not "endure" it, but only harden their neck in more bitter revolt (Hebrews 12:5-8). It is pitiful in the extreme when God has to say, "In vain have I smitten your children: they receive no correction" (Jeremiah 2:30).

4. CORRUPTION. "Whole head sick... whole heart faint... no soundness... putrifying sores," etc. (Isaiah 1:5-6). This sickness, and faintness, these wounds, and sores, can never be healed, bound up, and mollified, apart from Him whom they have despised and rejected. Corruption is the result of being separated from the Source of Life- the Living One. To forsake the Lord is to prefer corruption and death to health and life (Matthew 5:13).

II. His Merciful Offer. "Come now let us reason together, saith the Lord," etc. (Isaiah 1:18-20). These words contain-

1. A REVELATION. They reveal the infinite mercifulness of the God whom they had rejected and offended. Why should He make the first offer to His rebel creatures? "Oh, 'twas love, wondrous

love." While we were yet tinners Christ died for us.

2. AN INVITATION. "Come now, let us reason together." God recognises and declares man's kinship with Himself. "Come, let us reason," He does not "reason" with the brute creation. How gracious this invitation is. God might have driven out the whole nation from His presence as He drove out the man from the garden. "Come now," for where sin did abound grace hath much more abounded (Romans 5:20). "Come now," and let us reason together, for sin has been atoned at Calvary's Cross.

3. A PROMISE. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." It has been said that "any man can dye his soul with sin, but only God can bleach it." God's power is in and behind His promise to turn the scarlet-dyed clothes of a harlot-soul into the white robes of a blood-washed saint. "Come now," for neither the number nor the depths of your sins need be any hindrance, salvation is of the Lord. "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

4. A WARNING. "But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword" (Isaiah 1:20). This is the Divine ultimatum. If men refuse, and rebel against His free offer of mercy and forgiveness, if they will not yield to the Divine reasonableness, then their end is destruction. God is merciful, but God cannot lie (Titus 1:2). If His promises are despised, His judgments will not slumber. Come now, for behold now is the day of salvation.

FAILURE IN THE MIDST OF PRIVILEGE

Isaiah 5:1-7

This song of the prophet is a parable in honour of Jehovah, recalling His marvellous goodness to His people, and their failure and ingratitude to Him.

I. The Work Done. (Isaiah 5:1-2). These two verses contain a brief, but perfect outline of Israel's history. The "fruitful hill"-Canaan. "Fenced" with promises.

"Planted with the choicest vine"-His chosen people.

"Gathered out of the stones"-idols, etc. "Built a tower"-Temple. "Made a winepress"-Altar of Sacrifice. "He looked for grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes." Utter failure. All this is typical of what God in mercy hath done for us individually, and as a nation. We also have been brought out of the bondage of paganism and spiritual darkness, and planted beside the "fruitful hill" called Calvary.

II. The Result Shown. "He looked for grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes." There was the semblance of the fruit desired, but they were wild, utterly inconsistent with their profession, and entirely unfit for His use. There was nothing to satisfy the soul of the great Planter and Protector. Fleshly works by professing Christians are but wild grapes. They that are in the flesh cannot please God. Our God is quick to discern the real character of the fruit of His planting. The wild grape is the outcome of the old, wild, carnal nature that has not yet been completely subdued by the new life. Be not deceived, God is not mocked.

III. The Challenge Made. "And now..judge, I pray you, betwixt Me and My vineyard, what could have been done more to My vineyard that I have not done in it" (Isaiah 5:3-4). He had poured out His favours on His vineyard, but they had stained it with the blood of His Son. Could He have shown more love, more considerateness, more longsuffering mercy for His people than He did? Think of His dealings with them from Egypt to Canaan. Think also of His dealings with us, in the gift and sufferings of His Son, and in His merciful providence, that He might have us a people for the honour of His Name. Now, judge. What could He do more? (Matthew 23:37).

IV. The Doom Incurred. "And now...I will tell you what I will do..I will take away the hedge..and break down the wall..I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it" (Isaiah 5:5-6). Desolation comes upon them because His protection is removed, and His gifts withheld. The darkness of doom is the absence of the light of Grace. When Christ was compelled to turn His back on the temple, He had to say, "Behold your house is left unto you desolate." To be left to ourselves is to be desolate. My Spirit will not always strive with man. Repent. Return. Believe. Submit.

FITNESS FOR SERVICE

Isaiah 6:1-8

"In the year that King Uzziah died I saw." Uzziah had reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem. During all that time "he was marvellously helped till he was strong." But when he became strong, in his own eyes, his heart was lifted up to his destruction. He died a leper, for the Lord had smitten him (2 Chron. 26). At such a mournful time, and in such distressing circumstances, the Vision of the thrice Holy One came to Isaiah. What a change from the vision of a defeated, leprous king to that of the exalted Throne of the Eternal One. Our day of shame and sorrow may be the day of a new revelation of hope.

I. A Glorious Vision. "I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up," etc. He had seen the downfall of Uzziah, but he saw also the glory of the unfailing God. This vision is the reality of that which was seen by the high priest in type, when he passed through the Veil into the "Holiest of All." The Lord enthroned, and His glory filling the house. The landscape was there all the time, with its riches and beauty, although we did not see it till the Veil of mist was rolled away. The pure in heart see God. We, like the prophet, must have this vision if we would become meet for the service of God. We must needs see Jesus, our Lord, who humbled Himself to the death for us. "High and lifted up," exalted and enthroned, and the glory of His person and work filling the temple. Satisfying to the full every heavenly and Divine requirement (Hebrews 2:9).

II. A Humbling Confession. "Then said I, woe is me! for I am undone (cut off)...I am a man of unclean lips," etc. A vision of the highness and holiness of God is a self-humbling sight. "Unclean lips" are but the weapons of an unclean heart. It was when Job saw the Lord that he abhorred himself (Job 42:5-6). It is in His light that we see light clearly. This is God's method. First, revelation, then self-discovery, self-abhorrence, and self-abandonment. The vision of Bethlehem, Calvary and Olivet, first smites with conviction then inspires with hope. Having "seen the King, the Lord of Hosts," he has seen his own need, and the need of the people, for they also have "unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:5). There will be hope for the people when the servants of God have had a clear vision of God, and of their own condition and need.

III. A Great Salvation. "Then flew one of the Seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand" (Isaiah 6:6). The vision, the confession, "then" the live coal. The Seraphim fitly represents the personal work of the Holy Spirit in taking the things of the "Altar" (the substitutionary work of Christ), and applying them to the troubled and unclean soul. The lips were touched with fire because the sin was purged, and the iniquity taken away. This salvation is threefold-

1. PARDON. "Thy sin is covered" (margin). Covered by the atoning blood of God's Lamb. Such a covering as only God can cast over the guilt and heinousness of sin (Hebrews 1:3).

2. PURITY. "Thine iniquity is taken away." Not only is sin covered, but the cause of sinning is dealt with. The iniquity, or lack of equity in the nature, toward God and man is taken away. Renewed in your mind, morally straightened.

3. POWER. "Lo, this hath touched thy lips." The touch of the living coal was as the sealing of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13). It was power from on high putting his lips into touch and perfect accord with the holy Altar. Only the fire-touched lips can speak out the real significance of the Cross of Christ. Pentecost was needed to emphasise Calvary.

IV. A Definite Commission. The call of God was distinctly heard. "I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, whom shall I send" (Isaiah 6:8). It was not a voice commanding him to go, but a voice revealing to him, in a new fashion, God's longing desire to declare His mind and will to the people through His willing servants. Who will go for us? The man with the fire-touched lips is now ready to say, "Here am I, send me." He who has been cleansed, and claimed by the Altar fire, yields himself at once unto God as an instrument of righteousness. Now that his uncleanness and unwillingness have been taken away, the Lord says, "Go" (Isaiah 6:9). THE ALMIGHTY SANCTUARY

Isaiah 8:11-14.

This message from the Lord to the prophet in times of distress and perplexity, contains a message of guidance and comfort to all who are in similar circumstances.

I. The Danger. Judah was in distress, because Syria and Israel had formed a confederacy against them. Many also in Judah were disaffected to the house of David, and in secret sympathy with the enemies of their country. They were "refusing the waters of Shiloah, which go softly" and rejoicing in the glory of a heathen king (Isaiah 8:6). To which party should the prophet, the man of God, ally himself? This problem is with the Church to-day. There is a confederacy against it; organised parties of practical atheists. Within the Church herself there are also those who are "refusing the waters of Shiloah (Gospel), which go softly." Too softly for those who are the secret enemies to the Kingdom of God, and of His Christ, and who prefer the broad, turbulent waters of worldly pleasures and politics.

II. The Remedy. It consisted of-

1. A REVELATION. "The Lord spake to me...and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people" (Isaiah 8:11). Judah had lost sight of God, and of their relationship to Him, and, as a result, were seeking to "associate themselves" with a prosperous, heathen kingdom. But God's Word to the prophet was, "thou shalt not walk in the way of this people." The Church must choose whether she will separate herself unto God, or form a league with the aggressive forces of

infidelity.

2. A REBUKE. "Say ye not, a confederacy...neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid" (Isaiah 8:12). God's Word warns us against glibly using the language of the ungodly. "Say ye not." Don't you fall into their snare, or into their manner or spirit of working. Don't you be terrified at their numbers and organisation. Neither be afraid of their proposals, or propaganda. They shall be "broken in pieces...their counsel shall come to naught" (Isaiah 8:9-10). Those of Judah who were crying out for a confederacy with Assyria as a protection against the combined forces of Syria and Ephraim, were but showing their fatal weakness, as those who dwelt in the land of "Immanuel" (Isaiah 8:8). Such compromising on the part of God's people needs to be sternly rebuked. Whatever tends to lessen faith in God is dishonouring to Him.

3. A COUNSEL. "Sanctify the Lord of Hosts Himself, and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread" (Isaiah 8:13). To "Sanctify the Lord of Hosts" is to set Him apart from all else as the sole object of our confidence. When our Lord said, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself" (John 17:19), He shows the position He Himself hath chosen for His people's good. The dangers may seem great, the united forces in opposition to us may be formidable and fearful, but as the greater always overshadows the less, so, when the Lord of Hosts is sanctified by us and becomes our "fear and dread," we will not fear what man can do unto us. Fear Him. The dreaded mystery of holiness and power is with Him.

4. AN ASSURANCE. "And He shall be for a sanctuary," etc. (Isaiah 8:14). He shall become an holy place of refuge and of rest for your soul. Hide thyself in God, and all the confederacies of men shall never prevail against thee. "God is our refuge and strength...therefore will not we fear." This hiding place is indeed a "dreadful place." But the more dreadful the place is the more secure are they who hide in it. He will become "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence" to those who are opposed to His work and will. "They shall stumble and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and taken" that take counsel together against the Lord and His anointed ones. "Say ye not a confederacy," but say, God is my Sanctuary. THE GREAT FEAST

Isaiah 25:6-9

This is another vision given to the prophet. He sees Mount Zion as a table spread with rich and abundant provisions for "All people." It is the Millennial time of fullness and victory for His ancient people, when Jerusalem shall become a "praise in the earth," and when all nations shall "Call Him Blessed," who is their God and King. While the dispensational aspect must not be overlooked, we should like to read these verses, for our personal profit, more in the light of the Gospel of the Grace of God.

I. The Place. "In this mountain." God not only appoints the event, but also the place where it shall be accomplished. He hath appointed Zion as the place of His revealed glory. He also appointed "the place called Calvary" for the revelation of His grace. Here the Lord of Hosts hath made a feast for all people.

II. The Provision. It implies ample sufficiency for the whole need of man. There is-

1. PERFECT SATISFACTION. "Fat things full of marrow...wines on the lees well refined." Blessings that strengthen, and that cheer and inspire. There is no leanness of soul, for those who

feed in the work and fullness of Jesus Christ. Every promise of His is full of marrow and fatness. The wine of His Word is always on the lees of eternal verities. It is old and good. "Wherefore spend money for that which...satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness" (Isaiah 55:1-2).

2. FULL SALVATION. (1) The "Covering" of Darkness has been destroyed. "He will destroy the face of the covering cast over the people" (Isaiah 25:7). The darkened understanding has been enlightened (Ephesians 4:18). The true light now shineth. (2) The "Veil" of unbelief has been taken away. This veil that is "Spread over the nations" is taken away by turning to the Lord (2 Corinthians 3:15-18).

3. THE POWER OF DEATH has been destroyed. "He will swallow up death in victory" (Isaiah 25:8). Christ, in dying, hath destroyed death, and him that hath the power of death (Hebrews 2:14). The power of death, in itself, is a tremendous power, it is truly the "terrors of death."

4. THE ASSURANCE OF COMFORT has been given. "The Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces." The proofs of sorrow and suffering are visible in many faces. The day of His salvation is the day of peace and rest for the soul. A French writer has asked, "Where are now the calm, peaceful faces that were seen long ago?" Christ is our peace, "My peace I give unto you."

5. THE "REBUKE" OF FAILURE is taken away (Isaiah 25:8). The Salvation of God includes deliverance from a life of stumbling and failure. Oh, what reproach lies upon the servants of God to-day, because this full Salvation is not realised. God means all this for His people. "For the Lord hath spoken it."

III. The Testimony. "It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God" (Isaiah 25:9). When God's Salvation is experienced there is no doubt at all as to its God-likeness. This is the expression of a saved and satisfied soul. The word God is in the plural here, and has reference to the Trinity. To know Him, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent by the Holy Spirit, is Eternal Life. Those who can say "This is our God," can confidently add, "And He will save us," for, "We have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His Salvation" (Isaiah 25:9). We speak that we do know. In a fuller sense, this will be the testimony of God's people, when the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). Meanwhile His Salvation is offered unto "All people" (Luke 2:10). "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God" (Isaiah 45:22).

REBELLIOUS CHILDREN

Isaiah 30:1-3

Oh, how sad it is when the "woe" of the rebellious has to be pronounced by the Lord on His own children.

I. The Nature of It. It is seen in their counsellors. "They take counsel, but not of Me." Worldly wisdom is preferred to heavenly. It is seen in their covering. "They cover with a covering, but not of My Spirit." They clothe themselves with pride, and fleshly energy, instead of the power of the Holy Spirit. It is seen in their walk. "That walk to go down into Egypt." Their faces are toward the world, and their desire is to get into its ways. It is seen in their Motives. "To strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt." They seek worldly strength, and worldly

protection, to advance their cause. The heart that is in rebellion against God, and His Christ, is certain to seek the help of the ungodly.

II. The Result of It. The result is "Shame." "Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame." The strength of Pharaoh may do for a Pharaoh, but it will be your shame as a professed child of God. The strength of Pharaoh lay in the arm of flesh, and there is a curse upon the man "that maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord" (Jeremiah 17:5). Trust in the shadow of Egypt will be your confession (Isaiah 30:3). Nothing but shame and confusion will come upon the Church of God, if, for the sake of popularity and prestige, she allies with the godless forces of to-day. OUR REFUGE AND OUR REMEDY

Isaiah 32:1-5.

Man's character needs a "double cure." A place of refuge from danger, and a remedy from the disease of sin. When "A King shall reign in righteousness" within, then the princes of that Kingdom "Shall rule in justice" (Isaiah 32:1). Note the-

I. Need Suggested. We are exposed to the "wind" and the "tempest." These are the ordinary, and extraordinary trials and dangers that all have to face. The "wind," the common current of popular error: the "tempest," the crushing influence of temptation and lust. Then there is the "dry place." The experience of disappointment and helplessness, finding the world's cisterns empty in the time of deepest need. Then comes the "weary land" experience. A fainting of the heart at the discovery that the world provides no resting place for the weary feet of an anxious pilgrim.

II. Refuge Appointed. "A Man shall be an hiding place." Who is this Man? Jehovah says, this is "The Man that is My Fellow" (Zechariah 13:7). The One Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5). He is-

1. A HIDING PLACE. That is the feature of His character as Redeemer and Lord. The wind that drives away the chaff cannot" move those who hide in Him. "I flee to Thee to hide me."

2. A COVERT FROM THE TEMPEST. A place of secrecy where the most powerful forces outside cannot find the hidden one.

3. THE SHADOW OF A GREAT ROCK. The strength of this protection is here indicated, and especially the blessed fact that this shadow can be enjoyed by those who are presently in "a weary land." "Behold the Man."

III. Blessings Enjoyed. All who sit under His shadow have great delight. Here are several things which characterise those saved by the Lord, and who are abiding under the court of His wings enjoying His fellowship.

1. Their EYES are clear. "The eyes of them that see shall not be dim" (Isaiah 32:3). They have seen their need, they have seen their opportunity, now they see God.

2. Their EARS are opened. "The ears of them that hear shall hearken." They have heard His invitation, they have obeyed His call, now they eagerly listen to His Word.

3. Their HEART is taught. "The heart also of the hasty shall understand knowledge" (Isaiah 32:4). Yes, those who rest in Him as their "hiding place" shall be taught of the Lord (Isaiah 54:13). The

hasty heart shall be righted there.

4. Their TONGUE is loosed. "The tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly." There is nothing like the power of the truth of the Gospel for taking the stammer out of a man's tongue, and making him "ready to speak plainly." Plain speaking, on the part of the saved ones, is expected by the Saviour.

5. Their LIFE is purified. "The vile person shall no more be called liberal, nor the crafty said to be bountiful" (Isaiah 32:5, R.V, margin). A purified life means purified morals. Righteousness with God means practical righteousness with our fellow men. The man whose eyes are opened, and whose tongue has been loosed to "speak plainly," will not laud the immoral and the crafty because of their big subscriptions, or high social position. He is no respecter of persons, and must call things by their right names. THE EXCELLENCY OF OUR GOD

Isaiah 35:1-6

In the light of New Testament teaching, this portion is most inspiring. There is a-

I. Vision of Hope. "They shall see the glory of the Lord, the excellency of our God." How is this glory, or excellency, to be seen? Here, as in the Gospels, it is seen in the transforming power of His grace. The "wilderness," the "solitary place," and the "desert," are made glad and beautiful because of it. The excellency of our God is seen in imparting to the barren waste the majesty of Lebanon, the beauty of Carmel, and the fruitfulness of Sharon (Isaiah 35:2). Israel, as a nation, is that "wilderness, and solitary place," which shall yet "be glad..and blossom abundantly" at the revelation of the Lord: but now we may see the excellency of our God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6). What transformations He hath wrought in the "wilderness and solitary places" of the souls .of men, and of social life!

II. Condition of Need. The people of God axe here reminded of three sources of weakness that are hindering their life and work. They have "weak hands." Hands that hang down (Hebrews 12:12). The hands represent the instruments of work. What could even Hercules do with a hammer of soap? How can a servant work, or a soldier fight, with weak hands? They are powerless for service. Then there is the "feeble knees." They cannot walk straight and steady. They are easily upset. A little opposition, or the wind of some new doctrine, is enough to impede their progress, or turn them aside. Their knees are feeble, through the lack of the practice of prayer. Another weakness is seen in the "fearful heart." This is the worst of all, and the cause of all. When the heart is pure and strong, the hands and the knees will soon be strong and steady. Fearfulness is the result of the lack of faith.

III. Message of Cheer. The servant of God is commissioned to strengthen the weak hands, to confirm the feeble knees, and encourage the fearful in heart (Isaiah 35:4). But how is this to be done? Never were many of God's people so much in need of this, as now. With the work, conies the message of power, "Behold your God will come." The excellency of your God consists in this, that He delights to make the desert blossom as the rose, and to make the weak, the feeble, and the fearful, to triumph in His strength. Your God who will come with vengeance on your enemies, and a recompense to His own, He will save you. Let not your heart be troubled because of the signs of the times. Ye believe in God. Behold, He cometh with clouds (Titus 2:13; Revelation 1:7). Say to them that are feeble and fearful, Be strong; Behold your God.

IV. Work of Grace. The excellency of our God is seen in making-

1. The EYES of the blind to see (Isaiah 35:5). The eyes are the windows of the soul. In spiritual blindness, it is the spirit that is blind; to such, sight is a new faculty (Acts 26:18; Ephesians 1:18).

2. The EARS of the deaf to hear. As with sight, so with hearing; the ear is but the instrument, it is the spirit within that is made to hear Him.

3. The FEET of the lame to leap (Isaiah 35:6). The morally helpless, and crippled, by sin and iniquity, are made to leap like an hart. Salvation means renewal (Acts 3:2-10).

4. The TONGUE of the dumb to sing. Tongues that were silent for God, will, at His touch, break forth into praise (Psalms 51:15). For in the wilderness of the unrenewed and wasted life, the waters of grace shall break out as streams in the desert. Ye shall see the glory, and the excellency of our God. THE POWER OF PRAYER

Isaiah 37:14-20

The historical setting should be closely studied. A great trouble had come to Hezekiah, the king, because of the Assyrian invasion, and the imperious attitude of Rabshakeh the captain. "Trouble" has been said to be "A Divine diet for the new man." It is often more profitable than it is palatable.

I. The Cause of His Trouble. It was A letter." Only a letter, but a veritable "Messenger of Satan" to buffet him. For some the postman's bag may contain moral and social torpedoes. Who knows what the next post may bring? This was an attempt to destroy his faith in God (Isaiah 37:10), to dispossess him of his inheritance, and to bring him into bondage. The enemies of our souls are always active toward the same end. Their letters may be beautifully written, but they are terribly bitter.

II. What He Did With It. "He spread it before the Lord" (Isaiah 37:14). This solemn act revealed his faith in God. He did not spread it before the "face of Heaven," but before the face of an Almighty Personality. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is" (Hebrews 11:6). This also shows his thoroughness. He spread it. He laid the whole matter, from beginning to end, right before Him. Be definite in your dealings with God. Be as honest and confidential as He wishes you to be. Keep back nothing. Whatever is a trouble to you is interesting to your God and Father.

III. How He Succeeded. "The angel of the Lord" became his defence (Isaiah 37:36). His argument was simple, but irresistible. "Now therefore, O Lord our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that Thou art the Lord" (Isaiah 37:20). "When the angel of death spreads his wings in the blast," woe be to those who fight against the Kingdom of God. By the blast of God they perish (Job 4:9). Is there any sorrow too great, or circumstance too perplexing, that the prayer of faith cannot bring comfort and deliverance? "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed...nothing shall be impossible unto you" (Matthew 17:20).

POWER FOR THE FAINT

Isaiah 40:28-31

"Hast thou not known?" There is, oh! so much of the goodness of God revealed to us in His Word that we have, as yet, failed to understand or to profit by, that we greatly need a question like this to

arrest afresh our attention to our real need, and His Almighty fullness. We are reminded here of the--

I. Need of Power. "He giveth power to the faint." He speaks of power because he knows we need it. It is for lack of power that we "faint," and have "no might," and are "weary," and the "young men utterly fall" (Isaiah 40:30). There is to-day much fainting and weariness because of a conscious inability to overcome the power of current evils. An unhealthy moral atmosphere makes it difficult for a spiritual man to breathe. Even "young men" destitute of this power are an utter failure.

II. Source of Power. "Hast thou not heard that the Everlasting God.. .fainteth not, neither is weary?" (Isaiah 40:28). "Hast thou not known Me?" (John 14:9). All power is given unto Him. All creative and sustaining power is His. All fullness dwells in Him. If we are workers together with Him who fainteth not, why should we faint? Why this weariness in us if He who never is weary is working in us to will and to do of His good pleasure?

III. Nature of Power. Power is not something we put on, it is something that puts on us. Something that enters into our being, bringing increased capacity and responsibility. Power, like love, dwells in the life of God. To have more of His life means more of His power. The spirit of life is the spirit of power (Acts 1:8). This power is not that of a new resolve, or of youthful vigour, or natural enthusiasm, it is the "power of God," because God has come in mightier measure into the life. Abundance of life means abundance of power.

IV. Condition of Power. "They that wait upon the Lord" (Isaiah 40:31). This waiting upon the Lord must be interpreted as an honest confession, that there has been fainting and failure in the past. Because the promise is to the "faint, and to them that have no might" (Isaiah 40:29). His strength can only be made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9; Hebrews 11:34). Wait on the Lord, and change your weakness into His strength (Isaiah 40:31, margin).

V. Evidence of Power. "They shall mount up...run, and not be weary.. .walk, and not faint." They mount up, like eagles, into a higher and purer atmosphere of life where they can run, and not be weary, walk and not faint. The enduement of power implies an ascension of the life into a higher and more mysterious plane of living, far above all the principalities and powers of earth and Hell that would discourage and destroy. He giveth power to the faint.

FEAR THOU NOT

Isaiah 41:9-16.

What is here said of Israel? The seed of Abraham is also true of those who are His spiritual seed, the children of God by faith. These promises are made to "My servant whom I have chosen" (Isaiah 41:8-9). If you are a servant chosen of God, then these promises are virtually for you. Each promise is a reason why you should "Fear not." He says, "Fear thou not, for- I. I am with thee. "With you as your shield and great reward" (Genesis 15:1).

II. I am thy God. Thy God is good, and thy God is almighty.

III. I will strengthen thee. If He is the strength of your life of whom should you be afraid? (Psalms 27:1), IV. I will help thee (Isaiah 41:10). This implies co-operation. There is no help like His.

V. I will uphold thee. The right hand of His righteousness will stay you up.

VI. I will defend thee. "They that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of naught" (Isaiah 41:12).

VII. I will use thee. "I will make thee a new, sharp, thrashing instrument" (Isaiah 41:15). Every redeemed and consecrated soul will be a new instrument in His hand.

VIII. I will be glorified in thee. "Thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel" (Isaiah 41:16; see Jeremiah 9:24).

HOPE FOR THE NEEDY

Isaiah 41:17-20

The "needy," who are they? In every city and country their name is legion. But the "needy" here are the most hopeless of all mortals. Look at this picture of-

I. Lamentable Failure. "The poor and needy seek water, and there is none. They are keenly conscious of their need, they are "poor," they seek a common mercy- "water"-they seek it where it cannot be found-"there is none." And they have been seeking until "their tongue faileth for thirst." What a picture of disappointment and desolation. While "the common salvation" is as plentiful and as cheap as water, yet, how many poor and needy souls are seeking it where "there is none," in their own hearts, prayers, and works.

II. Inspiring Promises. Israel was not asked to dig wells in the wilderness, they were to drink from the smitten rock. Salvation is of the Lord. To the "poor and needy" three precious promises are given.

1. I will ANSWER them (r.v.). There is no answer to this thirst anywhere else but in God Himself. God is the only answer to the cry of humanity. He so loved the world that He gave His Son. Look unto Me, and be ye saved. God's answer is near when our absolute failure is recognised and confessed.

2. "I will OPEN RIVERS in the bare heights" (Isaiah 41:18, R.v.) God's fullness of blessing often comes from unexpected sources, "bare heights." "My ways are not your ways saith the Lord." A tongue failing for thirst is "a bare height out of which He is able to bring rivers of water" (John 7:37-39).

3. "I will PLANT in the wilderness the cedar...in the desert the fir tree and the pine" (Isaiah 41:19). This is part of God's answer to the poor and needy wilderness of man's soul. It needs not only the cleansing and refreshing rivers, but the imparting of new principles for the beautifying of the life-like trees in the desert.

III. God-honouring Results. "That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together that the hand of the Lord hath done this" (Isaiah 41:20). All His works praise Him. Our transfigured lives are a testimony to others of the good hand of our God upon us. When, instead of the thorn and the brier, there comes up the fir, and the myrtle, it shall be to the Lord for a name, and an everlasting sign (Isaiah 55:13). It is a poor testimony for God when the tongue faileth for thirst. But He delighteth to answer our need, even for His Own Name's sake. It is when the new song is put

into our mouth that, "Many shall see and fear, and shall trust in the Lord" (Psalms 40:3).

SPIRITUAL ISRAEL

or, Witnesses for God. Isaiah 43:1-10.

It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs; neither is it meet to take the Jewish bread, and give it all to the Gentiles. The great and precious promises made in the chapter are for Israel, and much important truth is lost by applying them only to the Church. Israel, like the Church of God, has a glorious and triumphant future before it. Still, all that is here said of the Jew is perfectly true of the Church, and may be forcibly applied to all Christians who are the spiritual seed of Abraham.

I. They are Purchased. "Fear not, I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art Mine." As Israel was redeemed out of Egyptian bondage and darkness, called into a separate life, and claimed by God as His own, so have we been redeemed from the bondage of sin and Satan, separated from the world, and claimed by our Redeemer as His own purchased possession. Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ.

II. They are Preserved. "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee.. .When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned" (Isaiah 43:2). No nation has ever passed through such deep and troublous waters as the Jewish. No other people have had to walk through such fire of suffering and persecution as they. Yet Jacob has not been overthrown, nor has the flame destroyed him. The reason is, "I am with thee." As it is with Israel, so is it with the Church. Only, the sufferings of Israel have been for her own sins, while the sufferings of the Church have been for Christ's sake. Through the fire and the waters of testing and trial must every redeemed one pass. But "Fear not" is the Saviour's word of cheer, for, "I will be with thee" (Psalms 66:12; see Psalms 23:4).

III. They are Precious. "Thou wast precious in My sight...and I have loved thee" (Isaiah 43:4). How a wayward, backsliding people can become precious to God is one of the mysteries of His grace. This fact is a proof that whom God loves He loves intensely (Daniel 7:6). God can do nothing superficially. If He saves, He saves to the uttermost. When He gives life, it is life in abundance. Their preciousness to God is a guarantee of their protection and security. We are precious in His sight, not only because of what He has given for us, but because of what we are now, as members of the body of Christ, His Son.

IV. They are Privileged. "I have created Him for My glory" (Isaiah 43:7). The creation of Israel as a nation is for the glory of God, and He shall yet be glorified in His people in this present world (Hosea 1:10). We, like them, are His workmanship, created unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them. It is to the praise of the glory of His grace that He hath made us accepted in the beloved (Ephesians 1:5-6). The Church of God is a new creation in Christ Jesus for His own glory, and this glory will yet be manifested in the ages to come (Ephesians 2:7).

V. They are Powerful. "Ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 43:10). A witness is one who has sufficient knowledge to constitute a proof. Knowledge, like steam, is a power that cannot be ignored. The Jew is a witness to Christ crucified, the Christian is a witness to Christ risen. Judah

and the Church are both witnesses for God. The Jews had committed to them the oracles of God (Romans 3:1-2), which gave them power for God. The Church has committed unto it the Holy Spirit of God that it might have witnessing power for God (Acts 1:8). Every Jew is a witness, so is every member of the body of Christ. Our witness-bearing depends on what we are, not what we say. If we are monuments of His grace we shall be witnesses for Him. What was said of Christ is true also of every man in Him, "Behold I have given him for a witness to the people."

GOD'S APPEAL TO THE BACKSLIDING

Isaiah 44:21-22

The goodness and longsuffering mercy of our God nowhere shines out more impressively than in His pitiful appeal to His backsliding people. "O Jacob," may remind them of their past pride and failure. "O Israel," of what His transforming grace had made them. Jacob, the wrestler, was turned into Israel the prince.

I. An Urgent Call. "O Jacob..O Israel...return unto Me." This clearly implies that they had turned away from Him, and that, for His own, and their own sakes, He longed for their return. All backsliding is a turning away of the affections from God to some other person or thing.

II. A Powerful Argument. He gives ample reasons why they should return.

1. I have FORMED thee. Israel, as a nation, would have had no existence but for the electing grace of God. They were chosen, not because they were better than others, but because it pleased Him to call them. Backsliders, think of that! God requireth that which is past.

2. I have FORGIVEN thee. "I have blotted out as a thick cloud...thy sins." Have you forgotten the time when He caused the sweet sense of His forgiving love to float into your soul? (Psalms 32:1-2).

3. I have NOT FORGOTTEN thee. "Thou shalt not be forgotten of Me." In your wilful wandering you have, like the prodigal, forgotten Him, but He has not forgotten you. "Return."

4. I have REDEEMED thee. The fact that He hath purchased you with His own blood that you might be His own peculiar treasure, is another strong reason why you should return unto Him (1 Corinthians 6:20).

5. I have CLAIMED thee. Return, for, "Thou art My servant." He has not only a claim upon your person, but also upon your service. Think of His infinite goodness in still acknowledging you-even in your present, sinful, and profitless condition-as His servant. "I will arise and go to my father."

GOD'S RELATIONSHIP TO HIS PEOPLE

Isaiah 48:16-18

"Come ye near unto Me, hear ye this." Here is something God is specially desirous that we should give heed to. Let us draw near unto Him, and hear it as fresh from His own lips. "Oh, hear it again." That Christ is the eternal Son of God who was with Him "from the beginning" and who was sent by "the Lord God, and His Spirit," and who hath declared Him who is-

I. Thy Redeemer. "Thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." Who gave Himself for our sins that He might redeem us from all iniquity. Jehovah is our Redeemer in the person of His Son.

II. Thy Teacher. "I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit." His teaching is not only instruction for the mind, but the impartation of life and light, of ability to receive and to act. He worketh in us both to will and to do (Psalms 25:8-10).

III. Thy Leader. "I am the Lord thy God...which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go." As He led Israel about and instructed him (Deut. 32), so, by His Spirit, doth He still lead His redeemed people. The Church never was in greater need of being "Led by the Lord" than now.

IV. Thy Keeper. "O that thou hadst hearkened... then had thy peace been as a river." They are kept in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Him. Great peace have they which love Thy law (Psalms 119:165). Hearken to the voice of Him whose blood preacheth peace, and whose life is the pledge that thy peace may be as full and constant as "a river."

DIVINE QUESTIONS FOR THE BACKSLIDING

Isaiah 50:1-3

The Jews were captives in Babylon. The sin of idolatry which, in God's sight, was the sin of spiritual adultery, had broken their marriage covenant with the Lord, and separated them from Him. It would seem that while they were in Babylon they murmured and complained against God, and the severity of their condition. Backsliders are slow to blame themselves for their present bondage and misery. But the Lord demands that they face the cause of their separation from Him by asking them five pointed questions, which appeal to any backslider.

I. "Where is the Bill of Your Mother's Divorcement?" Under the law, and because of the hardness of their hearts (Matthew 19:8), Moses allowed a man to divorce-cut off-his wife if found unfaithful, by giving her a "bill of divorcement." This bill was the evidence that she had been put away by her husband (Deuteronomy 24:1). The Lord demands of those grumbling sons, born in Babylon of backsliding parents, to produce the bill of their divorcement on the evidence that He had cut them off. Where is the proof that God is to blame for the backslider's failure and misery? Your iniquities have separated between you and your God (Isaiah 59:2).

II. "To Which of My Creditors Have I Sold You?" Another permission allowable under the law was, that a father had a right, if oppressed with debt, to sell his children (Exodus 21:7 : Nehemiah 5:5). The Divine argument is, did I sell you because of My poverty? Have I had to part with you because I was not rich enough to keep you? If I have sold you, then, name the creditor to whom I have sold you. Backslider, what have you to say to this? Have you separated yourself from God because He had not enough to supply all your need? The truth must be out, and here it is, "Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves" (Isaiah 50:1, l.c.)

III. "Wherefore...When I called was there None to Answer?" Another charge brought against them was that they had refused to respond to the call of His servants, the prophets. They gave Him no answer, but remained deaf to His entreaties. How is it that while you are so dissatisfied with your position and condition, you still refuse to obey His call to repentance as the way out of bondage into liberty and restoration? He is still calling through His Son, and by His Spirit, to the self-oppressed backsliders. How is it that so few answer Him?

IV. "Is My Hand Shortened at All that it Cannot Redeem?" You may have gone far away, but have you gone beyond His redemption point? Have you gone beyond the length of His arm to reach you? Backsliders, answer this question. Is His hand too short for your rescue? Is His blood too weak for your redemption? You think of your distance from God, will you also think of the length of His arm of mercy? He is able to save to the uttermost. If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us.

V. "Have I no Power to Deliver?" Your miserable, Babylonian bondage seems to indicate that your God hath no power to deliver you. As long as you remain in your backsliding state you are dragging the Name and Character of God into public dishonour (chap. Isaiah 52:5). As a proof of His saving power He reminds them of what He had done. At His rebuke the Red Sea was made dry, and the river of Jordan made as a wilderness for them. He had power also to "Clothe the heavens with blackness, and make sackcloth their covering" (Isaiah 50:3). This He did when He delivered them out of Egypt (Exodus 10:21). This He did when He gave His Son to die for us on the Cross (Luke 23:44). Has He no power to save thee? Then why art thou not saved?

LET US STAND TOGETHER-SUBSTITUTION

Isaiah 50:4-9

These words are mighty with solemn significance, coming as they do-prophetically-from the lips of the suffering Son of God. Although spoken 700 years before the birth of Christ they are becoming, only, on His lips.

I. His Wisdom. "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of them that are taught that I should know how to sustain with words him that is weary" (Isaiah 50:4, R.V.). He had the tongue of the taught even when twelve years of age (Luke 2:46-47). Never man spake like this Man. He was taught of God (John 8:28-38). He is the "Wisdom of God." His words hath sustained the weary in all generations. Let them dwell in you richly (Colossians 3:16).

II. His Obedience. "The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious" (Isaiah 50:5). Having heard the Word of God, and learned all that it meant for Him, He turned not back, but said, "Lo, I come...I delight to do Thy will O My God, yea Thy law is within My heart" (Psalms 40:6-8). How often, on our part, hath the open ear been followed with a rebellious will! We see, but do not delightfully obey the vision in a wholehearted consecration, but often "turn away backward."

III. His Sufferings. "I gave my back to the smiters...I hid not My face from shame and spitting" (Isaiah 50:6). He "gave," and He "hid not." Assuring us that His sufferings were purely voluntary. They would be of no value otherwise. The smiting and the spitting suggest the twofold character of our Lord's humiliation and agony. The physical and the moral suffering and derision. The scattering of the flock of Israel over the face of the earth is an evidence that the Shepherd has been smitten (Matthew 26:31).

IV. His Confidence. "The Lord God will help Me, therefore shall I not be confounded... I know that I shall not be ashamed" (Isaiah 50:7). He was helped, and not confounded, in the hour of His extreme sorrow, for an angel from Heaven strengthened Him (Luke 22:43). No one ever needed help more than He did, and no one was ever so confident of getting it. He knew that He was doing the will of the Lord God, and so doubted not. His face was set "like a flint," because there was no

wavering in his heart.

V. His Testimony. "He is near that justifieth Me" (Isaiah 50:8). God was near to Him, and He knew that God was justifying Him in all that He said and suffered. Justified in the Spirit He could truly say, "I am not alone." The sufferings of Christ were also the sufferings of the Father. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.

VI. His Invitation. "Let us stand together." Might we not take this as our Lord's appeal to His own. He has identified Himself with us, now we are invited to identify ourselves with Him. It is absolutely true that with Christ we fall or stand together. Hear Him say, "Let us stand together"-

1. In the PLACE OF CONDEMNATION. He bore our sins in His own body. He suffered for us the Just for the unjust. Let us stand with Him at that Cross bearing together the terrible shame of it. We are condemned already. Let us acknowledge it.

2. In the LIBERTY OF JUSTIFICATION. If we were judged in Christ we shall also be justified in Him (Isaiah 50:8, f.c.) He was justified in that He was raised again from the dead; herein is our justification (Romans 4:25). Let us stand together on resurrection ground (2 Corinthians 5:12, R.V.).

3. In the LIFE OF CONSECRATION. We are workers together with Him. The life of service is a life of holy fellowship and activity in the Lord. Your enemy is mighty, and your strength is but weakness, therefore, says He, "Let us stand together." In standing together with Him we shall also be found standing together with one another. Then, finally, we shall "stand together" in the presence of His glory, being "glorified together." THE GREAT REPORT

Isaiah 53:1

The Prophet, as he was moved by the Holy Ghost, passes in vision down through 700 years into the very midst of the days of Christ's humiliation and suffering, and speaks as an eyewitness. Infidelity has no reasonable explanation of this record so absolutely true to fact. "Who hath believed our report?" Notice the-

I. Nature of the Report. See chapter Isaiah 52:7-15. It contains "Good tidings of Good." It was the publication of "peace" and "salvation" (Isaiah 52:7). It refers to the prudence and exalted character of Christ the Servant (Isaiah 52:13). It reveals the astonishing fact that His sufferings would be unique among the sons of men (Isaiah 52:14). It also sounds the note of final victory (Isaiah 52:15). It is a true report.

II. Character of the Publishers. "Who hath believed our report." To Him gave all the prophets witness (Acts 10:43). The prophets, moved by the Holy Spirit, were God's witnesses. They were workers together with Him. The report was His through them. There is no exaggeration or false colouring about it. These reporters are in real sympathy with God and His work. So they ask Him, "Who hath believed our report?" Paul beseeched men in Christ's stead (2 Corinthians 5:20).

III. Responsibility of the Hearers. "Who hath believed?" The message is the most wonderful and timely that ears have ever heard. The reporters are the most trustworthy that have ever spoken. The demand is the most reasonable that was ever made-faith. Who hath believed our report. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Here, then, is God's Word of grace and

salvation. Where is your faith? It is not enough to believe in the Teacher like Nicodemus. We must show our faith like Rebekah who heard, believed, and followed (Gen. 24). Without faith it is impossible to please Him. THE ARM OF THE LORD

Isaiah 53:1

The "arm" is here used as a figure of the true Christ as the Head of the Church. He is also the "Arm of the Lord." This metaphor is deeply suggestive. The-

I. Significance of It. "The arm of the Lord" (Jehovah). It is the symbol of almighty power. Christ is the power of God. This power is a living power, an arm that is vitally connected with the Personal and Eternal God. It is no dead force like hydraulic pressure, but a power that worketh by love. His arm is also the symbol of mercy. Though His arm be strong to smite, 'tis also strong to save. His arm hath brought salvation (Isaiah 59:16).

II. Baring of It. "The Lord hath made bare His holy arm" (chap. Isaiah 62:10). In making bare His arm (Christ) the Lord has revealed His great power both, to smite and to save. What mighty spiritual muscle there is unveiled in the life and death of Jesus Christ. It is the work of the Holy Spirit, and of every preacher of the Gospel, to make manifest the naked and almighty saving arm of God. THE MAN OF SORROWS

Isaiah 53:3-6

The world in every age has had many a sorrowful man, but there has been only one "Man of Sorrows." The sorrows of the Son of Man were entirely unique and unparalleled. His was the sorrow of a unique-

I. Humiliation. Many a man, nurtured in the lap of opulence, has, through accident or failure, been reduced to poverty and shame, but no one ever had so much to give up as Christ had when He "emptied Himself, and took upon Him the form of a servant...becoming obedient unto death" (Php_2:7-8, R.V.). He who was rich-how rich!-for our sakes became poor, and, Oh, how poor!

II. Opposition. The contradiction that He suffered at the hands of sinners against Himself was also unique. Although "A Man of Sorrows" He was despised and rejected of men. Handel was found weeping while setting these words to music. The common sympathy bestowed on ordinary, suffering mortals was denied Him. The opposition of Satan to the "Death of the Cross" was another bitter element in the sorrows of the Saviour. Note the temptation in the wilderness. The rebuking of the wind; the same word used when dealing with "unclean spirits." The rebuking of Peter, and the "get thee behind Me Satan," when he said "far be it from Thee, Lord" (referring to His suffering death). Even when He was on the Cross they cried, "Come down," and we will believe in Thee.

III. Anticipation. Many a time have we been constrained to say, "It is good for us that we do not know what is before us" when some sudden and dire calamity has befallen us. These things are mercifully hidden from us. But Christ foresaw all that was before Him. He came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth...This He said signifying what death He should die" (John 12:32-33). His was also the sorrow of a unique-

IV. Separation. He trod the winepress alone. He was perfectly at home in Heaven, but He was awfully alone on earth. His very nature, as Holy and Divine, made Him "Separate from sinners," although, He was made in the "likeness of sinful flesh." Circumstances, disposition, and choice, often bring upon men the sorrow of a separated life. No one could feel this so intensely as the Son of Man who was also the Son of God.

V. Relationship. His was emphatically the sorrow of a unique relationship. "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows" (Isaiah 53:4). He alone could do this as a fond, devoted mother carries the griefs and sorrows of a beloved, suffering child. So intense was His love and sympathy for us as sinful men that He could not refrain from bearing our griefs and our sorrows. It was in this wholly, devoted One that Jehovah was pleased to lay "the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). It was for us that He poured out His holy, sorrowful soul unto death (Isaiah 53:12). Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow. Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? (Lamentations 1:12).

"FEAR NOT,"

or, The Heritage of the Lord's Servants, Isaiah 54

"Fear Not" (Isaiah 54:4). Then follows several powerful reasons why God's people should not fear. Closing with these words, "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord" (Isaiah 54:17). "Fear not,-

I. "For Thou Shalt Not be Ashamed"(Isaiah 54:4). Having believed in Him who is the chief corner-stone, elect, precious, thou shalt not be confounded (1 Peter 2:6).

II. "For Thou Shalt Forget the Shame of Thy Youth" (Isaiah 54:4). In the forgiving love of God ye shall find forgetfulness of the sins of your youthful ignorance and folly.

III. "For Thy Maker is Thy Husband...and Thy Redeemer" (Isaiah 54:5). A threefold relationship. Thine by creation, Thine by redemption, Thine by a mutual choice-"Husband" (Ephesians 5:25).

IV. "For the Lord hath Called Thee.. .forsaken and grieved in spirit" (Isaiah 54:6). If the Lord called us when we were forsaken and grieved because of our sins and failure, how much more may we depend on Him to bless us now.

V. "For with Great Mercies will I Gather Thee" (Isaiah 54:7). By His mercy hath He saved us, and by His mercies will He, as with Israel, gather us as His jewels.

VI. "For with Everlasting Kindness will I Have Mercy on Thee" (Isaiah 54:8, Isaiah 54:10). He who loved us with an "everlasting love" hath obtained "eternal redemption for us" (Hebrews 9:12).

VII. "For I have Sworn...that I would not be Wroth with Thee" (Isaiah 54:9-10). The rainbow of promise is now round about the throne (Revelation 4:3; see Heb. VIII. For "I will Lay Thy Stones with Fair Colours"

(Isaiah 54:11-12). Your character as a building shall be strong, beautiful, and precious.

IX. "For All Thy Children shall be Taught of the Lord" (Isaiah 54:13). The promise is unto you and to your children (Acts 2:39). Words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved (Acts 11:14).

X. For "No Weapon that is Formed Against Thee shall Prosper" (Isaiah 54:17). The gates (powers) of Hell shall not prevail against the purpose of God. See the weapons mentioned in Romans 8:35-39. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord. Fear not! THE GOSPEL OF GOD

Isaiah 55:1-3

The great verities, and the deep mysteries that are in nature, in no wise hinder us from simply appropriating the things needful for our physical life. Why should the mysteries of the Bible hinder any one from satisfying their spiritual and eternal need? A man does not need to be a philosopher to know how to eat when he is hungry. There is infinite grace in these opening verses.

I. The Provision. "Waters,...wine, milk" (Isaiah 55:1). This is, of course, figurative language, but profoundly significant as coming from the lips of the Eternal God. "Waters" suggest the abundance of the grace and mercy offered in His Word. Wine refers to their quickening and reviving influence in the soul. "Milk" indicates their strengthening and satisfying nature as a food. It is well known that milk contains all the essentials of life. These are emblems of the promises of God, without which man cannot truly live (Luke 4:4).

II. The Rebuke.

1. About FOOLISH SPENDING. "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread." The money of time, of talent, and opportunity, that's being spent for things that do not bring bread to the real hunger of the soul. Money that might be put to a much better use. If men would only spend half as much time and thought on their souls as they do on the pleasures of the world, they would find some "bread" for their more real, yet starved, inner man. Spending money for that which does not meet the true need of the man is a poor and foolish investment.

2. FRUITLESS LABOUR is rebuked. "Wherefore do ye...labour for that which satisfieth not?" A poor woman at our door one day, on being asked what hopes she had for Heaven, said: "I expect to do penance." Working for salvation is labour which satisfieth not. What has not satisfied you in the past will not satisfy you in the future. This "labour" may take many a different form, but there is no satisfaction in it as a purchasing price.

III. The Invitation. Three words are used to express the yielding of the will, and the appropriation of God's gifts. "Come...Buy...Eat." The urgency of this call appears in this threefold "Come." "Ho, every one that thirsteth. Come... Come... Come."

1. Come TO THE WATERS, the Scriptures of truth, pure and clear, from the throne of God.

2. Come and BUY. Buy wine and milk without money-without a price.

3. Come and TAKE His offered blessing of eternal life as freely as if you had bought it. Claim it with as much confidence as you would claim an article that you had duly paid for.

4. Come and EAT (Isaiah 55:2). This blessing is not to be pocketed, but assimilated. It is not something we merely hold, but something, the influence of which, possesses and transforms us. He that eateth of this bread shall live for ever. "The Bread of God...giveth life unto the world" (John 6:33-35, John 6:53).

IV. The Promise. Certain results are assured by God to those who Hear, Come, Buy, and Eat.

1. There is LIFE. "Thy soul shall live" (Isaiah 55:3). What a life this is. A life righted with God, and for God.

2. There is DELIGHT. "Thy soul shall delight itself in fatness" (fullness). This is not the delight of fancy, but of fact. There is never any famine in the Kingdom of God. All the fullness of the Godhead, in Christ, is the source of our supply.

3. There is CONTINUANCE. You ask, will it last? Hear what He says. "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David" (Isaiah 55:3). It is not to those who criticise, but to those who obey the promise is made.

V. The Appeal. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, Come." "If any man thirst let Him come unto Me and drink" (John 7:37). He who made the eye shall He not see? He who made the ear shall He not hear? He who made the spirit of man shall He not understand the deepest needs of that Spirit? What light is to the eye, and music is to the ear, God's precious Word is to the soul. Come ye to the waters.

UNFAITHFUL WATCHMEN

Isaiah 56:10-12

A WATCHMAN is one whose duty is literally to "look about" (1 Samuel 14:16). The Lord's watchmen are to look about for the aggressive movements of the enemy, and for any signs of backsliding among His people. What shall become of the people when the Lord has to charge His watchmen with-

I. Blindness? "His watchmen are blind" (Isaiah 56:10). They see not the danger of the wicked, and so fail to warn him that he may "save his life," and his blood is required at the watchman's hands (Ezekiel 3:18). The old note of warning seems to have almost died out of the present day ministry.

II. Ignorance? "They are all ignorant." "Without knowledge" (r.v.). They literally "do not know" the mind of God. Modern watchmen are in danger of being so engrossed with the critical opinions of men as to get into darkness with regard to the real purpose of God in their lives. To be ignorant of God's revealed will is to be a failure (Matthew 15:14), and a stumbling block.

III. Cowardliness? "They are dumb dogs, they cannot bark." Why are they dumb? Because they mistake enemies for friends. Because of the fear of man, and their love of the world. Being blind to men's danger, and ignorant of God's will, they have no deep conviction, and so they go on sinning the sin of a guilty silence. "Beware of dogs," the dumb ones are more dangerous than the noisy ones.

IV. Laziness? "Dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber" (r.v.). "Talking in their sleep" (margin). They are too lazy to find out what the mind of the Lord is, and go on talking like men in a dream: and the worst of it is, that they love this sort of thing. They have visions, but they are not the visions of God, but those of their own, blind fancy. They have no message from God to the people, but still they go on dreaming dreams.

V. Selfishness? "Greedy dogs which can never have enough...they look to their own way" (Isaiah 56:11). They seek their own good, and they go their own way. While this is a feature of

unrenewed, human nature, it is to be an emphatic characteristic of the perilous times of the last days when "Men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous" (2 Timothy 3:1-2). The covetous man hath no inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God (Ephesians 5:5). In a self-centred life there is no testimony for God and His Gospel.

VI. Recklessness? "Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink, and to-morrow shall be as to-day, and much more abundant" (Isaiah 56:12). Such traitors must have an inspiration of some sort. If they have not the Spirit of God, then they will have the spirit of the world. Being out of harmony with the revealed purposes of God, they fall in line with the baser passions and delusions of the people, saying, "to-morrow...shall be much more abundant" (2 Peter 3:3-4). While the Holy Ghost saith, "To-day." All this is being enacted just now before our eyes. Lack of spirituality leads to laxity in morals. Because of the unfaithfulness of the watchmen many to-day are filling themselves with the "strong drink" of a delusive and destructive theology. Every Christian should be a watchman. "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch."

PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY

or, Hindrance, to Prayer, Isaiah 58:1-9

The prophets were not only predictors, they were "instruments of righteousness unto God." They were not only "Seers," they were doers of the Word. God's servants must be faithful. "Cry aloud and spare not." Their attitude must be unmistakable. "Lift up thy voice like a trumpet." Their message must be practical. "Shew my people their transgressions" (Isaiah 58:1).

I. Their Sinful Condition. They had drifted into a formal observance of religion, but at heart it was practical ungodliness. They took pleasure in knowing His ways, and forsook not His ordinances (Isaiah 58:2), yet they were practising self-deception and delusion. They seem to think that by appointing a periodical fast, and afflicting their souls, that this would atone for their gluttony and insincerity (Isaiah 58:3-4). God is not mocked (Isaiah 58:5). "Bearing the head like a bulrush, and spreading sackcloth and ashes under him," doth not touch the sin of the soul. See Matthew 15:8; James 1:22.

II. The Divine Remedy. "Is not this the fast that I have chosen?" (Isaiah 58:6-7). Here is God's interpretation of "a fast." His fasts are soul-saving facts. His remedy is exactly suited to the disease. He says the fast you need is to-

1. "LOOSE THE BONDS of wickedness" (r.v.). Wickedness, or lawlessness, is spiritual bondage. Every unrighteous thought is a fetter for the soul.

2. "UNDO THE HEAVY BURDENS." Many are carrying burdens that are too heavy for them, burdens that you could help to undo by your sympathy and co-operation. James says, "I will shew you my faith by my works."

3. "BREAK EVERY YOKE." "Let the oppressed go free." The yoke of every oppressor is to be broken. Break the yoke of evil habit, fear of man, love of the world, pride of life, self-will, covetousness, etc.

4. CARE FOR THE POOR (Isaiah 58:7). Give "bread to the hungry." Shelter to the outcast. Covering to the naked. The man who shutteth up the bowels of his compassion from the destitute

cannot know the indwelling love of God (1 John 3:17).

III. The Assured Result. "Then." This word is emphasised in the Hebrew.

1. "Then shall thy LIGHT break forth"(Isaiah 58:8). Obedience to God's will is the clearing of the window through which the light of His favour will shine as the morning.

2. "Then shall thy HEALING spring forth." Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness. This light has healing in its beams. The moral diseases within cannot stand the dawn of the light of His truth.

3. "Then thy RIGHTEOUSNESS shall go before thee." Thy rightness with God, and with men, will go before thee like the prayers of Cornelius, as a memorial before God (Acts 10:4).

4. "Then THE GLORY OF THE LORD shall be thy reward." Righteousness before thee, and the glory of the Lord behind thee. What a testimony this is. Leaving behind the sweet savour of His presence and glory. The Shepherd's care before thee, and His goodness and mercy following thee all the days of thy life. What a rearguard!

5. "Then shalt thou call, and the Lord SHALL ANSWER" (Isaiah 58:9). Then shall your fellowship with Him be sweet, and your prayers answered. When iniquity is cleared out of the heart, then the way is clear for the Lord to show favour (Psalms 66:18). If we would receive of Him, "whatsoever we ask," it will be "because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight" (1 John 3:22).

INTERCESSORS WANTED

Isaiah 59:1-16

"BEHOLD, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear" (Isaiah 59:1). So He "wondered that there was no intercessor" (Isaiah 59:16). The language is human, but the feeling expressed is mysteriously Divine. Talking after the manner of men, he wondered that there was no intercessor.

I. Because there was Great Need for Such. The iniquities of the people had separated them from God (Isaiah 59:2). They were waiting for light, yet walking in darkness (Isaiah 59:9). They groped like the blind, and stumbled at noon-day (Isaiah 59:10). Their sins testified against them (Isaiah 59:12), and truth had fallen in the street (Isaiah 59:14). Yet no one sufficiently felt the sorrow and sin of the whole situation as to give themselves to intercessory prayer unto God. It was very different with Moses (Exodus 32:32), and with Paul (Romans 10:1). Does the present condition of Church work, and of Church life, not constitute a like demand for intercessors? May the Lord not wonder also-

II. Because of the Encouragement Given to Intercessors. "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy that it cannot hear" (Isaiah 59:1). He who hath delivered us, will He not yet deliver? (2 Corinthians 1:10). Hath He not set before every intercessor an "open door?" Every intercessor hath the encouragement of the Son of God who "ever liveth to make intercession for us" (Hebrews 7:25), and also of the Spirit of God who "likewise maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26). Now, "Ye that make

mention of the Lord keep not silence" (Isaiah 62:6). He is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

III. Because of the Possibilities within the Reach of an Intercessor. If the Lord could then have found an intercessor, what a victory might have been His. Aaron became a passionate pleader when he ran, and "stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was stayed" (Numbers 16:48). Prayer was made without ceasing for Peter, and he was delivered out of the prison (Acts 12:5). You remember how the widow got her victory over the injustice of a judge, "and shall not God avenge His own which cry day and night unto Him...I tell you that He will" (Luke 18:1-8). We who are a kingdom and priests unto God (Revelation 5:10, R.V.), let us offer this continual sacrifice unto Him, for the honour of His Name, the salvation of the sinner, and the sanctification of the saint. THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

Isaiah 61:1-3

In these verses we have a brief outline of three dispensations. Grace, judgment, righteousness. The year of liberty, the day of vengeance, and the time of Judah's restoration. This is a great subject for a great preacher,

I. The Preacher. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach." In writing these words the prophet must have been moved by the Holy Spirit, for our Lord personally applies them to Himself in Luke 4:16. The Spirit came upon Him (Luke 3:22; Acts 10:38), as the anointing of Jehovah for the work of this ministry. How great must the work be when it took such a person, and such an enduement, to accomplish it.

II. The Message. "Good tidings unto the meek" (poor and lowly ones, r.v., margin). How could there be "Good tidings" if there had not been something wrong, or awanting, somewhere? And why should the Holy Son of God need the anointing of the Spirit, by the Father, for the declaration of such tidings? Surely the tidings must be "good" and of eternal import to all who hear them when Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are so deeply interested in their proclamation, and when the power of the Triune God is needed to give them effect. What is the news?

1. HEALING FOR THE BROKENHEARTED. "He hath sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted." They that be whole need not a physician. How are hearts so easily broken? Why are so many disheartened? There must be many, and powerful, adverse influences at work. Yes, the world, the flesh, and the Devil. The result is defeat and failure. But He says, in Me is thine help. He hath sent Me. All that I am, and have, and do, is for thy heart's good. His Word and His work can heal the broken in heart, and bind up their wounds (Psalms 147:3).

2. LIBERTY FOR THE CAPTIVES. "He hath sent Me to proclaim liberty to the captives." He only has the right and power to make such a proclamation. Who are the captives? Those who are enthralled by influences that delude and destroy. Souls who are fettered by sin and Satan. Christ can proclaim liberty because He hath been anointed by Jehovah to burst the prison gates. By His death and resurrection He hath broken every barrier down, and conquered every foe.

3. VISION FOR THE BLIND. "Opening of the eyes to them that are bound" (r.v., margin). There is not only healing and freedom offered, but also a new vision of spiritual things. Spiritual darkness is the bondage of many. Christ hath been sent to give light. He is the light of life, and of the world.

4. GRACE FOR ALL. "To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." The jubilee of freedom, and restoration to an afflicted world. Christ alone by the anointing of the Spirit was able to make such an announcement as this. Who else would dare to fix the time and conditions of man's acceptance with God. This is now the day of salvation by grace, the time when the Lord holds His gracious reception (2 Corinthians 6:2). When the Anointed One read these words at Nazareth "(Luke 4:18-20), He, contrary to all custom, "closed the book" without finishing the sentence, because "the day of vengeance of our God" had not yet come: but it will certainly follow at the close of this jubilee year of grace, when the Church shall be "caught up" (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

LONGING FOR GOD OR REVIVAL

Isaiah 64:1-3

The previous chapter closes with these ominous words, "We are become as they over whom Thou never bearest rule" (R.v.). When God's people become like those over whom He has never had control, it is an awful proof of ingratitude and lawlessness, and a powerful argument for revival.

I. The Need Felt. "Oh, that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down." This is, of course, figurative language, expressive of a real spiritual experience. There is need for a "rending" of the heavens when the sin of backsliding has closed them, so that communion with God has been cut off. Even heavenly things may hide the Heavenly One. The veil of the Temple had to be rent, ere liberty of access could be enjoyed. "Oh, that Thou wouldest come down." The remedy for every need is in Him. A new manifestation of His power and glory would put to shame the sins of His people, and the false confidence of the ungodly. The soul's everlasting need is God, the world's dying need is God.

II. The Work to be Done. Mighty things are needing to be done. There is need for-

1. A MELTING WORK. "That the mountains may flow down at Thy presence." Mountains of difficulties, created by man's sin and vain imaginations. Mountains of selfishness, that dishonour God and hinder Him from working. Mountains of indifference, that block the channel of blessing.

2. A BURNING-UP WORK. "As when fire kindleth the brushwood" (r.v.). The brushwood of vain thoughts, self-confidence, and fleshly energy, needs burning up, to make room for a more healthy growth. Brushwood is a poor substitute for the golden grain. "Our God is a consuming fire."

3. A WARMING WORK. "Oh, that Thou wouldest come down...as fire that causeth the waters to boil." When the heart is made to boil like a pot, because of the power of His holy presence, then the affections will be hot. Lukewarmness cannot exist where this fire is. Then the prayers will be hot. Out of a burning heart will come burning desires, clothed in burning words. Then the testimony will be hot. When the heart is made to burn within us, while He talks to us, the tongue will become aflame of holy fire to speak forth the glories of His Name. "He maketh His ministers a flame of fire."

III. The Result Sought. "To make Thy Name known to Thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at Thy presence." We may long for the manifestation of the power of God for our own personal deliverance, but the mightier argument is, "That Thy Name may be known." He seeks to be sanctified in His people, that the heathen may know that He is God. His Name is His glorious character. They that know His Name will put their trust in Him. When God the Spirit comes in power, it is to glorify the Name of the Eternal Son (John 16:13-14). Be filled with the Spirit, then for

you the heavens will be opened, thy mountains shall flow down, thy brushwood burned up, and the waters of thy affections and heart's desire made to boil. So shall His Name be known, and others made to tremble at His presence. THE NEW CREATION

Isaiah 65:17-25

The closing chapters of this book are largely devoted to the coming glories of God's ancient people, and to the world-wide blessing that will flow out through them at the appearing of His Kingdom and glory. Note here some of the features of this new era.

I. There will be a Renewal of Natural Environments. "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth" (Isaiah 65:17). The glory of this new creation will be such that "the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." The "prince of the power of the air" will have no place in these heavens. Nor shall the fruit of the curse of sin ever appear in the new earth. Righteousness shall dwell there (2 Peter 3:13). Creation shall then cease her groaning (Romans 8:22).

II. There will be a Regenerated People. "Behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy, and I will..joy in My people, and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard" (Isaiah 65:18-19). The people who have been a byword among the nations shall then become a joy and a praise on the earth. The well-known "weeping place" at Jerusalem will then be deserted for ever. In this day shall this nation be born again into a new life of fellowship with their crucified King. Then their sorrow and sighing shall flee away (Isaiah 35:10).

III. There will be Lengthened Lives. "There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man who hath not filled his days, for a child shall die an hundred years old." With the new creation will come all the blessings of great longevity. Not only long life, but also the assurance that the days will be filled up with fruitful and joyful service. This is the gift of God to them, as eternal life is the gift of God to us through Jesus Christ our Lord. If one should die at an hundred years old, he would be reckoned as a child. The blessings of God's grace means the enlargement of all that is deepest and best in the human soul.

IV. There will be New Social Conditions. "They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them...My chosen ones shall long enjoy the work of their hands" (Isaiah 65:21-22). They shall not build and another inhabit. They are assured of life, and of success in their labour. Bank failures, industrial strikes, and blighted crops, will be unknown and unthought of. Sickness and poverty will then have fled away, their disciplinary influences will no more be needed when the King Himself appears.

V. There will be a New Enjoyment of God. "It shall come to pass, that before they call I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear" (Isaiah 65:24). What a change this will be compared with the present condition of the Jewish nation, and what a happy prospect for a desolate world. God's ear is never heavy that it cannot hear, but man's lust for self-glory hinders the operation of His grace. When God can "joy in His people" (Isaiah 65:19), He will speedily answer their call.

VI. There will be an End of all Strife. "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together," etc. Then surely shall "man to man a brother be." The wolves and lambs of social and political life have been long at deadly variance, then they shall "feed together" in the bountiful mercies of their God and Saviour. The serpent alone receives no advantage in the new Kingdom. "Dust shall be the

serpent's meat." It will not fatten much on that fare. Then shall the angelic song be fulfilled, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, goodwill among men." For nothing shall hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 65:25).

Jeremiah

CALLED AND EQUIPPED

Jeremiah 1:1-10

The prophets of old knew nothing of human ordination, and instead of rushing hurriedly into the Lord's work, they frequently shrank from it. Moses said, "I am not eloquent." Isaiah said, "I am a man of unclean lips." Jonah fled in fear. Jeremiah exclaimed, "Oh! Lord God, I cannot speak." But out of weakness He ordains strength.

I. The Call. "Before I formed thee...I knew thee...I sanctified thee, and ordained thee" (Jeremiah 1:5). He was called before he was created, and set apart before he was born. The prophet could neither explain it nor deny it. His call, like all others, was the result of Sovereign grace. My sheep, He says, know My voice. Whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate, etc. (Romans 8:29).

II. The Excuse. "Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child" (Jeremiah 1:6). A child is not expected to be an eloquent speaker, it is expected to be obedient, and trustful. The "Kingdom of God" must be received as a little child. Our sufficiency is not in ourselves, but of God (2 Corinthians 3:5). It is not to the wise and prudent that the great things of the Kingdom are revealed, but "unto babes" (Luke 10:21).

III. The Commission. "Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all thai I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak" (Jeremiah 1:7). The prophet has but one Master, and one purpose in his life, to go where he is sent, speaking the Word at His commandment. One is your Master, even Christ. The Lord may ask, "Who will go?" but He never asks His servant, "Where will ye go?" It is expected of God's called ones that His own message be faithfully spoken.

IV. The Encouragement. "Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee" (Jeremiah 1:8). In declaring God's will there will be many "faces" that will frown with rage, but "be not afraid of them when you have the smiling face of God's approval with you. To obey God is to oppose the course of this world. Darkness cannot overtake you while the true light of His presence is abiding in you (Hebrews 13:6).

V. The Equipment. "The Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth...Behold, I have put My words in thy mouth" (Jeremiah 1:9). This Divine touch corresponds with the touch of the tongue of fire in the upper room. His "touch" and His "words" are beautifully and vitally associated. With the Divine commanding there goes the Divine enabling (Isaiah 6:6-7). The touch is the evidence of a personal contact. The hand of the Holy Ghost makes the Word to burn like a fire.

VI. The Work. "See, I have set thee...to root out, and to pull down...to build and to plant" (Jeremiah 1:10). A distinctive work is to be done before the constructive work is begun. The garden must be cleaned of weeds before the good seed is planted. That tottering wall must be pulled down before a proper defence can be built up. Sin must be put away, and the soul put right with God, before a powerful character can be built up. It is the "good and honest heart" that brings forth much fruit.

Sow not among thorns. The instrument to be used, in this work of regeneration, is the Word of God, which is quick and powerful to the casting down of imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

WHY IS HE SPOILED?

Jeremiah 2:1-24.

Israel a servant? A home-born slave? Why is he spoiled? (Jeremiah 2:14). ("Why is he become a prey?" R.V.) Sin spoils all that it touches. How sad to think of lives full of glorious possibilities being deliberately spoiled for God by becoming the prey of an alien power. Even a dead fly may spoil the ointment. See- I. What He Was. His past condition is characterised as one of great privilege and opportunity.

1. There was FELLOWSHIP. "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals" (Jeremiah 2:2). A delightful walking with God because there was agreement, the holy bliss of a new and first love.

2. There was OBEDIENCE. "Thou wentest after me in the wilderness." Following Him with willing and triumphant feet, even through a waste and howling desert.

3. There was SEPARATION. "Israel was holiness unto the Lord" (Jeremiah 2:3). Separated from Egypt unto God, and a witness for Him. What a high and holy position! How are the mighty fallen? Such were some of you, but, - where are you now?

II. What He Did. Israel has gone astray. "My people have committed two evils" (Jeremiah 2:13).

1. They have FORSAKEN ME, the fountain of living waters." In forsaking God they turned their back on the source of all good. To forsake any one is just to treat that one as if you knew him not. He began to act as if the Lord had no claim on him, and as if he had no more need of Him.

2. "They have HEWED OUT cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water." In turning away from the "fountain of living waters Israel discovers the need of trying to invent for themselves some substitute, and their best imitation of God's fountain is a "broken cistern" that can hold no water. The "living waters" represent soul-satisfying grace and truth. To forsake these for the man-made cisterns, of this world's honour, wealth, pleasure, and philosophy, is to let go the substance, and vainly hunt the shadow. They can hold no spirit-refreshing water (Isaiah 55:1-2).

III. What He Became. "Spoiled" (Jeremiah 2:14). Why? Because he forsook Him who is the Fountain, and sought by his own works to find satisfaction without God. This is the delusion of a sin-blinded soul. Anything is spoiled when it becomes unfit for the purpose for which it was intended. Israel is spoiled for God because he has "become a prey" to others (r.v.). Other lords have got control over him. Self-will and love of the world have so possessed him that he has become their spoil.

1. He is spoiled like a DEGENERATE PLANT (Jeremiah 2:21). "I planted thee a right seed: how then art thou turned into "a degenerate plant?" The damage is not in appearance only, but deep down in the heart, the character is changed. There is virtually a reversion to type.

2. He is spoiled like a STAINED GARMENT. "Though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, thine iniquity is marked before Me" (Jeremiah 2:22). The nitre (mineral), and soap (vegetable), of man's invention, like the "broken cisterns," can do nothing to atone for the evil of departing from God.

3. He is spoiled like a WILD ASS (Jeremiah 2:24). An ass is a very useful animal, but a wild ass represents only wasted energy, uncontrolled and fruitless efforts. Such is the backsliding in heart in the sight of God. Though thou hast been a prey to the enemies of God, thou mayest yet be a praise by returning to God.

BACKSLIDING

or, Modern Dangers. Jeremiah 8:5-9.

BACKSLIDING is not a crisis, it is a process: a gradual sliding down the hill of "Holiness unto the Lord," into the low valley of the old self-life. Declension usually begins in unwatchfulness, and neglect of secret fellowship and trustfulness in God. "Why, then, is this people slidden back?" (Jeremiah 8:5). The reference here is to Judah and Jerusalem: but there are some salutary lessons for us in this present age. The causes of their backsliding and the evils incurred find their antitype in modern times. There was-

I. Perverted Belief. "They hold fast deceit" (Jeremiah 8:5). A perverted heart soon leads to a perverted faith. When the fountain of truth is forsaken, it is easy to believe any lie that may seem to favour such a condition (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12). He feedeth on ashes because a deceitful heart hath turned him aside (Isaiah 44:20).

II. Misleading Testimony. "They spake not aright" (Jeremiah 8:6). How could they speak aright, when they were not able to think aright? The Lord "hearkened and heard," but in this case no "book of remembrance was written," because they feared not the Lord, neither thought upon His Name (Malachi 3:16). Their words were dishonouring to Him, and hurtful to others.

III. Self-complacency. "No man repented of his wickedness, saying, What have I done?" (Jeremiah 8:6). Their condition was one of "wickedness" in the sight of God, but so deluded were they that they had no thought that repentance was needed. When a backslider, who has lapsed in conduct, is conscious of his guilt, there is some hope of immediate confession; but those who lapse through a perverted mind, and have settled down in self-satisfaction, having come under the spell of some moral delusion, their case is indeed hard and pitiful (see 2 Corinthians 4:4).

IV. Fleshly Enthusiasm. "Every one turned to his course, as a horse rusheth headlong in battle" (Jeremiah 8:6, R.V.). There is no lack of self-confidence; they pride themselves in what they can do. They are more energetic in going their own way, than the servants of God often are in His way.

V. Ignorance of the Signs of the Times. "The stork.. .the swallow and the crane knoweth their appointed times, but My people knoweth not the ordinance of the Lord" (Jeremiah 8:7, R.V.). These birds, true to their natural instinct, observe their times, and yield to the call; but Israel, with their "fatal gift of freedom," refuses to obey. This is solemnly and sadly true of many of God's people in these present times, which are ominous with indications of coming events. But there are those who, true to the Spirit's teaching, discern the signs of the times, and who look for the new Heaven and the new earth promised. When God's people "know not the appointed times," they are

in great danger of being deluded and deceived by the god of this world.

VI. Vain Confidence. They say, "We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us. But behold the false pen of the scribes hath made it (the law) falsehood" (Jeremiah 8:8, r. V.). When false teachers pervert the Word of God and turn it into a lie, then blinded souls believe the lie, and say, "We are wise." They swallow the poison, and boast that the law of the Lord is with them. "Lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord; and what manner of wisdom is in them?" (Jeremiah 8:9, R.v.). The wisdom that is in them when God's Word is rejected, is that which is "foolishness with God" (1 Corinthians 3:19). A SOLEMN DIALOGUE

Jeremiah 8:19-22

The prophet's manner in dealing with these future events is somewhat dramatic. There are differences of opinions as to how they may be interpreted. We shall note-

I. The Divine Question. "Why have they provoked Me to anger with their images and vanities?" (Jeremiah 8:19). "Is not the Lord in Zion?" Then why seek help in the work of your own hands, and the "strange vanities" of your own imaginations? A picture of guilt and depravity of man's natural enmity to God, and spiritual stupidity. A man nowhere plays the fool so perfectly as in his professed religious life.

II. The Mournful Reply. "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved" (Jeremiah 8:20). In answer to God's question this is a confession of disappointment, and a cry of despair. Their cisterns of hope have turned out broken ones that can hold no water. They are like those who were depending on a plentiful harvest to save their lives, but nothing but famine stares them in the face. Like the foolish virgins, they have found the "door shut." The evil heart of unbelief leads to a dungeon of darkness.

III. The Message of Sympathy. "For the hurt of the daughter of My people am I hurt" (Jeremiah 8:21). This may be taken as the voice of the Lord through the prophet. It is true of both. God feels the terrible hurt that has come upon His people. He was wounded for our transgressions. The tears of Jesus Christ, shed over the great hurt of Jerusalem, were proof enough of how deeply He felt the hurt in His own soul. If His people are "dear to Him as the apple of His eye," it shows how tender the heart of God is toward them. In all their afflictions He was afflicted.

IV. The Frank Confession. "I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on Me" (Jeremiah 8:21). Yes, that is the word, "black." Black with shame and guilt because of unbelief and pride. "Astonishment!" Yes, that is the other word. Astonished at your own sinfulness and folly in provoking the Lord, and astonished at His great pity and compassion for you even in your well merited misery. What is more astonishing than the grace of God as seen in the face of Jesus Christ? If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us.

V. The Gospel of Hope. "Is there no balm in Gilead: is there no physician there?" (Jeremiah 8:22). Is there no provision in Gilead, is there no one there mighty enough to heal your wounds, and restore your souls to true spiritual health and hope? It is said that the balm of Gilead was used for healing the bites of serpents. The bite of the old serpent, the Devil, can only be healed by the balm of Christ's Cross, and the Physician that is found there. You say, "I am black." Yes, but is there no healing balm in Calvary?

VI. The Searching Rebuke. "Why then is not the health of My people recovered?" (Jeremiah 8:22). The balm and the Physician are there. Why then are ye not healed? Free and effectual provision has been made in Christ for your salvation. Why then are ye not saved? Is there no wisdom to direct, and power to overcome, in the Holy Ghost? Why then is not the health of His people, in these days, recovered? Has Calvary lost its power? Has the Great Physician vacated His place of mercy? Why then not prove the all-sufficiency of His grace by living a healthy, God-honouring life.

SOMETHING WORTH GLORYING IN

Jeremiah 9:23, Jeremiah 9:24.

Three times in this chapter is the Divine "Me" emphasised in the Hebrew (Jeremiah 9:3, Jeremiah 9:6, and Jeremiah 9:24). God, Himself, is the source and centre of all good, and ought to be the undivided Object of all man's glorying.

I. What Some Glory In. There are three phases of worldly glory. Wisdom, might, and wealth. Each has its votaries.

1. The WISE are tempted to glory in their wisdom. Worldly wisdom is the principle thing sought for by the worldly man, and he may glory in it just as another man may glory in his shame, as something that belongs to himself, as the fruit of his work (Isaiah 5:21).

2. The MIGHTY are tempted to glory in their might. It is all the same, whether that might is physical, intellectual, or social. Whatever distinguishes one man from his fellows is apt to become a cause for selfish glorying.

3. The RICH are tempted to glory in their riches. To them there is a sort of divinity in their wealth, and they glory in their golden god. Thus saith the Lord, "Let not the wise glory in his wisdom," etc. All this glorying is in vain, for the wisdom of the wise will He bring to nothing... for God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise... that no flesh should glory in His presence (1 Corinthians 1:27-29). The things that are foolish to the world are the "things that are freely given us of God" through Christ Jesus.

II. What We Should Glory In. "Let Him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth ME." A modern philosopher spoke of Him as the "Great Unknowable." But it is possible, in a limited sense, of course, to understand and know Him. And this knowledge is the only thing worth glorying in. "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:31). All other glorying will finally be put to shame. It is life eternal to know Him and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent (John 17:3). How is God known? Through the revelation of His Word, and more fully by His Son (John 1:14-18). There are three reasons given us here why we should glory in Him-

1. Because of His LOVINGKINDNESS. "I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness" (Jeremiah 9:24). Because of the excellency of His loving-kindness the children of men put their trust in Him (Psalms 36:7). This great loving-kindness is seen at its flood-tide in the gift of His Son (John 3:16; see 2 Corinthians 4:6). He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is Love.

2. Because of His JUDGMENT. "Righteousness and judgment are the foundation of His throne" (Psalms 97:2, R.V.). The judgments of God in the past have all been against wickedness and for righteousness. Witness the flood, Sodom, God's dealings with the nations, especially His ancient

people Israel. We glory in God's judgment of sin, and also of the sinner, at the Cross of His crucified Son.

3. Because of His RIGHTEOUSNESS. Righteousness, crowned with loving-kindness, is the character of our God. Our Lord, His Son, gloried in this when He prayed, "O righteous Father" (John 17:25). Our Advocate now is "Jesus Christ the Righteous." "He is the Lord, the Righteous Judge, who will give the crown of righteousness to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Timothy 4:8, R.V.). Let us then show our glorying by seeking first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness. "For in these things I delight, saith the Lord" (Jeremiah 9:24). "Let him that glorieth glory in this."

CONCERNING THE DEARTH

Jeremiah 14:1-9

TIMES of dearth are testing times. Surely God hath a perfect right to withhold His gifts when, and, as He may. A dearth of water, or a dearth of spiritual power and fruitfulness, may be intended to have a salutary influence on the sufferers. "My ways are not your ways," saith the Lord. Notice the-

I. Evidence of the Dearth,

1. There was SORROWFUL PERPLEXITY. "Judah mourneth, and the gates thereof languish" (Jeremiah 14:2). The nation is distressed in soul, so that the gates-the market place-are deserted.

2. There were EMPTY VESSELS. "Their little ones (servants) returned with their vessels empty." All this is solemnly suggestive of the time of a spiritual drought when God's refreshing and reviving Spirit is withheld, and when there is a languishing of the work of God in the gates (Churches), and when the servants present only "empty vessels" to a thirsty household. No wonder that-

3. "SHAME AND CONFUSION covered their heads" (Jeremiah 14:3, l.c..). When the well of God's Word becomes dry and personal experience chapt, then empty vessels and dissatisfied souls will be plentiful. The dearth of conversions means the dearth of power.

II. Cause of the Dearth. "O Lord, our iniquities testify against us...our backslidings are many; we have sinned against Thee" (Jeremiah 14:7). If the Heaven that is over us be brass, and the earth under us iron, it is because of our iniquities and backslidings. The iniquity that separates from God separates from the Fountain of Living Waters. The dew of His refreshing Spirit does not fall upon the barren desert. Shame and empty vessels are the consequences of backsliding hearts.

III. Remedy. But can there be a remedy for a drought? Yes, when man's moral condition has become the cause of Heaven's rebellion. The remedy lies in our attitude toward the Lord Himself as a mighty Saviour. "O the Hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble...Why shouldest Thou be...as a mighty man that cannot save?" (Jeremiah 14:9-10). This is a confession and an appeal. "Do Thou for Thy Name's sake" (Jeremiah 14:7). We need to waken up to the fact of our God's almightiness to deliver, and to the infinite depth of His compassion for His people. "Why shouldest Thou be...as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night?" (Jeremiah 14:8). Why should His behaviour toward us, as our personal Redeemer and Friend, be more like a wayfaring man than our abiding Companion and Helper? The reason is we have become, through our worldliness and unbelief, unfit for His fellowship. Still His desires are after His own to bless them with "abundance of life" (Luke 24:29). There is no use of us saying, "Yet Thou, O Lord, art in

the midst of us, and we are called by Thy Name" (Jeremiah 14:9), if we refrain not our feet from the paths of error and unbelief (Jeremiah 14:10). The remedy for spiritual drought is confession, restoration, and resignation (Jeremiah 14:22; John 15). A CONFESSION AND A PLEA

Jeremiah 14:17-22.

I. The Need. The condition described in Jeremiah 14:17-19 is that of desolation and hopelessness-"A great breach" (Jeremiah 14:17). "A famine" (Jeremiah 14:18). A sense of rejection and despair. "We looked for peace, but no good came; for healing, and behold dismay" (Jeremiah 14:18, R.V.). What a picture of the soul's condition without God.

II. The Confession. "We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness," etc. (Jeremiah 14:20). There is no other honest way of dealing with our sin. As God loves a cheerful giver, He also desires an honest confessor (see Psalms 32:5; 1 John 1:7).

III. The Plea. It is based on the honour of His Name. "Do not abhor as for Thy Name's sake" (Jeremiah 14:21). It also appeals to the dignity of His throne. "Do not disgrace the throne of Thy glory." The throne of His glory was the "Mercy Seat" in the Temple. It was the "Throne of Grace." This throne will never be disgraced by sending the humble, needy ones empty away. It had also reference to the truthfulness of His Word. "Remember, break not Thy covenant with us." He is faithful that hath promised. The exceeding riches of His grace has ever an open channel toward us through Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:7).

IV. The Resolve. "Art not Thou He, O Lord" (who can cause rain and give showers) "therefore we will wait upon Thee" (Jeremiah 14:22). The God that answered Elijah, by both fire and rain, is well worth waiting on. For all the moral diseases and troubles that are sure to follow a spiritual dearth there is no remedy but in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit of God. His promise is, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." Wait upon the Lord. The language here used is truly that which befits penitent lips, but it may be used, as Judah did, in an impenitent spirit (chap. Jeremiah 15:1). THE EXPERIENCES OF A WITNESS

Jeremiah 15:16-20

As witnesses for God we may learn much from the experiences of the "Holy men of old." Their dangers and temptations, as well as their privileges and responsibilities, were very much akin to our own. Note his-

I. Joy In God's Word. "Thy words were found, and I did eat them: and Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart" (Jeremiah 15:16). This may refer to God's first message spoken to him, as recorded in chapter Jeremiah 1:7. This joy in God's Word implies two things- 1. That we are perfectly sure that it is the Word of God, and-

2. That we have really received it into the heart-eaten it-so that it has become the hope and inspiration of our lives. The Word of God is sweet to the taste of the believer, but it must needs often produce bitter effects in the heart when it begins its cleansing operations (Revelation 10:9).

II. Identification with God's Name. "For I am called by Thy Name, O Lord God of Hosts." When God's Word gets into the heart God's Name or character must be stamped on the life. Likeness to God is the mightiest testimony for God. To receive Christ Jesus as "The Word of God" is to be

conformed to the image of God.

III. Separation from God's Enemies. "I sat not in the assembly of the mockers," or them that made merry (R.V.) in their sins and over sacred things. "I sat alone because of Thy hand." Those whose delight is in the Word of the Lord will not be found walking in the counsel of the ungodly, or standing in the way of sinners (Psalms 1:1-2). How can we witness against "All ungodliness" if we are in any way identified with it? (see 2 Corinthians 6:17-18).

IV. Perplexity at God's Dealings. "Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable...Wilt Thou be altogether unto me as a deceitful brook?" (Jeremiah 15:18, R.V.). The deceitful brook is the one that fails and dries up at the very time when its refreshing waters are most needed. Will God so prove a failure to His servant in the time of need? A feeling of disappointment has crept over his spirit because God's purpose does not seem to run parallel with his expectations. The prophet had yet something more to learn. In the time of perplexity and seeming defeat, wait.

V. Assurance from God. God speaks. The fountain of living waters again break forth. The brook of Divine faithfulness has not proved deceitful (Jeremiah 15:19-21). Look at--

1. THE PROMISES. "Thou shalt be as My mouth...I will make thee a fenced brazen wall (stability)...They shall not prevail against thee...I am with thee..I will deliver thee...I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible." They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength by receiving fresh assurances from His Word, of His grace and goodness, His presence and power.

2. THE CONDITIONS. "If thou return." Get back to thy first love, into real, unclouded fellowship with God, and unquestioning obedience. "If thou...stand before Me." Abide with Him, and act as before His face. "If thou take forth the precious from the vile." Call things by their true name, and give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. Then the God of Peace shall bruise Satan under your feet, and make you more than conquerors through "Him with whom we have to do." THE CURSED AND THE BLESSED

Jeremiah 17:5-8

Two classes are contrasted here, in most simple, but emphatic terms, being prefaced by a "Thus saith the Lord." There are certain spiritual and unalterable laws that must come into operation according to our moral attitude to God and to His Word. His blight must come upon the godless as surely as His blessing comes on the godly. The curse means blessing withheld.

I. Who are the Cursed? "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, whose heart departeth from the Lord." To trust in man, and make flesh the arm of our confidence, is heart departure from the Lord. Neither Judah's salvation, nor ours, can come through the wisdom of man, or the power of any of earth's princes (Psalms 118:8-9). Salvation is of the Lord. It is the evil heart of unbelief that departs from the living God (Hebrews 3:12). There is a faith in humanity which is but a denial of God.

II. What is the Curse? "He shall be like the heath in the desert" (Jeremiah 17:6). The heath in the desert is deserted by the refreshing showers of Heaven. "He shall not see when good cometh." He shall be like a blind man incapable of seeing, or profiting by those mercies that are within his reach. "He shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness." He shall live in a state and condition that is barren of the promises of God. The godless often seem to prosper greatly with regard to

earthly possessions, but as in God's sight they are destitute and miserable (Revelation 3:17). Their soul doth truly "inhabit parched places" (see Job 8:11-13).

III. Who are the Blessed? "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is" (Jeremiah 17:7). To cease from man whose breath is in his nostrils, and to give the Lord the undivided confidence of the heart, is the secret of full and eternal blessedness. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him (Psalms 2:12). Note these two words, "trust" and "hope." The trust is but a counterfeit if hope does not spring out of it. When we truly trust the Lord we will certainly expect much from Him. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee" (Isaiah 26:3-4).

IV. What is the Blessedness? The blessedness is very great. This blessed man has-

1. A GOOD POSITION. "He is like a tree planted by the waters" (Jeremiah 17:8). Planted for a purpose, not like the heath in the desert growing wild-without grace. The believer is planted in Christ; a position of security, and infinite favour.

2. A PLENTIFUL SUPPLY. "That spreadeth out her roots by the river." All the resources of the continuous flow of the river of God's grace are at the disposal of this blessed man whose hope the Lord is. "Spread out all the roots" of your affections and desires into the river of His Word and will, for "My God is able to supply all your need according to the riches of His grace."

3. A HAPPY IGNORANCE. "He shall not see when heat cometh." The drought has no effect upon the tree that's planted by the waters of an unfailing river. What are "wild alarms" to others do not disturb his soul.

4. AN EVER FRESH EXPERIENCE. "His leaf shall be green." Abiding freshness belongs to all who abide in Christ, and in the current of His gracious purposes. The leaf of his testimony will be ever green.

5. A BLESSED FREEDOM. "He shall not be careful in the year of drought." Freedom from care when appearances are all against him. Living on the promises of God saves from all fearfulness in the day of trial.

6. CONTINUAL FRUITFULNESS. "Neither shall cease from yielding fruit." The never-failing river of life produces in those who receive of its fullness a never-failing fruitfulness unto God (Revelation 22:2; John 15:5-6; John 15:16). This blessedness cometh by faith. THE MARRED VESSEL

Jeremiah 18:1-6

The prophet of the Lord is sent to the house of a potter that he might get an object lesson on the work and will of God. God can put a new meaning into the common affairs of life. Even the ants, and the lilies, can teach the sluggard and the overly anxious. The prophet is humble enough to obey the call, and willing enough to learn the mind of the Lord, even through the actions of an illiterate potter.

I. The Clay. This represents the "house of Israel" (Jeremiah 18:6). Dug out of Egypt, and brought into Canaan, the great Potter's house where He desired to work in His people. Like Israel, we have been taken out of the clay pit of darkness and slavery, and brought into the Kingdom of His dear

Son, that He might fashion us after His own image. The clay is the raw material.

II. The Wheels. "Behold, he wrought a work on the wheels." The wheels of God's promises, purposes, and providences, were all working together for their good (Romans 8:28). Being in the Kingdom of God we are in the special sphere of His favour and grace. All our circumstances are but the wheels in which our spiritual character is being formed. The lives of all the Bible saints are witnesses to this. We should not shirk our tribulations knowing that "tribulations worketh patience, and patience experience."

III. The Potter. "Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in Mine hand, O house of Israel." The Lord Himself is the Potter. Oh, what possibilities there are for us, as for Israel, being in "His hand." Think of your position, and of His purpose with you in placing His mighty hand upon you. See what Nehemiah was able to accomplish because of the hand of God upon him (Nehemiah 2:8). The Potter's purpose is to make the best possible use of the material that is in His hand. "The Giver of all grace, who has called you to share His eternal glory, through Christ...will Himself make you perfect" (1 Peter 5:10, Weymouth). The wonder-working hand of God is the Holy Spirit who worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

IV. The Vessel. "The vessel that he made was marred in the hand of the potter, so he made it again another vessel." Even in the hand of the Divine Potter the vessel (Israel) was marred. Through disobedience they became another dishonoured vessel. Because of unbelief they have been cut off, and are still, as a nation, a marred vessel. Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief. If the Holy Spirit, as the hand of God, is to fashion us into a vessel meet for the Master's use, there must be no unyielding part in our " nature. The hard grit of a perverse will, or the sand of self seeking, will hinder and mar the work of the Heavenly Potter, whose gentle hands are so sensible to the least resistance. Every backslider is a marred vessel. Many like Saul, are marred because they have disobeyed the Word of the Lord. What might we not have been if the Divine Potter had had His will all the time with us?

V. The Application. "Cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord." Thank God, although the vessel has been marred, "He can make it again another vessel." The regenerating Spirit is able to restore the marred vessel into something like the image of Him who worketh in you mightily. The vessel may have been dishonoured by resistance, but it has not been disowned. Can God do with you as this potter? Can He? Are you as clay, soft, pliable, and refined, in His hand? If so, the Potter's purpose may yet be fulfilled in you. He still needs vessels to bear His Name (character) among the nations of the earth (Acts 9:15). Every vessel made meet for His use will be a vessel used in His service.

TONGUE SMITERS

Jeremiah 18:18-20

The man of God will never be understood by the man of the world. We see the-

I. Purpose of the Persecutors. "Come, let us devise devices against Jeremiah." The devices devised by the ungodly against the servants of God are many. They have nothing against him, but must, in their enmity, devise something. Yet they confess that "the law shall not perish...nor the word from the prophet." They are convinced that the "law" cannot be broken, and that the

testimony of God's man will not fail. Yet they say, "Come, let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words." They know he speaks the truth in God's Name, yet they smite him with the tongue of scorn and of calumny, and determine not to give heed to his message. This is surely a most humbling evidence of the enmity of the carnal mind against God.

II. Appeal of the Prophet. He appeals-

1. To the LORD HIMSELF. "Give heed to me, O Lord," etc. The tongue of the slanderer is as a poisoned arrow, but there is refuge in God from the strife of tongues. When others give no heed to our message it is good to realise that God gives heed to our cry.

2. To DIVINE RIGHTEOUSNESS. "Shall evil be recompensed for good?" No, God is not unrighteous to reward faithfulness with shame and defeat. The devices of the wicked shall never block the channel of Divine mercy and power to His own people. If we ask a fish will He give us a stone? He appeals also-

3. To HIS OWN FAITHFULNESS. "Remember that I stood before Thee to speak good for them, and to turn away Thy wrath from them." While they were devising devices against him, he was pleading with God for them. While they were speaking evil of him, he was speaking "good for them." Like the Greatest of all prophets, be prayed for his enemies, and like Him also, he was hated without a cause (John 15:25). The servant of God is clear of the blood of the lawless and the unbelieving when he can say, as he looks up into the face of the Eternal Father, "Remember that I stood before Thee.. .for them," as Abraham did (Genesis 18:22). Pray for them that despitefully use you, remember that ye are the salt of the earth. The terrible imprecations which follow in Jeremiah 18:21-23, show the awful judgments from which he sought to save them. Now, as it were, he steps aside from his pleadings, and allows the merited wrath of God to fall upon them. This the child of grace dare not do.

PASHUR

Jeremiah 20:1-6

This short biography is full of warning to those honoured with authority, but who, in their pride of social position, despise and reject the testimony of the Word of God at the mouth of His servant.

I. His Position. "The son of a priest, and chief governor in the house of the Lord." From his connection, and official position, you would expect that he would be in real sympathy with the Lord's prophet. But, No! While he superintended the house of the Lord he was at enmity with the purpose of the Lord. A religious position does not always mean a religious condition.

II. His Enmity to God's Word. "He heard Jeremiah...and smote him, and put him in the stocks" (Jeremiah 20:1-2). God's message was opposed to his thoughts and desires (Jeremiah 19:14-15), so he insulted and imprisoned the messenger. As a straw may show which way the wind blows, so a word or a look may reveal the enmity of the heart against the truth of God.

III. His Sudden Exposure. "The Lord hath not called thy name Pashur ("most noble," or, "joy round about") but Magor-missabib"-fear round about (Jeremiah 20:3). Men may call themselves what they may, but God will name them according to what they are. Men may call themselves believers when God calls them unbelievers. A man is what God sees him to be. He is not mocked.

IV. His Deceitful Life. "Thou hast prophesied lies" (Jeremiah 20:6). His lies were manufactured to discredit the Word of God at the mouth of Jeremiah the prophet. Like Elymas the sorcerer, he sought to pervert the right way of the Lord. But the perverted and the perverters shall all be put to shame.

V. His Doom. "Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself" (Jeremiah 20:4). What could be more terrible than this; a man a terror to himself? A sinner carrying his own brimstone in his own bosom as the product of his own deeds. Who shall deliver him from this body of death? A CHEQUERED EXPERIENCE

Jeremiah 20:7-11

The prophet here gives us a little bit of personal testimony. Within the compass of these few verses there is such a variety of experiences as makes one feel that he was a man of like passions with ourselves.

I. He was Enticed of the Lord. "O Lord, Thou hast enticed me, and I was enticed" (Jeremiah 20:7, margin) Another reading is, "Thou hast overcome" me, or, "Laid hold on me, and I was overcome." He was overcome by the enticing influence of the Word of God, it was "Stronger than I, and prevailed" (Jeremiah 20:7). This is the initial experience of a true prophet, a preacher, or a Christian. He himself must be "laid hold on," and "overcome" by the power of God's truth if he is to speak it in power.

II. He was Mocked by Men. "I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me." The man who has been "overcome" by God is derided by men. The godly man is still "Made a spectacle unto the world" (1 Corinthians 4:9). Marvel not if the world hate you.

III. He was Indignant at the Treatment. "Since I spake, I cried out" (Jeremiah 20:8). He complained against the violence done to the truth. Reproach for the Word of the Lord was hard to bear. Moses behaved differently (Hebrews 11:26).

IV. He was Discouraged at Results. "Then I said, I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His Name" (Jeremiah 20:9). Faithful testimony had brought but reproach. Why should he persevere? Oh, this is so very human. We would be more faithful to God if we were getting more personal profit and pleasure by it. Shame!

V. He was Inspired by the Word. "But His Word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones... and I could not stay" (Jeremiah 20:9). This is how God "overcomes" by His Word in the lives of His people. We cannot but speak when the truth becomes like liquid fire in the heart (Acts 4:20). Is it possible to have heard and believed the Gospel of God without feeling the woe of not preaching it? (1 Corinthians 9:16).

VI. He was Misunderstood by His Friends. "All my familiars (every man of my peace) watched for my halting." Even his choice acquaintances were ready to catch any seeming slip of the tongue, and to report it to his enemies. The unfavourable, gossiping of pretended friends is one of the sore trials of the servant of Christ. Personal friends who understand not your spiritual character and mission.

VII. He was Encouraged by the Lord. "But the Lord is with me as a mighty, terrible One" (Jeremiah 20:11). The prophet's Saviour is more mighty and terrible than his oppressors. If God be for us who shall prevail against us? (Romans 8:31). When His Word burns like a fire in the bones the mighty and terrible One is at hand. Be not dismayed, for I am thy God. THE FALSE AND THE TRUE

Jeremiah 23:24-32

There are two classes of prophets, or preachers, referred to here, whose successors are still with us: those who dream dreams, and proclaim them as the Word of the Lord, and those who have received God's message into their own hearts, that they might preach it.

I. The Dreamers. They say, "I have dreamed, I have dreamed" (Jeremiah 23:25). They have dreamed, so all the world should listen to them. Dreams may at times be very interesting, but they are destitute of authority. The dreamer is to tell his dream as a dream, but he is a "prophet of the deceit of his own heart," if he dares to substitute the imaginings of his own sleepy brains as the "Word of the Lord." These dreamers, like their modern followers, "prophesy lies," and "think to cause My people to forget My Name by their dreams" (Jeremiah 23:27). Such teachers as devise their own message, and declare it in God's Name, were never sent by Him. "Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams...I sent them not, nor commanded them, therefore, they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord" (Jeremiah 23:32). God's people would profit much more to-day if His servants would dream less, and trust more to His revealed will, and fearlessly proclaim it. These filthy dreamers are always exposed to "seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils," and those who will not endure sound doctrine, as in these latter days, will readily heap to themselves such man-pleasing teachers (2 Timothy 4:3).

II. The Receivers. "He that hath My Word" (Jeremiah 23:28). He hath the Word, because he received it from the Lord. There is a vast difference between knowing the truth, and theorising, or dreaming about it. The apostles could say, "We speak that we do know." "What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord" (Jeremiah 23:28). Just what a dream is to the revelation of God. The imaginations of the unrenewed mind are but as chaff in the reckoning of the Omniscient One. God's Word is not a fancy, nor a phantom, it is "A fire, and a hammer" (Jeremiah 23:29). Something that can make itself felt when in operation. God's Word is wheat to feed, fire to burn, and a hammer to break. "He that hath My Word," He says, "let him speak My Word faithfully." Worldly wisdom, as exhibited in the dreamer's dreams, is but the savour of death unto death. The wisdom of God, as revealed in His Word, is the savour of life unto life.

FAITHFULNESS AND FOOLISHNESS

Jeremiah 26:1-16

Dryden has said, "To take up half on trust, and half on try, name it not faith, but bungling bigotry." There was no "bungling bigotry" in the mind of Jeremiah, his attitude to God and to the people was one of fearless integrity.

I. The Commission. "Stand in the court of the Lord's house, and speak...all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word" (Jeremiah 26:2). In the Lord's house there must be no diminishing of the Lord's Word. Those who attempt to modify the force of God's

Word lest the princes of the people should be offended, are in danger of the curse pronounced in Revelation 22:19. What the "worshippers" in our cities need, as well as those in the "cities of Judah," is a faithful declaration of the whole truth as it is in Jesus Christ, that they may "turn every man from his evil way" (Jeremiah 26:3).

II. The Message. "Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord; If ye will not hearken to Me, to walk in My law... then I will make this house...and this city a curse" (Jeremiah 26:4-6). When the blight of God comes upon His house because of unbelief and disobedience, then the curse comes upon the city, and to "all the nations of the earth." A backsliding Church is a social and national curse. How can the house of the Lord maintain its dignity and power as a witness for Him if the light of Divine truth has grown dim?

III. The Opposition (Jeremiah 26:8-11). "The priests, the prophets, and all the people, said...Thou shalt surely die...Why hast thou prophesied in the Name of the Lord, saying, This house...and this city shall be desolate," etc.? The same charge was made against the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 21:23). God's Word, by the mouth of the prophet, cut at the root of their pride, the "house," and the "city," both dishonoured, and degraded, by their sins. What is the Lord's house, or the Lord's city to Him,, when His people have backslidden in heart from Him? To kill God's prophet would not kill God's purpose. Every preacher of righteousness will surely become a "pestilent fellow" to hypocritical professors.

IV. The Call to Repentance. "Then spake Jeremiah...The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house... Therefore now amend your ways...and obey the voice of the Lord" (Jeremiah 26:12-13). The messenger can take back nothing, the responsibility of saving the "house and the city" lies in their repentance and obedience (Hosea 14:2-4). If churches and cities are to be delivered from desolation and oppression, then let the "Voice of the Lord be obeyed."

V. The Personal Testimony. "As for me, behold, I am in your hand.. .but know.. .for a truth the Lord hath sent me unto you to speak all these words" (Jeremiah 26:14-15). The same language is found in Joshua 9:25; 2 Samuel 15:26. Every true servant of the Lord is more concerned about the faithful delivery of His message, than the deliverance of himself out of the hands of the enemies of God. When a man knows that he has the unerring Word of God in him and with him his soul is anchored.

VI. The Voice of Reason. "Then said the princes... This man is not worthy to die, for he hath spoken to us in the Name of the Lord our God" (Jeremiah 26:16). The princes and the people were more amenable to reason than the priests and the prophets. Religious pride and bigotry is often the bitterest enemy to the truth of God. The common people heard Christ gladly. Raw heathenism is not such an obstacle in the way of the Gospel as a Christianised paganism. "My sheep hear My voice, and they follow Me."

CLAIMING THE PROMISES

Jeremiah 29:10-14

These words form part of the letter which Jeremiah sent to those who were captives in Babylon (Jeremiah 29:1). This letter like the Gospel of God, is a revelation of His mind and will to those who, because of their sins, and iniquities, have become the slaves of an alien power.

I. The Thoughts of God. "I know the thoughts that I think" (Jeremiah 29:11). If great men have great thoughts, what shall we say of the thoughts of God. What might this world not give to know what God's thoughts are.

1. They are PERSONAL thoughts. "Thoughts that I think toward you." Neither science nor philosophy can tell what God thinks of us. The heavens may declare His glory, but His own lips must tell me what He thinks of me. This He does in Christ, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

2. They are PEACEFUL thoughts. "Thoughts of peace and not of evil." Guilty man naturally imagines that God's thoughts toward him are thoughts of war and destruction. But, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." "My thoughts are not your thoughts, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 55:8). The Cross of Christ is God's thought of peace toward a warring world. He hath made peace by the blood of His Cross.

3. They are PROSPECTIVE thoughts. "To give you hope in your end" (r.v.). Or, to secure for you a blessed future. God's purposes with Judah are not yet fulfilled (Zechariah 12:9-10; Zechariah 14:20-21). There is also a glorious future for the Church of God (Ephesians 2:7). The thoughts of God, revealed to us, and believed by us, inspires with a new and blessed hope, not only for this life, but also for the life which is to come (see Psalms 139:17).

II. The Expectation of God. When God reveals His thoughts to His people, He expects that they will receive them, and act accordingly. He says-

1. "Ye shall CALL upon Me" (Jeremiah 29:12). How shall we call on Him of whom we have not heard? But now that we have heard, faith and prayer are expected to be exercised. God looks for His promises to be claimed.

2. "Ye shall SEEK Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart." It is not enough to cry for deliverance, we must seek for the Deliverer. When His thoughts are so good and gracious towards us, why should we not seek the embrace of His Person? Those who see Him with all their heart make a wholehearted discovery, for, when there is the purity of heart, there is the vision of God (Matthew 5:8). "Seek, and ye shall find" (Luke 11:9-10).

III. The Promises of God (Jeremiah 29:14). These promises are the proofs of His exceeding great and precious thoughts to usward who believe. He promises-

1. To HEARKEN. "Ye shall pray unto Me, and I will hearken unto you" (Jeremiah 29:12). His ear is not heavy that it cannot hear, neither is it too far away, or too much occupied with others, to hearken unto you,

2. To ANSWER. "I will be found of you" (Jeremiah 29:14). God promises to reveal and surrender Himself to the seeking soul, and, oh, what a find! Infinite goodness and fullness for the soul's eternal need.

3. To DELIVER. "I will turn away your captivity." The bondage of sin He turns away by the revelation of His power; the bondage of darkness He turns away by the dawning of His light; the bondage of the world, the flesh, and the Devil, by the revelation of His Cross, His Word, and His Spirit.

4. To RESTORE. "I will gather you...and bring you again into the place." Their sin drove them away, but God's grace would bring them back. Christ suffered, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. As every Jew will yet be gathered out "from all the nations," so every child of God will yet be gathered out as members of the Body of Christ (Acts 15:14).

RUIN AND REMEDY

Jeremiah 30:11-22

Israel is a helpless captive in Babylon. All other nations have forsaken them in their time of need. A picture of a soul's ruin, and the world's indifference to its condition.

I. The Ruin. They are described as being-

1. GUILTY. "Because thy sins were increased, I have done these things unto thee" (Jeremiah 30:15). Sin leads to bondage, to suffering, and disappointment.

2. BRUISED. "Thy bruise (hurt, r.v.) is incurable." Sin has crushed man's soul out of its original shape. Man has absolutely no cure for it.

3. WOUNDED. "Thy wound is grievous." Heart rebellion against God is an awful gash in a man's, or a nation's, moral being. It is very grievous in its results, as they reach into Eternity.

4. FRIENDLESS. "There is none to plead thy cause" (Jeremiah 30:13). While in the "far country" the prodigal found no one to plead his cause. No man can redeem his brother. But we thank God for 1 John 2:1.

5. HELPLESS. "Thou hast no healing medicines" (Jeremiah 30:13). Man's wisdom and ingenuity has invented many medicines, but there is no healing in them.

6. DESTITUTE. "All thy lovers have forgotten thee" (Jeremiah 30:14).. The hewn-out cisterns have proved broken and worthless. Their lovers have proved mockers.

7. MISERABLE. "Why criest thou" (Jeremiah 30:15). It is the cry of hopeless despair. "Out of the depths have I cried." The discovery of our infinite poverty and need makes such a cry irresistible.

II. The Remedy. The cure for a sinner's woes is found in God alone, in His Presence, and His Promise. "I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee" (Jeremiah 30:11). Emmanuel, our Hope (Matthew 1:21-23). In His sevenfold promise there is a perfect salvation. He promises-

1. HEALTH. "I will restore health unto thee" (Jeremiah 30:17). Restoration to Himself means health. "He is the health of my countenance" (Psalms 23:3).

2. HEALING. "I will heal thee of thy wounds." Saved, not only from sickness, but also from unsoundness. The wounds may be deep, but not too deep for His healing power.

3. FREEDOM. "I will bring again the captivity" (Jeremiah 30:18). There is, not only healing, but emancipation from the power of the enemy.

4. FRUITFULNESS. "I will multiply them, and they shall not be few" (Jeremiah 30:19). An increase of numbers as the result of a better testimony for God.

5. HONOUR. "I will also glorify them." Despised and rejected of men they may be, but accepted and honoured of God they will be. Those who suffer for Christ shall also reign with Him. On the other side of the flood they sang the Song of Moses.

6. PROTECTION. "I will punish all that oppress them" (Jeremiah 30:20). The overthrowing of the Egyptians in the Red Sea is a warning to all who follow God's people with the intent of their hurt. His redeemed are His peculiar treasure.

7. ALL-SUFFICIENCY. "I will be your God" (Jeremiah 30:22). No greater promise could God give. No fuller blessing could He offer than this. "Lo, I am with you all the days." See Hebrews 13:5-6, Revised Version. Observe God's "I wills" in this provision. THE RESTORATION Here again, as in chapter 30, God's promise to deliver consists of seven "I wills."

I. I will gather them out-Separation (Ephesians 2:3-5).

II. I will bring them in-Safety (John 10:27).

III. I will be their God-Assurance (1 John 3:1).

IV. I will give them one heart-Unity (John 17:20-21).

V. I will make a covenant with them-Satisfaction (2 Corinthians 6:17-18).

VI. I will put My fear in their hearts-Worship (Acts 9:31).

VII. I will rejoice over them-Praise (Php_3:1).

GREAT, HIDDEN THINGS

Jeremiah 33:1-9

The reference is to Jerusalem desolated by war. A picture of a ruined life through sin and unbelief.

I. The Condition of Blessing. "Call upon Me" (Jeremiah 33:3).

II. The Mighty Promises. "Great and hidden things."

1. RENEWAL of health (v, 6).

2. REVELATION of abundance of peace and truth (Jeremiah 33:6).

3. DELIVERANCE from bondage (Jeremiah 33:7).

4. RESTORATION of ruined things (Jeremiah 33:7).

5. CLEANSING from all iniquity (Jeremiah 33:8).

6. GOD-HONOURING testimony (Jeremiah 33:9). THE RECHABITES

Jeremiah 35

Jonadab, the son of Rechab, was a strong, wise man. His life and testimony was a protest, Elijah-like, against the sins of the age, Baal-worship, and intemperance. The Rechabites were a separate family living in patriarchal fashion-dwelling in tents (Jeremiah 35:6), and observing the vow of the Nazarite (Numbers 6:2-4). As they were used as a rebuke to Judah, so may we learn

much from them.

I. They were the Sons of a Good Father. Jonadab was a man zealous for the cause of God (2 Kings 10:15-16). A righteous, courageous, and consistent example on the part of a parent goes a very long way in the formation of the character of the son. The good, as well as the evil, that men do live after them in their children.

II. They were Severely Tested. "Bring them into the house of the Lord...and give them wine to drink" (Jeremiah 35:2). They had come into the city for safety when the King of Babylon and his forces came into the land (Jeremiah 35:11). Now they are tempted by the prophet, in God's own house, to break their vow of abstinence. Truly, they might have been excused in the circumstances. City temptations are strong for young men in every age, especially now. How many are still tempted to take the intoxicating wine in the house of God, by God's own servants at "Communion Seasons," when the house of prayer smells like a saloon.

III. They were Faithful to their Convictions. "They said, We will drink no wine, as our father commanded us" (Jeremiah 35:6). Although their father was dead long years ago and although no one might have reproached them for taking it on such an occasion, yet they remained true to their father's wish and their own consciences. Of course, Jeremiah knew well that they would not touch it, if they had his purpose and God's message would have been thwarted. The proverb, "When in Rome do as the Romans do," is often cowardly and immoral. This lax, accommodating principle has been the ruin of multitudes.

IV. They became an Example to Others. Their faith in their father, their obedience, and devotion, to his word and will, were used by God to rebuke His people's unbelief and disobedience. "They obeyed their father's commandment;...I have spoken unto you...but ye hearkened not unto Me" (Jeremiah 35:14). They were faithful to their father's words spoken three hundred years ago, but God's professed sons had disregarded and forgotten His words. How true is it still that, in our human and temporal relationships we show far more fidelity, than in our spiritual and eternal. The Rechabites had received but one command, and they obeyed. God's people had servants and prophets sent again and again (Jeremiah 35:15), repeating His Words to them, yet they hearkened not. How slow men are to believe God.

V. They were Rewarded. "Because ye have obeyed your father, and kept all his precepts... Jonadab shall not want a man to stand before Me for ever" (Jeremiah 35:18-19). Their obedience to their parent was well pleasing unto the Lord (Colossians 3:20). As a family they lived long on the earth. This is the special blessing attached to the "Honouring of thy father and mother" (Ephesians 6:1-3; Exodus 20:12). Obedience to God's Word is rewarded with everlasting life (John 3:34-36). All who honour His Word shall stand before Him for ever.

BURNING THE BOOK

Jeremiah 36

The Book of God, like the people of God, has, in every age, suffered persecution. It has been tortured and ruptured, pierced and ridiculed, burned and buried, but it has quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, stopped the mouths of lions, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Here we see Jehoiachin burning it, but God gave it a resurrection in a mightier form.

I. The Message Given. (1) It was from the Lord. "Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee" (Jeremiah 36:2). Like the Gospel of Christ, it was a revelation from Heaven. (2) It was a message of solemn warning. "Against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations" (Jeremiah 36:2). Like the Gospel, it was of universal import. (3) It was sent in mercy. "It may be that Israel will hear...and return every man from his evil way, that I may forgive their sin" (Jeremiah 36:3). Like the Gospel, it was a manifestation of God's love for them, and His desire after their salvation.

II. The Message Heard. "So the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll...and he read it in the ears of the king" (Jeremiah 36:20-21). What a privilege to hear such words of faithful warning mingled with Divine forbearance and mercy. The importance and responsibility of hearing His Word, and giving heed to it, is powerfully evidenced here. It was the most critical moment in the life of the king. Hear, and your soul shall live.

III. The Message Rejected. "He cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire" (Jeremiah 36:23). Any fool could do that. There are some people's tongues like penknives, they cut to pieces the Gospel of God. There is a penknife called "higher criticism" that has done its own share of destructive work, but the most common and persistent weapon used by the ungodly against the Word of God is "an evil heart of unbelief." It was not with the "roll of a book" that the king had to do, but with the God of the book. The paper, or the preacher, may be easily cut to pieces, but not so the message, the Word of God endureth for ever. There are many who would not burn the book, but who are not afraid, nor rend their garments when its words are read (Jeremiah 36:24).

IV. The Message Renewed. Another roll was taken and "all the words of the book which the king had burned in the fire" were written, "and there were added besides unto them many like words" (Jeremiah 36:32). The force of the message was augmented by resistance. God will never lower His demands because of the opposition and hatred of men (Acts 5:40-42). No man is done with God's Word when he has rejected and destroyed it. That same Word will yet judge him. A man might as well expect to improve the weather by breaking the barometer, as to relieve his soul by rejecting God's message. The unbelief of some will never make the Word of God of none effect. Remember that He who is "The Word of God" was resurrected from the dead. THE VOICE OF THE LORD

Jeremiah 38

"Obey, I beseech thee, the voice of the Lord...so it shall be well with thee" (Jeremiah 38:20). The "voice" here stands for the Word of the Lord. It is- I. A Warning voice (Jeremiah 38:3-4).

II. A Humbling voice (Jeremiah 38:2).

III. A Hated voice (Jeremiah 38:4-6).

IV. A Convicting voice (secret concern, Jeremiah 38:14).

V. An Assuring voice (Jeremiah 38:20).

VI. An Infallible voice (chap. Jeremiah 39:2-7).

JEHOIACHIN'S DELIVERANCE

Jeremiah 52:31-34

"She sat and wept; with her untressed hair She wiped the feet she was so blessed to touch; And He wiped off the soiling of despair.-Coleridge. The Divine threatenings in Leviticus 26 find their terrible fulfilment in the reign of Jehoiachin. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked." Sin brings to ruin every nation and individual that yields to its dark and foulsome dominion. The king of Babylon was Jehovah's sword of vengeance in the punishment of Judah for their rebellion against Him. Jehoiachin was taken captive and thrown into a Babylonian prison, where he remained for the long period of thirty-seven years. But Babylon's new king, Evil-merodach, had mercy on him, and in grace wrought a marvellous change for him, giving us an illustration of the wonder-working grace of God.

I. Delivered. "He did lift up Jehoiachin out of prison" (Jeremiah 52:27). This was his first necessity. He could in no wise lift himself up. The grace of God which bringeth salvation has a mighty uplifting power. "He brought me up out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay" (Psalms 40:2); and from the darkness and thraldom of Satan into the Kingdom of God's dear Son. As with the king of Judah so with us; there is no uplifting into liberty without the exercise of Royal Authority.

II. Comforted. "He spake kindly to him." The law has no kind word of comfort to speak, but grace has. By grace are ye saved. All those ransomed by the power of Christ are comforted by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The religion of man attempts to speak comfortably to men in the prison of sin; the religion of God first saves, then comforts. The blood of His victory goes before the water of His consolation. He knows how to speak a word to the weary. In all the coming ages God's people will show forth His kindness towards them through Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:7).

III. Exalted. "He set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon." Jehoiachin had the pre-eminence among the other kings who were as captives in Babylon. The whole incident may be prophetic of Judah's future exaltation and glory, as it is suggestive of the spiritual uplifting enjoyed by those who are risen and exalted into heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Abounding sin and failure is conquered and overcome by the much more abounding grace of God. If man's fall through sin has been great, his uplifting through grace has been greater. He can make the homeless beggar of the dunghill meet to sit among the princes of Heaven. "Oh, to grace how great a debtor!"

IV. Clothed. "He changed his prison garments." The prison garments speak of guilt, defeat, shame, and bondage; but now they are gone, and garments of beauty take their place. So it is with those whom grace hath saved. The old things which spoke of failure, degradation and imprisonment, are put off, and those things have been put on which tell of glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life. A change will soon be evident when once a soul has been emancipated from the law of sin and death- the filthy rags of self-righteousness give place to the righteousness of God, which is unto all and upon all them that believe (Zechariah 3:3).

V. Honoured. "He did eat bread continually before him." He had the daily privilege of having fellowship with him who had delivered him from the house of bondage. The prisoner was now the constant companion of his Saviour. The grace of God not only saves and transforms, but brings into abiding fellowship with Himself. The kindness of David wrought the same gracious work for Mephibosheth (2 Samuel 9:7). The door of our King's banqueting-house is always open for His

own specially invited guests. Eat, O friends!

VI. Supplied. "His allowance was a continual allowance given him of the king, a daily rate for every day, all the days of his life."

1. It was an ALLOWANCE. It was not a reward, or something given as wages. It was something placed at the disposal of him whom the king delighted to honour. It was the provision of grace. How much has God placed at the disposal of those who have been saved by His grace? All the unsearchable riches of Christ.

2. It was a DAILY allowance. "A daily fate for every day." Take no thought for your life. "My grace is sufficient for thee." To-morrow's allowance will come with to-morrow's need.

3. It was given him of THE KING; out of the king's fullness, and from his own gracious hand were all his wants supplied. "My God shall supply all your need" (Php_4:19).

4. It was an allowance FOR LIFE. "All the days of his life." The royal promise covered his every need. All is yours, for ye are Christ's.

Ezekiel

THE LIVING CREATURES

Ezekiel 1

It was when the prophet was "among the captives" that the "heavens were opened, and he saw visions of God" (Ezekiel 1:1). John was in the Isle of Patmos when the revelation came to him. These "visions of God" which came to Ezekiel the priest, whatever be their import to Israel, are strikingly symbolic of the Church of God as seen in Revelation 4 (read r. V.). These living creatures resemble the Church in-

I. Their Origin. They came "out of the midst of... a whirlwind...a great cloud, and a fire" (Ezekiel 1:4-5). A fire that was "infolding (taking hold of) itself." The fire, cloud, and whirlwind, are suggestive of God of Mystery and of Judgment, all of which appear in the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. The Church is born of God in the mystery of godliness, and delivered from the judgment of sin (Acts 2:2).

II. Their Character. They are "Living creatures," literally "living ones." They are not dying ones. Not of the earth earthy, but from Heaven. They are living ones whose life is akin to God's, partakers of the Divine nature. Heirs of eternal life.

III. Their Appearance. "They had the likeness of a man" (Ezekiel 1:5). Created after the image of Him who is the Son of God, in righteousness and true holiness. The Church is in the likeness of the Man Christ Jesus. Having- 1. The face of a MAN for wisdom, and reverence in worship (Ezekiel 1:10).

2. The face of a LION for courage and strength in battle.

3. The face of an OX for patience and perseverance in service.

4. The face of an EAGLE for clear vision, and heavenly power in testimony.

Each had four wings, power to obey the Divine commission, and to keep themselves out of sight. With two they "covered their bodies" (Ezekiel 1:11).

IV. Their Movements. "They went every one straight forward" (Ezekiel 1:12). This method of action proves that they were of one mind, and dominated by one great purpose. How could it be otherwise when, "whither the Spirit was to go they went?" That the Church of God might go straight forward in one Spirit, doing His will, was partly the burden of Christ's great prayer in John 17 (Romans 8:14; John 17:22).

V. Their Influence. "Their appearance was like burning coals of fire...like lamps...the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning" (Ezekiel 1:13). He maketh His ministers a flaming fire (Psalms 104:4). The early Church was endued with "Cloven tongues like as of fire" (Acts 2:3). "Burning coals," "lamps, "and "lightning," are self-assertive, they are not to be hid. Be filled with the

Spirit, and the coals of thought will burn, then the lamp of life will shine, and the lightning of conviction and revelation go forth (Ezekiel 1:14).

VI. Their Accompaniments. "And when the living creatures went the wheels went with them" (Ezekiel 1:15-21). The rings of the wheels were so high that they were dreadful...and full of eyes...and the Spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. Symbolic of the Providence of God in relation to His redeemed people. "All things work together for good to them that love God,...called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28. See 2 Chronicles 16:9). They were mysterious ("dreadful"), unerring ("full of eyes"), and in perfect accord with the living ones-the same Spirit was in them. What a comfort to the Church of God.

VII. Their Translation. "The living ones were lifted up from the earth" (Ezekiel 1:19. See chapter Ezekiel 10:19). When they are lifted up the wheels are also lifted up. This is a solemn thought for an ungodly and Christ-rejecting world. The Church shall be lifted from the earth (1 Thessalonians 4:17). But when the wheels of Almighty grace cease to move in the world, the flaming fire of retribution will be kindled (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10). Life from God is the guarantee of life with God.

EQUIPMENT FOR SERVICE

Ezekiel 2:3

The first great essential in service is a "vision of God" (chap. Ezekiel 1:1). A vision of His greatness, His holiness, and unfailing mercy. Saul, who became Paul, was not "disobedient to the heavenly vision." The vision comes through the revelation of His Son in the Scriptures of truth (John 1:18). Here are some characteristics, which, without fail, belong to the true servant of God-

I. They are Spirit-possessed. "The Spirit entered into me" (chap. Ezekiel 2:2). The revelation of God prepares for the entering of His Holy Spirit into the heart. Be filled with the Spirit. He is always ready to possess every consecrated life.

II. They are God-sent. "He said unto me, I send thee" (chap. Ezekiel 2:3). Those who are Spirit-taught, will be Spirit-sent. "As Thou has sent me into the world," said our Lord; "even so have I also sent them into the world" (John 17:18). The vision of Calvary preceded the Pentecostal enduement and witness-bearing.

III. They are Willing Recipients of His Word. "He said. Son of Man...eat this roll, so I opened my mouth" (chap. Ezekiel 3:1-3). His words are spirit and life (John 6:61-63), so the Spirit-taught soul receives them gladly. He receives the roll of the book, just as a little child receives its food. He opened his mouth, and the Lord filled it, "and it was in his mouth as honey for sweetness." If the Word of God was more simply and fully received, there would be more delight in it, and more power through it.

IV. They are Courageous. "Behold, I have made thy face strong," etc. (chap. Ezekiel 3:8). A "strong face," is an evidence of great force of character. Leaders of men have usually a strong facial expression. God can make your character to be strong and powerful. The fear of man is foreign to the man of God.

V. They are Obedient. "The Spirit took me up... and I wept in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit" (Ezekiel 3:14). The Word of the Lord was sweet in his mouth, but somewhat bitter in its practical

operation. But although there was bitterness to his soul in following the guidance of the Spirit, he obeyed. Paul gloried in tribulation also.

VI. They are Humble. "Then I came to them of the captivity...and I sat where they sat" (Ezekiel 3:15). This was how he reached the lapsed mass. He obeyed the Spirit of God, and went and sat down among them. Those who labour for Christ, must act like Him, humbling themselves for the sake of others.

VII. They are Faithful. "I have made thee a watchman" (chap. Ezekiel 3:16-21). The watchman must "warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life." The wicked need warning, and the man who has seen "visions of God" is alone able sufficiently to give that warning. Paul was a faithful watchman, and could say, "I am pure from the blood of all men" (Acts 20:26-31). Study to show thyself approved of God, a watchman that needeth not to be ashamed (2 Timothy 2:15). THE TIME OF LOVE

Ezekiel 16:1-20

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine. In this chapter we have a revelation of the marvellous love and grace of God! Judah is here represented as a helpless, forsaken infant, perishing in the open field. The time of Divine love came when He, passing by, pitied, and saved with a great salvation. The need of a ruined Jerusalem is the need of every ruined soul.

I. A Picture of Destitution. Could any figures of speech be more expressive than this?

1. HELPLESSNESS. "I saw thee weltering in thy blood" (Ezekiel 16:6, R..v.). Jerusalem did not see herself in this sorrowful plight. God's judgment of sin is quite a different thing from man's (Romans 3:19; Romans 5:6).

2. HOPELESSNESS. "None eye pitied thee...to have compassion upon thee" (Ezekiel 16:5). No one is capable of pitying the sinner who knows not the holiness of God. Men can understand the sadness of poverty, shame and crime committed against himself or his fellow men, but not sin as against God. In this sense "No man can redeem his brother." In humanity there is absolutely no hope for man as guilty before God.

II. A Picture of Salvation. "Behold thy time, the time of love" (Ezekiel 16:8). The time of love was when "He passed by, and looked upon thee." Our time of love is now, while God in mercy and grace is passing by in the Gospel of His Son, beholding in pity and compassion our sin and misery. The proof and power of that love is seen in what He did.

1. HE SPARED. "I said unto thee, Live" (Ezekiel 16:6). He only could speak the Word of Life to this bloodstained outcast. He who "spared not" His own Son spared this sinning soul. The salvation of God is the sparing of the soul in unmerited mercy from guilt and death. Saved by grace alone.

2. HE CLEANSED. "Then I washed thee with water." Blood, the figure of pollution and sin, was washed away. Every spared one is a washed one (Galatians 1:4). The life He gives is a clean life.

3. HE COVERED. "I spread My skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness" (Ezekiel 16:8). He acts the part of a near kinsman (Rth_3:9). The skirt of His righteousness is unto all, and upon all

them that believe.

4. HE CLAIMED. "And thou becamest Mine" (Ezekiel 16:8). Oh, what a change! From the "open field" of sin and shame, into the bosom of the family of God. From self-degradation and hopelessness, into the Kingdom of grace and of glory.

5. HE ANOINTED. "And I anointed thee with oil" (Ezekiel 16:9). It is God's will that all His claimed, cleansed, and coyered ones should be anointed with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8; Acts 19:2).

6. HE CROWNED. "And I put...a beautiful crown upon thine head" (Ezekiel 16:12). He who began the good work of saving grace, carried it on to completion, so that we become "perfect through His comeliness" (Ezekiel 16:14). The crown is the emblem of dignity and power. The crowning day is coming, and now is.

7. HE USED. "Thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty" (Ezekiel 16:14). "Perfect through My majesty which I had put upon thee" (r.V.). "The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them" (John 17:22). Let your light so shine before men.

III. A Picture of Desecration (Ezekiel 16:15-20). In every age God has had occasion to make the same sorrowful complaint against His ungrateful people. Blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, yet backsliding in heart, and using their God-given prestige for selfish and worldly ends. This picture is a very sad one, and all the more so that the sin shown in it is so common. It is the desecration of their-

1. BEAUTY. "Thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown" (Ezekiel 16:15). This is what we sometimes term "religious pride," using the influence God in grace hath given us for base, selfish purposes.

2. GARMENTS. "Thy garments thou didst take, and deckedst thy high places" (Ezekiel 16:16). The garments given her for glory and beauty (Ezekiel 16:10-11) desecrated to the adorning of a false and God-dishonouring religion. The teaching of Christ is now being used by some preachers for the building up of a new and unscriptural system.

3. TREASURES. "Thou hast also taken My gold and My silver..and madest to thyself images of men" (Ezekiel 16:17). Devoting the gifts of God to the honour and praise of men. The gold and silver of Divine truth debased, as if it were only the message of men.

4. CHILDREN. "Morover thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto Me, and these hast thou sacrificed... thou hast slain My children" (Ezekiel 16:20-21). What an awful charge! A backsliding Church is a murderer of its children. Those born of the Gospel of God, in the day of His power and grace, are often sacrificed and "devoured" by false teaching. All this has come about by having a "weak heart" toward the Lord God (Ezekiel 16:30). Let us take heed lest there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.

SIN AND DEATH

Ezekiel 18:1-23

God charges the people with misrepresenting facts. He says, "What mean ye that ye use this proverb...saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge"

(Ezekiel 18:2). Hereditary influence may be great, but that will not absolve from personal responsibility. "Behold, all souls are mine...the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4). There is no escape from this. Some searching and encouraging lessons are taught in this chapter. Notice that-

I. All Souls Belong to God (Ezekiel 18:4). He is the Author and Bestower of life. He is the Father of spirits. Souls in the deepest sense are spirits, and should glorify God as the chief end of their existence.

II. Each Soul is Individually Responsible to God "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4, Ezekiel 18:20). No man here is to die for his father's sin. The sinning son of the just man shall die in his sins;.(Ezekiel 18:5-13), and the righteous son of a sinning father shall not die for his sins, but live (Ezekiel 18:14-17). Every man must give an account of himself unto God. No man is condemned because of Adam's sin, but because "All have sinned."

III. Righteousness is the Condition of Life. "If a man be just...he shall surely live" (Ezekiel 18:5, Ezekiel 18:9). A just man is literally a lawful man, a law-abiding man. A man whose life is in harmony with, and guided by, the holy law, or Word of God. Through Christ, the righteousness of God is now unto all and upon all that believe. All that believe are justified from all things (Acts 13:38-39). Apart from grace there is "None righteous, no, not one."

IV. Wickedness is the Condition of Death (Ezekiel 18:20). Wickedness here is literally lawlessness, the opposite of the just who are lawful. A lawless soul is a soul living in the sphere of death. Enmity to God's Word and will is the evidence of it. Those who are a law unto themselves are the murderers of their own souls. Repent and believe.

V. Sin and Death are Inseparable. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:20). The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). "Wages" are something duly earned, and that must be justly paid. The soul that sinneth shall die, because, in sinning, the soul is choosing death rather than life. The presence of sin means death, as the absence of light means darkness.

VI. God has no Pleasure in the Death of the Lawless. "Have I any pleasure at all that the lawless should die? saith the Lord God" (Ezekiel 18:23). God's character, His Word, and His work in the Person of His Son, all emphatically declare His displeasure at the death of the sinning soul. Could any protest be louder than the cry of the Christ of God upon the awful tree, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." His will is that all men should be saved by coming into the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4).

VII. Conversion is the Way into Life. "He should return from His ways and live" (Ezekiel 18:23). The Lord is no respecter of persons, His "way is equal" (Ezekiel 18:25). "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out. "Except ye be converted-turned to the Lord-ye cannot enter the Kingdom of life. I am come that ye might have life. Come unto Me. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, fox why will ye die.

WARN THEM FROM ME

Ezekiel 33:7-11

The prophet is here reminded that he has been set apart as a "watchman unto the house of Israel" (Ezekiel 33:7; see chap. Ezekiel 3:17-21). If there were no danger there would be no need of the watchman. The enemy is ever seeking whom he may devour. What He said to Ezekiel He now says unto all, "Watch" (Mark 13:37). Notice the- I. Responsibilities of the Watchman. They are twofold.

1. "To HEAR the word at His mouth" (Ezekiel 33:7). The watchman must not only have eyes to see and a mouth to speak, but ears to hear the Word of God as from His own mouth. The first necessity is to hear Him, and to enter intelligently and sympathetically into His mind and purposes.

2. To "WARN them from Me." Warn them, because there is impending danger; and warn them from Him, as one who is wholly devoted to His will. The watchman's responsibility lies in making men feel their responsibility to God.

II. Responsibility of the Warned. The "wicked" here are literally the lawless. Observe their-

1. CONDITION. "O lawless man, thou shalt surely die" (Ezekiel 33:8). Sin is lawlessness, and lawlessness is death. Death is the result of alienation from God.

2. OPPORTUNITY. "Warn them from Me." Through the prophet they were distinctly "warned of God." It is sad to be deluded and deceived, but it is surely a mercy to be faithfully warned of our danger. "Except ye repent ye shall likewise perish" was not spoken in anger, but in love. The warning comes from God just as directly as the invitation of His mercy (John 3:36).

3. RESPONSIBILITY. "If he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity" (Ezekiel 33:9). The warning is "to turn. " If he turns not he shall, die in his sins, his blood shall be upon his own soul. Regeneration is the work of the Spirit of God; but conversion-turning about-at His bidding is an act of our own will. The trumpet warning of the law may be despised, and the trumpet blower may be reckoned behind the times, but turning from sin and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the only way into the Kingdom of God, which is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

III. Attestation and Appeal of the Wronged One. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked (lawless); ... turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die" (Ezekiel 33:11). This is the agony of Divine love that found its fuller expression in the dying cry of His beloved Son on the atoning tree: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." "The Lord is... longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish" (2 Peter 3:9). "He that taketh warning shall deliver his soul" (Ezekiel 33:5).

HYPOCRITICAL PROFESSORS

Ezekiel 33:30-33

Hypocrisy is literally the acting of a part on a stage, assuming a character that is unreal. A "saint abroad and a devil at home" is how Bunyan puts it. Those who "steal the livery of the court of Heaven" to serve themselves on earth are hypocrites of the most ardent type. Take a look at their behaviour as here depictured. See them in-

I. Connection with God's Servant. "Talking against thee by the walls and in the doors of their houses." This manner of tale-bearing, behind the wall and in the home, is most reprehensible. This

secret, God-grieving tittle-tattle against His servants is not overlooked by Him. All closet work, whether it be good or bad, is open to His eyes.

II. Connection with God's People. They say, "Come, let us hear what is the Word from the Lord... and they sit before thee as My people sit, and hear thy words." They put on the form of Godliness so long as it helps their own personal interests. They assume the habits of God's people, while they secretly sneer at the real work of God. The only time they are among God's people is when they are hearing His Word.

III. Connection with God's Message.

1. THEY HAVE PLEASURE IN HEARING IT. "They hear Thy words... and lo, Thou art unto them as a very lovely song, as one that...can play well on an instrument." Ezekiel must have been an attractive preacher, with "a pleasant voice," and playing well, as on an instrument; and his message was, even to those hypocrites, "a very lovely song." That is just exactly what the message of God to sinful man is, "A very lovely song." But woe be to those who only hear it as a song for the ear, instead of a message for the heart. How much preaching there is to-day that "tickle the palate, but do not make men feel the bitterness of sin." -Good and entertaining preaching, that is to Godless hearers like a tune well played on an instrument, or a lively song sung with a pleasant voice. But in this case, as in very many others, the preacher was not to blame.

2. THEY IN HEART REJECT IT. "They hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." They love in a measure to hear God's message, but they will not receive it. "With their mouth and with their lips they honour Him, but have removed their heart far from Him" (Isaiah 29:13). Such base and deceitful conduct brings upon such the "woe" pronounced upon all religious hypocrites, who are "like unto whited sepulchres" (Matthew 23:27-28). It is awfully possible to flatter Him with the mouth, while lying to Him with the heart; but as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he before God. With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the heart man deceiveth unto everlasting condemnation.

FAITHLESS SHEPHERDS

Ezekiel 34:1-10

Here are six conditions of need mentioned as expressive of sin and soul destitution, making clear the great need of faithful shepherds.

I. Their Work.

1. To feed the HUNGRY (Ezekiel 34:3).

2. To strengthen the WEAK (Ezekiel 34:4). Weak through disease.

3. To heal the SICK (Ezekiel 34:4).

4. To bind up the BROKEN (Ezekiel 34:4).

5. To bring in the DRIVEN AWAY (Ezekiel 34:4). Backsliding.

6. To seek the LOST (Ezekiel 34:4).

II. Their Faithfulness.

1. They were SELFISH. They fed themselves and starved the flock (Ezekiel 34:3).

2. They were PROUD. They ruled with force, self-will, and not with love (Ezekiel 34:4, l.c.).

3. They were RUINOUS. The flock were scattered (Ezekiel 34:5). They became a prey to the beasts of the field (to false doctrine and lax example). "They wandered through all the mountains (false philosophies) and upon every high hill" (pride of intellect) (Ezekiel 34:6). The sheep became like distracted souls, seeking light and help in other godless religions.

4. They were DISOWNED of God (Ezekiel 34:10). Take heed to thyself. "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:2-3).

WHAT GOD WILL DO FOR HIS SHEEP

Ezekiel 34:11-30.

As the unbelief of some cannot make the faith of God without effect (Romans 3:3), neither can the unfaithfulness of God's shepherds make the faithfulness of God to fail. With regard to His sheep- I. He will search and seek them (Ezekiel 34:11). They shall hear His voice (John 10:27).

II. He will deliver them (Ezekiel 34:12). The power of the enemy shall not hold them.

III. He will bring them (Ezekiel 34:13). Separate them for Himself.

IV. He will feed them (Ezekiel 34:14). Bring them into good pastures (Psa. 23).

V. He will rest them (Ezekiel 34:15). Cause them to lie down.

VI. He will bind up the broken (Ezekiel 34:16). Broken and useless members.

VII. He will strengthen the weak (Ezekiel 34:16). Weak through sickness and weariness.

VIII. He will judge their cause (Ezekiel 34:17-22). When tempted, annoyed, and persecuted.

IX. He will watch over them (Ezekiel 34:23-25; Hebrews 13:20).

X. He will bless them and make them a blessing (Ezekiel 34:26).

XI. He will abundantly satisfy them with good (Ezekiel 34:29-31). THE GREAT CHANGE

Ezekiel 36:25-32

These wonderful words refer primarily to Israel's restoration. Under the law the heart of His people had become like a stone, but through His infinite grace a new heart would be given them, so that by the constraint of love they would walk in His ways. God's method in dealing with a sinful heart is revolutionary, it is a regeneration.

I. The Disease. "A stony heart" (Ezekiel 36:26). A heart that is "stony" is- 1. COLD. It has become insensible-past feeling. All warmth of affection for God and His Word has died away.

2. HARD. Not easily impressed. Unyielding as a rock. Indifferent to all the gracious influences of light and the force of spiritual truth. Callous.

3. DEAD. Incapable of spiritual motion. No vitality toward God. Deaf to His call and dumb for His Name.

II. The Remedy. "A new heart will I give you...an heart of flesh." The only cure for a stony heart is a new heart. Polishing or carving a stone into an altered and improved form will not make it a "living stone." A heart of flesh is-

1. A NEW HEART. It is the gift of God, and takes the place of the stony heart, and so renewing the whole man. It is not only new to the man who gets it, but its manifestations are new to all who see them.

2. A SOFT HEART. Sensitive and childlike, easily impressed by the things of God. The stony nature has disappeared.

3. A WARM HEART. The love of God has found a home in it, and is shed abroad through it. It glows with compassion for the perishing, and burns with indignation against sin and iniquity.

4. A LIVING HEART. Once dead, but now alive unto God. A heart fitted to have communion with the living God. When Sir W. Raleigh was asked to adjust his head on the block he said, "It matters little how the head lies if the heart is right." Is thine heart right with God?

III. The Results. The new heart opens the way for the fullness of the new life. The new character reveals itself by-

1. POSSESSING HIS SPIRIT. "I will put My Spirit within you" (Ezekiel 36:27). His Spirit is the new motive power in the life. . This new moral machinery requires a new power (Romans 8:9).

2. WALKING IN HIS STATUTES. "I will cause you to walk in My statutes." The daily life is made to become pleasing unto the Lord. To walk in His way is to walk with God.

3. DWELLING IN HIS LAND. "Ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers," etc. (Ezekiel 36:28). The good land of His providence is the inheritance of all Who have been made "new creatures in Christ Jesus."

4. RESTING ON HIS PROMISES (Ezekiel 36:29-32). They are exceeding great and precious, so that we might delight ourselves in the Lord, because for His own Name's sake hath He done all this for us (Ezekiel 36:32). THE BONES AND THE BREATH

Ezekiel 37:1-10

These bones refer to "the whole house of Israel" (Ezekiel 37:11). As a nation, they are scattered over the open valley of the whole world, separated bone from his bone, and very dry. But the time will come when the breath of God's Spirit shall come upon them, and they shall "stand upon their feet an exceeding great army" of witnesses for God and for His Christ. But surely there is a present-day application of all Scripture, divinely breathed. Observe-

I. How the Vision Came. "The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the Spirit" (Ezekiel 37:1): We must be "in the Spirit" to see things as they really are as God sees them. This is where revival begins.

II. What the Vision Was. "A valley full of bones." A picture of utter desolation. A wrecked and ruined people. "Very many" and "very dry." Through their backsliding and indifference to God's Word they had become like bleached bones; no evidence whatever of spiritual sap or life in them; dried up through pride, worldliness, and self-dependence. .The same principles produce the same results to-day, but how few see it.

III. A Testing Question. "Son of man, can these bones live?" (Ezekiel 37:3). This question can only come home to those whose eyes have been opened to see the awful need of spiritual life. . The blind man would answer, "What bones? I don't see any bones. Things are quiet and peaceful, and the valley is lovely and attractive. " Think of the responsibility that rests with a Spirit-taught man! The opened eye is a new opening for work. If God hath given us to see the need of others, does He not mean to use us for their deliverance?

IV. A Thoughtful Answer. "I answered, O Lord God, Thou knowest." He only could know, for He alone could make them live. Science, art, and all the philosophies of men have no remedy for a soul dead in sin and dried up with iniquity. "Thou knowest." Salvation is of the Lord. It is good in a crisis like this to cast ourselves on the wisdom and power of God.

V. The Remedy. The Divine remedy is revealed when the need has been seen and painfully felt. It is twofold. He is commanded to speak to the bones on God's behalf (Ezekiel 37:4), and to speak to God on their behalf (Ezekiel 37:9). Preach the Word of the Lord (Ezekiel 37:4) and pray for the power of the Holy Ghost. The preaching is to be in the faith of His promises. "Behold I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live" (Ezekiel 37:5). It is the Spirit that quickeneth. The results were according as he had said (Ezekiel 37:10). An army of men raised from the dead stood upon their feet, ready to breathe out their God-given life in His service. "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be... alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:11).

WATERS TO SWIM IN

Ezekiel 47:1-12

This mystical river is full of prophetic significance. In the time of Millennial blessing rivers of living water shall flow forth from the sanctuary of the Holy City into the desert and waste places of the earth (Zechariah 14:8), and "everything shall live whither the river cometh" (Ezekiel 47:9). But this river may also be regarded as a beautiful emblem of the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ, or of the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

I. The River. A free, spontaneous outburst.

1. ITS SOURCE. "Out from under the threshold of the house" (temple) (Ezekiel 47:1). Out from the holy place, the place of the "Mercy seat," the throne of God. Like the Holy Spirit, it proceeded from the Father (John 15:26).

2. ITS COURSE. "The waters came down...at the south side of the altar" (Ezekiel 47:1). Yes, the only way these life-giving waters can reach a perishing world is by way of the altar-the Cross of

Christ. The Holy Spirit was not given till after Christ had suffered and was glorified (see Revelation 22:1).

3. ITS FORCE. IT GREW IN POWER AND PLENITUDE, ALTHOUGH IT HAD NO TRIBUTARY. The streams of earth can add nothing to the river of God. It became a river that could not be passed over. It had power to heal (Ezekiel 47:8), to revive (Ezekiel 47:9), and to bring forth fruit and abiding freshness (Ezekiel 47:12). Such is the power of the Holy Spirit working in those who believe in Him as the Scripture hath said (John 7:38-39). It is a symbol of the unsearchable riches of Christ and the boundless love of God.

II. A Growing Experience of the River's Depth and Power. Being obedient to the Divine Leader, he was brought in vision into a progressive experience of this fullness of blessing. Three times over we are told that "He brought me through," indicating that these were not final conditions, but the way to something deeper and better-a passing experience. Note the order-

1. ANKLE DEEP. "He brought me through; the waters were to the ankles" (Ezekiel 47:3). It was but a shallow acquaintance with the river of life, but still, he was in it. This stage represents the "Spirit of Faith," the definite act of stepping into the current of the Divine will, although that will as yet is but little known.

2. KNEE DEEP. "Again He brought me... the waters were to the knees." The only way the waters can rise upon us is by our getting deeper down. Knee deep represents the "Spirit of Prayer." When the knees are captured for God there will be delight in His fellowship. It is possible to be a believer and yet have no liberty in prayer. Although this is but the second stage of the Christian life, how many fail to attain unto it, because they refuse to be led (Ezekiel 47:2).

3. LOIN DEEP. "Again...the waters were to the loins" (Ezekiel 47:4). The loins stand for the secret of the strength of a man. The river has laid hold of his strength. This represents the "Spirit of Power." The praying Christian will soon become a witnessing Christian. His loins are now girded with the power of God. When a man is loin deep there is less of the man seen, and the depth of the river is in greater evidence. Those only ankle deep make a big show of themselves, and misrepresent the fullness of the waters.

4. SWIMMING. "Afterward...the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over" (Ezekiel 47:5). The swimming Christian has got beyond his depth, and is now being borne up by the river of God. This last stage represents the "Fullness of the Spirit." Instead of wading through, he is now resting on the waters. This is an experience that cannot be passed over. There is nothing better than this in earth or in Heaven. The perfection is not in us, but in the abounding fullness of His provision for us. "Waters to swim in." "Launch out into the deep."

Daniel

THE MAN OF PURPOSE

Daniel 1

The book of Daniel has been cast into the critics' den, but, like Daniel, it shall yet escape from the mouths of the lions. Rationalists are rejecting it because of its miracles and prophetic utterances. The Lord Jesus Christ approved of it, for it formed part of the canonical Scriptures in His time. Sir Isaac Newton said that "Christianity itself may be said to be founded on the prophecies of Daniel."

After the siege of Jerusalem (Daniel 1:1), Daniel had been taken captive to Babylon, a distance of about eight hundred miles. He was probably about fourteen years of age at that time.

I. His Character. We know nothing of his parents, but judging from his character as a lad, he must have been nurtured in a God-fearing home, for the soundest principles of life had been early formed. One has said: "There is nothing rarer than personality, for there are so many causes that hinder both interior and exterior, so many hostile forces to crush, so many illusions to lead astray." Blessed is that young man who can truly say, "I know in whom I have believed," etc. A personal knowledge of God is the mightiest of all safeguards for city life.

II. His Temptations (Daniel 1:5-6). Testing times will come. These are needed for our moral and spiritual development. The king's command was to select blameless youths, skilful and wise, to take the honoured place of students at the Royal College, and to "stand in the king's palace." It was to be a three years' course, to learn the tongue of the Chaldeans. The Chaldeans were the politicians, philosophers, theologians, and teachers of the nation. What ah opportunity for a young, bright, hopeful man! But how could he eat that meat and drink that wine which had been consecrated to idols, and defile his conscience? The worldly man sees no difficulty, but rather a grand chance to attain honour and earthly glory; but it is very different with the man who is abiding in the fellowship of God.

III. His Purpose. "He purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself" (Daniel 1:8). This in our days would be called "narrow-mindedness and puritanical bigotry." In this connection see Paul's advice (Romans 14:21). That man is of little value for God who is not able to stand against popular opinion. The Talmud says: "A myrtle tree remains a myrtle even in the desert." A man of God should act as such in any circumstance. God is not influenced by man-made conditions. A lad of fifteen years was following the plough near the Carse of Gowrie, the horses stopped in the middle of the furrow. At that moment this question came to his mind: "Might I not make more of my life than I am doing?" and straightening himself up, he said, "God helping me, I will be a missionary." That lad was Dr. . James Stewart, of Lovedale. Keep a conscience void of offence.

IV. His Reward. "God made Daniel to find favour" (Daniel 1:9, R. V.). This was a great crisis in the life of Daniel. He was found faithful, and God promoted him. Henceforth he is marked as a leader of the people. Faith in God, and plain fare (Daniel 1:15), got the victory for both body and soul.

"Their countenances were fairer and fatter than all who did eat the king's meat." Godliness is profitable. Why? Because it is the highest type of character and the best possible relationship to God and men. The wisdom that profited Daniel was not found in the" schools of the learned, but in the closet of communion with the God of Heaven. Determine to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and the wisdom of God will be in you. THE MAN OF FAITH

Daniel 2:16-28

The pleasures of the ungodly are easily spoiled. Because of a dream, the king's spirit is greatly troubled. The vision had vanished from his mind, and he demanded of his wise men that they should make it known (Daniel 2:5). A thing with them impossible (Daniel 2:10), but a new opportunity for the God of Daniel to manifest His wisdom and power.

I. Faith Exercised. It would seem as if the executioners were on their way to carry out the king's mad decree (Daniel 2:5), when Daniel "went in and desired of the king that he would give him time and he would show him the interpretation" (Daniel 2:16). How did he know that he would succeed in this? He believed that His God knew, all about it, and that by coming into closer touch with Him the wisdom of God would be given him. All things are possible to them that believe. Paul could say: "Be of good cheer for I believe God" (Acts 27:25).

II. Prayer Answered. "Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision" (Daniel 2:19). Daniel invited his three companions to a night of prayer. They spread the matter before the God of Heaven, and then was the thing revealed. Prayer does not bring God down to our thoughts and actions, it brings our thoughts and actions up into His. Contact with God means being made like God.

III. Thanks Given. Daniel said, "Blessed be the Name of God for ever...He changeth the times...He giveth wisdom... He revealeth the deep and secret things" (Daniel 2:20-23). If we would pray more, we would praise more. The secrets of the Lord are with them that fear Him. Draw near to Him and He will draw near to you.

IV. Testimony Borne. "There is a God in Heaven that revealeth secrets... as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have" (Daniel 2:28-30). What a consolation this is. The door into this favour is open to all. The Holy Spirit has been given to guide into truth. He searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. THE ALMIGHTY STONE

Daniel 2:31-45

Daniel, by living in the fellowship of God, became a man of visions, and the interpreter, of the Divine mind. The vision of the "Great Image" came to the king in a dream, perhaps that Daniel may have the opportunity of revealing the purposes of God in the ages to come. The different parts of the image represent successive kingdoms (Daniel 2:38-40). The Stone is the symbol of Christ, who shall yet dash the nations to pieces like a potter's vessel, when there shall be "no place found for them" (Daniel 2:34-35, Daniel 2:44). Seven times in Scripture is our Lord Jesus Christ called a Stone, the symbol of strength and durability. We shall note four instances that refer to Israel, the Church, the Nations, and to the World.

I. As a Stone, Israel Stumbled over Christ. He was to them "a Stone of stumbling" because He came in the form of a Servant. As a Stone He was rejected by the Jewish builders (Matthew

21:42), although He had been laid in Zion as the Foundation by Jehovah (Isaiah 28:16). Christ warned them that "Whosoever shall fall upon this Stone shall be broken" (Matthew 21:44). They fell on it, and as a nation were broken, and are yet scattered abroad, dashed to pieces like a broken vessel.

II. As a Stone, the Church was built on Christ. When Peter confessed Him as "The Christ, the Son of the Living God," Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build My church" (Matthew 16:16-18). After Pentecost when Peter declared that the lame man had been healed through faith in the Name of Jesus, he also added, "This is the Stone which is set at nought of;you builders, which is become the head corner" (Acts 4:10-11). We still come to Him as unto a "Living Stone" (1 Peter 2:4). He is the Author of eternal life. Other foundation can no man lay. There is none other Name.

III. As a Stone, Gentile power shall be broken by Christ. "A Stone, cut out without hands, smote the image" (Daniel 2:34). In our days "hands" count for much, but this revolution shall be brought about "without hands." The image represents Gentile authority, "the kingdoms of this world." Their end shall come suddenly, like the falling of a stone from Heaven, and upon whom it shall fall it shall grind to powder (Matthew 21:44). The whole image was "broken to pieces." His coming will be like a thief in the night, unexpected by those who are asleep, it will be like "lightning" (Matthew 24:17), unmistakable. No need saying, To here, or To there, when the lightning flash comes, it is self-evident to all. Then the Babel tower of this world's Godless principles will be a heap of ruins, for like them they have brick for stone. This appearing of Christ cannot possibly refer to His first advent. Then the Roman kingdom was not divided like the ten toes. Gentile power was not destroyed at His first appearing. He then came as a Babe, not with the crushing force of a falling stone, taking vengeance on them that knew not God.

IV. As a Stone, the World will yet be filled with the Glory of Christ. His coming is not the end of the world, but the beginning of a new world. The Stone becomes a great Mountain, and fills the whole earth (Daniel 2:35). A mountain is the symbol of the Kingdom's strength and stability. When He comes in great power and glory, He who is strong to smite will also be strong to save. To understand this chapter read Psalm. 72. "He shall put down all rule and all authority and power, for He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet" (1 Corinthians 15:24-25). "Then the kingdoms of this world shall become the Kingdom of our God, and of His Christ." His Name is, and for ever will be, above every name. All nations shall yet call Him blessed. THE NONCONFORMISTS

Daniel 3

These two images in chapters 2 and 3 represent man's rule and man's worship. This "image of gold" to be set up in the plain of Dura was the visible expression of Nebuchadnezzar' s "new theology." It was to be a great affair. But true godly living is a very simple thing. A Revelation is needed. This new popular religion brings a new trial to the servants of God. There was-

I. Their Temptation. A new national idol had been set up (Daniel 3:3-5). Man's unenlightened ingenuity is always setting up some new thing as an object of worship. It is all the more delusive with its grand musical attractions (Daniel 3:7). On the king's part it was but another exhibition of despotism and religious intolerance, another form of "man's inhumanity to man." The temptation at this time to Daniel and his three fellow-believers was to-

1. SAVE THEIR SITUATION. They had been "set over the affairs of the province of Babylon" (chap. Daniel 2:49). As government officials they held a high social position, and perhaps received a good salary. Demas forsook Paul when worldly advantage was to be gained (2 Timothy 4:10). It was also a temptation to-

2. SACRIFICE THEIR CONSCIENCE. It affected their relationship with God. Of course all that the king demanded was conformity, what all sham religions are satisfied with. James Renwick, the last of the Scottish martyrs, was offered freedom if he would "but let a drop of ink fall on the paper." But, no, when it was to be the sign of the denial of Christ.

II. Their Testimony. "Our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us...We will not serve thy gods" (Daniel 3:17-18). This showed their-

1. FAITH IN THE POWER OF GOD. "If so be our God is able." Those who are serving God daily are not likely to be cast down suddenly. True hearted service gives stability of character in the time of trial.

2. SUBMISSION TO THE WILL OF GOD. "But if not...we will not" (Daniel 3:18). They would rather burn than turn. Like Job, they could say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust" (see Acts 4:19-20). They were in Babylon, but they were not of it.

III. Their Triumph. They were cast into the furnace because of non-conformity, but "the fire had no power" (Daniel 3:26-27). The wrath of man is a poor, impotent thing in presence of the power of God. Their sufferings brought them-

1. A NEW SENSE OF FREEDOM. "Lo, I see four men loose walking in the midst of the fire" (Daniel 3:25). Liberty to walk in a furnace was a new experience for them. They could truly "glory in their affliction." They were not saved from the fiery furnace, but they were saved in it, which was a much greater deliverance. The peace of God in the heart is an indestructible principle, beyond the reach of any fiery trial. The world cannot take it away.

2. A NEW SOURCE OF FELLOWSHIP. There was a fourth in the fire, "like the Son of God." In being cast out by men, they were brought into sweeter communion with the Son of God. It was so with Paul and Silas (Acts 16). Bunyan, Rutherford, Madam Guyon, and multitudes of others who suffered for Christ.

3. A NEW OPPORTUNITY FOR SERVICE. "The king promoted them" (Daniel 3:30). Their sphere of usefulness was enlarged after their deeper experience of the power of God. What a testimony they had to give, as men who had passed from death into life; who were dead, but are now living in the power of a resurrection. Every severe trial borne for Christ's sake will bring a new revelation of Divine possibilities, that we may go back to live with a new force in our being. The Captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering, and the servant is not greater than his Master. By refusing to bow to the image of gold man had set up, the image of God was more firmly set up in their own hearts.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR-RUIN AND REMEDY

Daniel 4:29-37

"All Scripture... is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness." In the experiences recorded in this chapter there is something that might reprove our selfishness, correct our actions, and instruct in the righteousness of God. This personal testimony of Nebuchadnezzar was given as a Royal Edict (Daniel 4:1). One may know much about the ways of God and yet be an utter stranger experimentally to His saving grace. Think of-

I. His Privileges. He had been favoured with special opportunities. In chapter 2 we see God revealing to him in that "Great Image" the character and history of Gentile rule. He heard Daniel, the man of God, interpreting that vision. He had seen the mighty power and grace of God in saving the three Hebrews from the fiery furnace. He had also publicly, confessed that there was no other god like the God of the Hebrews (chap. Daniel 3:29). More than that, he had been solemnly warned of God by this vision of the great tree hewn down (Daniel 4:14), and of his heart being changed into a "beast's heart" (Daniel 4:16). He was moreover counselled to "break off his sins by righteousness, and his iniquities by shewing mercy" (Daniel 4:27). How many there are in this day of grace who likewise have been as mercifully dealt with by visions, warnings, and encouragements. Their need, like this king's, is repentance toward God.

II. His Pride. "At the end of twelve months he walked upon the palace of Babylon...and said, Is not this great Babylon that I have built?" etc. (Daniel 4:29-30). These twelve months were days of grace, but as "all things" seemed to "continue as they were," the warning of God was neglected and forgotten. On the royal palace, about four hundred feet high, he had a full view of "Great Babylon" lying around him, four-square, with a circumference of about sixty miles. There were twenty-five streets intersecting each other-150 feet wide and about 15 miles long. The city had a hundred brazen gates, and was walled about with a massive structure three hundred feet high and eighty feet broad, so that two chariots with four horses abreast could pass easily on the top. This wall was also ornamented with two hundred and fifty towers. The river Euphrates ran slowly through the midst of the city. The great bridge built by the king, and the royal palaces on each side, with the gorgeous temple and the magnificent "hanging gardens," might all be before his eyes when he said, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built...by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" (Daniel 4:30). When the Pharisee said, "I thank God that I am not as other men," he was also glorying in his great Babylon of self-righteousness. Cardinal Wolsey gloried in his Babylon of "worldly honour." All glorifying that is not in the Lord will come to naught.

III. His Downfall. "While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from Heaven saying, The kingdom is departed from thee," etc. (Daniel 4:31-32). Pride goeth before a fall. He who was glorying in the grandeur of his own works is now driven out from the presence of men as a raving maniac. The root cause of it was rebellion against the Word of God. Sin, like lunacy, separates and unfits for the fellowship of God.

IV. His Recovery. "At the end...I lifted up mine eyes to Heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me" (Daniel 4:34). What an awakening! To find himself living the life of a beast! The beast life is that of eating and drinking, with no knowledge of God. There are multitudes which need just such an awakening. What he wanted was understanding. To cut his hair, clip his nails, and to cast a royal robe over him was not the restoration that he needed. Outward reformation can never stand for an inward apprehension. The eyes of the understanding must be enlightened. It is not a new faculty, but a new vision of guilt and of God. The prodigal made this discovery "when he came

to himself." The evidence of his sound conversion was, "Now I praise the King of Heaven" and confess that "those that walk in pride He is able to abase" (Daniel 4:37).

BELSHAZZAR'S DOOM;

or, Sinning Against Light, Daniel 5:22-31

A heathen genius once made a beautiful goblet, with a serpent coiled up at the bottom, with a pair of gleaming eyes, open mouth, and fang ready to sting, so that when the drinker emptied the cup the fearful thing suddenly appeared. Such are the pleasures of sin. At last they bite like a serpent. Such was the experience of Belshazzar at the end of his great godless feast (Daniel 5:1). Inflamed with wine, he demands that the holy vessels of the Lord be brought (Daniel 5:2), but in the same hour the hand of judgment appears (Daniel 5:5), and terror pierces his proud heart. Belshazzar is a solemn warning to those who are sinning against the light. Look at-

I. His Opportunity. "O Belshazzar...thou knewest all this" (Daniel 5:22). All what? See chapter Daniel 4:27-34. He knew all about his father's (or grandfather's) pride and downfall, how he was humbled by God to the degrading life of a beast, and how when he looked up to Heaven his understanding returned again to him. He knew all this, yet went on in his life of sin and godlessness. Many sin in ignorance, but how many to-day are sinning against the "knowledge of the truth," like the Scribes and Pharisees of old; living the darkness of sinful pleasure, rather than the light of God's salvation.

II. His Guilt. "He lifted himself up against the Lord of Heaven" (Daniel 5:23). It is easily seen how this was done. He simply ignored the light and warnings of God, and put material and sinful things in the place of the "Lord of Heaven." The gods of silver, gold, brass, and iron had more influence over him than the "God of Heaven." The present-day form of this is following certain popular opinions and ignoring the revelation of God's will as declared in His Word. Lifting "himself up" by his own thoughts and works, and denying the Lord that bought him.

III. His Failure. "Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting" (Daniel 5:27). The weighing process may have occupied several years. The Lord is slow to wrath. Character is formed through a course of actions. By Him actions are weighed. Job once uttered this request, "Oh that I were weighed in an even balance." God's balances are always just. While the sinner is thoughtlessly going on in his evil course, God is silently weighing him in His unerring balance. He was found wanting. Wanting in faith, in love, and in submission to His will. Belshazzar was uninfluenced by all God's providential dealings with him. Without any heart response, he "passed on and was punished." Judas, and all like him, will ultimately find "their own place," a place of their own preparing.

IV. His Doom. "That night was Belshazzar...slain" (Daniel 5:30). In the night of his greatest glory-the night of his great delusion. While he feasted, the Medes and Persians stealthily entered the city, and an unexpected end suddenly came. Lust, unbelief, and indifference are no protection against the overwhelming power of rejected truth. Those weighed and found wanting by God are destitute of all power of resistance. The thunder cloud of God's judgment may gather slowly, but when the light-. ning flash comes it will be sudden, irresistible, and fatal. How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?

DANIEL-STEADFAST IN THE FAITH

Daniel 6

Daniel has now been probably sixty-eight years in the city of Babylon. He had lived under the reign of three kings, and was about eighty-five years old. He had had many severe trials and temptations, but he remained faithful to his God, his conscience, and his fellowmen. Notice his-

I. Integrity. "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it concerning the law of his God" (Daniel 6:5). His enemies themselves are witnesses to the purity of his life, His character was invulnerable. As a man of prayer and of faith he was faultless, even in the details of his arduous business life. The undercurrent of his nature was as pure as the upper. This was the secret of his moral strength. The daily life is perhaps the severest test of the Christian character, but the pure in heart shall see God, and seeing Him they shall endure.

II. Steadfastness. "When Daniel knew that the writing was signed he went.. .and prayed, and gave thanks before God, as he did aforetime" (Daniel 6:10). Their plot was to get the law of the Medes (unalterable) to clash with the law of Daniel and his God. Although he knew that they had succeeded in making and setting a trap for his feet, he trusted in God and went on as aforetime. Circumstances, adverse as they were, had no effect in changing his holy purpose to be true to God, and his own conscience. General Gordon, when in the Sudan, used to lay his handkerchief at the door of his tent each morning while he prayed, and no one dared to enter till the signal was removed. Courage, brother, do not stumble in your prayer life. Be steadfast in your faith and practice.

III. Sufferings. He was doubtless persecuted through envy (Daniel 6:3). Their dastardly scheme seemed to succeed. Daniel is condemned to the lions. This was the Persians' mode of capital punishment, as the fiery furnace was that of the Babylonians. This is one strong proof of the authenticity of the book. This was a great crisis in the experience of the prophet. Must all be sacrificed to appease the wrath of these haters of godliness? Every sacrifice we make for God brings for us a fuller enjoyment of the salvation of God.

IV. Deliverance. "My God hath shut the lions mouths," etc. (Daniel 6:20-22). This was a new experience of the power of God. While his enemies are rejoicing over his supposed destruction, Daniel is rejoicing in a new salvation. God will vindicate the faith of His own true servant. He is able to do exceedingly above all that we think.

V. Faith. "Because he believed in his God" (Daniel 6:23, l.c.). God will not deny Himself. To trust Him is to put Him on His honour. The secret of victory in the Christian life lies deep down in our oneness of life and purpose with Him.

VI. Doom of Enemies. "They were cast into the den and their bones broken in pieces" (Daniel 6:24). The triumph of the wicked is short. They digged a pit for the servant of God, and they themselves fell into it, as Haman was hanged on his own gallows. As these enemies of Daniel had to do with Daniel's God, so the enemies of the Gospel of Christ have to do with the Christ of the Gospel. To reject the Word of God is to reject the God of the Word. The wrath of God must abide on the unbeliever (John 3:36). Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him. THE END OF THE MATTER

Daniel 7

"Hitherto is the end of the matter" (Daniel 7:28). What has been here referred to is prophetic of the final condition of things in this world. This book is divided into two parts. Chapters 1-7 give the narrative portion unbroken. Chapters 7-12 give the prophetic references unbroken. Chronological order is not adhered to. Daniel, as a man of vision, was a man of action. The visions of God and His truth ought ever to have practical results.

I. The Vision. This revelation and the interpretation are a repetition of the vision of the image in chapter 2. The four parts of the image correspond perfectly with the four "beasts" seen here. As the Stone broke in pieces the image of the Gentile kingdoms, so here the "Son of Man" takes the dominion from the beasts (Daniel 7:12-14). The world-kingdoms are all as "beasts" rising up out of the great sea of humanity. The "beasts" referred to, note, are all beasts of prey-savage, oppressive, ferocious. Not like the ox or the sheep. These powers, represented as strong, unreasonable, brute forces, contain a sorrowful reflection on our boasted civilisation. They have been permitted by God to rise up into power and authority for some wise purpose. Even nations may need surgical operations as well as individuals. Part of the vision has been already fulfilled in the downfall of the Babylonian, Persian, Grecian, and Roman kingdoms. The rest will as certainly follow.

II. The Blessed End (Daniel 7:28). A new monarchy is coming. The history of the "Beast" kingdoms has been written in tears and blood. The new Kingdom will be the Kingdom of God and of His Christ. What notable events!

1. THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN. "Behold the Son of Man came with the clouds of Heaven" (Daniel 7:13). He is the new Head of humanity. The "beasts" are from the earth. He is the Lord from Heaven. Study the parable of the "Nobleman" in Luke 19. See Matthew 24:27 as to the suddenness of His appearing.

2. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE BEASTS' POWER. "They had their dominion taken away" (Daniel 7:12). They have had a long rule, but the world hath not learned to know God, and never will through beastly government. 'Tis the Man Christ Jesus, now crowned Lord of all, whose right it is to reign. He shall reign, and the uttermost parts of the earth shall become His possession.

3. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW KINGDOM. "And there was given Him dominion and glory, and a kingdom,... and all nations shall serve Him" (Daniel 7:14). This kingdom will be universal-"All people, nations, and languages." It will be everlasting-"An everlasting dominion which shall not pass away." Every tongue shall confess Him Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

4. THE VICTORY OF THE SAINTS. "And the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom" (Daniel 7:22). So the promise will be fulfilled: "The saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom" (Daniel 7:18). Blessed "end of the matter" this! It is the saints that shall rule, not the sects. Know you not that the saints shall judge the world? (1 Corinthians 6:2). Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom. Yes, there is a good time coming for the trusting, toiling, suffering servants of God. "If children, then heirs." We must first possess the Divine nature before we can enter into the Divine inheritance. A criminal has no place or say in the state, he is always treated as an alien. Neither can a sin-loving soul have any place in the Kingdom of God, which is righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. "My hope," said a dying saint, "is in

the justice of God-the justice of God to Jesus Christ." Ye are complete in Him.

Hosea

GOD'S GRACIOUS AND ETERNAL PURPOSE

Hosea 2:14-18.

Hosea is reckoned the first of the minor prophets, a contemporary of Isaiah, in the eventful days of Uzziah and Hezekiah, Kings of Judah. "The Word of the Lord came to him, " and by his vital relationship with a morally depraved and faithless wife, he symbolically revealed Israel's treacherous relationship with her longsuffering God. Here let us try and see something of the abounding grace of this God with whom we have to do.

I. His Gracious Method. "I will allure her into the wilderness" (Hosea 2:14). He does not say, "I will drive her, " but "I will allure her" into a condition where her old evil associations and habits will not have the same bewitching influence over her. Thus the first act of grace is seen in a merciful alluring. Why are we so slow to recognise and believe in this blessed work of the Holy Spirit, and to imagine that when the pleasures of material things begin to wither and die in our experience, that life has lost its value? It is always a seeming barren wilderness to the worldly-minded to be brought into a position where they having nothing left but God.

II. His Merciful Purpose. "I will speak comfortably unto her. " God knows what our deep needs are, and how best to meet them, for "as a mother comforteth, so the Lord. " Oh, the bliss that dawns upon our souls when in our bewilderment the peace of God breaks in upon our troubled hearts. His comforting words and ways bring us out of the darkness of doubt and fearfulness, into His marvellous light and restfulness. Why is it that we need so much alluring to bring us into that condition where God can give us His most precious gifts? Surely this is the blindness and the stubbornness of our natural minds. Still, "He giveth us the victory. "

III. The Wonderful Results.

1. "I will give her vineyards from thence" (Hosea 2:15). What! vineyards from the wilderness, where we could see nothing but barrenness and desolation? Yes, out of our experiences, of weariness, and seeming failure God can make, even these, fresh sources of refreshing and strength. By this we are assured that the Divine leading is never contrary to our highest good. Our Father's hand is never out of harmony with our Father's heart. His wisdom never contradicts His love. Therefore, let us confidently and joyfully trust, even when we have been disappointed and brought low. "Where He leads I will follow. " The Holy Spirit is still alluring into new and deeper experiences.

2. "I will give her the Valley of Achor (trouble or trembling) for a door of hope." In the dark and fearsome valley of trouble He can and will open a new door into fresh hopefulness and larger liberty (Joshua 7:26) to every humble believer. We dread the experience of "trouble, " it may be because it brings to us such a deep sense of our weakness and helplessness. Don't let us imagine that we are only making spiritual progress when we are climbing. Our wonder-working God can

make our valley of trouble a place to lie down in (Isaiah 65:10).

3. "I will give her the Joy of Youth" (Hosea 2:15). "She shall sing as in the days of her youth," when, as a nation, she was delivered out of Egypt. She had restored to her the freshness of his happy, youthful days. The God of Israel is the God of our salvation, still ready to renew and restore. Every answered prayer gives occasion for a new song. Every fresh manifestation of His wisdom and power brings additional victory into our spiritual being. In this sense, that which is truly Christian never grows old. "Even youths may faint, and young men utterly fail, but they that wait on the Lord shall change strength." When God satisfies the craving of our spiritual nature with "good things" the youth is "renewed like the eagle's" (Psalms 103:5).

4. New Relationship. "In that day thou shalt call me, My Husband" (Hosea 2:16). Blessed day for Israel when their "Deliverer shall come out of Zion, turning away captivity," and when "all Israel shall be saved" (Romans 11:26). "My husband." This is something deeper and sweeter than the mere formal designation, "My lord." "My wife" means much more to me than "my servant." What marvellous grace is here revealed. God pledging Himself to act for His people the part of a "Husband." Think of all that is involved in such a promise. Taking the responsibility of supplying our every need, and bringing us and keeping us in closest fellowship with Himself. "Call Me Husband, and trust Me to be loving and faithful as long as you do live." How sweet is this assurance to the weary, trembling heart. "Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God" (John 14:1). THE DIVINE BETROTHAL.

Hosea 2:19-23.

God did not love Israel because of her loveliness. She had been guilty of spiritual adultery; even her mother had played the harlot (Hosea 2:5). "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us." Even "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Note-

I. The Manner of this Betrothal. Betrothing is always a delicate business, and should be done on just and sacred principles; and so it is with our God.

1. In Righteousness. In a manner consistent with His character and our real need. He must be just to be a trustworthy Saviour (Isaiah 45:21). This betrothal is in perfect accord with all the holiness of Heaven, and will be faultless through the ages of eternity. But it must also be-

2. In Judgment. The betrothed is presently guilty, unclean, and deep in debt. How is she to be cleansed from sin and her great debt cancelled? This is the great problem of Divine grace. The wages of her sin is death. Sin and guilt must be judged. Glory and honour be to His Holy Name. Jesus Christ God's Eternal Son, in seeking to betroth humanity to Himself, took our nature, bore our sins, shed His Blood to cleanse us, and became a propitiation for the whole world (1 John 2:2).

3. In Lovingkindness. Yes, in that love that delighted to manifest itself in kindness toward us. This expressive word was used by the Psalmist over twenty times. Is it not marvellous to find it used here in connection with an adultrous nation? Behold the triumph of redeeming love. In righteousness and in judgment, these are the banks of the channel through which the stream of His loving-kindness flow, "that He might show the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness towards us, through Jesus Christ. For by grace are ye saved" (Ephesians 2:7-8).

4. In Mercies. His mercies, Oh, how manifold! These are the gifts of His love to the betrothed. The apostle calls them "the riches of His grace" freely bestowed. When Rebekah decided to "go with this man," she doubtless received many mercies by the way. When the prodigal came home the mercies the father bestowed were many. The mercies of God constitute a powerful incentive to yield ourselves unto Him. Paul fully realised this, for in writing to the Romans, he says: "I beseech you by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice unto God... your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1).

5. In Faithfulness. This proposed union is all in faithfulness on His part. "My covenant will I not break." Faithful is He that hath promised. "I am the God of Jacob, that changing and doubtful one, but "I change not." He abideth faithful. What a comforting promise this is, when weakness, failure, and defeat overtake us in our work for Him.

II. The Purpose of this Betrothal. It is in prospect of marriage-Eternal union.

1. That we might know Him. "Thou shalt know the Lord" (Hosea 2:20). Know Him sufficiently to love, serve, adore, and praise Him. This means heart knowledge, and His promise still is: "I will give them a heart to know Me" (Jeremiah 24:7). This new God-given heart is what men need to know God. "This is life eternal to know...Jesus Christ whom He hath sent" (John 17:3).

2. That we might belong to Him. "Thou shalt not be for another. So will I also be for thee" (chap. Hosea 3:3). This is a searching truth. He is wholehearted for us; we must be wholehearted for Him, or play the harlot with our affections. Christ did not purchase us with His Blood that we might belong to any other. "One is your Master, even Christ." Ye are not your own. Do we desire as sincerely and fully to be His as He desires to be wholly ours?

3. That we might confess Him. "They shall say, Thou art my God" (Hosea 2:23). What harmony could there be in a home where the wife was ashamed to say, "Thou art my husband?" There are many who drink greatly at the stream of God's mercies who never look up and say, "Thou art my God." There is a present and eternal honour for all who confess Jesus Christ before men (Luke 12:8), for Christ will confess such before the angels of God. Open thy mouth wide for Him and He shall fill it.

4. That we might be co-workers with Him. The wife is to be the husband's helpmate. The members of the body are co-workers with the head. We who have been allowed into the family of God, by His merciful and persistent grace, must surely feel our responsibility to seek the furtherance of His kingdom. The cause of God is a family business. Are you in His family? Then are you in His business? "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" THE PERIL OF SPIRITUAL IGNORANCE.

Hosea 4:6-11.

This chapter deals further with this sinful people, and God's exposure of their character and judgment against them, for "the Lord hath a controversy with them" (Hosea 4:1). Here they are charged with the lack of knowledge.

I. Ignorance of God is Common. Israel had many manifestations of God's wisdom and power in their past history. Many messages from the lips and lives of His prophets; yet in practical life they knew Him not. The same is true to-day of multitudes in this so-called "Christian age." There are many that try to justify such ignorance by saying, "God is unknowable," which is a denial of the

"testimony of Jesus," who is "the image of the invisible God." "He that hath seen Me," He said, "hath seen the Father." How sayest thou then, "God is unknowable?" (John 14:7-10).

II. Ignorance of God is often Wilful. "Thou hast rejected knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). Paul, writing to the same nation, says: "Being ignorant of God's righteousness, have not submitted themselves" (Romans 10:3). Those who have "left off to take heed to the Lord" (Hosea 4:10) are surely guilty of wilful blindness, because they love the darkness rather than the light. The darkness being better suited for the working out of their selfish and evil deeds. We reject the highest wisdom and knowledge when we reject Christ, who is the wisdom of God. Now to be willingly ignorant of God in the presence of His glorious Gospel is to be a voluntary criminal. "How shall we escape if we neglect?"

III. Wilful Ignorance of God is Fatal. "My people are destroyed (cut off) for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). It is fatal to spiritual life and fruitfulness as a branch cut off from the vine. God is not mocked. Such ignorance leads to-

1. Divine Rejection. "Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee" (Hosea 4:6). There can be no real fellowship with God where the light of His Word is despised or ignored. The darkness of the unbelieving heart cuts off the vision of the face of God in Jesus Christ. Think of it. To reject the pleadings of His sacrificial love is to be finally rejected.

2. Glory Turned into Shame. "I will change their glory into shame" (Hosea 4:7). Were they glorying in their false gods, in their growing numbers, in their material prosperity, or in their freedom from Divine restraint? They were not glorying in their God, so He would change all into a burning shame. Our God is "a jealous God." His love is so great and tender that He will not suffer any rival for our affections and devotion. Beware, for whatever takes His place in the heart's affections will certainly be changed into shame and confusion.

3. Fruitless Effort. "They shall eat and not have enough" (Hosea 4:10). No matter how much of material things they seek to cram into their greedy lives, they never have enough. Such is the experience of many a worldly man and woman. Frantic, fruitless effort to gain soul satisfaction, but they never have enough. They don't know the depth of the hunger of their own souls. Christ said: "I am the Bread of Life." Eat, O beloved, there is enough here and to spare. He satisfieth the hungry soul with good. "I am the Living Bread which came down from Heaven: if any man eat this Bread he shall live for ever." Surely this is enough. "All fulness dwells in Him." Herein is God's ocean, to fill that little cup of yours, called the heart. THE WITHDRAWAL OF GOD'S FACE.

Hosea 5.

This simply means the withdrawal of His favour. Here is-

I. A Sad and Solemn Possibility. "He hath withdrawn Himself from them" (Hosea 5:6). The face of God stands for Divine presence and approval: guidance, comfort, and help. How miserable and hopeless must that nation or that soul be when this face is withdrawn from them. "The face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (Psalms 34:16). How can we pray, "Make Thy face to shine upon us" (Psalms 31:16) if in our service we are secretly seeking self-glory or the praise of men? He will not give His countenance to that which is displeasing to His heart. But, blessed be God, we can now behold His glory in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6). That face which is ever turned

to those who love Him and faithfully follow on to know. "My presence (lit. face) shall go with you" (Exodus 33:14). Beware. Grieve not the Holy Spirit, lest His face be hidden. Thou hast said, "Seek ye My face." My heart would answer "Thy face, Lord, will I seek."

II. The Reasons for His Withdrawal. There must be a cause for this.... a cause that is painful to a loving heart.

1. They had Become a Snare (v. 1). Instead of being a light and example, encouraging others to trust and serve the Lord, they had been as a snare and a net, trapping unwary feet into their ungodly ways. Do you wonder that God turns away His face and favour from those whose life and example encourages others to dishonour His Name and His message? "He that is not for Me is against Me."

2. "They would not Frame their Doings to turn unto their God" (Hosea 5:4). Or, "Their doings would not suffer them to honour their God." Is it not so with many in our own day? Their daily doings are such that they will not suffer them to take time to pray, or even to think of the merciful God they are so persistently ignoring. Christian workers, take time to look up. Don't let the multitude of your engagements hinder the act of worship, lest He hide His face from you.

3. "They had Dealt Treacherously with the Lord" (Hosea 5:7). Treachery is a violation of allegiance, a breach of faith. We are traitors to the Captain of our Salvation when we identify ourselves with the ranks of the enemy. To be unfaithful to our Lord is to miss the shining of His face. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked." Now let us note some of- III. The Results of His Withdrawn Face. On their part there was-

1. Vain Sacrifices. "They shall go with their flocks and herds,... but they shall not find Him" (Hosea 5:6). No number of sacrifices will atone for the hidden face of God as long as the heart is not right towards Him. Not any number of works, nor any amount of fleshly energy expended in His service will make up for the absence of the Holy Spirit of power. Out of fellowship with God means to us vain and fruitless testimony. They were-

2. Oppressed and Broken (v. 11). Because they had lost the vision of the face of their God, they sought help from the gods made by hands. Disobeying the Word of the Lord, they became obedient to the commandment of a worldly-wise man (see Kings __Kings__12:28). Distressed by the powers of the world, and broken like a potter's vessel. This becomes the destiny of the soul that has deliberately grieved away the saving presence of its God. Then they-

3. Seek for Another Remedy (v. 13). But they found no healing for their sickness, no balm for their wound. Lord, to whom can we go when the true fountain of our life has been dried up? All other sources are but "broken cisterns" that can hold nothing that a sinful soul needs. When faith in God has failed, then life is but a desperate and hopeless struggle. "Without Me ye can do nothing."

4. God Waits till they Seek His Face. "I will return to my place till they acknowledge their guilt and seek My face" (Hosea 5:15, margin). Although His face may be hidden because of their sin, yet in love He longs for fellowship with the prodigal nation. Confession is needed, and the search of the backslider should be not only for healing, but for the brightness of the face of the Healer. "Ye shall find Me when ye shall seek Me with all your heart." "He restoreth my soul." When the prodigal in penitence saw the face of his father, he immediately received of the riches of his grace. Those

who refuse the favour of God now, as revealed in the face of Jesus, may have to say: "Hide me from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb" (Revelation 6:16). A CALL TO REPENTANCE.

Hosea 6:1-3.

This call evidently came through the lips of the prophet. And from all that follows it appears that they repented not, but the time will come when as a nation these words will be literally fulfilled (Jeremiah 30:17). Let us think of these wonderful words in the light of New Testament teaching.

I. The Need for Repentance. They were "torn" and "smitten" (Hosea 6:1). Torn and tortured with their own wretchedness, and smitten with defeat and failure, and all this as the result of the Divine Providence, because of their unbelief. There is need for repentance on our part when we are torn with anxieties and smitten with shameful defeat in our work for the Lord. He knows how much there is in us that needs to be torn up and smitten down. Such as selfishness and pride.

II. The Manner of this Repentance. "Return unto the Lord." To return implies a backsliding condition. The repentance that does not bring us right back into the Lord is a repentance that needs to be repented of. The proof of the prodigal's repentance was in the fact that he arose and came to his father. Repentance is a "saving grace" only when it brings us to God in humility of heart, and it may be, with a trembling trust. The Divine arms are ever extended in loving welcome to the truly penitent soul. It is with Him we have to do at such a time, not with any earthly priest.

III. The Results of Such Repentance.

1. There will be "Healing and Binding." "He will heal and He will bind us up" (Hosea 6:1). Our diseased hearts and torn hopes will be healed and bound up. "He healeth all our diseases" and "bindeth up the broken in heart." They have repented deeply who live in the joy of this spiritual health and wholeness.

2. There will be Quickening. "He will revive us" (Hosea 6:2). After the "healing" and the "binding" there comes the energising powers of a new life. When the sinner has been pardoned and reconciled to God there will, or should be, a revitalizing of the soul by the Holy Spirit. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth." He can make all things in our daily lives new.

3. There will be a "Living in the Light of God." "We shall live in His light" (Hosea 6:2). The man of the world may be all alive in the light of his fellowmen, but it is a very different thing to be really alive in the light of God. Not merely living under His eye, as all are, but to have the life that is life indeed in God's reckoning. "I am come," said Jesus Christ, "that ye might have life." "He that hath the Son hath life," and may have it in abundance. This is the real life as God sees it. The world's estimate is very different; but what does it matter as long as we are living in God's sight that life that is eternal.

4. There shall be a Growing Experience. "Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord" (Hosea 6:3). It is the nature of every living thing to grow. The new spiritual life is not to be like a stagnant pool, but an ever deepening stream. We are to "grow in grace and in the knowledge" of Him who is the source and force of the new life. This we shall do if we faithfully follow on. "My son, if thou wilt receive My words... and hide them with thee, then thou wilt understand righteousness and judgment and equity, yea every good path" (Proverbs 2:1, Proverbs 2:9).

5. There will be Times of Refreshing. "He shall go forth as the morning... and He shall come unto us as the rain" (Hosea 6:3). What a bright, cheerful experience to have His presence breathing upon us like the dawning of the day, and to have our drooping and fainting hearts refreshed like the rain upon the mown grass. The Presence of God, by His Spirit, always brings times of refreshing We ire taught to pray: "Give us this day our daily bread." May we not also pray: "Give us this day a fresh dawning of Thy glorious presence upon the whole landscape of our lives?" THE DIVINE REVIEW.

Hosea 11:1-11.

Here Jehovah tenderly reminds His wayward people of what He had done for them. Oh, how ready we are to forget the past mercies of our God. "Son, remember." The sin of discouragement may often be the sin of forget -fulness. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits" (Psalms 103:1-5). He reminds them of- I. What He Did for Them.

1. He Loved. "When Israel was a child, then I loved him" (Hosea 11:1). When Israel was a child then he had no wisdom or strength to glory in. But the child's ignorance and weakness did not hinder the love of God. Let us never forget that God loved us even "while we were yet sinners."

2. He Delivered. "I called My Son out of Egypt" (Hosea 11:1). Out of the land of darkness, sorrow, and bondage. He hath delivered us out of the kingdom of darkness and the slavery of ignorance, into the glorious light and liberty of the children of God. Delivered that we might be a separated people unto His Name.

3. He Taught. "I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by the arms" (Hosea 11:3). What a picture this is of Divine patience and carefulness. Like a father taking his child by the arms and teaching him to walk. God means us "to go," and although we may feel shaky in our feet, He will "perfect His strength in our weakness."

4. He Draws. "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love" (Hosea 11:4). Not with cords of a beast, following in ignorance of its master's will. Not with the iron bonds of compulsion, dragging against the will; but with that tender and most effective of all ties-Love. "The love of Christ constraineth us." "O Love, that wilt not let me go, I yield my willing heart to Thee."

5. He Encouraged. "How shall I give thee up?" (Hosea 11:8). What comfort we may draw from language like this, as if He said: "I have done great things for thee; I have had long patience with thee. How shall I give thee up?" Let us hear these words as coming from the lips of our Redeemer: "I have ransomed thee with My own Blood, endowed thee with My own life, called thee by My own Name, given thee My own Spirit, and promised thee Eternal Life and a place in My own Home. How shall I give thee up?"

6. He Assured. "I am God, the Holy One, in the midst of thee" (Hosea 11:9). The assurance of His Presence is the fortaste of victory (Exodus 33:15). "Greater is He that is with us, and in us, than all that can be against us." "He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is My Helper, and I will not fear" (Hebrews 13:5-6). We may well have boldness in His service with such an all-sufficient and unfailing promise. For "in His presence there is fulness of joy" (Psalms 16:11). He also reminds them of- II. How they had Requited His Goodness.

1. They had Listened to Other Voices. "They called them, so they went" (Hosea 11:2). How unstable are the human affections. The worshippers of other gods called them, so they sacrificed unto Baalim. Before we pass judgment on their shameful faithlessness, let us ask: Are there no voices of the world, the flesh, our social relationships or sceptical acquaintances to which we have listened and turned aside from our ardent service of God? Satan is an adept in this alluring art. "Be ye faithful unto death."

2. They did not Recognise His Good Hand as they should. "They knew not that I healed them" (Hosea 11:3). What? Recipients of His great mercies, and blind to the Giver? Is there any sin more common than this? The world is crowded with such sinners, and the so-called Church is by no means destitute of such wilful ingrates. They receive with open heart and willing arms all the mercies God may pour into their earthly lot, but never recognise the Giver with even an upward look. God has given His Son to the death of the Cross to save them, but they have never said: "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift."

3. They had a Tendency to Backslide. "My people are bent on backsliding from Me" (Hosea 11:7). Alas, this bent is only too common among the Lord's professing people. How much we need to pray: "Uphold Thou my goings, that I slip not." The temptations of the world to turn aside always press heavily upon the Christian pilgrim. Yet in midst of all these tendencies to go out of His way, we are assured that He is faithful who hath promised. "Cleanse Thou me from secret faults." THE FINAL APPEAL.

Hosea 14.

Again we hear the pathetic voice of that inextinguishable love that "suffers long and is kind." They had fallen by their iniquity, but here is hope.

I. The Urgent Call. We may regard this call as fourfold.

1. To Return. "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God" (Hosea 14:1.) He is still thy God, even when you have lusted after other gods and caused Him to hide His face from thee. There is no remedy for Israel's sin, nor for ours, but to return to the Lord, and in humility and faith own Him as "My Lord and my God," even as Thomas did (John 20:28).

2. To Prayer. "Take with you words,... and say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously" (Hosea 14:2). The separating causes are in their "iniquity;" the uniting elements are all in the gracious-ness of our God. This kind of praying is very definite business. There are many who hope their sins may be forgiven, but who have never said a word to God about them. Here is a simple but God-given formula for such: "Take with you words and say: Take away my iniquity, and receive me graciously, for Jesus' sake."

3. To Praise. "So will we render the calves of our lips." The calves of the lips are more precious to God than the calves of the stall. The true priestly offering in this age is, "The sacrifices of praise unto God continually." That is the richest and ripest fruit of lips, "giving thanks to His Name" (Hebrews 13:15). "Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness and wonderful works" (Psalms 107:8, Psalms 107:15, Psalms 107:21, Psalms 107:31).

4. To Open Confession. Hosea 14:3 is very emphatic, which simply means: No mighty nation shall save us. No material instruments of battle can deliver us (horses and chariots). No works of our

own hands can inspire us. But we will trust in the eternal love of our Father God, with whom such orphans find mercy. "Believe in thine heart, and confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus," and prove in your own daily experience His mightiness to save. Now note- II. The Divine Promises.

1. "I will Heal their backsliding" (Hosea 14:4). To heal a wound is something better than merely binding it up. To Israel, backsliding was a festering sore; but in answer to their pleading He will heal them. There is no disease so deeply rooted in our moral nature that our Great Physician cannot heal. He can "heal all our diseases." This disease of backsliding-a wilful desertion from the Word and Will of God-is perhaps one of the most inveterate.

2. "I will Love Them Freely" (Hosea 14:3). This is the love that is not restrained because of our unworthiness. To the pardoned and restored soul His love flows as fully and as freely as if they had never sinned. What an encouragement this is to the ministers of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. To him that cometh He says, "I will in no wise cast out."

3. "I will be as the Dew unto Israel" (Hosea 14:5). The dew falls gently, silently, and effectively in the night. The Lord will yet be to the nation of Israel as refreshing dew in the long night of their drought and affliction. Meanwhile, all who turn unto Him in the night of their sorrow and need will find His Presence as the dew, a real though invisible something gently falling upon their thirsty souls. If we had eyes to see nature as God sees it, we would doubtless behold many symbols of His wonderful works toward the children of men.

4. "From Me is thy Fruit Found" (vv. 6-8). Fruit is always the result of favourable conditions, and a manifestation of the character of the tree. Jehovah reminds them that the many rich mercies to be enjoyed would not be as a reward of merit, or a product of mere chance, but as an outcome of Divine activity in them and through them. We are reminded here of the parable of the vine (John 15). "The branch cannot bear fruit of itself. No more can ye." The vine might say to the branch: "From me is thy fruit found, for without me ye can do nothing by way of fruitfulness." If we abide in Him as a branch, and He abideth in us as the Source of our supply, then from Him shall "much fruit be found" (Galatians 5:22-24).

Joel

THE SEVERITY AND THE GOODNESS OF GOD.

Joel 2 and 3.

It has been said that Joel is the prophet of the Holy Spirit, as Isaiah is of the Messiah. Yet he gives us one of the darkest pictures ever drawn by a prophetic pen, and also one of the brightest (chap. 2:28). Here we note their utter bankruptcy. Their failure and desolation was-

I. Complete. "What the palmerworm left the locust hath eaten; what the locust left hath the cankerworm eaten; what the cankerworm left hath the caterpillar eaten. A nation is come up upon My land whose teeth are the teeth of a lion. My vine is waste; my figtree is barked; my people like a virgin girded with sackcloth. Offerings cut off from the house of the Lord. The Lord's ministers mourn. The fields wasted, land mourneth, harvest perished, all the trees of the field are withered, and joy is withered away from the sons of men" (vv. 4-12). Yet we know that "He doth not afflict willingly, but for our profit." As with this nation, so is it with our souls; we need to be stripped naked and our earthly pleasures withered before we feel our need of God.

II. This bankruptcy was Humanly Incurable. What could this nation do to arrest all those adverse forces that were warring against them? In themselves they had no power to resist such a mighty host. Lord, teach us to know our own helplessness, while we war "not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12). God has declared the bankruptcy of our sinful nature with regard to spiritual power. It is also humanly incurable. "In my flesh dwelleth no good thing."

III. This desolation reveals the Many Instruments at God's disposal. The "worm," the "locust," the "waste," the "blight," the "drought," and the "ungodly." All these He can turn into irresistible weapons of judgment. Surely we have need to "Behold the goodness and the severity of God" (Romans 11:22). He can use for our help or hindrance the most insignificant things on the earth. Great is our God, who can "make all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

IV. The Divine Purpose. The reason of God's severity with them was to awaken in them a deep sense of their need of dependence upon Him. "Now, saith the Lord, turn ye to Me with all your heart. Rend your hearts and not your garments" (vv. 11, 12, 13). The called of God are called for God. It was easier for them to rend their garments as a sign of sorrow in the sight of men, than to rend their hearts as a proof of their humility before God. "A broken and contrite heart He will not despise." It may be easier for some of us to offer a gift for God's cause than to offer ourselves to Him for His service. His purpose for us is that we should present our bodies a living sacrifice, and this is but "your reasonable service," and the evidence of a "renewed mind" (Romans 12:1-2).

V. The Divine Encouragement. "Fear not, be glad and rejoice: for the Lord will do great things. I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, and ye shall praise the Name of the Lord your God. My people shall never be ashamed" (chap. 2:21-27). What an inspiring message for trembling hearts. Though His hand is strong to smite, 'tis also strong to save. Why should we doubt in the cloudy and dark day, when we are assured that God is light and that God is love? "I am the Lord, I change not" (Malachi 3:6). Our trials and troubles are no proof that the character of our God has in any way changed. God, in Christ, is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Approach with joy "the Mercy Seat," for He is waiting there to show "the kindness of God" to every penitent soul that comes, and to restore unto them the joy of His salvation. THE PROPHETIC OUTLOOK.

Joel 2:28-32.

"And it shall come to pass afterward." This "afterward" is interpreted by Peter on the Day of Pentecost, as "the last days" (Acts 2:17). This "afterward" seems to embrace this whole dispensation and the one that is to follow. We must not overlook the fact that all these words were spoken by Jehovah Himself, as the "I wills" prove. We have here then-

I. A Wonderful Promise. "I will pour out My Spirit" (v. 28). The Holy Spirit is the mysterious personal energy of God. In the past age He came again and again, and filled or clothed His chosen servants for their God-appointed work. But at Pentecost He was "poured out." As Jesus Christ poured out Himself for our redemption, so God hath poured out His Spirit for our guidance and enduement for service.

1. The Extent of this Gift. "Upon all flesh." All types of humanity-white, black, brown, red, and yellow. There is no respect of persons with God; but everywhere all who believe in Christ, and desire to honour His Holy Name, may, if they will, receive their share of this holy unction. "The promise is to you and to your children, and to as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39). To your "sons and your daughters, old men and young men, servants and handmaids." "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" (Acts 19:2); or in believing, did you receive?

2. The Results Predicted. These results must be such as cannot be gained without the operation of the Holy Spirit of Promise.

(a) "Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy." This may not mean the foretelling of events, but it does mean uttering words and thought by Divine inspiration, whether they are in a pulpit or a coal-pit; whether they are in the "ministry" or the factory, in the home or in the street. The true Christian life is a forthtelling of the Holy Spirit's presence.

(b) "Your old men shall dream dreams." We sometimes speak of a man as a dreamer, who is given to reverie, to deep, serious thought. But the Spirit of God, who taught Joseph and Jacob by dreams, can even while we sleep speak to the heart. The old men may not be so able now to take their part as formerly in the front of public spiritual warfare, but God has other ways that the world knows nothing of in bringing refreshing to their weary hearts. In this ministry of the Holy Spirit the "old man" is not cast off because of his age. Blessed be His Name.

(c) "Your young men shall see visions." Youth is the time of new visions, but with many these visions are as illusive as the mirage. "Your young men," or let us say, young men who have

embraced the Christian faith, yielded to the call of Christ, and received the Holy Spirit. What marvellous visions of possibilities you will see in the world-wide field of labour and in the potentiality of your own redeemed character.

(d) "And upon the servants and the handmaids will I pour out My Spirit." The slaves and the kitchen maids are not to be exempt from this spiritual endowment, which means increased efficiency in every sphere of life. The Holy Spirit comes to put a new and higher value into all our activities.

II. A Solemn Warning. "I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth... before the great and terrible day of the Lord come." The "Day of the Lord" will be very different from this present day of grace. Then shall the lawless one be revealed, whom the Lord shall destroy with the "brightness of His Coming" (2 Thessalonians 2:8). For "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 1:7-8). This is the merciful Day of the Lord. Then will come "the terrible Day of the Lord" (v. 31). "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation." Sound aloud the trumpet of His Gospel call.

III. A Precious Opportunity. "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call in the Name of the Lord shall be delivered" (v. 32). In the midst of such terrible judgments God has not forgotten to be gracious, for yet "in Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance." Meanwhile this door of opportunity stands wide open, for "whosoever will" (John 3:16). Christ, by the sacrifice of Himself, hath "put away sins" as a barrier in the way of our approach. The responsibility of the sinner is now great, because he is thus without excuse. It is ours to "call on the Name." It is His to deliver. "Salvation is of the Lord." "The grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men hath appeared" (Titus 2:11-14).

Amos

AN AWFUL CHALLENGE.

Amos 4:6-13.

It is an awful act when God Almighty challenges a crippled nation to a final combat. "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." This is a declaration of war. All negotiations had failed, a rupture had come. Now, after the manner of men, God challenges them to battle. It is quite apparent that in their past this would be a hopeless struggle. And to this end doubtless was it made.

I. Why was this Challenge Given? Because Jehovah had been trying to subdue them in other more merciful ways; and when the last of these failed, behold a challenge came. God gives His reasons before He utters this ultimatum.

1. "I have given you cleanness of teeth (starvation) in all your cities, yet ye Have Not Returned unto Me" (Amos 4:6).

2. "I caused it to rain in one city and not in another." Thus Making Distinctions that should have awakened anxiety, "yet have ye not returned unto Me" (Amos 4:8).

3. "I have Sent Among you the Pestilence. Your young men have I slain with the sword. Yet have ye not returned unto Me" (Amos 4:10).

4. "I have Overthrown Some of You, like Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning. Yet ye have not returned unto Me" (Amos 4:11). The purpose of all these chastenings was to bring them to Himself, but they would not. "I have called, and ye refused." Now then, "Prepare to meet thy God!" Are we hearing His voice and seeing His warning hand in His providential dealings with us? It is a miserable thing to be carrying on, it may be silently, a daily controversy with the God whose merciful purpose is that we should return unto Him. "I will arise and go to my Father."

II. This Challenge Must be Accepted. "Ye must meet God." But how? Is it to be in battle or in peace? As an enemy or as a friend? If it is a question of our own strength against the might of our God, who shall be able to stand? Though one man could be prepared by being endowed with all the best resources inherent in the human race, he could not dare with any hope of success to face and defy the "wrath of God." To meet God in our own moral strength and virtue, all preparation is utterly vain and presumptive. Yet meet Him we must, and meet Him we can, but never with hope as an antagonist. Then how can we meet Him in peace who have deliberately rebelled against His law and insulted His forbearance? Ah, herein lies the mystery and the majesty of grace through Jesus Christ, His own Beloved Son, who on our and on God's behalf gave His life a ransom for our sins, that through faith in His conquering Name we are reconciled to God, so can come with boldness before His throne, and find grace to help in our every time of need (Hebrews 4:16). Christ, for us, hath met all the just demands of God's holy law, and all the claims of His holiness. Hence our preparation to meet God in joy and peace lies in our acceptance and trust in the

finished work and victorious Name of Jesus. Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift.

FAITHFUL WITNESSING.

Amos 7:7-17.

The Lord hath never left Himself without a witness (Heb. 11). The very "Heavens declare His glory." The personal testimony of Amos, as here recorded, leads us to meditate on some characteristics of true witness-bearing.

I. He Had a Message from God. "Thus He showed me... the Lord with a plumbline in His hand," who said unto him, "What seest thou? and I said, A plumbline" (Amos 7:7-9). A "plumbline" is an instrument for testing. Being in the hand of the Lord, it was the symbol of His righteousness and judgment. He had come, through His prophet, to measure the "high places" and the "sanctuaries of Israel," and to expose their delinquency. But the point is, Amos had a message; something definite to say, in the Name of the Lord; something that was not manufactured to please the people, or to show forth his own gifts, but something that burned in his own heart like a tongue of fire (Jeremiah 20:9). The early apostles, after the Resurrection, had such a vision of the power of Christ and of the blessed Gospel, associated with it, that their hearts became inflamed as with a Divine passion to speak out the "Good News." As Peter and John testified: "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). Truly they had a message. A message that came to them with such commanding authority that their whole "spirit, soul and body" were brought into subjection to it. Have we lost the vision? Are our ears dull of hearing or our hearts become hardened through the familiarity of words that we have so largely lost the spiritual thrill of this holy compulsion? We have the same message, the same promise of power, but, alas, where is our faith?

II. He Suffered Opposition. "Amaziah the priest of Bethel" misrepresented both Amos and his message to the king, and then hypocritically asked him to "Go, flee into the land of Judah" (Amos 7:10-13). Even modern priests of Bethels often misunderstand and misrepresent the man of God who boldly "declares the whole counsel of God." Opposition may be expected in the ministry of God's Word, when we remember the enmity of the human heart to spiritual things. "If any man will live godly, he must suffer persecution." "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trials which is to try you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings. If ye be reproached for the Name of Christ, happy are ye, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you" (1 Peter 4:12-14). "I will glory in my affliction that the favour of Christ may rest upon me." If we are speaking God's Word, in God's Name, then leave it to God to care for His own.

III. He Gave his Personal Experience. "Then Amos said, I was no prophet, neither a prophet's son, but I was an herdman and a gatherer of wild figs" (Amos 7:11, margin), "and the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and said unto me, Go" (Amos 7:14-15). There is no reference made of his inexperience or "lack of education." One need not depend on the help of "the schools" to receive the call of God. We are not chosen because we are wise and strong, but because we are fit instruments for the exhibition of His wisdom and power. "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and weak things to confound the mighty; and base and despised things to bring to naught things that are: that no flesh should glory in His Presence" (1 Corinthians 1:25-28). Paul's bodily presence was "weak, and his speech contemptible, but his letters were

weighty and powerful" (2 Corinthians 10:10). It is of vital importance for the success of our ministry that we should be able to give a personal testimony as to what God hath done for us. Out of the heart are issues of life. Apart from this there may be plenty of "sound and fury," but the significance of it in His sight is "nothing." We are to speak what we do know, and testify what we have seen. It is little honour to Him that we should prophesy beyond the measure of our own faith. Isaiah saw the Lord seated on a Throne, before he heard Him say, "Go" (Isaiah 6:1-9). The apostles were "eyewitnesses of His Majesty" before they were sent to preach.

Jonah

JONAH THE RUNAWAY.

Jonah 1:1-3.

This is one of the most romantic of all the books of the Bible. To those who can read between the lines, it is more fascinating than the most popular novel.

I. Who was Jonah? From 2 Kings 14:25, we learn that he was the servant and prophet of the Lord-no mean title. His name means "Dove." If it was an expression of his nature, then perhaps this is one reason why he fled from great and wicked Nineveh. He was the son of Amittai, but his father's name is shrouded in obscurity. All great men don't spring from great parents. Although the world has never missed your father, that is no reason why it should not miss you when you are gone. A tinker may die without much ado, but the name of Bunyan will be held in everlasting remembrance. Don't trifle with the days of your youth. Jonah was the author of this book which bears his name. Oh, what a revelation he himself gives us of his own faults and follies. Don't condemn him too severely for being a runaway prophet, for we never would have known about it had he himself not told us. Write down your own faults as Jonah did, and see if your record is not infinitely blacker than his. Would you dare to do it? At any rate the recording angel is doing it for you. It is clear that in writing this book, Jonah does not seek his own glory. No man can be a prophet of God who does. Self-seeking is the spirit of Antichrist, and with him must be cast into the bottomless pit.

II. His Commission. The Lord said to Jonah: "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it." This was a sudden and startling call, but all God's calls are sudden. Look at the city to which he was sent. It had been founded by Nimrod shortly after the confusion of tongues at Babel, and was therefore one thousand years old. It was the greatest city in the mightiest monarchy in the world. It was sixty miles in circumference, and contained streets and avenues twenty miles long; its walls were a hundred feet high, and so wide that three chariots could be drawn abreast on the top. Its population must have been over 600,000. But, moreover, it was great in wickedness, and that wickedness had climbed up to the very throne of God. Little did those wealthy and voluptuous Ninevites think that their secret sins were committed in the face of Jehovah. But so it was, and so it is now. The secret sins of our modern cities cry louder in the ears of God than the roar and rattle of the traffic in the streets. If we had the ears of God, nothing would strike us more, I think, than the longsuffering patience of our God. Friend, think of it, every sin unforgiven is a voice crying to Heaven for vengeance. Nothing can silence that cry but the precious Blood of Jesus. Now look at the purpose for which Jonah was sent to Nineveh. He was to "cry against" it. What a task. One little pebble in the bed of a mighty madly rushing river crying against it. But the prophet was not to be concerned about success, he was simply to obey the call, and leave the consequences in the hands of Him who called him. Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord. Every witness for God must "cry against" the wickedness of their day and generation. The present generation is cursed with dumb dogs which cannot bark. Think of the murderous drink traffic, licensed and protected by law,

to make and to bury 100,000 drunkards every year, and men professing to be witnesses for God, refusing to cry against it. Think of the gambling fever that's flushing the faces of so many of our young men, and hurrying them headlong to eternal ruin. Think of the infidelity and indifference that's settling down among the people, like a deadly malaria. Oh, that all God's prophets would "cry against it." But, say you, they only mock. Well, better be mocked for your faithfulness than your cowardliness.

III. His Disobedience. Instead of going to Nineveh, Jonah fled to Tarshish, at least he tried to. He arose like a pigeon let loose in a strange place, performed the circle of indecision, then darted off in the wrong direction. Perhaps you have treated the call of God in the same way. You have heard His Word, and knew that you ought to believe it, and be saved, but you turned away from it, and fled from the Lord. Jonah was displeased, and, as it were, sent in his resignation as a prophet. It is much easier to resign than to face a stern difficulty. Any craven-hearted fool can refuse to obey. Yes, it is easy to flee from the will of God, when the heart is not in sympathy with Him and His work. It is easy to refuse hearing the Word of God on a Sunday, when the heart and mind are occupied only with worldly things. Jonah was on the "down grade" to shame and confusion when he went down to Joppa, then down into the ship. If we are seeking to shake ourselves clear of God's call to repentance and faith, we are as surely on the down grade to spiritual desolation. Think of the sin of it, "fleeing from the presence of the Lord." Why? Because the presence of the Lord is intolerable to a rebellious will. It is because of this that men will one day cry on the rocks to fall on them and hide them from His presence. Just now God is calling men to arise and flee to Christ, but instead of doing that, they are fleeing to Nineveh, seeking to drown conviction in the pleasures of the world. Jonah having fled, the next thing he had to do was to "pay the fare." So he "paid the fare and went down." Ah, but Jonah had more to pay than he expected. The fare is not all paid in advance. Young man, have you ever considered what the fare is, from the presence of the Lord to the land of godlessness? Look at that shattered frame, that bloached face, that blasted character, that man fled to strong drink, and he is now paying the fare. See that miserable miser with greed stamped on his face, and a heart as cold and callous as the gold he hoards; he fled to money, and had to pay the fare of becoming its slave. That young woman who once thought of becoming a Christian, but was hindered through the fear of man, and who has fled from the presence of Christ, is now paying the fare, in a seared conscience and a hopeless life. Truly the way of transgressors is hard. The prodigal in the far country, in rags and wretchedness, staring with hungry eyes at the swine troughs, was just paying the fare to get away from his father. What is the meaning of that weeping and wailing in eternity? It is this: The souls who have fled from the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ paying the fare. What a price. Are you prepared to pay your own fare, or will you trust the price Jesus has paid on your behalf? (1 Peter 1:18-19).

JONAH FOUND OUT.

Jonah 1:4-7.

The disobedient prophet fled with all speed to Joppa, Disobedient feet are sure to run quickly. It is always easy running down hill. But God's messengers are swifter than the feet of any runaway. He sent out the storm as His detective to apprehend His guilty servant. The seamen are dreadfully alarmed, and take to lighting the ship; the wares are cast into the sea. It is the old story. "All that a man hath will he give for his life." Many who have led godless lives take to lighting the ship when

death is staring them in the face. But wares cannot appease the storm of God's wrath against sin. Let us look at-

I. The Sleeping Prophet. He had a journey of about three days, but being in such a hurry to get away from the presence of God he may have done it in less than two. Being weary with his flight, and having paid the fare, he is soon fast asleep in the ship. How sad. Weary fleeing from God. Truly the way of the transgressor is hard. If the way to Hell is paved with good intentions, it is also sprinkled with many tears. It is full of sighs and heartaches. Sleep is what runaway souls are seeking. They long for complete insensibility to their sins. How many convictions have been drowned in drink, and smothered in the haunts of sinful pleasure. Remember, insensibility is not security. A man may never be more in danger than when he is dreaming of ease. Jonah slept, while his companions on board were in desperation about their lives. I am afraid a good many professing Christians are playing the Jonah here, enjoying selfish ease, instead of seeking to help perishing souls. A sleeping Christian is not only helpless and useless, but is a positive hindrance to others. What was the cause of this great tempest that so oppressed the ship that it was "like to be broken." It was the disobedience of the servant of God. Think of the solemn responsibility resting upon us as the servants of Christ. It is possible to endanger the souls of others by our uncharitable behaviour towards God. Gospel hardened saints make Gospel hardened sinners.

II. The Arousing Call. "What meanest thou, O sleeper; arise, call upon thy God." This is the language of the skipper, heathen as he was, he believed in prayer. Our country is crammed with such heathen; men who believe in prayer when the waves of death are wildly dashing about them. Those who think prayer best becomes foul weather. An infidel who scoffed at a minister of Christ on board ship when the wind was fair, prayed: "O God, if there be a God, have mercy on me," when the storm came. Such fair-weather sailors are common. The drowsy prophet awakened to find that the God he sought to flee from is on his track, and has blocked his way. The seamen thinking the storm has come because some one of them is guilty, cast lots, that he may be found out, and the lot "fell upon Jonah."

III. Found Out. The runaway is found out. What a great awakening this must have been to him. Be sure your sins will find you out. We see here the proof of an overruling Providence. The lot fell on Jonah. God always puts the cap on the right head. When God comes to dispose of the lot that has been cast into the lap of time, every one will receive their due. "I'll take my chance," said a reckless sinner, when urged to accept Christ and be saved. What chance? The chance of escaping detection at the judgment? Remember, the lot "fell on Jonah." Let us remember that one transgressor may be a great stumbling block to others. One Christian, whose life is not in harmony with the will of God may hinder the cause of Christ. Achan's sin hindered the whole army of Israel (Joshua 7:8-18). Learn also the folly of attempting to flee from God. As a sinner, you may be permitted to flee into the wilderness of eternal ruin, but as a servant, God is sure to pull you up as it were, with bit and bridle. Judas sold our Lord, committed suicide, and went to his own place. Peter denied our Lord, but through the prayer of his Master, he wept, and was restored. In hiding from God we are tempting Him to shut us out from His presence -which is life for evermore.

IV. Disobedience Leads to Confusion. What a weakling Jonah was in presence of these heathen sailors. Instead of being a lighthouse and a tower of strength to help them, he was a source of sorrow and perplexity. It is sad to see the prophet of God confused and confounded in the

presence of the ungodly. A powerless Christian is a very pitiable object. Salt without savour is a worthless thing. Samson in the power of the Spirit of God is more mighty than a host of Philistines, but as a runaway from his God, he becomes a miserable laughing-stock. A Christian ought to be a man of fearless courage and irresistible power. He would be so if he were not like Jonah, cowardly and disobedient. In the lap of Delilah, Samson was smuggled of his strength. In the lap of the pleasures and gaiety of the world the Church herself is being shorn of her power. The inconsistency of a Christian will not hide any more than Jonah's. It is impossible to be out of fellowship with God and yet have the influence and authority of an obedient servant. Our strength lies in our nearness to God. The nearer the fire we keep the more will its warmth possess us. Moses knew this when he prayed: "If Thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence." If we have His presence, nothing shall be impossible; if we have not His presence, we have nothing worth having. Jonah fled from God. David fled to God. Whither fleest thou?

JONAH OVERBOARD.

Jonah 1:8-15.

Now that the skipper has got Jonah thoroughly awake, he is besieged with questions of the seamen. There is something very sad in a prophet of the Lord being asked: "What is thine occupation?" Like a soldier, the proof of his calling should be always manifest. Men did not need to say to Elijah, "What is thine occupation?" or to Peter or Paul? His connection with God was stamped upon his every action. If men have to ask us if we are Christians, after being in our company for a time, it is surely proof enough that we are backsliders.

I. Jonah Makes Confession. "I am an Hebrew and fear the Lord God of Heaven." If he fears Jehovah, why does he not call upon Him? Others have been calling upon their Gods, why is he silent? Perhaps the reason is here, Jonah had sinned, and had not yet confessed his sin to God. Unconfessed sin shuts the mouth of prayer. This is why many give up praying. Sin is in their conscience, they will not confess it, so they cannot pray. "He that covereth his sin shall not prosper." Prayers, once uttered at a mother's knee, are now choked by a guilty conscience. Another heart-searching question is put to Jonah: "Why hast thou done this?" To this he was speechless. We can always give good reasons for fleeing to God, but who can give a reasonable answer for fleeing from God? Are you a backslider? Have you turned aside from following Christ? Why hast thou done this? What answer can you give to this question? Alas, that the lives of so many should bare the mark of Cain, the mark of those who have gone out from the presence of the Lord, those who once professed to be Christians, but who now deny Him by their wicked works. What wilt thou say when God Himself shall put this question to thee: "Why has thou done this?" Another question is put to Jonah that must have been like a dagger to his soul. "What shall we do unto thee that the sea may be calm unto us?" These men believed in the doctrine of substitution. Why do the heathen practice it? Where did they learn it? It was the first lesson that God taught fallen man in clothing him with coats of skins. But now, in these days, this Divine truth is despised, because of the pride of intellect. We are not now to speak about "the fall of man," it is "the ascent of man." We are not now to teach that God made man in His own image, but that he sprung up from a drop of dirty water, called protoplasm. The apostasy of the last days is among us. Jonah's answer implies-

II. A Noble Surrender. "Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall it be calm unto you." He feels his guilt, and sees in the storm the hand of Divine vengeance. Every child of God can read Providence as none other can. He is willing to offer himself a sacrifice to the God of the tempest that his companions in trial might be saved. It seems that self-sacrifice is the way to true service. Are we willing to be cast out for God that we might be a blessing to others? Jonah confessed that for his sake the tempest was upon them. If we are guilty of bringing others into trouble by our lack of faithfulness to God, don't let us add sin to sin by denying it. But the sailors were, as yet, unwilling to fling the culprit overboard, they were a crew of noble-hearted men, and displayed a magnanimous reluctance.

"Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land." Yes, but their hard rowing will not suffice, where sacrifice is demanded. All the strivings of men will not avert the tempest of God's wrath against sin, there must be a sacrifice. We would rather give to God the work of our hands than the sacrifice of a broken heart. "They rowed hard to bring it to land, but they could not." It is an utter impossibility for us to succeed in the teeth of God's purpose. You, who are seeking by dint of effort to pull your soul to Heaven, will need to give up in despair. If you wish to work out your own salvation you must see that it is God who worketh in you. Finding their efforts useless, they cry unto the Lord that this man's life may not be laid to their charge

III. Divinely Thwarted. "Then they took up Jonah and cast him into the sea, and the sea ceased from her raging." It must have been with heavy hearts they heaved him overboard. As a passenger he had paid the fare from Joppa to Tarshish, and now he is thrown out of the ship. See how God can thwart our self-made plans. It is sad to bury the dead at sea, but much more sad to bury the living. The terrible plunge would scarcely be heard amidst the rush and roar of the tempest. The sacrifice was made. God accepted the offering, and immediately "the sea ceased from her raging." The key to all this is found in Christ's own words. "The Jews require a sign, there shall be no sign given, but the sign of Jonah, the prophet." Jonah then is a sign. A sign of what? Of death and resurrection. What a picture we have here of a greater than Jonah, who willingly offered Himself a sacrifice that others through Him might be saved. In the storm and the tempest we see the judgment of God, because of sin. The sin was that of disobedience, by one man's disobedience many were made sinners. The remedy was the sacrifice of a prophet. What a striking illustration of Christ, the great Prophet, who took the place of the disobedient, and allowed Himself to be cast out that the storm of judgment may be averted, and many precious souls saved. "Then the men feared the Lord and made vows." They made their vows after the storm was over. Many vow to God in the time of affliction, but deny Him when deliverance comes. The vows of the unconverted are usually vows that need to be converted. If you have been saved through Christ plunging into the sea of God's wrath on your behalf, then make your covenant vows to God, and keep them.

JONAH PRAYING IN HIS GRAVE.

Jonah 2:1-10.

God has many ways of working. The truant prophet was caught by a storm, swallowed by a fish, and landed safely on shore. What encouragement to those who may be praying for disobedient sons and daughters. You have had no letter for a long time, but trust the God of Jonah. With the rod of affliction He may hook them out of their disobedience and sin, and yet cheer your heart with unexpected tidings of gladness. But did a whale swallow Jonah? Scientific men say that the throat

of a whale is too small to swallow a man, and loud mouthed infidelity has been quick to magnify the difficulty. Jonah does not say it was a whale, he says: "The Lord prepared a great fish." Where the word is used, in Matthew 12:40, it simply means "monster." In the year 1758, a man went about exhibiting a shark that had swallowed himself. The story is that he left the ship to bathe, and was swallowed by the shark. The captain shot it, the man was vomited up and rescued little the worse of his double dip. The shark was taken and presented to the man who had been swallowed by it. If a shark could swallow and vomit a sailor, what is to hinder it from doing the same with a prophet? Jonah is-

I. A Sign of Christ. The Jews require a sign. Jesus said: "There shall be no sign given but the sign of the prophet Jonah." They had had many signs. One yet remained to be given-the sign of His resurrection. Jonah is a sign of Christ-

1. In his Burial. He was cast forth; so was Christ cast out by His brethren. They led Him outside the gate and then put Him to death. Jonah was buried in the heart of the sea; Christ in the heart of the earth. Notice that the purpose for which they both were cast forth was the same- to make peace. "Cast me forth," said Jonah, "and it shall be calm for you." Christ hath made peace through the Blood of His Cross. The sin was in Jonah; the sin was on Jesus. Jonah was also a type of Jesus-

2. In his Conscious Activity in the place of death. The seamen buried Jonah in the sea, and doubtless mourned over him as one dead, but he was-

II. Alive After he was Buried. A living, conscious, active soul in the deep. We are not to suppose, as commonly believed, that the great fish devoured the man the moment he was flung overboard. He himself tells us that "the depths closed him round about, that the weeds were wrapped about his head, and that he went down to the bottom of the mountains." When Christ was buried, His friends mourned Him as dead; but while they were preparing the spices for His body, He was preaching to the spirits in prison, those-we believe-who had died in the faith of His Coming, and who waited His resurrection. When Samuel was brought back from the other world, he was disquieted, because he was in a place of happiness. If the rich man, mentioned in Luke 16, had been raised, he would not have talked about being troubled at the change, he would have been more than thankful. If we could see now the joys or sorrows of our departed dead, it would unfit us for this present life. Jonah was also a type of Jesus-

1. In his Resurrection. "The Lord spake unto the fish and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land. He came out of the depths with the same individuality with which he was cast in. It was the same Jesus that rose from the dead, that was buried in the tomb. Neither of them saw corruption. The casting of Jonah upon the dry land is but the earnest of that time when both earth and sea shall vomit out the dead that are in them; some to the sunshine of eternal life, some to the darkness of eternal shame and contempt. Here we might see also-

III. The History of a Soul. The inner experience of Jonah has to some extent been the experience of all who have passed from death unto life, all who have been brought from the bondage of sin into the liberty of the sons of God. Will you notice seven steps in the experience of Jonah.

1. Disobedience. He deliberately refused to obey what he knew to be the will of God. Who among us has not taken that step?

2. Conviction. His soul is now encompassed with the horrors of Hell. The weeds are wrapped about the heart as well as his head. Disobedience to God is the straight way into the abyss of despair.

3. Confession. He acknowledges the hand of God in arresting him. "Thou hast cast me into the deep." A man is not in a state to be saved until he is prepared to acknowledge the justice of God in punishing transgressors. We must confess our sins if we would hope for His mercy to forgive.

4. Contrition. "When his soul fainted within him he remembered the Lord." At the remembrance of His goodness the heart is melted. Truth lodged in the mind in early years often proves effectual in later life. If men would only remember the Lord Jesus Christ, how soon would they be delivered from the bitterness of their lives.

5. Prayer. "He cried unto the Lord." Where there is true sorrow for sin it must gush out in prayer to God. A prayerless soul is like a sealed vessel. It took great faith to cry to God from the belly of a sea-monster. There is nothing like the jaws of death for opening the mouth of prayer. Many tempt God by their rebellion to plunge them into the belly of Hell, that they might learn to pray. Better pray in the sunshine than wait till you sink into the depths of despair, and death comes like Jonah's fish to swallow you up.

6. Deliverance. Jonah was vomited out upon the dry land. It was to him as it is to every one saved by the Lord-a resurrection from the dead. "A passing from death into life." Some think that nobody can know when they are saved. Did Jonah not know? He shouted: "Salvation is of the Lord." Yes, Jonah had to pay the fare to get away from the presence of the Lord, but he got a free passage back. The Lord was at all the expense of his home coming It is always so, if you run from God, you must pay your own fare; if you come to God there is nothing to pay. "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out."

7. Thanksgiving. He said when he got out of the belly of death into the light of Heaven: "I will sacrifice unto Thee with the voice of thanksgiving," and so well he may. Thanksgiving becomes a reality when salvation is enjoyed. If there were more saved souls in our churches there would be less need for musical instruments. There are three states that may include us all.

(a) Those who are indifferent about salvation.

(b) Those who are praying to be saved.

(c) Those who thank God because they are saved. Which is yours? "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift" (Psalms 40:1-5).

JONAH OBEDIENT.

Jonah 3:1-10.

There are many questions one would like to ask here, but who can answer them? What did the sailors do after the storm, when their cargo had been pitched overboard? Did they return to Joppa to get it renewed? If so, the story of the storm being hushed by casting a prophet into the sea would doubtless be rapidly circulated, and perhaps reached Nineveh before Jonah did.

I. The Repeated Call. "The Word of the Lord came unto Jonah a second time." How gracious God is, to give a man a second chance of serving Him. He might have left him in his disobedience to perish. What hope there is in the Second Man, the Lord from Heaven. Is there one of us who have not had a second call? Yea, a sixth, a seventh, and a seventieth, and perhaps as yet there has been no response. God's right to take vengeance is often denied, but dare you deny His patience and longsuffering? The Law was given, that failed through our disobedience; now humanity's second chance is in His call of grace. Note the changed commission: "Go and preach unto it, the preaching that I bid thee." At the first Jonah was to "Cry against it," now he is just to speak what he is told. The call is repeated, but the commission is altered. Do you notice that the Word of the Lord came to Jonah before he was asked to preach it? Preachers must have a revelation from God. If they have seen no vision, then they have no message. Paul could say: "I have received of the Lord that which I have delivered unto you." We testify of what we have seen, else we are not witnesses. In these days a bold attempt is being made to discredit everything that savours of the miraculous. If there be no miracle, then there can be no mercy.

II. The Ready Obedience. "Jonah arose and went." What a task is before him; a journey of over 800 miles, and then to preach in the streets of the mightiest, the gayest, and the guiltiest of cities. But his forty days' journey is much easier than his three days' run to Joppa, because his heart is now right with God. It is easier doing great things for God than little things for the Devil. It was easier for Daniel to go to the lions' den than deny his God. It was easier for our faithful Scottish martyrs to go to the fires than to deny the faith. But where did Jonah learn this obedience? He learned it where most of us have had to learn it-in the depths, when the floods compassed him about, when the waves and billows passed over him, and the weeds were wrapped about his head. We would not always pity the afflicted if we understood the purpose of God. May God plunge many more into the belly of Hell, if so be that it will bring them to repentance. When God by the hand of death snatched your bright-eyed child from the home, did you understand that He was seeking to bring you into the faith that saves?

III. The Startling Proclamation. "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." A strange message from a strange man. Jonah, footsore and weary, enters the great and mighty city, probably clad in a coat of camel's hair, girded with a leathern girdle. He may seem very small and insignificant in the presence of those haughty gentry, clothed in their gaudy robes, and those high flying chariots, rushing along on the top of the wall, but he has a dignity superior to the King of Assyria. He has a message from God that will bring the guilty and conceited Ninevites to their knees. The mightiest men in the world are those who know God's will, and are courageous as lions in declaring it. Sometimes sermons are characterised as being as destitute of grace as Jonah's. "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." Jonah's message was one of mercy and judgment. Yet forty days-forty days' grace to be followed with judgment if these days were neglected. Grace has been reigning now these 1928 years, and will assuredly be followed with judgment in the case of those who despise the mercy offered.

IV. The Confirming Sign. From the Lord Jesus Christ Himself we learn that Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites (Luke 11:30). How could he be a sign to them if they did not know his character and history? This is indeed significant. The Ninevites not only heard the Divine message at his lips, but they saw in himself a proof of God's mighty saving power. Jonah wrought no miracle, but he himself was a miracle. He was as one raised from the dead. Three things the subtle infidelity of

to-day seek to deny. Incarnation, Regeneration, Inspiration. But every regenerated soul is in itself a sign, and an evidence of the Divine and the supernatural. What we are will tell more powerfully than what we say. Signs are needed. Men and women who have themselves been saved and taught by God. Is there no such sign beside you or in your own home? To see a true Christian is to see a sign from Heaven.

V. The Grand Result. "Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah." If he had gone with the Gospel of the "higher critics," and hobnobbed with the gentry, he might have got on for chaplain to the king, but Nineveh would never have repented. "By their fruits ye shall know them." The preaching that does not bring sinners face to face with their sins and with God will never produce repentance. There were no sleepers under Jonah's preaching. There are scores who go to our churches for no other purpose than to see and to be seen, and to get a nap. It is interesting to observe the process of their repentance.

1. They Believed God. It is not said that they believed Jonah, but that they believed God. This ought to be the aim and end of all preaching, to lift the hearts of the people right up to the Lord Himself. What will it avail you although you believe in the kirk and in the minister, if you have no faith in God? I would rather die a heathen Hottentot than an unconverted Church member. Then they humbled themselves, "and put on sackcloth." This is always the result of believing God; faith is accompanied with the sackcloth of confession. Sackcloth is never very fashionable, sealskin is more in vogue. There is nothing like a deep conviction of sin for stripping one of their gaudy garments of pride. Oh, man, if you saw yourself in the light of God's judgment, you would as quickly as Ninevites, put on the sackcloth of a broken spirit. A haughty sinner is the imp of Hell. Never say that you believe in God if you have never been on your face before Him. Then-

2. They Cried to God. Every one was to "cry mightily to God." There is no use telling an awakened soul that God has so bound Himself with fixed laws that he cannot answer prayer. It is as natural for such to cry as the newborn babe. Only those encased in their own conceit can talk so lightly about prayer. No prayer book will suffice when the soul is alive to its true need. Such are like dead men's grave clothes. But they did more than pray, they "Turned every one from his evil ways." No prayer is in earnest as long as sin is indulged. If we are not prepared to forsake our sins, then all our prayers are a mockery (Psalms 66:18). A man once told me that he always said his prayers except when he was drunk. Poor man, he was afflicted with two devils. A drinking one and a self-righteous one. Both are alike unclean. Their prayer was sincere. The result was-

3. They Found Mercy. "God saw their works and repented, and did it not. What! Does God repent? Yes, I am thankful that He does. In His Character as holy, just, and good, He is unchangeable, and without shadow of turning; but in mercy He turns His face to every penitent seeking sinner. "Draw nigh unto Me," God says, "and I will draw nigh unto you." "Seek, and ye shall find."

JONAH DISPLEASED.

Jonah 4:1-6.

There is a great difference between mere obedience and sympathy. Every parent sees it when the one child has to be driven to obey, and when the other delights in it, because in full sympathy with the parents' plans and purposes. The elder brother in the parable (Luke 15) had been obedient, but he had no sympathy with the father in making such an ado over the returning prodigal. There

are many Christians like this, they obey from sheer necessity, but they have no joy in the will and purposes of God. Such seems to have been the character of Jonah. He obeyed from a powerful sense of duty, but had not entered joyfully into all the mind of the Lord.

I. His Complaint. "It displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry," or, as it might be rendered, he was very hot, greatly perplexed and excited. He saw now what perhaps he did not expect to see-Nineveh in sackcloth and prayer. The Assyrians, being the enemies of Israel, he probably was secretly rejoicing in the prospect of their downfall. It is so easy to mix our own selfish motives with the purposes of God, and bring confusion to our own souls. It is here where thousands are making shipwreck, they set up then own opinions and think that God is bound by His honour to conform to their plans. Perhaps Jonah was thinking of his own honour as a prophet when he got so excited. He had been crying, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." Now that God was going to spare the city, what would they think of him as a prophet? We are not much use in the Lord's service until we are willing to become fools for Christ. It is ours to obey and to trust. Opinions formed apart from the light of God's Word will sooner or later bring the blush of confusion to your face.

II. His Prayer. "He prayed unto the Lord." If Jonah's heart had been filled with anger against the Lord, how could he pray? No one can pray with anger in their heart. This is the remedy for all unholy passion-get to your knees. It is wonderful how our creeds get corrected in our prayers. Open up your heart to God, and your crooked things will be made straight. In Jonah's prayer there is a revelation. Here we get the reason why he fled from God at the first. He says: "I fled, for I knew that thou art a gracious God." This is the very reason why some of us have fled to Him. What does he mean? Perhaps this: "I knew that Thou art such a merciful God, that although I prophesied its destruction, Thou would forgive them, so my preaching would be in vain, and I would be mocked for my trouble." There was much of both good and evil in Jonah, but something more might be learned from this-

III. His Testimony. His description of God's character is simply grand. "Gracious, merciful, slow to anger, of great kindness, and ready to turn from judgment." How could he be angry at such a God? He is gracious to consider the sinner's need, and merciful to forgive their iniquities. My friend, can you say, like Jonah, "I know Him." He is slow to anger. What a mercy. This is an age of hurry and excitement and "Go." The Devil knows that his days are short, and he is driving this world-"that lieth in the wicked one"-at express speed. The Devil is always in a hurry "The wheels of God grind slow, but they grind exceeding small." God is slow to anger, but He is quick to forgive. "There is life for a look." This is the reason why some of you are spared till to-day, who have been wasting your time in selfishness and sin. "God is slow to anger." Why despise such great kindness, and weary out the patience of God? Oh, remember, that although God is slow to anger, when He does strike, it will be the blow of the Almighty.

IV. His Foolish Request. "O Lord, take my life from me, it is better for me to die than to live" Is it? How do you know? Here again is another manifestation of self. "Better for me." Oh, yes, it is the old story: "Suffer me first." This is the fly in the ointment of much of our Christian service-"Self-seeking." But there is some faith mingled with his faults. If he knew it would be better for him to die, then he had a good hope for the world to come. Would it be better for you? Paul said, "to depart and be with Christ is fax better." It takes faith to die in gladness, alone in the midst

of heathen.

V. His Watchfulness. "So Jonah went out of the city, and made him a booth." He might have shared the hospitality of the king, but he preferred a booth outside the city. "Moses chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Those who testify against the world aught not to live as the world. "Come out from among them lest ye perish with them." The command to Lot was, "Flee to the mountains, tarry not in all the plain." He sat under his booth till he might see what would become of the city. Do you know anything about calmly waiting to see what God will do? It is a solemn time. The doctor has given up that child, the mother has committed it to God, and is waiting in silence to see what God will do. There are times in Christian work when we know not what to do; we have to sit down like Jonah till we might see what the Lord will do. God is worth waiting on. Beloved friends, have patience with God. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength" (Isaiah 40:31).

VI. His Great Joy. "The Lord prepared a gourd, and made it come up over Jonah, so Jonah was exceeding glad." How quickly God can turn our sadness into gladness. This gourd is supposed to be the palm-christ, a plant like the running ivy, with broad leaves the shape of a man's hand. Every leaf might remind him of the hand of the Almighty. What a shelter-to be covered with Jehovah's hands-no wonder he was glad. This sheltering gourd was the gift of God-a handful on purpose for a weary, downcast pilgrim. How often has God raised a gourd for us in our day of trouble. It was given for a twofold purpose. (1) To be a shadow over his head. (2) To deliver him from his grief. Is not this what you need-shelter from danger, and deliverance from inward grief. This gourd raised by the Lord seems to be a passing shadow of the Cross. Here sinners find a refuge from the piercing rays of Divine vengeance and deliverance from their sins and sorrows. This double salvation every one of us need. Christian, in the day of your trial, sit under its shadow, and wait and see what God will do. Unsaved one, here is a resting place for you, here is deliverance from your grief. No matter how deep your need, sit here and see what God will do for you. "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He is "mighty to save."

JONAH SILENCED.

Jonah 4:7-11.

Every visible thing is stamped with uncertainty. All our earthly comforts will, sooner or later, wither and die. The countenance of nature herself, although governed by unerring law, is continually changing. Kingdoms and nations change. What changes have taken place in our homes, and among our friends. How many old faces are gone, how many new faces have come.

"Change on all around I see,

Oh, Thou who changeth not,

Abide with me." When all earthly things shall wax old and pass away like a garment, the unchanging Saviour still remains. "Blessed are all they that trust in Him." We have here-

I. A Short Lived Pleasure. "God prepared a worm the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered." God can prepare the worm as well as the gourd. While we are enjoying our gourd of pleasure, we are apt to forget that there may be a worm at the root. How many little unseen things may be at work in the night. Receive your mercies with humble thankful hearts. Are there not many

whose gourd has suddenly withered. That child which used to be the delight of your eye-God prepared the worm of disease, and it has withered away. That husband that used to cast over you his protecting hands has suddenly withered away. That mother who used to be your gourd, in delivering you from your grief, has been cut down by the worm of death. Oh, this world is strewed all over with withered gourds. Each ruin says to us, "Set not your heart on the things which are seen, for they are temporal." Every earthly thing has its worm. The worm of time is already working at the root of your present worldly pleasures. That gourd of false profession will turn out a lifeless mass on the day of God's fierce anger. God has prepared a worm that will bring to ruin every refuge of lies. What an awful discovery to awaken on the resurrection morning, to find our hopes, like Herod's body, eaten up of worms. The incorruptible Christ has paid an incorruptible price for your incorruptible soul.

"Here everlasting springs abide.

And never-withering flowers." The heart that has laid hold on Christ has received a portion that can never fade away.

II. An Overcoming Trial. "And it came to pass, when the sun did rise, that God prepared a vehement east wind, and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah that he fainted." Alas, for you, if your joys are bound up in your circumstances, instead of in your God. It is so easy and natural to be more anxious about the gift than the Giver. It does seem strange at first sight, how God dealt with Jonah. He prepared a gourd to cover him, then a worm to vex him, then a wind to smite him. We may find fault, but we cannot mend it. The Divine Teacher is not obliged to explain Himself to His stupid pupils. A great and merciful purpose is here. This piercing east wind upon Jonah's defenceless head was a sore trial. It has been said that "When the wind is in the east, 'tis neither good for man nor beast," but this does not tally with our own good Scottish proverb: "It is an ill wind that blaws naebody guid." The winds are in His fists, and are flung out, not at random, but for a definite purpose. It was by a strong east wind that the Lord divided the Red Sea. The cutting, biting, withering winds of affliction are all for some gracious purpose. I once made the remark to a farmer, that these cold winds would hinder the growth. "Yes," he said, "they hinder the growth upwards, but they help the growth downwards; they make the roots take a firmer hold." Then welcome affliction that drives the root of our being deeper into the things of the unseen world, and makes us more fit to stand in the time of tempest. Jonah fainted. Poor fellow, he was like the seed that had no depth of earth, and withered away when the scorching sun fell upon it. David said, "I had fainted, unless I had believed." If we have no faith in God we have nothing to save us from fainting in the time of trial. To you who are growing faint thinking there is no salvation for you, "Only believe." Weary workers, remember that "He giveth power to the faint."

III. A Pointed Question. God said to Jonah, "Doest thou well to be angry?" Jonah's answer was that of a man who is perfectly honest, but whose heart was likely to deceive him. "I do well to be angry, even unto death." The great lesson seemingly that God wished to teach Jonah was that "Sin worketh death," both in the nation and individual. Israel had turned away from God. Idolatry, like the worm at Jonah's gourd, was eating the life out of the nation. Righteousness exalteth a nation. Now that Nineveh was on its knees seeking mercy and righteousness, God would lift it up. The same principle reigns to-day; the Divine word is, "Them that honour Me, I will honour." God looketh on the heart. Jonah was more concerned about the gourd of his own comfort than the

salvation of the heathen city. Such are certain signs of a staggering faith. Faith in God is the death-blow to all this miserable self-interest.

IV. A Silencing Argument. "Thou hast had pity on the gourd, and should not I spare Nineveh, wherein are more than six-score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand?" What a wonder, that God should condescend to reason with a man. There is much in God's dealings with us that we can never understand, and must be received by faith. God uses two powerful arguments to silence the doubts and fears of His servant.

1. The Argument of Sovereignty. God has a right to do as He will with His own. Proud man would even question this right and show displeasure at God's dealings, because he cannot comprehend His meaning. It is awful presumption to suppose that the purposes of God are to be subordinated to the reasonings of men. Paul's argument is conclusive. Nay, Oh man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it: "Why hast thou made me thus?" Then there is-

2. The Argument of Pity. The Lord reminds Jonah that there are sixty thousand persons in Nineveh that cannot discern between the right hand and the left- 60,000 babies. What a place the children have in the heart of God; what a claim their utter helplessness makes upon Divine mercy. Nineveh was spared, partly through the mute intercession of these 60,000 infant priests. You cannot tell how much your home has been blessed because of these helpless children. Mothers, make room for the children; every baby is a blessing, a priest that maketh intercession for you. These arguments seem to have silenced Jonah, for we hear his voice no more. He quietly allows God to have the last word. Has God settled all your difficulties and silenced all your arguments? Don't keep up a controversy with the Almighty. Yield your will to Him, and what you cannot grasp with the intellect, believe with the heart. There is a story in ancient history of a monarch who, when some of his subjects rebelled against him, subdued them then loaded them with precious gifts. One of his nobles asked why he was so kind to his enemies. He said, "I subdued them by my power, I must now win them by my love." It is thus that Jesus Christ, the greater than Jonah, would win us to Himself. By the power of his convicting Spirit He would show us the blackness of our evil hearts, that He might bring us to repentance and confession. Then He lavishly bestows upon us the great gifts of His grace, love, peace, joy, rest, and eternal life. He blesses all he conquers. Has He conquered you?

Micah

THE COMING KINGDOM.

Micah 4:1-8.

There is a "kingdom" coming, as predicted by the prophets and foretold by our Lord and His apostles; a kingdom such as this world has never known. This kingdom will come when the King Himself appears. He who died for the world will yet assert His "right to reign" over it. When He comes to rule the nations, then that prayer He taught us in the days of His flesh, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven," will be abundantly fulfilled. "His kingdom is not of this world." It can never come out of present world conditions. It will come from God, and with "God our Saviour," who shall appear in "power and great glory" (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17).

I. Jesus as King Is Coming Again. As a Prophet He has appeared; as a Priest He now appears in the presence of God for us; as King He shall yet appear, and perfect His great work by bringing the world into subjection to His will; and when His redeemed people who have suffered for Him here shall share His honour and glory (1 Corinthians 6:2; Revelation 5:10). This is something of the grace that is to be brought unto us at the Revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:13). He is coming; yes, coming in Person as a Glorious Victor, just as He was seen to go (Acts 1:11).

II. When is this Kingdom Coming? Micah says: "In the last days it shall come to pass" (Micah 4:1). The "last days," not of the world's history, but of this present age. The day or the hour of His appearing no man can know; but the signs of the "last days" are something given us whereby we might know that the day of His appearing is drawing nigh. We are assured that in the last days perilous times will come (2 Timothy 3:1). These last times will be dangerous, hazardous, involving terrible risk: "Distress of nations with perplexity, men's hearts failing them for fear, while they are looking after those things which are coming on the earth." Then, while all such conditions are with us, "shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (Luke 21:25-28). Are these "signs" with us now or not? Many of these sorrows have always been with mankind, but in these "last days" they become "signs," as the world has no remedy for its own diseases. These signs are danger signals.

III. The Characteristics of His Kingdom, as revealed by this prophecy.

1. It will be Centred at Jerusalem. "The mountain of the House of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and exalted above the hills and peoples shall flow into it" (Micah 4:1, r.v.). Where else could this heavenly kingdom find its capital but in His own City. Even there where He Himself was crucified for the world's sin. Blessed thought, where His Cross of suffering and shame was lifted up, there will be His Throne of dominion, the symbol of power and victory over all His enemies. "The House of the Lord" will then be worthy of His Holy Name, when all peoples shall flow into it, and every tongue confess that He is Lord, Jerusalem will again become a praise on the earth.

2. It will be Universal. "Many nations shall come.... He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths, and the Word of the Lord shall go forth from Jerusalem" (Micah 4:2). The heathen shall be given Him for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession (Psalms 2:8). He who hung on a Cross will yet have a world bowing before Him. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive this honour and glory and dominion (Isaiah 9:7).

3. It will be Peaceful. "He shall judge... and rebuke. . . they shall beat their swords into plowshares... and shall learn war no more" (Micah 4:3). What a deliverance for a world now lying in wickedness! His Name shall be Prince of Peace, and the government shall be upon His shoulders (Isaiah 9:6). In that day the "prince of this world," now working in the children of disobedience, will be utterly overthrown. Meanwhile, let us hear and rest in His own comforting words: "Let not your heart be troubled... ye believe in Me... I will come again" (John 14:1-3).

4. It will be Abundantly Prosperous. "They shall sit every man under his vine, and under his fig tree, and none shall make them afraid" (Micah 4:4). No fear of raiders, or pestilence, or drought, for the wilderness and the desert shall blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly. The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water. There shall be joy and gladness, "and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isa. 35). No more anxious scanning of the sky, sighing for the refreshing rain; all the elements in earth, air, and sea under His control, and made subservient to the good of His people (Isa. 12).

5. It will be a Time of Great Joy. To His ancient people it will be a national resurrection, for "The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads" (Isaiah 35:10). Micah tells us: "In that day, saith the Lord, will I assemble her that halteth, and gather her that is driven out, and the afflicted; and I will make her a strong nation, and the Lord shall reign over them in Mount Zion... for ever" (Micah 4:6-7). What a reunion for this halting, scattered, and afflicted people. Truly their restoration will be as "life from the dead." A saved and happy nation! What a mighty influence they will have on the peoples of the earth. But what about the Church? Those who belong to Christ now? Ah, "Christ the firstfruits." Afterward, "they that are Christ's at His Coming. For He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet" (1 Corinthians 15:23-25). THE LORD'S CONTROVERSY.

Micah 6:1-8.

"Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy" (Micah 6:2) After all that He hath done for His people, why should there still be a "controversy" between them? Even God's chosen ones are often stubborn. God has had a controversy with humanity since Adam's fall. The great mission of the Lord Jesus Christ was that of reconciliation. Hear His- I. Sorrowful Questions. What pathos is in them, revealing His heart agony.

1. "O My people, What have I done unto Thee?" (Micah 6:3). Think of what I have done for thee! Think of how thou hast requited My longsuffering patience, and kindness toward thee. O My people, redeemed by the precious Blood of Christ, what have I done unto thee, that your heart is so cold toward Me, and your service so formal and fruitless?

2. "Wherein have I wearied thee? testify against Me" (Micah 6:3). Is it possible to get wearied of God? We may possibly get wearied in His service. Surely never of it. If spiritual things are becoming wearisome to your soul, would you dare to "testify against Him," that His dealings with

you are not in harmony with His revealed will? It is a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? (Isaiah 7:13).

II. Mercies Recalled. "O My people, remember" (Micah 6:5). How grievous it must be to our Heavenly Father when we grow weary of Him through forgetfulness of His benefits. Remember He says-

1. That "I Brought thee up out of Egypt" (Micah 6:4). Remember that I broke the power of your oppressors, and led you forth into joyful freedom. Brethren, let us never forget that it was the loving grace of God that delivered us from the power of sin, the bondage of the world, and the delusions of the Devil, into the blessed liberty of "sons of God."

2. That "I Redeemed Thee." The price Jehovah paid to redeem Israel out of Egypt was His terrible judgments upon her enemies. But the price He paid to redeem us from guilt and sin was the life and Blood of His own Beloved Son. "He gave Himself a ransom for us." Remember, ye are not your own, ye have been bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body and spirit, which are His.

3. That "I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam" (Micah 6:4-5). These three leaders are typical of a threefold blessing: Moses, the legislator; Aaron, the intercessor; Miriam, the song leader (Exodus 15:20-21). The word, the worship, and the praise. Has He not also given us His Word, like Moses; liberty of access, like Aaron; and the song of victory, like Miriam. Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory.

4. That "I turned Balaam's intended curse into a blessing" (Micah 6:5; see Numbers 23:11-12). What a wonderful proof this is of the overruling power of God on behalf of His people. Take no anxious thought for your life. He careth for you.

III. Personal Perplexities. In Micah 6:6-7, we have language that might well become an anxious sin-smitten soul, seeking the favour of God. "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord" (Micah 6:6). With what shall I come, that I might find acceptance in His eyes? This old question is ever and anon burrowing its way into Spirit-awakened minds and hearts. There is a deep conviction that something is needed. But what that something is remains a mystery to those who know not Jesus Christ as their Redeemer. "Shall I come with burnt-offerings? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" (Micah 6:7). Abraham was willing to give his only son Isaac, but God provided Himself with an offering. "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins (Hebrews 10:4). There is absolutely nothing man can offer God that can in any way take the place He has given the Christ, who Himself bore our sins to the accursed tree. Anything we can offer, apart from Him, is but an insult to His Cross. In that Cross there is the "wherewith" we can come boldly before the Lord.

IV. The Way Revealed. "He hath showed thee, O man, what doth the Lord require of thee. To do justly, to love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God" (Micah 6:8). Many proud and worldly people quote these words to justify themselves before God and men. They say, "I do justly; I love mercy and walk humbly." Yes, but no experience of truly walking with God! It is easy for us to talk of justice, mercy, and humility, while we may know nothing experimentally of the reconciling Blood of His Cross. "How can two walk together except they be agreed?" How can we be agreed with God

if we are persistently ignoring the redemptive work of Jesus Christ on our behalf? We may do justly and love mercy, but to humbly walk with thy God is impossible without a new birth, a new spirit, and an entire surrender of ourselves to Him in the daily life.

REJOICE IN THE LORD.

Micah 7:7-20

"The joy of the Lord is your strength." The closing words of this prophet give us abundant cause for this joy, for his God is our God. See here-

I. His Joyful Confidence. The following utterances in view of very depressing conditions, seem to be the spontaneous expressions of a satisfied and joyful heart

1. "I will Look unto the Lord" (v. 7). The upward look to the believing soul is always a clear one, even when the outward and the inward look is dark, cloudy, and foreboding. "Look unto Me, and be ye saved."

2. "I will Wait for the God of my Salvation" (v. 7). The look may be like a flash, but we must also quietly wait for Him The waiting time may be the testing time; but if we are waiting for God's salvation it will surely come.

3. "When I Fall I shall Arise." So that the joy of the enemy over the fall shall be quickly spoiled (Micah 7:8). "Falls" are not to be expected, for "He is able to keep you from falling." When you do fall, either openly or secretly, arise before the enemy gets time to rejoice.

4. "When I Sit in Darkness, the Lord shall be a Light unto me" (v. 8). Blessed darkness, when all the light we have is in His Holy Presence. "Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me" (Psa. 23).

5. "I will Bear the Indignation. . until He Plead my Cause" (Micah 7:9). When stricken by the chastening hand of God it is good just to bear the stroke until He plead my cause, as Job did, and God did plead his cause and reward his patience.

6. "He shall Bring me to the Light, and I shall Behold His Righteousness" (Micah 7:9). The patient, trustful sufferers He shall bring into the light, and cause such to behold his righteousness in all His dealings with them, for He doeth all things well. And at last, when He brings us into the glorious light of our Redeemer's face, and behold His righteousness in all His dealings with us while pilgrims and strangers on the earth, what a revelation, what joy, what cause for praise!

II. Joyful Reasons for Such Confidence. In these verses (18-20) we have what has been recognised as an unparalleled expression of the gracious character of our God. "Who is a God like unto Thee?" Here are seven things He does for His people.

1. He Pardoneth Iniquity. What a comfort to know that His pardon can extend to our lack of rectitude, or moral principle, in our dealings with our fellow-men. Such sins may not always be apparent to others, but they are naked in his eyes.

2. He Passeth by the Transgression. He is willing to overlook our trespasses against His holy law and our presumptuous intruding into the holy domain of His Presence, as when we come before

Him in our pride and self-confidence.

3. He Retaineth Not His Anger for Ever. His anger is as just and as holy as His love. But in grace He retaineth not His anger, because love has triumphed. We may well rejoice as we see the proof of this in the gift of His Son (John 3:16).

4. He Delighteth in Mercy. We do not read that He delighteth in judgment. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that he should turn from his way," for "He delighteth in mercy." Herein lies the hope of sinful men.

5. He will have Compassion and Subdue our Iniquities. To conquer and subdue is something deeper than merely to forgive. This he does for us by the Incoming of His mighty Spirit into the citadel of the soul

6. He Casts all our Sins into the Depths of the Sea. This is, of course, figurative language. They are buried where there can be no resurrection, into the depths of His eternal forgetfulness. "Behind His back," where His holy eyes can see them no more (Isaiah 38:17).

7. He will Perform His Promises to His believing children. "He is faithful that hath promised." All these gracious features constitute a true likeness of the Father, as revealed to us in the face of Jesus Christ, who appeared as the image of the invisible God, and who said, "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." Rejoice in the Lord.

Chapter 50

Nahum

GREAT IS OUR GOD.

Nahum 1:1-8.

The prophet is here burdened with a terrible sentence. But while the judgments recorded were against old Nineveh, they are a very solemn revelation to us of the great and terrible God with whom impenitent sinners will have to do.

I. God is Jealous (Nahum 1:2). Jealousy may be defined as an uneasy state of mind, under fear that another has engaged the affections of one you love. God is jealous of any rival for our affections and trust, just because His love is so good and true. "Love not the world, nor the things of the world," that you provoke Him not to jealousy. The world and self are His rivals.

II. The Lord's Revenge is Furious (Nahum 1:2). When God is for us His power is Almighty; when against us it is equally Almighty. When He avengeth His adversaries it will be with a fury that is overwhelming. O proud man, think of the God with whom ye have to do.

III. The Lord is Slow to Anger (Nahum 1:3). He is not what we say of some people, "quiet tempered." All past history is proof of this. In the days before the Flood God gave them 120 years' notice (Genesis 6:3). This longsuffering patience of God is often misconstrued as utter indifference. While His anger comes slowly, bless His Name, His love comes quickly.

IV. The Lord is Great in Power, and will not at all acquit the wicked" (Nahum 1:3) How shall we escape if we neglect His great salvation? Here is the answer. "Not at all." What a solemn and urgent truth this is for those who deny His love and ignore His proffered mercy in the Gospel of His grace. "He that believeth not is condemned already" (John 3:18). But the final execution of this sentence awaits the day of His great power (Nahum 1:6).

V. The Lord has His Way in the whirlwind, in the storm, the clouds, the rivers, the sea, and the fire (Nahum 1:6). We cannot imagine any of the natural forces He has created rebelling against His will. They are all weapons at His disposal. He has His way in them all. We are assured that every atom in the universe is under law. The winds are in His fist, the clouds are the dust of His feet. It is man and fallen angels who are the rebels. But "who shall stand before His indignation?" (Nahum 1:6).

VI. "The Lord is Good, a Strong Hold in the Day of Trouble" (Nahum 1:7). The Lord is great in power, but also in goodness. His goodness is a strong hold for us in the day of our trouble because of sin, or weakness, or failure. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psalms 46:1). "By grace are ye saved" (Ephesians 2:8)

VII. The Lord Knoweth Them that Trust in Him (Nahum 1:7). We are known unto God, not by our wisdom, not by our many works, or popularity in the eyes of men, but by our trust in Him. The Lord knoweth such, although the world knows nothing of them. Have faith in God, and rest assured that

He knoweth them that trust in Him, and will surely satisfy them with His goodness. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.

Habakkuk

ON THE WATCH TOWER.

Habakkuk 2.

We need not imagine the prophet climbing to some hill top to get this expected vision, but that in his own heart he would take the attitude of being on the outlook, and wait for God's message. The message given can be easily applied to the present times, as all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof (2 Timothy 3:16). This message is chiefly for reproof and instruction in righteousness. Here are- I. Words of Warning. Expressed in five solemn "woes."-

1. Woe to the Dishonest. "To him that increaseth that which is not his own" (Habakkuk 2:6). This applies to the unscrupulous master, the dishonest servant, the unsympathetic miser, and to all religious hypocrites, who claim that which is not their own.

2. Woe to the Covetous. "Him that coveteth... that he may set his nest on high" (Habakkuk 2:9). This is coveting for self-display and social aggrandisement. Although such may never gain what their vanity craves for, their sin lies in their covetous spirit. Some may even covet the gifts and power of a Christian brother; not that they might bring more honour to God, but that they themselves might get more honour from men. Beware of this woe. "Pride goeth before a fall." It is lawful and wise "to covet earnestly the best gifts" (1 Corinthians 12:31), just as a wise workman might covet the best tools, that he might be able to do better work for his master.

3. Woe to the Oppressor. "To him that buildeth with blood and established by iniquity" (Habakkuk 2:12). Thank God, the old slavery has been abolished, when verily, cruel men built fortunes on the blood of others, and established their stronghold by iniquity. Every nation, every cause that is built on this policy will certainly be smitten with the woe of the Almighty, as all past history attests. The footsteps of every industry and every individual life that is being built up by iniquity will be followed by the unerring and overwhelming woe of God. "Be sure your sin will find you out."

4. Woe to the Deceiver. "To him that giveth his neighbour drink, that they might look on their shame" (Habakkuk 2:15). This attempt to drug a neighbour, that advantage may be taken of them is a kind of deception that has many practitioners in our own day. Not only in giving men drink that they might laugh at their folly, but in giving such teaching that stupify and bring such dullness and insensibility over the mind that the precious things of God's Gospel become of no vital value And all that they might be classed as followers with us.

5. Woe to the Idolater. "Woe unto him that saith unto the wood, Awake, and to the dumb stone, Arise" (Habakkuk 2:19). We pity the poor blinded heathen, bowing down to the workmanship of their own hands, and worshipping the devices of their own hearts What better are the worshippers of fashion, of fiction, of sport, and of purely selfish interests? Whatever takes the place of God in our thoughts and lives is our dumb idol in the day of our real need.

II. Words of Encouragement. Here is a brilliant star gleaming in a cloudy sky. It is the Morning Star of Promise heralding the new day of universal blessing. "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Habakkuk 2:14; also Isaiah 11:9). When our Lord comes again in power and great glory, when every eye shall see Him, and all shall know Him, from the least unto the greatest, then shall be fulfilled the promise given at His birth: "He shall be great To Him shall be given the throne of His father David, and He shall reign, and of His kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:30-33). Be of good cheer. As sure as the world's Redeemer has come, so surely will the world's Kingly Deliverer appear, when all power shall be given Him on the earth, and when the kingdoms of this world shall become the Kingdom of our God and of His Anointed. The closing verse of this part of the prophecy gives us another peace-assuring statement. "The Lord is in His Holy Temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him." The conditions of the world when the King of kings appears will be tumult and uproar. Here is His call for silence. "Let all the earth keep silence before Him." What a solemn, holy hush, when all the earth is silent before Him. The noise of battle, the war of traffic, the strife of tongues, the clamour of scepticism: every discordant note in His ear silenced. Peace on earth, goodwill among men, and glory to God. THE SECRET OF ABIDING JOY.

Habakkuk 3:17, Habakkuk 3:18.

This old prophet with the crooked name had the secret of a happy life. And here it is for you: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom," etc, "yet I will rejoice in the Lord." The meaning is: Although the Chaldeans invade the land and burn up the vineyards and oliveyards, hinder the harvest, steal the flocks, and rob me of every earthly possession; yet I will rejoice in the Lord. Will you and I say that in the day of calamity?

I. The Christian has Joy. "I will rejoice." Christianity is not a system of melancholy. Many Christians may have long faces, but every true believer in God has a joyful heart. The joy of the Christian is not that superficial kind of mirth that finds expression only in "roars of laughter." It is more like the calm of the settled water in the deep sea, undisturbed by those elements that constantly affect the surface. "The peace of God that passeth all understanding."

II. This Joy is in the Lord. "I will rejoice in the Lord." This joy implies knowledge. You cannot rejoice in the Lord unless you know Him. If you knew Him you would love Him. If you loved Him you would rejoice in Him. We cannot rejoice in God as we ought until we have found in Him that which satisfies every desire of the heart, and fills up every longing of the new-born life. See that little dog creeping over to that sunny spot of the carpet. How it rejoices in the sunshine. The reason why so many Christians are not filled with joy is because they don't abide in the bright warmth of the Holy Spirit. Friends, the Cross of Christ is the only bright spot on earth where guilty men can share the joy and happiness of Heaven.

III. This Joy is the Joy of Salvation. Habakkuk says here, "I will joy in the God of my salvation." "How is it that you are always so happy, Annie?" asked a visitor who had called and marked the little girl's brightness. "Oh!" she said, "I am happy because I am forgiven." After the Israelites had passed through the Red Sea, they struck up the Song of Salvation (Exodus 15:1). How can they help from singing who have been saved. Jonah was in a sore plight when swallowed by the great fish, with the weeds of the deep wrapt round his head-the picture of a lost man. But he cried unto God out of the belly of this Hell. The Lord heard and saved him. Then how gladly he sang

"Salvation is of the Lord." Salvation has two sides-the manward and the Godward. Your side is to repent and believe. God's side is to regenerate and restore (John 3:7-16). You cannot regenerate your own soul, but God will if you believe. You are commanded to repent and believe the Gospel. This you can do if you will, and you will perish if you don't. Let me say further that-

IV. This is the Joy of Anticipation. In Habakkuk 3:19 we read: "He will make my feet like hind's feet, to walk upon mine high places." The Christian life is not only one of happiness, but also of progress. A climbing from one high place of grace to another. It is not a grasping at gaudy bubbles that vanish with the touch, but the laying hold of spiritual certainties. For this feet like the hind's feet are needed. I understand that the peculiarity of the hind's feet is that they not only rest on the rocks, but cling to them, so that they can easily stand on high places. Such represent the feet of faith that rests on and cling to the great and precious promises of God. The Christian's prospects are mountains high. The hope of the wicked shall perish.

V. This Joy is Independent of Earthly Possessions. "Although the fig tree shall not blossom," etc., "yet will I rejoice in the Lord." Although I am stripped naked of every earthly thing, yet will I joy in the God of my salvation. You see, beloved brethren, that the joys of the believer are not in the things of this world, but independent of them. Old Job could say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

John Bradford, while in Newgate prison, the night before he was burned at Smithfield, swung himself on his bedpost with great glee, saying to his brother martyr: "Fine shining we shall make to-morrow when the flame is kindled." Was he mad? No. He was rejoicing in the Lord. Do you know the Lord like that? Have you found in Him your all, your everything? A poor negro slave, who was once asked if he was never unhappy, said: "When all de world are saying, 'Dis is my house,' 'Dat is my cottonfield,' I just look up and say, 'Dare is my house, and dare is my Saviour,' and when I own de Lord me tinks I own eberyting." He rejoiced in the God of his salvation. If you are an unhappy Christian it is because you know so little of your Lord. The joys of the worldling are like the flash of a rocket that glares for a moment and is gone. The joy of the true believer is like a star in the Heavens- it abides for life; it abides for ever. "The joy of the Lord is your strength."

Zephaniah

THE BLESSINGS OF THE LORD.

Zephaniah 3:10-20.

The blessings here promised are, of course, for Israel, and will be completely fulfilled when the Lord will bring full deliverance to His waiting people at His Second Coming. But the spiritual import is for God's people in every age. Shall we look at- I. What He hath Done. In the light of our own experience as Christians.

1. He Hath Taken Away thy Judgments (Zephaniah 3:15). The judgment hanging over us like a thick cloud, because of sin. He hath taken away because of the Cross. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). The judgment is past, and the true light now shineth upon the forgiven soul.

2. He Hath Cast Out thine Enemy (Zephaniah 3:15). He hath dislodged that wicked spirit that still worketh in the children of disobedience. Satan's sphere of operation is now outside the citadel of the justified soul. Therefore keep thy gates closed against him, and yield not to temptation.

3. He is in the Midst of Thee (Zephaniah 3:15). The Mightier Spirit has come to take possession. He shall be with you and in you (John 14:17). Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world. Ye are more than conquerors through Him. "God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved." "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age."

II. What He Will Do. God is in the midst of thee.

1. He will Save (Zephaniah 3:17). The salvation of God is a past, present, and future deliverance. One great whole in His eternal purpose. Don't we need a daily salvation from sin and folly, from doubting and fearfulness, from spiritual apathy and ignorance, from self-assertiveness and fruitless testimony? He will save. There is none other Name under Heaven whereby we can be so saved.

2. He will Rejoice Over Thee with Joy (Zephaniah 3:17). Yes, those who are daily being fully saved bring gladness to the Saviour's heart. The Lord will not rejoice over a spoiled thing, or a marred vessel, or a professedly Christian life that is failing to fulfil His high and holy purpose. If your life is a sacrifice of joy unto the Lord you may rest assured that "He will rejoice over thee." "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:11).

3. He will Rest In His Love (Zephaniah 3:17). Oh, the sweetness of this thought, that our God can find rest in the greatness of His love for us: that love that never faileth, and is stronger than death. He will, and does, rest in that love that gave His beloved Son to the death for us all. Rest in His love as seen in the willing sacrifice offered by His Son. Rest in the triumph of that love that bringeth salvation to all men. What a resting place this is for our own hearts, now and ever. Rest in His love, not in our own.

III. What We Should Do.

1. Praise His Blessed Name. "Sing, O daughter of Zion. Shout O Israel. Be glad and rejoice with all the heart" (Zephaniah 3:14). "Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men" (Psalms 107:15). In that day Israel will be "made a praise among all people of the earth" (Zephaniah 3:20). For many generations they have been a "sneer and a byword" among the nations, but their "crowning day is coming," when their King and the Church's Redeemer shall take unto Himself His right and reign over the whole earth. O Christian, be glad and rejoice with all your heart, for He hath done great things for thee. For he hath delivered in the past, He doth deliver in the present, and will yet deliver (2 Corinthians 1:10). Thanks be unto God.

2. Fear Not. "Fear thou not" (Zephaniah 3:16). There is no place for fearfulness and uncertainty in the Economy of Divine Grace. He who planned the Heavens, and the whole scheme of man's salvation, and the movements of an atom, will not fail His own trusting children. "He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my Helper, I will not fear" (Hebrews 13:5-6).

3. Be Diligent in Service. "Let not thine hands be slack" (Zephaniah 3:16). Slack hands are an evidence of slack hearts. Slackness in God's work is a prevailing weakness among His people. The "go slow" policy is largely practised in the ranks of Christian workers. Whatsoever thy hand finds to do, do it heartily as unto the Lord. Let us seek to serve our gracious Master just as if He were standing by our side looking on, and waiting to receive the finished article.

Haggai

CONSIDER YOUR WAYS.

Haggai 1:3-10.

Thus saith the Lord of hosts, "Consider your ways" (Haggai 1:5). This call comes to His thoughtless, dilatory, procrastinating people Let us hear it as coming to ourselves. Is there not a tendency with us to be slack, and backward in facing facts. Consider your ways- I. In Relation to God's Cause.

1. They said, "The time is not come to build the Lord's house" (Haggai 1:2). How ready we are at times to postpone the things we should do for the cause of Christ. We feel we should consecrate ourselves to God, but "the time is not come," or that we should make an offering to some missionary enterprise but "the time is not come." The time to help on God's work is an ever present opportunity. "Consider your ways."

2. "They dwelt in their own ceiled houses, while His house lay waste" (Haggai 1:4). They were content that their own personal interests were prosperous, while the house of the Lord was in ruins. Just as there are many professing Christians to-day satisfied with material things, while the cause of Christ languisheth for lack of faith and personal effort. "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?" "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God." "Consider your ways"- II. In View of the Results of your Labours.

1. "Ye have sown much, and bring in little" (Haggai 1:6). We who are ministers of His Word have much need to lay this reminder to heart. There is something sadly wrong where there is much sowing and little reaping. Is it the sower or the seed that is to be blamed? Or is the cause of failure the blighting breath of God's disapproval? For it is "God who giveth the increase." Those who sow much of the seed of the Word of God, and bring in little, have need to "consider their ways," for such results are not in harmony with God's purpose.

2. Ye "Eat and have not enough" (v. 6). This is the spiritual condition of multitudes. They have a keen appetite for the things of this life-wealth, position, honour, and the praise of men. They are constantly eating, but never satisfied. They cannot say, like Esau, "I have enough." Hungry souls, but will not take the true "Bread of Life" that they may have the life which is for ever (John 6:51).

3. Ye "Clothe you, but there is none warm" (v. 6). They wrap themselves up in the flimsy garments of their own righteousness, and complain of the cold. There is nothing like the "Righteousness of God, which is unto all and upon all them that believe," for keeping the heart warm in the cold season of adverse circumstances. Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and His righteousness, and the glow of His Presence will keep you warm.

4. Ye put your "wages in a bag with holes" (v. 6). The wages you have earned by the efforts of your pride and self-seeking become of no practical value to your soul. "The wages of sin is death." Death is a bag with tremendous holes in it. Every ungodly thing will fall through it. "Consider your

ways"- III. In View of the Work to be Done.

1. The Work. "Build the house, and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord" (Haggai 1:8). The house of the Lord was the Temple at Jerusalem which stood for worship and testimony. The Church of God, which is the "Body of Christ," stands for worship and witnessing. It is a spiritual temple, built with spiritual stones. That building is now going on, and we are called to be fellow-workmen together with Him (2 Corinthians 6:1, margin). Our work then is to build this holy temple of the Lord in which He will take pleasure and be glorified. If we have been in any way indifferent to this Divine purpose, let us "consider our ways."

2. The Material. "Go up to the mountain and bring wood" (Haggai 1:8). The temple at Jerusalem could not be built with high and noble thoughts or eloquent speakers, they must have timber. "Go, bring wood." The great spiritual temple of which Christ is the Foundation, cannot be built with mere formal prayers, or powerless sermons, or social activities. A spiritual building needs spiritual stones, souls quickened by the Holy Spirit of God, "built upon the foundation of the apostles, fitly framed together, growing unto an holy temple of the Lord" (Ephesians 2:19-22). But where are these living stones to come from? "Go up to the mountains" and bring them. They had to go up, probably to Mount Lebanon, for the wood. We must go up to Mount Calvary if we would secure what is needful for the building of this holy temple of the Lord. To win souls for Christ we need personal cleansing, personal consecration, and a personal enduement of the sacrificial spirit of Jesus. "He that winneth souls is wise." In considering your ways, take time to consider God's ways. THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS.

Haggai 2:6-9.

All agree that the reference here is to the Coming of the Messiah. But the birth of Christ was not heralded by a universal "shaking," but rather, we are told that there was universal peace at the first Christmas. So the reference must be to His Second Appearing. Note, then-

I. The Condition of the Nations at His Second Coming. "I will shake the Heavens, the earth, the sea, and the dry land. And I will shake all nations" (Haggai 2:6-7). Convulsions in nature, and nations being shaken to pieces by internal strife. Our daily newspapers are giving us abundant evidence of this shaking process in operation. "I will overturn, overturn, overturn, until He come whose right it is" (Ezekiel 21:27). We are not warranted to look for a converted world before He comes, but for these signs (see Luke 21:25-28). And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, for your redemption draweth nigh. "Distress of nations," and "Men's hearts failing them for fear" are the warning signals of His near approach.

II. The Desire of All Nations shall Come. But do all nations, as nations, desire the coming of the Lord? There is no evidence of this. This word "desire" is of peculiar significance. According to Dr. Young, the word in the Hebrew only occurs in one other place in the Bible (1 Samuel 9:20), where the sense seems to be, "They desired the things which a wise and mighty ruler would bring." "The desirable things of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory" (Haggai 2:7, r.v.). The nations, as such, do not desire the Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, but mutely long for the things which Christ alone can bring.

1. As a Mediator. One to stand between the wrongs of men and the rights of God. His Presence would do more for peace than a "League of all Nations." He will be the God-appointed and final

Arbiter in all the controversies of earth.

2. As a Deliverer. "There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer" (Romans 11:26). All national enemies have their stronghold in the hearts of men. All that is in the world at enmity with God lies in the human heart. A Deliverer is needed. When we think of the age-long blindness of the Jewish nation, of the problem of racial hatred, of a rapidly growing heathendom, of the growing army of "seducing spirits," and the comparative impo-tency of the Church to win the world for Christ. But when He Comes, "All nations shall bow down before Him."

3. As a Physician. He alone can heal all our diseases: all the running sores in our social, industrial, commercial, and national life. His Presence will be a balm for every wound. No one shall say, "I am sick."

4. As a King. When He came as Redeemer it was in lowliness and weakness; but when He comes as King it will be in kingly fashion-with "great power and glory." Then shall He judge the poor and save the needy. Then shall His Presence be like rain upon the mown grass, and as showers that water the earth. Then in His days shall there be abundance of peace. Then shall the heathen that dwell in the wilderness bow before Him. Then shall His enemies lick the dust. Then shall all kings fall down before Him, and all nations serve Him. Then shall He redeem from deceit and violence. Then shall be given unto Him the gold of Sheba, and daily shall He be praised. Then shall His Name be continued, and all nations shall call Him blessed. Then shall the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen (Psa. 72). "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Zechariah

THE UNFIT PREPARED.

Zechariah 3:1-5

Joshua, the high priest, may be regarded as a symbolic character, representing the degraded priesthood as a whole at that time. We may regard it as a parable of how defiled Christians may be restored, and fitted for the Lord's service.

I. The Cause of His Unfitness.

1. He had Filthy Garments (Zechariah 3:3). The garments represent the outward and visible expression of his character. When the outward life-our acts and deeds- condemn our profession, then our garments are unclean, and we become unfit for His holy service. Pure religion, and undefiled before God, is to keep himself unspotted from the world (James 1:27).

2. He was like "A Brand in the Fire" (Zechariah 3:2). Fire, like sin, usually has small beginnings. "By one man sin entered into the world." A brand is a fit subject for the fire. A man whose character has become filthy in the light of God becomes a fit subject for the blackening and consuming power of sin. Like a brand, he is helpless in the fire.

3. He had an Adversary Standing by to Resist (Zechariah 3:1). Satan, our adversary, is always "standing by," ready to resist any efforts that might be made for our deliverance from uncleanness, and salvation from our unfitness for the work of our Lord. "Your adversary the Devil" is pleased with your stained garments, and is a standing enemy to the transforming grace of God.

II. The Manner of His Deliverance. "The angel of the Lord stood by" (Zechariah 3:5). Perhaps the "Angel of the Covenant," the Son of God, to see that Satan was resisted, and that this poor, unclean, and disqualified servant might by the all-sufficient grace of God be cleansed and restored. For here grace reigns.

1. He was Forgiven. "I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee" (Zechariah 3:4). Forgiveness is our first need as sinners and our first need as backsliders. Because all sin is against God. Sin is the transgression of His law and of His love. If we lose out fellowship with God, we lose our power for Him. But we have a God who is ready to pardon (Psalms 86:5).

2. He was Cleansed. "Take away the filthy garments from him" (Zechariah 3:4). How inconsistent it would be for any one claiming to have received the forgiveness of God and yet continuing to wear garments that are filthy in the eyes of their fellow-men. "Put off the old man with his deeds" (Colossians 3:9). Filthy garments are not to be covered over, but taken away.

3. He was Clothed with Change of Raiment (Zechariah 3:4). What a change, when we get rid of our soiled and torn garments, and receive that robe of righteousness which Christ alone can bestow. That righteousness which puts us right with God and right for our priestly office in making intercession in His Name for others. Be clothed with humility.

4. He had A Fair Mitre set upon his Head (Zechariah 3:5). The mitre was the crown of his priesthood, the symbol of Divine authority. All God's cleansed and clothed ones are crowned with honour. The holy anointing oil was put upon the mitred head. "Upon man's flesh shall it not be poured" (Exodus 30:32). We should ever remember that the anointing of the Holy Spirit comes upon what God Himself hath given.

III. The Renewed Promise. After the cleansing and crowning comes the new purpose. There must now be:

1. A New Walk. "Walk in My ways " (Zechariah 3:7). Hitherto the Lord could say, "My ways are not your ways, neither are your ways My ways." Because there was no agreement they could not walk together. But now, cleansed in heart and renewed in mind, the only path to be chosen was the "New and living way," as revealed in His Word: the way of faith and willing obedience to the truth. Jesus Christ said: "I am the Way. Follow Me. He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness" (John 14:6; John 8:12).

2. New Motives. "Thou wilt keep My charge" (Zechariah 3:7). "Thou shalt be faithful unto Me in the work to which you are called." The new man in Christ Jesus has new motive springs in his soul. His chief desire is to honour his Lord, and to keep true to His charge as revealed in His Word, that God might work in him both to will and to do of His good pleasure (Ephesians 2:13). Paul's one motive was: "To me to live is Christ" (Ephesians 1:21). All who are crowned with the mitre of holiness will be able gladly to say: "Not I, but Christ." THE SUPREMACY OF THE SPIRITUAL.

Zechariah 4:1-7.

This vision of the Candlestick, or Lampstand, teaches us that there is in God's purpose a real and vital relationship between spiritual and visible things. We might look at this vision in connection with-

I. The Temple of God as a Witness. The temple was not yet built, but God saw it already as a perfected thing, as the prophet saw the Golden Candlestick-complete with its bowls, and lamps, and pipes; with its oil, and the two olive trees standing by as living, unfailing source of supply for the lamps. This is what the temple of God was to be for His people: a witness for Him. But a lampstand is not all that was needed. There must be lamps and a plentiful supply of oil if light is to shine. Without the oil (emblems of the Holy Spirit) even a golden lampstand might become a stumblingblock. So the message of this vision is: "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Zechariah 4:6). How applicable this truth is to-

II. The Church of God as a Witness. The secret of the Church's power lies in the constant flow of the Holy Spirit. This Spirit, like the oil, comes from the living and abiding Sources, the Father and the Son (John 14:16-18). Let us give heed to Jehovah's warning that this building is not to be reared by mere human might or power, but by His Spirit. In these days there are many substitutes for the power of God's mighty Spirit in doing Christian work. Some trust the power of money, some education, some organisation, some legislation, and some the power of numbers. None of these are to be despised, but none of them, nor all of them together, can do the work or take the place of the Holy Spirit. None of these can convict the world of sin, or righteousness, and of judgment. None of these can quicken a dead soul into newness of life and reveal the things of Christ. None of these can clothe the message of the Gospel with power to win souls for Christ. None of these can

be a "Comforter" to the troubled spirit or make intercession for us with unutterable groan-ings. None of these can breathe the breath of life over a valley of dead bones (Ezekiel 37:9). In this great God honouring work it is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing. The secret of the Church's power is the operation of the Holy Spirit. What is true of the Church as a whole is true of the individual life. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto Me" (Acts 1:8). "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" (Acts 19:2).

BEHOLD THE BRANCH.

Zechariah 6:9-15.

We believe that there is here-

I. A Symbolic Representation. Joshua is here again brought before us in a symbolic fashion. In chapter 3 we have seen him in filthy garments, then forgiven, cleansed, and adorned with a fair mitre, and so equipped for the holy office as high priest. Now he has golden crowns, or a composite crown, put upon his head, bestowing on him kingly honours', by which he becomes a true type of the Coming Christ, who would be both Priest and King, after the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:6).

II. A Prophetic Announcement. "Behold the Man whose name is The Branch." "The Branch" is one of the most significant of Messiah's Names. A branch bears the fruit and reveals the character of the tree. Christ as Jehovah's Branch, revealed by His words and deeds the true character of His Father. Jesus said, "I am the Vine, ye are the branches," the fruit-bearing part of the vine. Just as if God should say: "I am the True Vine, and Jesus Christ is the Branch, from which My fruit is found." All the blessings that hang on this Branch for our present and future life are the outcome of the love of the Eternal Father. As a Son, Christ is a true and fruitful Branch of the Godhead. O the multitudes who have sat under the shadow of this Branch with great delight! Note what is said of the Branch as a Person-

1. "He shall grow up out of His place" (v. 12). His place was a lowly one: one of humility, sorrow, shame, rejection, and crucifixion, and burial in a borrowed grave. But He grew up. "Up from the grave He arose." He grew up, and up, till He vanished out of sight and reached the Throne of the Heavens (Luke 24:51). His cause shall yet grow up.

2. "He shall build the Temple of the Lord" (v. 13). He shall build and see the completion of that great spiritual temple, "the Church of God," which will be a witness in the ages to come to the redemptive power of His own precious Blood (Isaiah 53:11).

3. "He shall bear the Glory." The glory of the new temple shall be all on Himself. He who bore the burden of our sins, and of the Cross, shall bear the glory that was to follow (Hebrews 2:9). The government and the glory shall be upon His shoulder (Isaiah 9:6).

4. He "shall Sit and Rule upon His Throne" (v. 13). He had His Cross, and He will have His Throne. He was cast out by rulers on earth, ,but He will yet rule the nations of the earth. His Kingdom shall be the kingdoms of the world (Revelation 11:15).

5. "He shall be a Priest upon His Throne" (v. 13). What a blessed combination, King and Priest, an Enthroned Priest, a King to govern His people and subdue His enemies; a Priest crowned to bear His people's needs before the Throne of His Almighty Father. The King rules, the Priest intercedes.

6. The Counsel of Peace shall be Between Them Both. What is that which lies between the King and the Priest? Literally, it may be difficult to define, but in a spiritual sense, in connection with the character of our Great High Priest, the meaning is by no means obscure to the spiritually enlightened. Christ, our High Priest, offered Himself a Sacrifice for our sins on the Cross. Christ, our Coming King, will yet make His redeemed ones kings and priests to reign on the earth (Revelation 5:9-10). The counsel and message of peace and power comes from between, or belonging to both the Cross and the Throne.

FORMAL WORSHIP AND POWERLESS PRAYERS.

Zechariah 7:4-14.

The Temple at Jerusalem was in process of building, when the question was asked: "Shall I weep and separate myself as I have done these so many years?" (Zechariah 7:3). Here we have the Lord's answer, which is a charge against them of mere- I. Formal Worship. Formality in worship, or trusting in the form, is alas, very prevalent.

1. Hypocritical Fasting. The Lord asks: "When ye fasted and mourned, did ye at all fast unto Me?" (Zechariah 7:5). When they fasted it was not that they might get into closer fellowship with God, but, like the hypocrites in our Lord's time, that they might appear unto men to fast (Matthew 6:16-18). It is possible in many things to deny ourselves for the glory of ourselves in the eyes of others.

2. Selfishness In Eating and Drinking. "Ye eat and drink for yourselves" (Zechariah 7:6). How little do we think that in our ordinary, every-day "eating and drinking" we should do all to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31); thanking Him for such mercies that help to strengthen us for His work. Even at the Lord's table we may eat and drink judgment on our own soul by not discerning the Lord's body (1 Corinthians 11:29). Our worthiness for this is not in our moral goodness, but in our spiritual discernment.

3. Neglect of the Word of the Lord. "Should ye not hear the words which the Lord hath cried?" (Zechariah 7:7). The formalist allows no special value for the Word of the Lord, but is very punctilious about outward acts and ceremonies. He or she may carry a Bible or Prayer Book to Church, but they seldom or never seriously read it, or offer up their own desires unto God (1 John 5:15). Such have need to pray the prayer of Duncan Mathieson: "Lord, stamp Eternity on my eyeballs."

II. Powerless Prayers. There are prayers that are powerless, because God will not listen to them (Zechariah 7:13), and because they come from dishonest and hardened hearts (Zechariah 7:12). Note some of the causes of failure, as recorded here-

1. There was a Lack of Mercy and Compassion. "Shew mercy and compassion every man to his brother" (Zechariah 7:9). Our attitude to our fellowmen has much to do with the helping or hindering of our prayers. "First be reconciled to thy brother, then offer thy gifts" (Matthew 5:24).

We incur God's displeasure if we from the heart forgive not every one his brother (Matthew 18:35). He that loveth God must love his brother also (1 John 4:21).

2. They Oppressed the Helpless. "Oppress not the widow, the fatherless, nor the poor" (Zechariah 7:10). To take advantage of those because of their helplessness is a blatant insult to the God who "delighteth in mercy." Surely that man's religion is in vain (James 1:27).

3. There was Evil Thinking. Imagining evil against another in your heart (Zechariah 7:10). Thoughts are naked things before God. Evil thoughts against your brother will poison your prayers. As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he before God. "The pure in heart shall see God."

4. They Refused to Hearken to the Words which the Lord hath sent (Zechariah 7:12-13). To refuse to hear the voice of His written Word is to close the door of the heart against Heaven's benediction. "If you will not hear My cry, neither will I hear your cry, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Zechariah 7:13).

5. The Final Result of Unanswered Prayers. A grieved God, scattered hopes, bondage and desolation (Zechariah 7:14). "Ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss that ye may consume what you get upon your own lusts" (James 4:3). The remedy for all this is given us in James 4:8-10.

O JERUSALEM! JERUSALEM!

Zechariah 8:20-23.

Jesus looked on the city and wept over it, saying: "O Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets... how often would I have gathered thy children together: and ye would not. Behold your house is left unto you desolate. Ye shall not see Me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord" (Matthew 23:37-39). In this prophecy Zechariah gives us the vision of Jerusalem restored, the Presence of the Lord, and the gathering together of her children.

I. The Centre of Attraction. The Holy City (Zechariah 8:22). Glorious things are spoken of thee, O Jerusalem, the city of the Great King. But the attraction was not the city as such, but the fact that "The Lord Himself had suddenly come to dwell among them" (Malachi 3:1). What is the chief attraction in our modern religious assemblies? Is it the gorgeous building, the fine music, or the eloquent preacher? The true aim would be: "Sirs, we would see Jesus."

II. The Gathering of the People. "Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord in Jerusalem" (Zechariah 8:22, r.v.). What a stirring among the "dry bones" this will be. The Shiloh in Kingly Power has come, and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be (Genesis 49:10). What a holy, Christ-honouring convocation this will be. Sectarianism will have no place in that day. Paul says: "We beseech you, brethren, by the Coming of our Lord, and by our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not shaken in mind" (2 Thessalonians 2:1).

III. The Purpose of this Gathering. "Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord" (Zechariah 8:21). "They shall come to seek the Lord and to pray" (Zechariah 8:22). In those revival days shall ten men (perhaps Gentiles) take hold of a Jew, saying, "We will go with you for we have heard that God is with you" (Zechariah 8:23). They heard, they believed and obeyed. No one will be able, sneeringly, to say on that day, that this Gospel is a failure. Great cities, peoples, and nations

flocking to Him, like doves to their windows. In our own days we have a glorious message for every creature from the lips of this same Lord: "Come unto Me." But with what indifference the tidings is heard. Oh, how much we need the power of the outpoured Spirit, that many may seek the Lord and pray before Him.

IV. The Blessing to Follow. "He shall speak peace unto the nations, and His dominion shall be from sea to sea, even to the ends of the earth" (chap. Zechariah 9:10). He shall speak peace to the nations, as He spoke peace to the winds and waves on the Sea of Galilee; and His peace-speak ing word shall resound to the uttermost parts of the earth. We pray now, "Thy kingdom come." Then His kingdom will have come, and His will being done on earth. Then shall they say: "How great is His goodness," and "How great is His beauty" (chap. Zechariah 9:17). They shall look upon Him whom they have despised and pierced, and mourn; but also be constrained to say, "How great is His beauty." The Christ we trust is the embodiment of the Divine fulness. May we so trust Him that the "beauty of the Lord" may be upon us. Walk worthy of your high calling, knowing that the happy day is coming when "Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty" (Isaiah 33:17). A HEART-RENDING DISCOVERY.

Zechariah 12:10-14; Zechariah 13:1.

Here are four great realities in connection with the Second Coming of the Lord.

I. A Precious Opportunity. "I will pour upon the house of David... the Spirit of Grace and of Supplications" (Zechariah 12:10). This Spirit of Grace can only come from the "God of all Grace," and when this Spirit comes He convinces of sin and the need of making supplications unto God, in view of the great revelation that is to follow. Every revival is an evidence of this. We now are living in the days of the poured out Spirit (Acts 2:16). Days of grace and of personal responsibility. "Behold, now is the accepted time." Days of preparation for the appearing of the Lord.

II. A Great Revelation. "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced" (Zechariah 12:10). This will be a heartbreaking sight to the house of David, whose rulers, 1900 years ago, despised and rejected, saying, "We will not have this Man to reign over us," and clamoured for His crucifixion. And all these long ages they, as a nation, have been the bitter enemies of Jesus. In that day "this same Jesus" (Acts 1:11) shall appear bearing the marks of His Cross in His hands. And one shall say unto Him: "What are these wounds in Thine hands?" (chap. Zechariah 13:6). Ah, these wounds are the marks of His identity with the Man who was nailed to a Cross, of whom their fathers cried, "Let Him be crucified." Shall that be the time "when a nation shall be born in a day?" Something like this happens when a sin-smitten soul gets its first look of Jesus as their sin-bearer. He died for me. My sins were there at the nailing of Christ to the tree. The wounds in His hands, even in His glorified body (John 20:20) will remain through all Eternity, as a witness to the triumphs of His death.

III. A Real Repentance. "They shall mourn and be in bitterness, as one that mourneth for his only son. Every family shall mourn apart" (Zechariah 12:11-13). Their blindness and unbelief have been great; now they have discovered their awful guilt in murdering their own longed-for Messiah. What a hallowed time this will be in Jerusalem, when in every home there will be the voice of confession, and tears of penitence. While at the same time a deep well of new-found holy joy springing up in their hearts. Their long-looked-for Messiah has come, and brought deliverance (Romans 11:26).

Like Joseph's brethren, they sold Him, then saw Him clothed with power and glory, and then were saved by Him (Acts 5:31). True repentance needs no repentance.

IV. A Great Salvation. "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David... for sin and uncleanness" (chap. Zechariah 13:1). In that day, when "blood and water" flowed from the pierced side of the crucified Christ, a fountain was opened for a whole humanity for sin and uncleanness. "The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day," and many a living thief has rejoiced at the same vision. When the "Lord comes and sits upon the throne of His father David, and when His Word shall go forth from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:3), then shall there be a fountain opened for the nation's sin and uncleanness. Meanwhile we rejoice in the truth that the grace of God, that bringeth salvation to all men, hath appeared, teaching us to deny ungodliness and to look for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of the great God, our Saviour Jesus Christ (Titus 2:11-13). THE SECOND ADVENT AND SOME OF ITS ACCOMPANIMENTS.

Zechariah 14.

In this chapter the prophet sees what might be regarded as the final assurance to that prayer taught by our Lord: "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth" (Matthew 6:10).

I. The Manner of His Coming.

1. It will be Personal. "His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem" (Zechariah 14:4). Some tell us that His feet are not to be taken literally. Might they not as well say that He Himself, or the Mount of Olives, are not to be taken literally? It is "the Lord Himself" that is to descend from Heaven. It is "this same Jesus" that was seen to go up that is "in like manner" coming again (1 Thessalonians 4:16; Acts 1:11). It should be remembered that it was while He was making the descent of the Mount of Olives, riding on an ass, that the multitude of His disciples began to praise God, saying: "Blessed be the King that cometh in the Name of the Lord. Peace in Heaven and glory in the highest" (Luke 19:37-38). What a forecast this is of that day when "His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives" as King of nations.

2. It will be as King of the Earth. "The Lord shall be King over all the earth" (Zechariah 14:9). In that day there shall be One Lord, and His Name One. There shall be no room for any other when He comes; for in His times He shall show who is the blessed and only Potentate, King of kings, and Lord of lords. To whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen (1 Timothy 6:15-16). It is worthy of note that the term Potentate occurs nowhere else in the Scriptures. In that day the kingdoms of this world will be compelled to acknowledge no ruler save Jesus only. His Name shall be above every name, and at His Name every knee shall bow (Isaiah 45:23). The nations were never in greater need of leadership than they are just now. But when He comes, who is "the Wisdom and the Power of God," this need will be fully met.

3. It will be with All the Holy Ones. "The Lord my God shall come, and all the holy ones with Thee" (Zechariah 14:5, R.V.). While Jesus was teaching on the Mount of Olives, He surely was making reference to this prophecy, when He said: "The Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him. Then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory" (Matthew 25:31). Jude also says: "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints" (Zechariah 14:14). It is not customary for kings and princes on earth to travel alone when fulfilling a public function. They have a retinue or train of attendants; those who are in perfect accord with them and their mission. So

"the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels" (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10), when He shall be glorified in His saints and admired in all them that believe. Glorious as His ten thousand holy and mighty attendants will be, yet He shall still be "the chiefest among ten thousand, the altogether lovely."

II. Results which Follow His Coming. There will be-

1. Perennial Blessing. "In that day living waters shall go out from Jerusalem" (Zechariah 14:8). These living waters are symbolic of something that abundantly satisfies; something ever fresh and abiding. They represent Divine energy in constant activity on behalf of His people. "Everything shall live whither this river cometh" (Ezekiel 47:9). Here is something for which civilisation can offer no substitute. Here is a river that cannot be augmented by any earthly tributary. Like the Gospel of God, man's wisdom and genius can add nothing to its value. The living authoritative Word of the Lord "shall go out from Jerusalem," as streams of blessing from the throne of His glory.

2. Universal Worship. "Every one that is left of all the nations shall worship the King, the Lord of Hosts" (Zechariah 14:16). "Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy Name; for all nations shall come and worship before Thee, for Thy judgments are made manifest" (Revelation 15:4). Satan tempted the Lord by offering Him the kingdoms of this world if He would fall down and worship him (Matthew 4:9). But now we see the kingdoms of this world worshipping Him, who submitted to death, defying the Devil and will yet cast him into the abyss (Revelation 20:10). It is our privilege now to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness (1 Chronicles 16:29). God is a Spirit, they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. God is not to be mocked.

3. Consecration of Common Things. "In that day there shall be upon the bells of the horses, and upon every pot in Jerusalem, holiness unto the Lord." Blessed day, when "holiness unto the Lord" shall be stamped upon the bells of the horses and on the pots and pans of the kitchen, and upon our motor cars, city trams, railway trains, and steamboats. When this motto will be read on the gates of our Houses of Commons and places of industry, and on the front door of every Exchange; when every transaction between man and man shall have this holy seal set upon it. Truly these will be "days of Heaven upon earth," when men, because they love the Lord, will love one another, and do all for the honour of His Holy Name. When poor-houses, asylums, law courts, and prisons will be things of the sorrowful past. If this is to be written on bells and pots, how much more should it be inscribed on the lives of those who have been redeemed by His Blood? Holiness unto the Lord.

Malachi

A MESSAGE TO MESSENGERS.

Malachi 2:1-9.

"And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you" (Malachi 2:1). A priest was one who ministered before God on behalf of the people. He is also called "The messenger of the Lord" (Malachi 2:7). We who are priests unto God and ambassadors for Christ, let us note- I. The Messenger's Privilege, as the messenger of God.

1. He was to lay to heart what he hears, and to give glory to His Name (Malachi 2:2). Our first business as ministers of His Word is to take the truth revealed to our own hearts, with the object of giving glory to His Name. We are to speak what we do know in our own experience for the honour of His Holy Name.

2. He was a representative of Divine truth. "They shall seek the law at his mouth" (Malachi 2:7). If we are to be worthy of the trust of anxious inquirers, we ourselves must be taught of God, and wear the real garments of the priesthood-humility and godly fear.

II. The Secret of His Power. A powerless ministry is a misrepresentation of this holy order.

1. He is assured of his message. "Ye shall know that I have sent this word unto you" (Malachi 2:4). He can say: "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." There was no uncertain sound in his testimony. The waverer receiveth nothing of the Lord (James 1:6-7).

2. He is enjoying the gift of life and peace. "Life and peace, I gave them to him" (Malachi 2:5). It is a joyful possession. Life in Christ and peace by the Blood of His Cross. The joy of the Lord is your strength.

3. He has "the law of truth in his mouth" (Malachi 2:6). When the love of God is in his heart, and the law of grace in his mouth, he is Divinely equipped as a herald of the Gospel of God. Life, peace, truth, are an holy trinity in Christian experience.

4. He has the Presence of God. "He walketh with Me in peace and equity" (Malachi 2:6). Herein lies the secret of all spiritual power. "Lo, I am with you." "Without Me ye can do nothing." For fruitfulness, the presence of God in the life is as needful as the presence of the sunshine on the fields.

5. He had good success. "He did turn many away from iniquity" (Malachi 2:6). By their fruits ye shall know them. He is wise that winneth souls. This is not the wisdom the world gives, but that which cometh by the presence of the Holy Spirit of God.

II. The Cause of His Failure. There was failure, even after such high, holy, and happy experiences. God has made no provision for our failure; but, alas, it comes, and always through man's own folly and waywardness. "How are the mighty fallen?"

1. He departed from the truth. "Ye have departed out of the way", (Malachi 2:8). To depart out of His way and will is to go outside the sphere of His purpose and blessing. It is easy to depart from His way when our thoughts begin to wander after selfish interests.

2. He Corrupted the Covenant (Malachi 2:8). Made the Word of none effect by false interpretation. We corrupt the Gospel when we make it conditional upon human merit, or that the grace of God makes any allowance for continuing in sin (Romans 6:1).

III. The Sad Result of His Failure. Such is the fall of a backslider who has been used of God.

1. His Blessings were Blighted. "I will curse your blessings" (Malachi 2:2). The gifts and graces divinely bestowed became blighted with God's disapproval, even the seed (Word) which he sows becomes as a rotten thing (Malachi 2:3). His life becomes barren and unfruitful, like the branch separated from the vine.

2. He Causeth others to Stumble, "Ye have caused many to stumble at the law" (Malachi 2:8). How many there are who stumble at the Gospel because of failure in professing Christians, especially if they are preachers. Iniquity in the Christian life is always a stumbling-block (Ezekiel 7:10). The only remedy for the stumbling-block is to take it out of the way.

3. He is Despised by the People. "Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before the people" (Malachi 2:9). He preached to others, now he is a castaway. Let us give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should slip away from them (Hebrews 2:1, margin).

FULNESS OF BLESSING.

Malachi 3:7-17.

Malachi was the last of the prophets. The times in which he lived, about 400 years before Christ, were typical of any modern community (see Malachi 3:13-14).

I. The Condition of Blessing. There was-

1. The Divine Challenge. "Prove Me now herewith, if I will not open the windows of Heaven and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:10). What a promise this is, and what a challenge to our faith. "Prove me." "Put Me to the test, and see if I will not do this for you." Don't let the greatness of the blessing make your faith to stagger. Remember that He who hath promised is the Almighty and Unchangeable Lord (Malachi 3:6). What He hath promised He is well able to perform.

2. The Conditions Specified. "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse" (Malachi 3:10). The tithe was the tenth of the increase, given for the priests who served in the house of the Lord. It was reckoned as belonging to God. They were to "render to God the things that are God's." But we as Christians are not promised fulness of blessing if we give Him a tenth of our increase, although even this will bring blessing into the soul. We are called upon to give to God that which belongs to Him. "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price" (1 Corinthians 6:20). God is not satisfied when we give Him only part of what is His own (Acts 5:2). If we are to have the "open windows of Heaven" and the "poured out blessing," we must present ourselves unto God. This is our

reasonable service (Romans 12:1). "Yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments unto God" (Romans 6:13). We can only prove Him when we have fulfilled His conditions.

II. The Evidences of Being Blessed.

1. "They Feared the Lord and Thought upon His Name" (v. 16). Reverential fear is a blessed state of mind, for it leads to a deeper thinking into the preciousness of His Holy Name, that Name which is above every name. O fear the Lord, ye saints of His.

2. "They Spake often One to Another." We are not told what they said, but if they were thinking of the wondrous Name of the Lord, they were surely speaking of Him. Herein lies the secret and joy of Christian fellowship. They had a common cause.

3. They Had the Presence of the Lord. "The Lord hearkened and heard" (Malachi 3:16). His promise was fulfilled: "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). To the mere onlooker nothing happened. But the Lord was "listening in." We have open ears when we hear others speaking of us, and mentioning our name. So the Lord hearkens when we talk of Him. But the Lord is no idle listener. A "book of remembrance" was written, a memorandum was kept. For this thing so precious to Him shall never be forgotten. This thing may be written in that other book mentioned in Revelation 20:12. All spiritual values are associated with His Name.

4. They had the Lord's Comforting Assurance. "They shall be Mine when I make up My special treasure" (Malachi 3:17). "They thought of Me when in the midst of a perverse people, who said, It is vain to serve the Lord" (Malachi 3:14). "I will think of them in that day when I gather out all that is worth saving from a wrecked and sinking world." What an encouragement we have here for the prayer and fellowship meeting, for quiet seasons of meditation. The Lord knoweth the thoughts and intents of the heart. His special treasure is the Church, redeemed by His own Blood. "They shall be Mine."

TWO GREAT DAYS.

Malachi 4:1-3.

In these verses we think we see a brief prophetic account of two aspects of the Lord's Second Appearing. Both aspects are seen in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10.

I. The Awful Day of Testing. "Behold the day cometh that shall burn as a furnace" (Malachi 4:1, R.V.). This will be the day of the searching power of His consuming presence, when He shall "discern between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not" (chap. Malachi 3:18). A day that when "all the proud and all that do wickedly shall be stubble." Stubble in a furnace will stand a poor chance of escape. In this day it will not be man's work only that shall be tried by fire (1 Corinthians 3:13), but the man himself. "All the proud." "Who shall stand when He appeareth, for He is like a refiner's fire" (chap. Malachi 3:2). It is Himself that is the "furnace," in the blazing holiness of His righteousness. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord" (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9). How should this awfully solemn fact effect us in our service for Him and

them? Surely if we realised it, all coldness and indifference would be melted by pity.

II. The Joyful Day of Deliverance. (The Lord's relationship to His own people.) "But unto you that fear My Name, shall the sun of righteousness arise" (Malachi 4:2). The sun also is a "furnace," but oh, how different its influence. "But unto you" He shall arise "with healing in His wings." The sun is a brilliant symbol of Christ in its mystery, majesty, and glorious might; a fit emblem of the inexhaustible resources of the Son of God, who is the "Sun of Righteousness." Then truly "The Son shall rule the day, when, like the sun-

1. Christ will be the Centre of a Great System. The sun is the centre of the solar system, bound together by the law of gravitation. When Christ, as the "Sun of Righteousness," shall arise upon the earth, "with the brightness of His Coming" (2 Thessalonians 2:8), He shall be the centre of the greatest and most glorious system this world has ever known, bound together by the law of love. He who is the Centre of all creation will subdue all things to Himself (1 Php_3:21; 1 Corinthians 15:28). Like the sun-

2. Christ will be the Light of the World. Jesus said: "I am the Light of the World," but now men "love the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil;" but then, when He rules in righteousness, as King, all nations shall come to His light (Isaiah 9:2; Isaiah 60:19). All the blessings the sun brings us are emblems of the gifts which Christ will bring to the world in His Day: light and life, health and healing, warmth and fruitfulness, beauty and gladness. What a world, perpetually basking in the sunshine of Divine favour. The world for Christ.

Chapter 56

Expository Outlines: New Testament

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Matthew

THE TEMPTATION.

Matthew 4:1-11.

The word "tempt" has two different meanings, which come from two different sources: (1) To try, as God tempted Abraham; (2) to entice, as Satan tempted Christ. God's trials are all for good, Satan's always for evil. Concerning the Temptation, notice-

I. The Time. It was after the heavens had opened, and the Holy Spirit had come (chap. Matthew 3:16-17). It was after Paul had been caught up to the third heavens that the messenger of Satan was sent to buffet and try him. Note the order: (1) Owned by the Father, "This is My Son." (2) Anointed by the Spirit. (3) Tempted by the devil. Some know little of the tempting because they know little of the anointing.

II. The Place. The wilderness. Adam was tempted in the garden, surrounded by every outward comfort. Christ in the lonely desert, among the wild beasts. All Christ's battles had to be fought alone-alone in the wilderness with the devil; alone in the garden with the cup of death; alone on the Cross, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46). Soul battles are all solemn.

III. The Tempted One. Jesus, the Son of God. This shows how truly human Jesus was. God cannot be tempted. He was tempted in "all points, like as we are" (Hebrews 4:15). But just as highly musical ears feel more keenly painful discords, so much more must He, the pure and undefiled, have felt the force of this trial. The more intense our devotion to God the more intense will we feel the approach of sin.

IV. The Nature. It could only be from without, because Satan could find nothing in Him. It was threefold:

1. To Self-Satisfaction. "Command these stones to be made bread." The answer of the hungry Christ shows that there is something more precious than bread-the Word of God. Eternal life is in it.

2. To Self-Destruction. "Cast Thyself down." The devil's elevations are all with the view of self-destruction. Pride goeth before a fall. Satan seeks to destroy in every Christian their sense of divine sonship.

3. To Self-Glorification. "Worship me." I will give you all. He suggests an easy way whereby He might possess the kingdom of this world without dying for it. An unredeemed world Christ would not fake. Beware of the devil's easy paths.

V. The Tempter. The devil. He is a person, a person of great power. Was the whole world his to give? Why did Christ call him "the prince of this world?" (John 12:31). Is he not the god of this world? Does the whole world not lie in the lap of the wicked one? The world will be Christ's when

He comes again.

VI. The Fight of Faith. The means of Christ's warfare, the Word of God. "It is written." He trusted in God. As a tempted man He fell back on the divine promise. Where else can we go? What else need we do? Fight the good fight of faith.

VII. The Victory. "The devil leaveth Him, and angels came and ministered unto Him." His faith is rewarded with strength from Heaven. The Christian's position, like Christ's, is between the love of God and the hate of the devil. Greater is He that is for us.

CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRISTIANS.

Matthew 5:1-12.

He who spoke in times past by the prophets now opened His mouth. These first words of the Great Teacher, come from God, reveal the way of happiness-not through doings, but being. Happiness is found not in what we have, but in what we are. This blessedness belongs to every Christlike character.

I. The Christian's Character.

1. He is Poor in Spirit (Matthew 5:3). Not spiritually poor, because that through the poverty of Christ be is made rich. The humble spirit is indwelt by the God of grace and glory (Isaiah 57:15).

2. He Mourns (Matthew 5:4). Not for fear of missing the kingdom, but over everything that hinders his greater growth into the image of Christ; over the sins of others; over the enemies of the Cross.

3. He is Meek (Matthew 5:5). He would not be like his Master if he was not meek and lowly (Matthew 11:29). Not rendering railing for railing, but contrariwise (see Matthew 5:39). A peculiar people.

4. He Hungers and Thirsts (Matthew 5:6). Not after the pleasures of sin and worldliness, but after righteousness- righteousness unto God These cravings are the natural desires of the new man.

5. He is Merciful (Matthew 5:7). He delights to show mercy because he himself has had great mercy showed him Christ prayed for His enemies, so does he.

6. He is Pure in Heart (Matthew 5:8). His heart is right with God. Wholly yielded up to His holy will. Delighting in all that is pleasing to Him. Cleansed by the blood, and open to the light.

7. He Makes Peace (Matthew 5:9). He loves peace because he has the peace of God ruling in his heart. He seeks to make peace by beseeching men to be reconciled to God.

8. He Suffers Persecution (Matthew 5:10-11). If any man will live godly he must suffer persecution. "They persecuted Me; they will persecute you." Notice that these characteristics present us with a true portrait of the life of Jesus Christ. Are we like Him?

II. The Christian's Prospects. Each Christ-like characteristic, you observe, has its own special reward. It is always so.

1. He Shall be Comforted (Matthew 5:4). This is the hour and power of darkness. Being poor in spirit the kingdom is sure, and all the comforts of the kingdom will yet be given.

2. He Shall Inherit (Matthew 5:5). The saints have not much of the earth just now, but when He comes they shall inherit it (Revelation 20:6). There is a good time coming (Daniel 7:22).

3. He Shall be Filled (Matthew 5:6). "They shall hunger no more." We shall be satisfied when we awake in His likeness. Filled with all the fulness of God. Present hunger is the evidence of future filling. There is satisfaction for every holy longing.

4. He Shall Obtain Mercy (Matthew 5:7). The mercy of God, which covered his sin, can cover every fault and failing. Blameless.

5. He Shall See God (Matthew 5:8). Because his heart is pure he is an holy one (Hebrews 12:14). Holy eyes see holy things; a holy heart shall see a holy God. Holiness is capacity for God.

6. He Shall be Called a Child of God (Matthew 5:9). The world says, "pestilent fellows." Christ says, "Sons of God." Every one like the children of a king (Judges 8:18).

7. He Shall be Rewarded (Matthew 5:12). "Great is your reward in Heaven." Reviled on earth; rewarded in Heaven with an eternal weight of glory (2 Corinthians 4:17). Let not the fear of man rob you of your reward.

CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE.

Matthew 5:13-16.

Salt and light represent what every Christian should be- a penetrating and illuminating influence, something both to be seen and felt, a power to attract and transform. Notice the- I. Twofold Sphere.

1. The Earth. "Ye are the salt of the earth." The earth is the place of the curse, and may represent the heart of man as the seat of his affections and the source of his desires "Thy will be done in earth" (Matthew 6:10)-in the heart of man as in Heaven Purify the spring (2 Kings 2:21).

2. The World. "Ye are the light of the world." The world here may mean the sphere of man's mind and thought. Apart from the light of revelation, this is a world of spiritual darkness. "No light in them."

II. Twofold Action.

1. It Permeates Like Salt. Invisible, but effectual in its working. Must first get into touch with the corruptions of ungodliness before it can heal. It represents unconscious influence.

2. It Illuminates Like Light. This is something to be seen. The light is not something put on. It is the outcome of a flame kindled The Christian's life is the light. The life is the light of men. If there is abundance of life there will be a brightness of light. A living Christ within will make a steady light without.

III. Twofold Nature.

1. The salt must have savour. Salt is good, but savourless salt is good for nothing. The mere name and form without this is powerless. The savour is an emblem of the Holy Spirit. We may bear the name Christian and have the form of godliness, but without the Holy Ghost we are savourless salt,

"good for nothing." "Have salt in yourselves" (Mark 9:50). Salted with the fire of the Holy Spirit. It is the savour that is precious and powerful. "Be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18).

2. The candle must have light. Here again the mere name and form are useless without the living flame. A candle must be lighted; it cannot light itself. God hath shined into our hearts, giving us the light. "Thou hast lighted my lamp, O Lord."

IV. Twofold Purpose.

1. To Salt the Earth. If Christians lose their savour, wherewith shall it be salted? If the world does not see Christ in the Christian, where will it see Him? If the ungodly don't feel the power of Christ's presence in the actions of His people, how will they feel it?

2. To Glorify the Father (Matthew 5:16). The light is to shine, not that men may praise the light, but that they may be led to trust and glorify the Father. Let your light so shine.

V. Twofold Hindrance.

1. In Losing the Savour. "If the salt lose its savour, it is thenceforth good for nothing," trodden under foot of men. Sad picture of a powerless Christian! A withered branch. Samson was savourless salt when the Spirit departed from him (Judges 16:20). Quench not the Spirit.

2. In Hiding the Light. If God hath shined in our hearts, it is to give the light (2 Corinthians 4:6). Let it shine forth in a bold, steady testimony for Christ. The fear of man is often the bushel that hides the light, or the bed of selfish ease. Remember that a covered light may be suffocated. THE TWO WAYS.

Matthew 7:13-14.

There are only two religions in the world-that which has emanated from the heart of man, and that which has come out of the heart of God. The one is only an imagination, the other is a revelation. In these verses we notice two gates, two ways, two companies, and two ends. Specially observe two ways-

I. The Way into Life. What does this life mean? "The gate" suggests the idea of a city, a place of safety, fellowship, and plenty. The life which is in Christ is a life of-(1) Safety from sin and wrath; (2) of fellowship with God; (3) of satisfaction in the fulness of God. There must be a passing from death into life.

1. It is an Open Way. It may be strait, but, thank God, it is not shut. "Behold, I have set before thee an open door" (Revelation 3:8). This way was closed up by sin, and fenced up by the law. Christ opened it through bearing our sins and becoming obedient unto death. It is a new and living way consecrated (set apart) for us. There are no back doors into the kingdom of God (John 14:6).

2. It is a Narrow Way. "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way." Perhaps the gate on the side-walk may be referred to, where even camels were sometimes dragged through after stripping them of everything. Men needs a stripping to enter here. Self-righteousness is not admitted. This gate is as narrow as the new birth. The straitness is not with God, but in man's utter unfitness. If the way be narrow it leads to a large place.

3. It is the Way of the Few. "Few there be that find it," because few there be that seek it. "Seek, and ye shall find." There are few on it, because many shun it, preferring the darkness to the light, because their deeds are evil. Some put off, others hope to stumble into it by chance. This is no chance work. "Strive to enter." "Ye shall find Me when ye shall seek Me with all your heart" (Matthew 6:33).

II. The Way of Destruction. The word "destruction" here means "loss," and is awfully significant. It is the loss of that which alone can save and satisfy. Like a watch losing its mainspring, like a plant losing the earth from its roots, a man losing all his privileges and hopes. This way is:

1. A Broad Way. It suits the carnal mind. There is plenty of room in it for all the sinner's likes and pleasures. The world, the flesh, and the devil have full scope here. It is broad enough for the staggering drunkard, for the dishonest and the unclean, for the scoffer and the proud and haughty religious formalist.

2. A Crowded Way. "Many go in thereat." It is easy going downhill. Generally man's first choice is the "broad way." The heart of man is deceitful and wicked, and naturally prefers the pleasures of sin to the fellowship of God. Some are being pushed along in the crowd without any serious thought. All are without God and without hope.

3. A Fatal Way. There is but one only possible end to this way-"Destruction." As sure as a stone sinks in the sea will the man perish who loves and follows sin. "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" (Ezekiel 31:11). "Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death" (Jeremiah 21:8). Choose life. THE TWO BUILDERS.

Matthew 7:24-27.

The sermon on the mount begins with the blessedness of the poor in spirit, and ends with the ruin of the proud, self-confident professor. The end of this sermon is the end of all Christian teaching. Life and death, righteousness to those who believe and obey, ruin to those who do not obey.

I. A Suggestive Comparison. He that heareth and doeth is likened to a wise man. The connection between hearing and doing is very vital. Those who have the blood-sprinkled ear must also have the blood-sprinkled foot (Leviticus 8:24). These sayings of Christ are for the doings of His people. The hearer only is a fool. He is like a man taking shelter in the plans of a building instead of in the house. The hearer only is like a cake unturned; like a man rowing with one oar. If the hearing does not affect the fingers and the feet it profits nothing.

II. A Common Need. A house. A house is one of the common necessities of man. "A wise man built his house." There is responsibility resting upon every man with regard to his own house. A house is:

1. A Place of Shelter. Man needs a hiding-place from the storm and the tempest of Jehovah's wrath against sin. The wrath of God abideth upon every unbeliever (John 3:36).

2. A Place of Rest. A resting-place is needed from the busy, bustling, bothering cares and sorrows of this present life. A man might as soon find heat in an iceberg as rest in disobedience to the sayings of the Son of God.

3. A Place of Fellowship. Man's needs will never be fully met until he is brought into fellowship with the Father and the Son.

III. An Indispensable Prerequisite. A Rock. Before a house of safety can be got the Rock must be found. "That Rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:4). The Rock is within the reach of all if men would only dig deep enough (Luke 6:48). This Rock is strong enough to bear all. None doubt their foundation who build on Christ. Until He is found all building is vain and ruinous.

IV. A Threefold Trial. Rain, floods, winds beat upon the house. The rain tries the roof, the floods the foundations, the winds the whole structure. Every stone built on this Rock, that is, every deed done for Christ's sake, every act of trust in Him will be tried by the threefold enemy of the soul-the world, the flesh, and the devil. The foundation holds.

V. A Presumptuous Effort. Building on the sand. This man is wise enough to know that he needs a place of shelter, but fool enough to believe that he can have it without getting into touch with the great, eternal Rock. He has no faith in what is out of sight. His whole work is a matter of appearance. What a sad picture of all those who trust their works without having a grip of the invisible Christ (Hebrews 11:27). The life may be right and beautiful in the sight of others, yet have no connection with Christ the Rock.

VI. An Irreparable Mistake. It fell, and great was the rain of it (see Luke 6:49). It fell in the time of his greatest need. He hoped it would save him but hoping, without Christ, is vain and ruinous. The more beautiful the life and works are, without Christ the foundation, the more dangerous and fatal. The greater the house the greater the ruin. Take heed where ye build (1 Corinthians 3:11).

THREE SUGGESTIVE ATTITUDES OF JESUS.

Matthew 11:20-28.

I. Toward the Wilful Impenitent. "Woe unto thee" (Matthew 11:21),

1. Think of their Privileges. What mighty works were done among them! How many miracles had they witnessed! And Christ Himself had lived among them. What are your privileges? Have you not seen His mighty works in others? Christ only knows the awful consequences of rejection.

2. Think of their Doom. "Woe unto you." Our responsibility will be according to our privileges.

II. Toward the Purpose of God. "I thank Thee" (Matthew 11:25). He thanks the Father for two things:

1. For Hiding these Things from the Wise. Much divine wisdom is this. What would unrenewed men do with these holy things? Pearls before swine.

2. For Revealing them unto Babes. To those willing to receive, to trust, and be thankful (Matthew 18:3).

III. Toward the Heavy-laden Sinner. "Come unto Me." The sovereignty of God is no excuse for the sinner's delay.

1. The Invited. (1) Labourers-those trying to earn rest by their works, a poor-paying business. (2) Burdened ones-those staggering, helplessly and hopelessly, under the weight of sin and guilt.

2. The Promise. "I will give you rest." He gives the labourer rest by doing the work for him. "It is finished" (John 19:30). He gives the burdened ones rest by carrying their load. He bore our sins in His own body.

GREAT FAITH.

Matthew 8:5-10.

All men have not faith; some have no faith (Mark 4:40); some have little faith (Matthew 6:30). This Centurion was one who had great faith. Those who have faith are rich. Faith will buy anything from God. This man's faith was-

I. Great when you think of who he was. He was a Roman Centurion-not a Jew, familiar with the Scriptures. How would his faith grow so great if he had not believed all that he heard of the truth concerning Jesus? Great faith is often fostered in the midst of the greatest difficulties. Poor circumstances are not specially favourable for poor faith. If your faith would grow exceedingly it must be exercised abundantly.

II. Great when you think of the occasion of it. His slave was sick. He believed that Christ's compassion was deep enough and broad enough to reach the poor and the ignorant. Not like the Pharisee (Matthew 9:11). Great faith always brings the little and the disputed things to Jesus. Little faith never carries little troubles to God. It takes great faith to bring the trifling details of life to Him in prayer. Beware of the little foxes.

III. Great when you think of the need mentioned. "His servant was sick of the palsy, grievously tormented." Afflicted both in body and soul, a helpless incurable, as far as human skill and power were concerned. But his faith in Jesus surmounted all. Nothing is too hard for Him. Great faith lays hold on the greatness of Christ. The power of Christ is sufficient for all the emergencies of a believer.

IV. Great when you think of the request made. "Speak the word only." No visit asked; no means trusted. All his desire will be met with His word only. It is always so. Great faith asks for no signs, but is satisfied with the promise alone, knowing that He is faithful.

V. Great when you think of the argument used, "I am not worthy; I am a man under authority." Great faith is always humble, for it sees so much grace and goodness in Jesus that proud, boastful self is ashamed. "Speak the word only, and the demon and disease will go as quickly as my servant obey me." Great faith is the most childlike of all. "Lord, increase our faith."

VI. Great when you think of the results that followed. "As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee" (Matthew 8:13). His simple but large-hearted faith was answered at once, and answered to the full. There was nothing left to be desired. So wonderfully gracious is our loving Lord He never sends the hungry empty away.

VII. Great when you think of the commendation given. "I have not found so great faith." Jesus knows exactly the measure of our faith. What a precious thing it is in His sight! He does love to be trusted. He is so pleased with it that He saves all who believe (Acts 13:39). "Without faith it is impossible to please Him" (Hebrews 11:6). Give Him this pleasure.

EVIL: ITS NATURE AND REMEDY.

Matthew 8:28-33.

This incident has been sneeringly called "The pig affair." But in these two demon-possessed men we have some of the most terrible and heart-humbling revelations that we have in all the Bible. Look at evil as personified in these wholly-possessed ones.

I. Evil may be Closely Connected with Man. These men were "possessed" (Matthew 8:28). Evil takes possession of the sinner, controls his actions and thoughts, and completely masters his whole life. Sin is an awful tyrant, a perfect despot; it claims and affects every power and faculty of the being.

II. Evil is Allied with Death. "They dwelt among the tombs" (Matthew 8:28). They preferred the company of the dead to that of the living. They loved darkness rather than the light. Such is the effect of an evil heart. The things that holy men dread are loved. The company of those who are dead in sin is chosen rather than the company of those who are alive unto God. They love death; separation from God.

III. Evil is the Enemy of Liberty. "No man could pass that way" (Matthew 8:28). Sin always hinders true liberty. There are many still who are afraid to pass the tomb (grave) because of evil. As long as there is unforgiven sin in the heart there will be fear. Perfect love casteth out fear.

IV. Evil Shuns the Presence of Christ. "What have we to do with Thee?" (Matthew 8:29). All living in sin, and satisfied with it, hate the holiness of God. They will have nothing to do with Christ, yet they are afraid of being tormented by Him. They can see no hope in the Holy One of God.

V. Its Influence is only Toward Destruction. When the demons entered the swine they did with them what they were trying to do with the men-drove them quickly into destruction. Evil always chooses the shortest and steepest way to ruin. It is easy running downhill.

VI. Its Power is too Great for Man. Those possessed ones had no power of resistance whatever; they could do nothing to save themselves. No more can ye. Sin, like a poison, becomes an integral part of the being; it cannot be shaken off like a viper.

VII. Its only Cure is to be Cast Out. It cannot be tamed or reformed, Christ said to the demons, "Go." The mighty, never-failing, cleansing Word of the Son of God alone can change the heart and separate the sin from the soul, as the demons were separated from the men. He speaks, and it is done.

VIII. Its Conqueror is often Unwelcomed. "They besought Him to depart out of their coasts" (Matthew 8:34). Those who don't want victory over their sins don't want the Lord Jesus. If you want sin put away, receive the Lord Jesus. If you want to die in your sins, let Him depart, and He will go. Welcome the sin-separating Saviour. THE CALL OF THE PUBLICAN.

Matthew 9:9-13.

Great multitudes followed Jesus (chap. Matthew 8:1), but He knew the worthlessness of mere popularity. This river of public favour would soon dry up. "He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). Let us see here the-

I. Call of Grace. "Jesus said unto him, Follow Me" (Matthew 9:9). If Christ had been seeking popularity among men He never would have called a hated tax-gatherer as a personal friend. He cannot but be true to Himself. Grace came by Jesus Christ. As water seeks the lowest place, so grace seeks the neediest soul. He saves, not because we are rich, or righteous, but because we are sinners. All men are at liberty to follow Him, but He calls sinners to repentance.

II. Obedience of Faith. "He arose and followed Him" (Matthew 9:9). Matthew may have known and heard much about Jesus before this. Now the call comes for instant decision for Christ. It is possible to believe much about Him, and yet in heart not to be one with Him. "He left all and followed Jesus." Following is the evidence of faith. Discipleship may often mean "a leaving all." It was so with Abraham. He believed God and went out.

III. Proof of Love. "He made Him a great feast" (Luke 5:29). "Jesus sat at meat in his house." Feasting and following Christ have a wonderful heart-opening effect. It is a blessed experience-Jesus resting with us in the home of the heart. "If any man open the door I will come in." Jonathan loved David, and stripped himself (1 Samuel 18:4). Let us lay all at His feet-this gives refreshing to His soul.

IV. Place of Hope. "Many came and sat down with Him" (Matthew 9:10). The place of hope for sinners is at the feet of Jesus. There is room and welcome for all here. There is mercy with Him. Sit down with Him in His rejection, and you will sit with Him in His resurrection glory.

V. Manifestation of Pride. "The Pharisees said, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?" (Matthew 9:11). Why did they not ask the Master Himself? The self-righteous never like to plead their own cause before God. Pride blinds the eyes from seeing the great depths of divine grace. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. Are you a seeker or a faultfinder?

VI. Condition of Need. "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick" (Mark 2:17). The Pharisees, like thousands still, were not sin-sick, but self-satisfied. Such have no room for Jesus. Like the Laodiceans, they have need of nothing; or, if they do want Christ, it is as a teacher, not as a Saviour. Christ's work is a great remedy which can only have effect where there is disease.

VII. Purpose of Christ. "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice" (Matthew 9:13). He will have mercy on sick sinners. He will not have the sacrifice of the self-righteous. Take the place of the guilty, then you come in for His mercy. Ye who would be saved by your works "Go and learn what this meaneth."

COME, TAKE, LEARN.

Matthew 11:28-30.

This invitation of Christ implies His deep, conscious fitness to bless all men in all ages. He knows every need of man, and He knows, as none else can, the great and holy claims of God. Put these two sayings together, "All things are delivered unto Me of My father" (Matthew 11:27). "Come unto Me" (Matthew 11:28).

I. We are Invited to Rest. What an opportunity for a sin-burdened heart! Jesus gives rest from guilt, from the fear of death, and the dread of judgment. He gives it; He does not sell it. He does not give it as a prescription, but as an actual, conscious possession. This rest is for heavy-laden ones,

whether they be saints or sinners. Weary workers, disappointed and downcast because of fruitlessness, hear Him say unto thee, "Come unto Me." Everything that is a burden to us should bring us to Christ for rest and relief. Are you feeling your task heavy upon your heart and strength? Take advantage of this loving offer.

II. We are Invited to Serve. "Take My yoke upon you." There are different yokes. Yokes we put upon ourselves, and Satan's yoke. What is Christ's yoke? It is the yoke He Himself willingly took on, the yoke of His Father's will. "I delight to do Thy will, O My God" (Psalms 40:8). To take on this yoke means a life of entire submission to the work and will of God. Paul had this yoke on when he prayed men, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God. The yoke of Christ means yoked with Christ, co-workers together with Him. We take it upon us when we come to the help of the Lord against the mighty. Every soul who has received rest from Him may find a life of restful activity in His yoke. His yoke is easy to the willing mind; His burden is light to the loving heart. The yoke of service is not thrust upon us; we are invited to take it. It will be to our eternal loss if we do not.

III. We are Invited to Learn. "Learn of Me." To learn of Christ we must get close to Him. To get close to Him we must needs be yoked with Him. The yoke of service comes before spiritual wisdom. We learn best while in the yoke. Paul had to cry out, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6) before he received his divine commission. In the school of suffering and testimony for Christ the deeper things of God are learned. The reason why many Christians make no progress in grace and heavenly-mindedness is because they are ashamed of Christ's yoke; and not keeping company with Him, they cannot be taught by Him. We enter the school of Christ when we enter the yoke of Christ. There are many branches of learning here. With Him we learn to be patient in suffering, to walk humbly, to trust implicitly, to love intensely, and to rejoice exceedingly (Ephesians 4:20-23). THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST.

Matthew 12:18-21.

In these verses we have a beautiful and correct photograph of our Divine Lord. Taught by the Spirit of God, their clear eyes saw Him distinctly, although afar off. Sirs, if ye would see Jesus, look at Him standing before you here as-

I. The Chosen One. "My Servant whom I have chosen." This choice was made before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). It was a choice constrained by infinite grace-chosen as the Lamb to be slain. Although men disallowed Him, He is still the chosen of God, and precious. Let us fall in with God's choice.

II. The Obedient One. "Behold My Servant." This is the Servant who could neither fail nor be discouraged (Isaiah 42:4). He delighted to do His Father's will. He said at the beginning of His service, "I must be about My Father's business" (Luke 11:49); and at the close, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (John 17:4). "He was obedient unto death" (Php_2:8), because His love was stronger than death.

III. The Beloved One. "My Beloved, in whom My soul is well pleased." There is strong consolation for us here; in that Christ was, as the Servant of God and in the likeness of men, well-pleasing to the soul of Jehovah. It opens wide the door whereby we may be accepted in the Beloved.

IV. The Anointed One. "I will put My Spirit upon Him." At Jordan this Scripture was fulfilled when the Spirit as a dove came upon Him. There and then He was sealed by God the Father (John 6:27), owned and fitted for the great work He had to do. This every Christian needs.

V. The Revealing One. "He shall show judgment." The truth is made known through Him, because He is the Truth. To come into contact with Christ is to come into the judgment (truth) of God, both concerning ourselves and Himself. Christ as the wisdom of God speaketh the words of God (John 3:34).

VI. The Lowly One. "He shall not strive nor cry." How could He, when He had committed Himself unto Him who was able to keep. He never sought the favour of men for His own sake. "I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29). When a Christian strives and cries it is an evidence of weakness and unbelief. "The servant of the the Lord must not strive" (2 Timothy 2:24).

VII. The Sympathising One. "A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench. He will not break the bruised reed of a weak, feeble, musicless Christian life. In tenderness and patience He will bind up. He will not quench the smoking flax of a flickering, powerless, Christian testimony, but will pour in a fresh supply of the Spirit of Grace. The lack of oil (Spirit) makes a smoky testimony.

VIII. The Conquering One. "He shall send forth judgment with victory." His truth shall triumph. "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied" (Isaiah 53:11).

IX. The Trustworthy One. "In His Name shall the Gentiles trust." His Name is as a nail in a sure place; it bears all that is hung upon it. Not like the rotten pegs men make and fix for themselves (Acts 4:12). THE SOWER.

Matthew 13:1-8; Matthew 13:18-23.

The Sower is the Son of Man; the seed is the Word; the soil is the human heart. The Sower! What a beautiful name for the Preacher! He went forth to sow; not to criticise, or make a display. All who are burdened with precious seed long to scatter it. The prophets of old knew what the burden of the Lord meant. May His message so burden us that we shall go forth weeping! The four different kinds of ground represent four distinct ways in which the Word of Life is treated by those who hear it.

I. The Wayside, or Indifferent Hearer. The "wayside" is-

1. A Hard Place. The indifferent hearer may be a regular hearer, but his heart is like a public footpath, open to every passer-by, and beaten hard with the feet of selfish thoughts. The heart that is open for the pleasures of sin will be hard for the Word of God.

2. A Dangerous Place. Exposed to the "fowls of the air" and the feet of every passer-by. No matter how precious the seed, it can only fall on it; it cannot fall into it. The seed is always in danger of being lost until it is hid (Psalms 119:11). Fowls have quick eyes. The wicked one detects the precious Word lying on the thoughtless heart and "catcheth it away." The loss is never felt, because its worth has never been enjoyed.

3. A Hopeless Place. Here the living seed can find no shelter. Although it may remain for a time, it has had no entrance, and so can show no life. Indifferent hearers can profit nothing.

II. The Stony Ground, or Emotional Hearer.

Here the word is-

1. Joyfully Received (Matthew 13:20). There being no depth of earth it is easily moved. The shallow-hearted hearer is often very emotional. Their thin layer of feeling is easily wrought upon. Tears are quickly shed, and as quickly dried up. They hear the Word gladly; but, alas! their heart seems to be in their eyes.

2. Quickly Starved. There is "no root." It soon sprang up, but its life was all on the outside. No downward growth, because there was no deepness of earth. Beneath the thin covering of emotional feeling there lies the hard, unyielding rock of a stubborn will. No room for the root of the matter.

3. Completely Scorched. "It was scorched and withered away" (Matthew 13:6). There being no inward nourishment it is soon overcome by outward circumstances. Unless the heart is filled with love to God the Word will not root and grow, and stand "rooted in love." Persecution soon withers the pretentious. But what withers the rootless strengthens the rooted.

III. The Thorny Ground, or Double-Minded Hearer. Here we have-

1. Soil Abundant. Where there is plenty of depth for thorns there is depth enough for seed. In the heart of the double-minded the plough of the convicting Spirit may have been, for there is readiness to receive the Word of the kingdom, but only to give it a place with the thorn of worldly things.

2. Soil Preoccupied. "Thorny ground." That which is first is natural. The thorns and the briers usually have the first place in the heart of man. But that which is first must be taken away if that which is second and spiritual is to possess and prosper. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24).

3. Soil Unfruitful. The seed will not choke the thorns, but the thorns the seed. The sins that are allowed to harbour in the heart will surely manifest themselves, although they may be out of sight for a time, like the thorns covered by the passing plough. "Cares," which choke the hopeful Word, are deadly enemies, although often excused. Cast out those murderers if you would be fruitful in every good work.

IV. The Good Ground, or Honest Hearer. This is-

1. A Prepared Heart. "Good ground." Ground that has been the object of special care. A heart that has been ploughed and torn by the Spirit of God. Here the weeds and thorns have been cut up at the roots and gathered out. The heart that is truly anxious for spiritual things has no room for the "cares" and "riches" that hinder the one thing needful.

2. An Understanding Heart (Matthew 13:23). If the seed of the Word is to be fruitful it must have full liberty in the soil of the heart. It must have soil congenial to its nature. Without meditation the Word will get pot-bound (Psalms 1:2). The understanding of the Word is the germinating of the

seed.

3. A Fruitful Heart. "Some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." There are degrees of fruitfulness even in good ground. The individual seeds of special truth will be better conditioned in some hearts than others. The same truth in one man's life may bring forth an hundredfold, while in another only thirty. The measure of understanding has much to do with the measure of fruitfulness. The character of the fruit betrays the nature of the soil. The great object of the Sower is fruit. All is loss and failure that is not fruitful. Let us abide in Christ, and our lives shall not be barren (John 15:7-8). THE TARES.

Matthew 13:24-30; Matthew 13:37-43.

In the parable of the tares we have a revelation of the kingdom of Heaven in the field of the world. Christ's own interpretation of it is beautifully clear and simple. The kingdom represents the dispensation of the grace of God. It came with Christ Jesus, and continues till the end of the age.

I. The Sower, or Planter of the Kingdom, is the Son of Man (Matthew 13:37). All the affairs of this kingdom are in the hands of Jesus Christ. As precious seed it was brought forth as a burden in His bosom. It is not of this world, but from Heaven. It is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. It is the ministration that exceeds in glory (2 Corinthians 3:9).

II. The Field, or Place of the Kingdom, is the World (Matthew 13:38). The world is called "His field" (Matthew 13:24). The field is great, but He has seed enough for every corner of it. His large, compassionate heart and eye take in the whole (John 3:16). Much of the field is still in waste. May the world of our inner being be possessed by it!

III. The Seed, or Subjects, are the Children of the Kingdom (Matthew 13:38). The seed with which He sows the field has cost Him much-redeemed with His own precious blood. Every seed is a living one, and as closely connected with the Sower as children are to a parent. Each seed is sent forth into the soil of the world to grow and manifest His own hidden life and beauty. To this end it must die. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone" (John 12:24). We must die unto sin before we can live unto God.

IV. The Tares, or Hinderers, are the Children of the Wicked (Matthew 13:38). Where did the tares come from? "An enemy hath done this" (Matthew 13:28). There is everlasting enmity between the tares and good seed (Genesis 3:15). The title "children" reveals their very close connection with the devil (Ephesians 2:2). While growing together in the field there may be a seeming likeness, but their origin and character are entirely different. Regeneration is the only remedy for the tares (John 3:5).

V. The Enemy, or Usurper, is the Devil (Matthew 13:39). It was while men slept he sowed the tares. He loved the darkness rather than the light, because his deeds were evil. It is when Christians cease to watch that the devil comes, and his awful work is silently and quickly done. When the tares spring up many say, "There's your Christians." No! An enemy hath done this. Every seed sown by the Son of Man is good.

VI. The Harvest, or Separation, is the End of the World or Age (Matthew 13:39). "Let both grow together until the harvest" (Matthew 13:30). So the grace of the Master spares the tares for a time; but sparing grace is not saving grace. While abiding among the wheat their privileges are the

same, but the nature of the tares unfits them for the heavenly garner. The end will come as sure as the seedtime, when all that offend shall be gathered out.

VII. The Reapers, or Servants, are the Angels (Matthew 13:39). They said, "Wilt Thou that we gather them up?" He said, "Nay! the reapers are the angels." These impartial servants will in no wise be hindered in their mission. Their first work is to put away all scandals and them which do iniquity.

1. They are Gathered. The offensive and the worthless are brought together. No comfort, no hope, because they are many.

2. They are Bound into Bundles. As straw binds straw, so both doth evil and evil-doer. No more liberty or fellowship with the wheat.

3. They are Cast into the Fire. A fearful plunge: eternal separation; awful doom! The tares are not made for the fire, but the fire for the tares. The Lord knoweth them that are His. THE MUSTARD SEED.

Matthew 13:31-32.

Where there is life there is growth. The kingdom of Heaven, as represented in the Person of the Lord Jesus, is a living thing. Notice its-

I. Outward Appearance. "The least of all seeds." The kingdom of Heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself was the living grain. His kingdom was the least of all kingdoms. It began with a handful of illiterate men. He was despised and rejected of men. No beauty in Him for the carnal eye.

II. Inward Vitality. It is a seed, not a stone. There is within it a vital principle capable of wonderful manifestations. A seed needs to be planted under favourable conditions before its hidden power and fruitfulness can be seen. The living seed of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ must fall into the soil of a broken and believing heart before its life-giving power will be realised. In the life of Jesus we see the blade; in His resurrection the ear; and on the day of Pentecost the full corn in the ear. The atmosphere of worldliness is not favourable for the development of this tender plant. The power of this seed lies in the presence of the quickening Spirit.

III. Manifest Progress. "It became a tree." Its vitality is apparent to all now. The corn of wheat has fallen unto the ground and died. Much fruit has appeared. Every soul quickened from the dead is a branch. The fowls of the air lodge in the branches. But the fowls are no part of the tree; they are only lodgers. The tree is perfect without them. The tree of the kingdom has many lodgers-those who identify themselves with it only for their own convenience. Are you a branch or a lodger? THE LEAVEN.

Matthew 13:33.

Two different methods of interpretation have been applied to this parable. Much depends on how we view these seven parables, whether separately or dispensationally.

I. The General Interpretation. Looked at separately, it is said- 1. That the Meal is the World-something bad, and all alike bad, needing a new and transforming principle put into it.

2. The Leven is the Gospel, and must be hid within before it can effect any change.

3. The Woman is the Preacher, the one who hides the Gospel in the hearts of men.

4. The Result-"the whole is leavened." The world becomes permeated with the Spirit of Christ. As an exhibition of Gospel truth all this is beautiful, and may be much blessed. But as an exposition of the parable it may be very faulty.

II. The Difficulties in the Way of Accepting this View.

1. It changes the Scriptural use of meal and leaven. It makes the meal bad and the leaven good. Everywhere else meal is good and leaven is bad.

2. The meal is very favourable to leaven, whereas the world is for ever opposed to the Spirit of the Gospel of Christ.

3. The Hiding of it suggests secrecy and craft, a thought never associated with the preaching of the Word, but closely connected with the work of Satan, who sowed the tares "while men slept."

4. The Manner in which leaven works is more suggestive of sin than grace. It mixes with the meal, and gradually operates by the law of contagion. We do not see sinners converted in this way. Grace does not run in the blood. We do not see whole streets, and towns, and cities being leavened with the Spirit of Jesus.

5. The Purpose of Leavening also suggests the idea of making the meal, or bread, more palatable to man. The great purpose of the Gospel is to make men more favourable to God.

III. The Other Interpretation views the kingdom in this parable as in a state of further development in the course of time, and may represent things as they are pretty much in our own day. Those who look at it in this way see- 1. The Leaven, as a good thing that has become polluted; as the truth of God, perverted by the carnal wisdom of men.

2. The Meal, as a good thing that has been corrupted by the leaven of false teaching. As the meal is very susceptible to the leaven it may represent professing Christendom being corrupted by doctrines that are not of God. This corrupting process does work like leaven.

3. The Woman who hid the leaven in the meal, as typical of those who are acknowledged as religious teachers. It was the woman's work to hide leaven in meal. Their business is to hide, to promulgate things contrary to Christ while acting as the servants of Christ.

4. The Result. "The whole was leavened." They see here the universal corruption of Christendom as such-a Church that has become unfaithful, and so unfit for the Lord's use; a Church saying that it has need of nothing, while Jesus Christ stands without (Revelation 3:17-20). THE TREASURE.

Matthew 13:44.

Some seem to see in this parable: (1) The Field, as the Scriptures, that must be searched; (2) The Treasure, as salvation that must be found; (3) The Selling All, as the condition on which salvation is possessed. We much prefer to put it thus-

I. The Field is the World. It is expressly called so in Matthew 13:38. It is a large field, loved by God (John 3:16), and claimed by Jesus Christ (John 1:10). He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. He bought the field. Satan offered it to him on the cheap, but He would not have it on such conditions (Matthew 4:8-9).

II. The Treasure is the Church. The people of God are called His own "peculiar treasure" (Exodus 19:4-6). The Lord's treasure is His people. This treasure was hid in the field of the world, but promised to Christ before the world was. "All that the Father hath given me shall come to Me." Those which Thou hast given Me "out of the world" (John 17:6).

III. The Price was Himself. "He selleth all that He hath, and buyeth the field." Salvation cannot be bought by anything the sinner can sell. "The gift of God is eternal life" (Romans 6:23). Jesus did sell "all that He had" to purchase the treasure of His believing people. "He who was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). "Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25). He purchased it with His own blood (Acts 20:28). The hiding of the treasure may suggest the mystical character of His body-the Church known to Him, but not yet manifested to the world. THE PEARL.

Matthew 13:45-46.

The scope of this parable is very much the same as the last; but there is this marked and beautiful difference, that while the "treasure" is His possession, the "pearl" is for personal adorning. The Church here is not only a "purchased possession," but a pearl of great price and beauty to adorn His person and reflect the glory of His character. If Christ is the pearl, then the sinner, as the merchantman, has to buy Christ by selling all that he has. It is quite clear that this is not the teaching of the Scripture. The price is paid by Jesus Christ as the Redeemer, not by man, the already bankrupt sinner (1 Peter 1:18-19).

I. The Merchantman is Christ. He is a merchantman, a man well up in the business of carrying on heavenly trade. He has a great business on hand. "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke 11:49)-seeking goodly pearls.

II. The Pearl is the Church. The Church is the Lamb's wife, and has been purchased with a great price. As Boaz found Ruth, and redeemed her to himself, the Bride of Christ is a priceless pearl to Him. She will be to Him as diadem of glory through all the coming ages. "Come, and I will show thee the Bride, the Lamb's wife" (Revelation 21:9-27). "A purchased possession" (Ephesians 1:14).

III. The Price was His Own Life. "He sold all that He had" (2 Corinthians 8:9). He died for us. "Ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:20). "Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men" (1 Corinthians 7:23). Christ may truly say of His Church:

"I've found the pearl of greatest price,

My heart doth sing for joy." THE NET.

Matthew 13:47-50.

The key to this parable has been laid beneath the door (Matthew 13:49). It is the last of a series of seven parables, bringing us up to the close of the period of the kingdom; to the end of the age, when the whole system will be tested and judged.

I. The Net. The net is something prepared and fitted for a special purpose-to catch fish. It is emblematic of the Gospel of the grace of God. The net itself makes no distinction of the fish, for it receives all who come. The invitation of the Gospel is universal; it is to every creature. Whosoever will may come. Like the sunshine and the rain, it comes to both bad and good.

II. The Sea. The net was cast into the sea. The sea represents the sphere in which men live and move, and corresponds with the "earth" and the "field" in the other parables. It indicates a state of changeableness, restlessness, and danger. Into this sea the net of the Gospel, prepared by the grace of God, has been cast. The purpose is to gather out a people unto His Name.

III. The Gathering. "And gathered of every kind" (Matthew 13:47). Was this the intention of the great Fisherman? Was the net made for both "good and bad?" Does it not seem that the net is put to a wrong use when used, as here, for a drag-net? When the Lord told His disciples to cast their net on the right side of the ship they did not get one bad fish. The Gospel is put to a wrong use when it gives an equal place to both good and bad. In these days quantity, not quality, is the aim of the net-spreaders. But the sifting-time is coming.

IV. The Time of Drawing. "When it was full they drew it" (Matthew 13:48). The net of God's saving grace will not always be in the sea of this world. There is a time-it may be near at hand-when it will be full. This time will be the end of this age, when the fulness of the Gentiles be come in (Romans 11:25). When the Gospel net is drawn, then present privilege and opportunity of salvation will be gone.

V. The Place of Sifting. "They drew to the shore" (Matthew 13:48). The bad and the good could sport together while in the sea, but it will be different on the shore. The wheat and the tares were allowed together until the end came. As they came near the shore the more did the bad and the good crowd together. There is a great cry for union in the present time. Let us take care it is not the crushing together caused by the net being drawn out.

VI. The Separation. "They gathered the good, and cast the bad away" (Matthew 13:48). So shall it be at the end of the age. They shall sever the wicked from among the just (Matthew 13:49). Their character determines their destiny-good or bad. The Lord knoweth them that are His. The bad may boast, while in the sea, that they are just as good as their neighbours, but they shall not escape.

VII. The Final Destiny.

1. The Good are put into vessels. These vessels were prepared for them before the net was drawn. "In My Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2).

2. The Bad were cast into the fire (Matthew 13:50). "Cast the bad away." Oh, think of it! Away from what? Away to what? "Ye must be born again" (John 3:7). THE UNEXPECTED APPEARANCE.

Matthew 14:22-27.

The hungry multitude had just been fed and sent away. His own soul now hungers for secret communion with His Father. "Man shall not live by bread alone" (Matthew 4:4). He constrains His disciples to go before Him to the other side, and when the evening is come we see Him alone on the mountain. Here is a picture of Christ's present position and of His Coming again. Jesus is now on the mount of intercession before the Father. His disciples are still being tossed with tempest on the sea of this troublous world. But one day He will appear again and deliver His Church out of all its troubles. As Peter went to meet Him on the waters, so shall we meet Him in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17). When Jesus came back to the boat He brought Peter with Him. When He shall appear then we also shall appear with Him in glory. Then those who see Him will also confess, "Of a truth Thou art the Son of God" (Matthew 14:33). This is a very fruitful theme. Let us gather some practical lessons-

I. The Obedient will be Tried. "Jesus constrained them to go before Him unto the other side" (Matthew 14:22). Perhaps it was with reluctance that they went, but they obeyed, and while doing His will they were severely tested. The trial of your faith is precious, more precious than tried gold. Observe the nature of their trials-

1. That in which they Trusted was likely to Fail Them. "The ship was tossed with waves" (Matthew 14:24). Every object of the believer's confidence will have a tossing. Jesus Himself had it. The little ships of our own making are too slim to bear the stress of strong temptation. In following Jesus let us beware of trusting anything apart from Himself. The arm of flesh, our own understanding or past experience, if trusted, can only bring the soul into dread and danger.

2. That which might have Helped was an Actual Hindrance. "The wind was contrary" (Matthew 14:24). We, too, while seeking to do the will of our Lord may expect to meet with many a storm of opposition. The wind which wafted them across the lake now hinders their progress. The favour of men, which may have helped us at one time, may press against us at another. It is as fickle as the wind. But there is a deep need for every contrary wind in the experience of God's people. It only hindered these disciples from getting beyond the sphere of His own wonder-working power. It made them tarry till He came. Blessed detention!

3. That their most Strenuous Efforts were of Little Avail. "He saw them toiling in rowing" (Mark 6:48). Ignorant of the Master's purpose to bless them among the billows, they toiled and struggled as earnest, honest men to save themselves. But they spent their strength in vain, as every one will do who seeks deliverance by their own works (Romans 3:20).

II. The Obedient will be Helped. "Jesus saw them toiling in rowing," and made haste to their help. Comforting thought! He sees every stroke of the oar. He hears every groan of the heart, every half-choked sigh, and is an eye-witness to every bitter tear. Our fruitless efforts may prove a blessing by bringing Jesus Christ into closer touch with us. He came-

1. At an Unexpected Time. "In the fourth watch." As in nature, so may it be in our spiritual experience-the darkest hour is the hour before daybreak. He came in the hour of their greatest need-when their strength was exhausted, when all hope was gone. In perplexity cast the anchor of faith, and wait for the day.

2. In an Unexpected Way. "Walking on the sea." The great, surging billows, the source of the disciples' fear and dread, were now under His feet. He comes as the Overcomer to their help.

They found their salvation where you and I will always find it, not in toiling, but in trusting. "My ways are not yours."

3. With an Unexpected Blessing. "Be of good cheer. It is I; be not afraid." He does not at once remove the cause of their trouble (wind and waves), but He gives them rest in the midst of the storm. He may not take away the thorn, but He makes His grace sufficient (2 Cor. 12). He did not save from the fiery furnace, but He walked with them in it. This is the greatest blessing. A SUPERNATURAL WALK.

Matthew 14:28-34.

Jesus appeared to His storm-tossed disciples walking or the sea. To this purpose of His followers the wind was contrary, but the contrary wind was an opportune time for the Lord. They saw His wonders in the great deep of their distress.

I. A Bold Request. "Peter said, Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water" (Matthew 14:28). This was a great petition, but not too great. "If it be Thou." He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask. Should our love to Christ not constrain us to walk even as He walked? What although other disciples shrink from such a prayer; let us seek the privilege of walking with Him, even where human wisdom and fleshly feelings cannot find a footing.

II. A Gracious Invitation. "He said, Come" (Matthew 14:29). The door is now open for the faith of Peter. He is invited to walk where none but the feet of faith dare go. The Christian's walk is a supernatural one, He walks by faith. This, in the eyes of the wise men of the world, is like walking on the sea. They cannot understand it. Every believer is invited by Christ to walk with Him on the deep as He walked.

III. A Successful Venture. "Peter went out of the ship, and walked on the water" (Matthew 14:29). The seemingly impossible can be accomplished through simple faith in the Word of Christ. There must be a going out if there is to be a going on. The life of faith implies the complete abandonment of every other source of confidence-out of the ship of self on to the Word of Christ. Jesus is not fully trusted until both hands are off every earthly prop.

IV. A Momentary Failure. "When he saw the wind boisterous he was afraid" (Matthew 14:30). Perhaps he expected the storm would cease when he stepped out on the invitation of the Lord Jesus. Our troubles don't all cease the moment we trust Christ. Our faith will be tried. Peter was afraid, and began to sink, because he was getting more concerned about himself than the Word of his Master. Even walking in Christ's ways will become a terror and a labour when our eyes are off Christ Himself.

V. An Earnest Prayer. "Lord, save me" (Matthew 14:30). "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Let him who is falling not hesitate to cry out for salvation. Out on the depths of the life of faith, where no unbeliever ever stood, Jesus will make us realise that, apart from His continual help, we can do nothing but tremble and sink. Peter was wise in crying as soon as he began to sink. Many wait until they are up to the neck.

VI. A Speedy Deliverance. "Immediately Jesus caught him" (Matthew 14:31). Instant confession brought instant salvation. He leaps to the help of His needy ones (S. of S. Matthew 2:8). Peter was not sent back to the ship. There is no help for the troubled and tempted believer in the old life.

Jesus caught Peter, so he found refuge in the "arms of Jesus." These strong and willing arms are still outstretched (Psalms 138:7).

VII. A Gentle Rebuke. "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" (Matthew 14:31). The tenderness of Jesus is very manifest. He will not break the bruised reed. We might think Peter's faith was anything but little when he boldly stepped out on the swelling waves. Oh, how precious a thing faith is! If we have trusted Christ let us trust Him wholly. None perish that Him trust. Abraham staggered not, but was strong in faith.

VIII. A Blessed Result. "When they were come to the ship the wind ceased" (Matthew 14:32). Peter now walks with Jesus-saved from fear, where before he had feared and sank. His walking to Jesus was a testing time, but his walking with Him is calm and peaceful. The wind is still as boisterous as ever, but he fears no evil, for the Lord is with him. The near presence of Christ is the secret of a restful and triumphant Christian life. When Jesus came into the ship the wind ceased. Let Him into the heart; He maketh the storm a calm. THE WOMAN OF CANAAN.

Matthew 15:22-28.

Jesus had said, "Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out" (Matthew 11:28); but difficulties have often to be faced and surmounted in the coming.

I. Her Character. With regard to her nationality, she was-

1. A Woman of Canaan. A representative of a class that were without hope, having no promise, and without God in the world (Ephesians 2:12). Such were some of us.

2. A Woman in Deep Anxiety, "Her daughter was vexed with a devil" (Matthew 15:22). Her own soul was thereby grievously vexed. Her great need and conscious helplessness drove her to Jesus. Blessed thirst that draws us to such a fountain. Our poverty, like the prodigal's, is often the means of driving us home to the house of plenty.

II. Her Request. Such soul-agony must cry out. It was-

1. A Cry for Mercy. "Have mercy on me" (Matthew 15:22). The prayer will always be short when mercy is felt to be the first need. Secure His mercy and you have lifted the sluice for the outflowing of infinite blessing. If mercy is your first plea it will not be your last.

2. A Cry to the Lord. "Have mercy on me, O Lord" (Matthew 15:22). "To whom can we go but unto Thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Mother Nature is deaf to the cry of the needy.

III. Her Difficulties. The first trial she met with was-

1. The Silence of Jesus. "He answered her not a word" (Matthew 15:23). Does it not seem alarmingly strange that Jesus should hold His peace at such a time? There is a needs be. We must not deal with Jesus as one would do in trying an experiment. The silence of the Saviour may lead to deeper searchings of heart. Although He gives no word we may still hope in His character. Other difficulties were-

2. The Conduct of the Disciples. "They said, Send her away" (Matthew 15:23). Between the silence of Jesus and the surliness of His followers her faith would be severely tested. The conduct

of many of Christ's disciples is more likely to drive away than attract to the Master; their words and actions are sad representations of His gracious character. Are we commending Him by showing love for the perishing?

3. Her own Unworthiness. "Jesus said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24). She did not belong to the house of Israel; therefore as a heathen Gentile she had no claim on Him as the Son of David. She was knocking at a closed door. If as sinners we would buy from Him, we must buy without money. "Nothing in my hand I bring."

4. The Righteousness of God. "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs" (Matthew 15:26). Deep ploughing this; yes, but the shafts are in the hands of Infinite Love. The promises given only to saints will not be cast to sinners. God cannot be unrighteous, even in saving a soul. She was not a Jewish child; therefore by birth she had no hope. In Christ we meet with a just God and a Saviour.

IV. Her Argument. "Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall" (Matthew 15:27). As much as to say, "That's the truth, but as Lord Thou canst give me also what I need." This was a powerful plea, because it was-

1. The Argument of Faith. "O woman, great is thy faith" (Matthew 15:28). She laid fast hold upon His character, not as Son of David, but as the Son of God-as Lord over all, blessed for ever. It was also-

2. The Argument of a Broken Spirit. She humbly took her place among the undeserving dogs, that the grace of the Lord might reach even to her. Grace delights to flow down and fill the needy. A broken and a contrite spirit He will not despise.

V. Her Success. Hers was the triumph of faith.

1. She Gained the Needed Blessing. "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt" (Matthew 15:28). Her "Lord help me" is answered by His offer of Omnipotent fulness. Faith may be tested, but it will not be disappointed. Though He tarry, wait. She knew His Name, and trusted in Him, and He did not forsake her (Psalms 9:10).

2. She Embraced a Passing Privilege. While Jesus was passing by she "came out and cried" (Matthew 15:22). This was her only opportunity, and she made the most of it. Take heed lest you are letting yours slip. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). THE GREAT PHYSICIAN.

Matthew 15:29-31.

Christ's public ministry began with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Does not every real ministry begin with this? His first recorded utterance is, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He hath sent me to heal, to recover the sight of the blind, and to set at liberty the bruised" (Luke 4:18). This is His diploma.

I. The Position of the Healer. "He went up into a mountain and sat down" (Matthew 15:29). The actions as well as the words of Christ were prophetic. While He sat upon the mountain great multitudes came unto Him, and He healed them all. What a picture of Christ's position and power!

He has gone up into the mount of Heaven, and is sat down at the right hand of God to give gifts unto men. Whosoever will may come. None are cast out. He heals them all. He now sits as He did on that mount by the Sea of Galilee, waiting to be gracious. No question asked, no fee required, no prescription given, but instant help and healing imparted. Before God Jesus sits as the only hope and health for a perishing world. "Look unto Me and be ye saved, for I am God" (Isaiah 45:22).

II. The Character of the Healed.

1. The Lamb. Those whose legs are unequal, and whose walk is very unsteady, who have many an up and down. There are many lame Christians vainly trying to walk like those whose legs are equal. It is no use trying to conceal the limp. If there are failure and weakness bring them to Jesus. He maketh the lame to walk.

2. The Blind. Those who walk in darkness. Their outward life may be without a limp, but their minds are darkened. They have no assurance; they know not where they are going. They depend on human hands to guide them; they have not the eye-salve of the Holy Spirit. He can make the blind to see for themselves.

3. The Dumb. This is a type of those who can both see and walk, but whose lips are sealed. They know the truth, and their actions may be faultless, but their tongues are dumb for God-moral beauties, but spiritual dummies. This great Physician can also make the dumb to speak.

4. The Maimed. This is a very plentiful class, and very pitiful. They once had hands and feet and tongues for God, but sin has maimed and marred their members, so that they are now useless in the service of Christ. They once had power, but the Holy Ghost is grieved, and their testimony is maimed (see Judges 16:20). "I will heal your backsliding" (Jeremiah 3:22).

5. The Nondescript. "And many others." Among this lot there would likely be found "all sorts"-the sick, the sad, the fevered, and the broken-hearted. Christ can heal every ailment. Everything that hinders our joy in God and our testimony for Him may be confessed as a disease. Is it care, anxiety, temper, fear, despondency? He healeth all thy diseases.

III. The Place of Healing. "They cast them down at Jesus' feet" (Matthew 15:30). The place of blessing is at the feet of Him who is able to tread upon the surging waves of humanity's sorrows (Matthew 14:25). Those bleeding feet on Calvary's cross proclaim victory through His blood over every sin to all who believe. The way into this place of perfect healing is to get down, down to Jesus' feet.

IV. The Results that Followed-

1. The Healed Bore Testimony. They saw the dumb speaking, the lame walking, the blind seeing, the maimed to be whole. Every one used the gift received to the glory of the Great Healer. What a change! The power of Christ could not be hid in the lives of the healed ones.

2. The Multitude Glorified God (Matthew 15:31). Why has the multitude ceased to wonder and glorify God now? Have we not the same all-sufficient Saviour to-day waiting to make us perfectly whole, that our lives might be worthy of His Almighty grace and healing power. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven"

(Matthew 5:16). THE TRANSFIGURATION AND ITS LESSONS.

Matthew 17:1-9.

Jesus had just begun to show unto His disciples how He must suffer many things, and be killed (Matthew 16:21); but before the awful darkness gathers over the Cross He here gives them a passing glimpse of His great glory. We need such manifestations to support us in the hour of sorrow and trial. When we come to this mount we are apt to be so blinded with the "glory of the light" that we cannot see the helpful lessons we might learn. We might learn that-

I. To be Alone with the Lord is a Glorious Privilege. "Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John, and was transfigured before them" (Matthew 17:1-2). "They went apart with Him to pray" (Luke 9:28); and, while alone with Him, they beheld His glory, and were eye-witnesses of His majesty. This was a premature outburst of the hidden glory of the Man whose face was more marred than any man's. If we would know Jesus Christ in all His glorious fulness, let us be much alone with Him on the quiet mount of prayer. We hope to be alone with Him in eternity; why not seek much of His presence now?

II. The Lord is Infinitely more Glorious than Men see Him to be. "While He prayed His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light" (Matthew 17:2). There was a double glory-that which shone out of Heaven from the Father, and that which shone out of Himself as the image of the Father. The carnal eye saw no beauty in Him, but He was glorious within all the same. The hidden glory of Christ and the hidden glory of the Christian will both in one day yet be manifested. The same "Lord the Spirit" who hath transfigured our souls will also transfigure our bodies (2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 John 3:1-2).

III. The Death of Christ is the Most Important Subject under Heaven. "Moses and Elias talked with Him" (Matthew 17:3); and Luke says, "They talked about the decease to be accomplished at Jerusalem." The death of Christ had a wonderful significance-to Heaven, earth, and hell. Think of the contrast between the subject of their talk and the appearance of the One appointed to die on a cross. What would Moses and Elias think of our present-day religious talkers who deny the atoning death of Jesus?

IV. The Glory of the Lord can be but Little Appreciated in our Present State. "The voice that must accompany the glory terrified them. They fell on their face, and were sore afraid." Moses had to be hid in a cleft of the rock to see the back parts of the divine glory; Paul, caught up into Paradise, heard and saw what was unspeakable. The High Priest never attempted to explain the "Shekinah glory." Enough for us that God graciously gives us as we are able to bear.

V. The Lord only is Sufficient to Comfort the Troubled heart. "He touched them, and said, Be not afraid... They lifted up their eyes, and saw Jesus only" (Matthew 17:8). When the living Word of God touches the sorrowful or terrified soul it is enough. Although all else should fail, and every comfortable feeling flee, "If I've Jesus, Jesus only, then my sky will have a gem." The touch and the word of Jesus are sufficient to bind up every wound.

VI. The Resurrection of the Lord is the Foundation of the Gospel. "Tell the vision to no man until the Son of Man be risen from the dead" (Matthew 17:9). The Gospel of the glory must come after the Gospel of the Cross. "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain" (1 Corinthians 15:14).

But Christ is risen; therefore tell out the vision of His glory. He is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour.

VII. To Hear the Word of the Lord is a Divine Command. "This is My beloved Son, hear ye Him" (Matthew 17:5). We should hear Him because the Father is "well pleased" with everything He says. Hear- 1. The Voice of His Word. He is a great Teacher come from God, with God's message to sinful men.

2. The Voice of His Works. "The works that I do bear witness of Me" (John 5:36). Works of miracle and mercy. "Believe Me for the very works' sake" (John 14:11).

3. The Voice of His Blood. The blood that speaketh better things than that of Abel. Jesus' blood speaks of satisfaction to God and peace to man.

4. The Voice of His Spirit. That Spirit who maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered, and who seeks to transform us into the image of Christ. Hear ye Him, and be made like Him. THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT.

Matthew 18:23-35.

Peter had just been asking, "How often shall I forgive?" and even hinted that he was willing to go the length of seven times. But Christ's seventy times seven would teach us to exercise the love that was after His own heart- the "charity that never faileth." In this parable two great truths are brought out: (1) The need of being forgiven; (2) the need of forgiving others.

I. His Deplorable Condition. His true state was only discovered when he began to reckon with his Lord. A day of reckoning will come when every hidden thing will be revealed. See him-

1. As a Great Debtor. "He owed ten thousand talents" (Matthew 18:24), about three million pounds. Our debt to one another may be measured by one hundred pence, but our debt to God is infinite. How much owest thou my Lord? Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength. How much of His goods have we squandered?

2. As a Helpless Bankrupt. "He had not wherewith to pay" (Matthew 18:25). In the eyes of his fellowmen he is rich and honourable; in the presence of his Lord he is a wretched insolvent. He has sinned, and has come short, far short. To meet all the demands of a holy Lord God by our own selfish efforts is a miserable and hopeless task. "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight" (Romans 3:20). Without strength.

3. As One under Condemnation. "His lord commanded him to be sold" (Matthew 18:25). All his past service only merited his condemnation. This is a sharp rebuke to the self-righteous. This is the revelation that comes to us when by the Holy Spirit the soul is brought face to face with the righteous claims of God. "By the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20).

4. As an Earnest Petitioner. "He fell down, saying, lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all" (Matthew 18:26). He is in downright earnest, but it is a self-righteous and presumptuous prayer. He is not able to pay, yet he only pleads for patience. He makes confession of his failure, and promises to do better in the future. It, is the old trick of the carnal and unbelieving heart, which refuses to ask forgiveness. He still hopes to be justified by his works. But when will an imprisoned

man be able to pay his debt? Not of works.

II. His Merciful Lord.

1. Had Compassion on Him. "His lord was moved with compassion" (Matthew 18:27). It was good for him that he met his lord in a day of grace. Poor debtor, in his reckoning he left no place for the love of his lord. "Behold, now is the accepted time" (2 Corinthians 6:2). Let us bless God that we have seen and felt His infinite compassion through the grace of His Son.

2. Pardoned Him. "He forgave him the debt" (Matthew 18:27). This was much more than he expected. This was the only remedy, and it was a gracious one. Not a word of rebuke, not a word about continued patience. Ah! He knows what we need, as poor, penniless paupers in His sight. "He forgiveth all thine iniquities" (Psalms 103:3). "Your sins and iniquities will be remembered no more" (Hebrews 10:17). "Who is a God like our God, who pardoneth iniquity, transgression, and sin?" (Micah 7:18). He is now saved by grace.

3. Delivered Him. "He loosed him" (Matthew 18:27). He not only got his debt cancelled, but he was, as a matter of course, loosed from the sentence of condemnation passed upon him. Being forgiven, he is now free from the law. Blessed change! Not under the law, but under grace. Salvation is twofold: (1) He forgiveth all their iniquities; (2) He redeemeth thy life.

III. His Selfish Behaviour. "He took his fellow-servant by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest." He had mercy shown him, but he shows no mercy. The spirit of his lord had not possession of him, and not being filled with his spirit he soon has to forfeit the fellowship and favour of his master. As those who have received mercy, let us take heed lest we frustrate the grace of God, and as a servant become a castaway. We may learn here the-

1. Manner of Brotherly Forgiveness. "Shouldst not thou have had compassion;... from your hearts forgive." If the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts we will have compassion on the erring, and be willing to forgive them from the heart. Freely ye have received, freely give.

2. Example of Brotherly Forgiveness. "Even as I had pity on thee." May the pity of the Lord Jesus Christ toward us fill up the measure of our pity for others. "As the Father loved Me, so have I loved you, so ought ye also to love one another. By this shall all know that ye are My disciples, if ye love one another" (John 13:34-35).

3. Misery of the Unforgiving. "The lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors." The unforgiving servant cannot abide in the fellowship of his Lord. One hard, unkindly thought toward a fellow-Christian worker is enough to bring the soul into the hands of the tormentors, and to rob us of the smile of the Master's face. Sin always betrays us into the hands of the tormentors. The torments of an evil conscience and a proud, covetous heart are neither few nor small. "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32). THE LABOURERS; Or, Lessons for Christian Workers.

Matthew 20:1-16.

Those who leave all for Jesus will find their all in Jesus (chap. Matthew 19:27). Peter said, "What shall we have therefore? Seeing we have left so much, how much shall we get?" This savours too much of the language of the mere hireling. To labour only for reward is a mean motive for serving

Christ. To correct this grovelling spirit, and to enlighten the darkness that fosters it, this parable seems to have been given. Notice- I. Some Things about the Labourers. The-

1. Place of Labour. "His vineyard" (Matthew 20:1). This is the place where much patient labour is urgently needed, or much fruit will be lost. Those who labour among the trailing vines must be careful about their walk. The tender grapes must be gently handled. To gather fruit for Christ the gentleness of Jesus is needed. Note, further, that every labourer in the vineyard must have the Master's call.

2. Hiring of the Labourers. This was done at five different times. Look at it dispensationally, "early in the morning" (Matthew 20:1) may represent from Adam to Noah, the third hour from Noah to Moses, the sixth hour from Moses to David, the ninth hour from David to Christ, the eleventh the present, till He comes again. Or it may suggest the various stages of life from youth to old age. How few are found at the eleventh hour, but even then the full reward of eternal life is given to all who believe and obey.

3. Rewarding of the Labourers. "Call and give them their hire." Every one called to labour shall be called to their reward, "beginning at the last." The most hopeless at the eleventh hour becomes the most hopeful in the evening. Here grace reigns. Labour on. Idlers in the market-place are less responsible than idlers in the vineyard.

4. Dissatisfaction of the Labourers. "The first supposed that they should have received more." These find their counterpart in the "elder brother" mentioned in Luke 15; those hired at the eleventh hour in the prodigal son. We cannot anticipate disappointment in Heaven; but are there not many on earth who grudge the chief of sinners an equal share of the grace of God with themselves?

II. Some Things about the Master. Here observe His-

1. Justice. "Friend, I do thee no wrong" (Matthew 20:13). The selfish servant cannot understand the grace of Christ. Those who labour only for wages cannot enjoy the favour of God. If we knew Him better, we would murmur less at His doings. "I have not the gifts of So-and-so." "Friend, I do thee no wrong."

2. Faithfulness. "Didst thou not agree with me for a penny? Take that is thine" (Matthew 20:14). He gave all that He promised. The penny seems to have been their own terms; the others went on His terms, "Whatsoever is right I will give you," and had no desire to grumble. Trust His grace, and you will have good cause to praise and rejoice.

3. Sovereignty. "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own?" (Matthew 20:15). What unhallowed feelings arise in our hearts when we see a brother or a sister, with scarcely any experience-just an hour in the vineyard-being more honoured of the Master than we are, who have borne the burden and heat of the scorching drought. So it seemeth good in Thy sight.

4. Judgment. "Is thine eye evil, because I am good?" (Matthew 20:15). The evil eye can see but little good in the grace of Christ. "An evil eye makes a darkened body" (Matthew 6:23). It contrasts badly with the unmerited goodness of the Master. Our thoughts at the best come far short of the exceeding riches of His grace. Lord, give us the single eye to Thy glory. THE TWO BLIND MEN.

Matthew 20:30-34.

"Behold two blind men." There are many important lessons for us in this short narrative. Here we see- I. A Sorrowful Picture. "Two blind men." They were-

1. Poor. They sat by the wayside, evidently begging. They were men who had no promise to live on, no prospect to cheer them. Such were all of us, at that time having no promise, and without hope. All who are without Christ are poor indeed.

2. Blind. They had no eyes even to look on the passing Saviour. Picture of those who are destitute of spiritual vision, walking in darkness, and having no light.

3. Helpless. Although there were two of them, the one could in no wise help the other. All are alike guilty and impotent before the Lord. Help must come from above.

II. A Passing Opportunity. "Jesus passed by." In the coming near of the Son of God lies man's only chance of getting deliverance from the power of darkness. These men embraced their opportunity by putting themselves "in the way." Jesus has come near by the light of His Word. Flee not from Him by preferring the darkness (Hosea 7:13).

III. An Earnest Prayer. "They cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord." See their-

1. Boldness. "They cried out." It was nothing to them who heard their voice. They were poor men, crying out of the depths of their dire and conscious need.

2. Faith. "They cried, saying, Lord." They acknowledge Him as Messiah and Master. Dost thou believe on the Son of God? Hast thou confessed Him?

3. Petition. "Have mercy on us." They confess their helplessness and need by begging for mercy. The prayer of the self-righteous is, "I am not as other men" (Luke 18:11), or, "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee" (Matthew 18:26). "God be merciful to me." (Luke 18:23).

4. Wisdom. "When they heard, they cried." They did not wait for a more convenient season. "Faith cometh by hearing" (Romans 10:17). "Hear and your soul shall live" (Isaiah 55:3).

IV. A Rebuking Crowd. "The multitude rebuked them." Anxious and inquiring sinners are often rebuked by a multitude of false fears and feelings, but perhaps a greater obstacle lies in the multitude of inconsistent disciples-those who outwardly follow Christ, but who have no sympathy with Him in His great work of saving sinners. Do with the hindrances that arise through the failings of some professing Christians what these blind men did with the rebuking multitude, "Cry the more."

V. A Willing Saviour. "He willeth not the death of any." He-

1. Stood. The cry of need has a magical power to arrest the passing Saviour, and draw out the living waters of divine compassion. He stood. What a privilege! "Behold, I stand at the door and knock" (Revelation 3:20).

2. Called. Liberty of access is now given. Nearness invited, He seeks the fellowship of those whom He blesses. He that stands at the door and knocks still calls, "If any man hear My voice, and open the door" (Revelation 3:20). He has made room for you; make room for Him.

VI. A Gracious Offer. "What will ye that I should do unto you?" (Matthew 20:32). He invited them. Now He throws the door of infinite fulness open before them, that all their needs may be fully met. Oh, what a wonderful Saviour is Jesus! The rebuking multitude cannot hinder Him from pouring out the treasures of His love and grace upon all who come, "Come unto Me, and I will give ye-. "What will ye?

VII. A Perfect Cure. God's remedy for needy man is a wonderful compound of infinite love and precious blood. The order here is very beautiful-

1. He had Compassion. The need of the blind men touched the very depths of His heart, and His whole soul moved out in mighty, misery-melting mercy.

2. He Touched their Eyes. The presence of Jesus is always a conscious presence. To be blessed we must come within His touch. Here the dead live, and sin is blotted out. His gentle yet almighty hand is laid on the cause and source of their misery. He opened Lydia's heart.

3. They Received Sight. What a change! Old things have passed away, all things became new. Salvation is a very great and conscious blessing we know.

4. They Followed Him. He touched them. Now they keep in touch with Him. Blessed life! "Follow Me!" "Wilt thou go with this Man?" (Genesis 24:58). THE TWO SONS.

Matthew 21:28-32.

This parable begins with Christ's "What think ye?" and is eminently fitted to make us think. Some perish for want of thought, and many more for wrong thinking. The priests and elders had been asking Him, "By what authority doest Thou these things?" Christ answers their question by holding up this parable as a mirror before their eyes that they might be convinced of their sins. The way to understand the authority of Christ is to discover our real state before Him. Those who pride themselves in their own supposed goodness will always remain in ignorance of Christ's authority and saving power.

I. What the Father Commanded. "Son, go work to-day in My vineyard" (Matthew 21:28). The Father's vineyard needs workers; who should be more interested than the Son? Observe the-

1. Ground of the Father's Claim. "Son," (Matthew 21:28). Plenty of hirelings may be got for wages, but love ought to constrain a son. "The love of Christ constraineth us" (2 Corinthians 5:14). If we are the sons of God, surely our Father has the first claim upon our time and strength and substance. Our Father may hire strangers to serve Him (Isaiah 7:20), but sons are commanded.

2. Desire of the Father's Heart. "Work" (Matthew 21:28). What a grief it must be to our God to see so much work to be done and so many of His sons idle! Work is pleasing to the Father, good for the vineyard, and profitable for the Son. The idle soul shall suffer hunger (Proverbs 19:15). Our Father has a multitude of talkative sons, but the labourers are few.

3. Urgency of the Father's Request. "To-day." The time for serving the Lord is always now. Some of the younger sons say, "Wait till I get a little more experience." Some of the older sons say, "It is not worth my while beginning now;" or they are thinking about retiring from the vineyard. Go, work to-day, this present day of salvation, for "the night cometh when no man can work" (John 9:4).

"Wherefore the Holy Ghost saith, To-day" (Hebrews 3:7).

II. What the Sons Said. In the case of the first we have-

1. A Decided Refusal. "I will not" (Matthew 21:29). This language reveals the spirit of selfish indifference to the Father's desire. In plain words it is this: "I have something else of my own to look after, and have not time to work in your vineyard." What cares the selfish Christian for the perishing millions, or the grieving of the Father's heart, if their own little plans and purposes can only be attended to. This language also betrays a heart in open rebellion. "I will not." A life opposed to the Father's will and out of sympathy with the Father's purpose. The other son answered with-

2. A Ready Consent. "I go" (Matthew 21:30). He speaks with marked respect, "I go, sir." Judging from his talk he has a great reverence for his father and a great zeal for his work. His words are smoother than butter. The descendants of this oily-lipped professor have not yet ceased from among us. Yet his instant decision and prompt reply to the father's urgent command should be copied by every son. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15).

III. What the Sons Did. There is often a vast difference between a man's profession and his actions. "Whither of them twain did the father's will?" It is not which of them talked the best or made the loudest profession? By their deeds are they justified or condemned. His Word is fulfilled in our doing of it, not in our talking about it.

1. The One Repented and Obeyed. Repentance always precedes the doing of the will of God. The bold, self-willed rebel is the first to yield and obey. Don't despair of the restoration of the loud-mouthed, disobedient backslider, or of the conversion of the defiant sceptic. "Afterward, he repented and went." Those who go willingly into the vineyard of God's service will find grace sufficient and a holy joy in pleasing Him.

2. The Other Promised and Failed. "He said, I go, sir, and went not." All who go not at God's bidding into the field of service for Him are disobedient and rebellious children, no matter how nicely they may talk about "the Lord's work." Talking about ministers, churches, and religion is not working for God any more than warming your hands at the fire is gathering grapes. Not every one that saith, "Lord, Lord," shall enter into the kingdom, but he that doeth the will of My Father. "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it" (John 2:5). THE WICKED HUSBANDMEN.

Matthew 21:33-41.

In this parable Christ rebukes the unfruitful profession of the rulers of His people. They had rejected the Cornerstone, as builders, and their work had come to naught. So the vail of their temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and the kingdom of God was taken from them and given to another nation (the Gentiles, Matthew 21:43). Religious knowledge, enthusiasm, and scrupulous observances are all empty and lifeless when Jesus Christ is rejected or denied His proper place-a lamp without a light, a body without a spirit. We observe here-

I. Labour Expended. The householder himself was at all the expense of the "planting," "hedging," "digging," and "building" (Matthew 21:33). Think of what God had done for Israel as a nation. He dug them out of Egypt, planted them in a good land, and hedged them about with promises and privileges, yet it proved an empty vine. God, as the Householder, wrought all this work-there were

none to help Him. Think of the labour expended by our Lord Jesus Christ, that we might bring forth fruit to the praise of His Name. Oh, what praying, suffering, groaning, sweating, dying, He gave Himself.

II. Privilege Enjoyed. "He let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country" (Matthew 21:33). These husbandmen did not purchase the vineyard; through the grace of God it was let out to them. Israel was honoured, as being the tenant of divine wisdom and knowledge, but because of unfaithfulness they have been expelled. This privilege now belongs to all who are in Christ Jesus. While the Master is in the far country these priceless blessings are let out to us by the grace of God. We have not bought them; we do not deserve them; they are the gifts of God-the tokens of His infinite love.

III. Fruit Expected. "He sent his servants, that they might receive the fruits" (Matthew 21:34). Although the Master is in the far country (Heaven) He is still mindful of His vineyard. In asking the fruits He is only asking His own. The vineyard was His. "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). The much labour of Christ for us should produce much fruit through us.

IV. Selfishness Exhibited. "The husbandmen took his servants, and beat, and killed, and stoned them" (Matthew 21:35). There is here no sign of gratitude for great privileges bestowed; no concern about the Master's interests. The grace of God has been in vain to them. It is sad to find this same selfish spirit among those who profess to be the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are ready to take every earthly blessing and advantage God may give them, but they will yield Him nothing. They will even wear the Name of Christ for their own personal interests.

V. Forbearance Manifested. "He sent other servants, and last of all He sent His Son" (Matthew 21:36). What long-suffering, what patience with insult and cruelty, what willingness to forgive, what reluctance to punish! What a hideous contrast between the selfish greed of man and the lovingkindness of God! "They will reverence My Son." The appearance of His Son brought out the awful enmity of the human heart against God. Such is grace-giving His best gift to the least deserving.

VI. Rebellion Declared. "When they saw the Son they said, This is the Heir; come, let us kill Him, and let us seize on His inheritance" (Matthew 21:38). "We will not have this Man to reign to reign over us." "We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15). So Jesus, as the Son of Sovereign Grace, is cast out, and the Father, as the Householder, is defied. We will reign as gods without Him is still the language of many a highly-favoured but God-hating sinner. Yet, O the depth of the mystery, that through the death of the Son we may indeed seize on His inheritance. Heirs of God.

VII. Destruction Assured. "He will miserably destroy those wicked men" (Matthew 21:41). Privilege may exalt to the gate of Heaven, but if neglected and abused will crush into the depths of hell. These 1880 years' wanderings of the Jews on the face of the earth, without a king and without a country, is a divine and solemn witness and warning that God will judge sin. When the Lord Himself appears to reckon with the husbandmen it will be a time of dreadful awakening to those who have been in the vineyard only for their own selfish ends. Carefully note that the Householder asked for the fruits before He came. His coming was the time of judgment for His servants. "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in

His body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10). THE MARRIAGE FEAST.

Matthew 22:1-14.

The scope of this parable is very wide; it seems to embrace the whole of this present dispensation. The "certain King" is God the Father; the "Son," Jesus Christ; the "marriage," the new relationship into which the Son was about to enter; the "servants," the apostles of Christ; "those that were bidden," the Jews, who, as a nation, had received notice long before; the "other servants," perhaps those who went forth after Pentecost; the "dinner," the provision made by God in the death of His Son for hungry, perishing souls; they "made light of it, "the rejection of Christ by the Jews, His called ones; the "city burned," destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans thirty years later; "Go into the highways," the universal invitation of the Gospel; the "wedding furnished," the calling out and completion of the Church; "the King came in to see the guests," the second Coming of Christ; "Bind him, and cast him into outer darkness," the separation of the chaff from the wheat; He shall thoroughly purge His floor. The Gospel of the grace of God is here beautifully set forth. Observe the-

I. Provision. "Behold, I have prepared My dinner; all things are ready; come" (Matthew 22:4). The provision was wholly His own. "My oxen, my fatlings are killed." He spared not His own Son, but freely gave Him up to the death for us all. "Behold the Lamb of God." The provision was very great; it included "all things." All things are yours if ye are Christ's. Those who came to this feast found what sinners find on coining to Christ- 1. Rest on a Princely couch.

2. Shelter under a Princely roof.

3. Satisfaction at a Princely table.

4. Fellowship with Princely friends.

II. Invitation. "Come unto the marriage" (Matthew 22:4). This invitation is for all. Whosoever will may come; both bad and good were called. The Gospel invitation takes no notice of our character; the vilest as well as the most virtuous must accept the invitation on equal terms. None deserve it. It is the goodness of God freely offered to all. The pompous prince and the poverty-stricken beggar are both alike indebted to the mercy and grace of God for salvation. Because of this many "make light of it." To make light of the invitation is to make light of the God who gives it. That is no light matter.

III. Inspection. "The King came in to see the guests" (Matthew 22:11). All who accept the invitation expect to see the King; with joy they wait for His Coming. Those who are living in rebellion against His will, despising His grace, may well dread His appearing. He comes to see and to welcome all those who have believed His Word through His servants. Jesus Christ manifests Himself to those who yield to His call, and accept His offered mercy. Believe, and thou shalt see the glory of God.

IV. Detection. "He saw a man which had not on a wedding garment" (Matthew 22:11). Only one, but the quick eye of the King soon found him out. The man was conspicuous, not for what he had, but for what he had not. "A wedding garment." The garment was part of the King's provision, bat he refused it. It is not enough that we merely believe the invitation of the Gospel; we must lay hold of the righteousness of God, which is offered us in Christ Jesus, and upon all them that believe.

Remember that mingling among the people of God does not fit us for meeting the King. You may escape the detection of the servants, but the Searcher of hearts will find you out.

V. Interrogation. "Friend, how earnest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment?" (Matthew 22:12). He does not take him by the throat. This is the language of tenderest compassion, but he is faithful and just. It was not the King's fault, but perhaps he was priding himself in his own good-looking garments, prepared for the occasion, and all duly paid for. He belongs to the family of those "who go about to establish their own righteousness" (Romans 10:3). "Prepare to meet thy God" (Amos 4:12).

VI. Conviction. "He was speechless" (Matthew 22:12). He was self-condemned before a court from which there was no appeal. He may have been making fine speeches before the King came in, but now his mouth is stopped. There is no one to plead his cause; in his behalf all his friends are speechless. Oh, friend, boast of nothing now that you will not rejoice in when the King comes. This man does not even ask for mercy, so utterly hopeless is his case now. It is a solemn moment when all the refuges of lies are swept away by the power of His presence, "What wilt thou say when He shall punish thee?" (Jeremiah 13:21).

VII. Expulsion. "Then said the King, Bind him, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness" (Matthew 22:13). The man who despises the King's garment will never taste His feast. Think of what he was taken away from. Away from all his opportunities and companions, into the outer darkness, the darkness of hopeless despair, that is, outside the kingdom of God's dear Son. What a change! What a disappointment! Out from the presence of a feast into the place of weeping. There will be great and sudden changes when He shall appear. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. THE LAST DAYS.

Matthew 24:37-39.

"But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the Coming of the Son of Man be." Then, according to the teaching of Jesus Christ, Noah was a real person, the flood was a great fact, and the second Coming of Christ as the Son of Man will be an unfailing certainty. What the state and conditions of the world will be when He comes is here clearly revealed, "As the days of Noah were, so shall the Coming of the Son of Man be." Nothing could be more simple than this.

I. As there was great and growing wickedness in the days of Noah, so shall also the Coming of the Son of Man be. The world did not go on growing better and better up till the days of Noah. No, but it grew worse and worse, till God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually (Genesis 6:5). So shall it be when the Son of Man comes. "As in the days of Sodom" (Luke 17:29-30). In the last days, "Perilous times" (2 Timothy 3:1); "Not endure sound doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:3); "Damnable heresies" (2 Peter 2:1); "Strong delusion" (2 Thessalonians 2:11); "Scoffers, walking after their own lusts" (2 Peter 3:3); "Many departing from the faith."

II. As there was faithful warning in the days of Noah, so shall also the Coming of the Son of Man be. Noah was a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5). For a hundred and twenty years, while the Ark was a preparing, "he condemned the world" (Hebrews 11:7). Every board put in the Ark was a note of warning that judgment was coming. So shall also the Coming of the Son of Man be. There never was a time in the history of the Church when the "Coming of Christ" was so generally

believed and so clearly preached as now. The cry, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh!" (Matthew 25:6) is being heard by the waiting virgins.

III. As they were overtaken with sudden and universal surprise in the days of Noah, so shall also the Coming of the Son of Man be. "They knew not until the flood came and took them all away" (Matthew 24:39). They were marrying and giving in marriage until Noah entered the Ark and the Lord had shut the door. They believed not the testimony of Noah. The habits and sins of society remained unchanged and unrepented. So shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. When He comes shall He find faith in the earth? He shall come suddenly. "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the Coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:27). Who shall stand when He appeareth?

IV. As all who entered the Ark in the days of Noah were saved, so shall also the Coming of the Son of Man be. The Lord said, "Come thou and all thy house into the Ark" (Genesis 7:1). Noah and his family obeyed the call; then "the Lord shut him in"-"kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation" (1 Peter 1:5). So shall it be when the Son of Man cometh. "Caught up... to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:17). All who are now in the kingdom of God's dear Son shall be taken away before the judgment of God falls upon the disobedient and the unbelieving. "They that are Christ's at His coming" (1 Corinthians 15:23). Just as Lot was taken out of Sodom before the deluge of fire came. He that hath this hope purifieth himself.

V. As all outside the Ark were visited with judgment in the days of Noah, so shall also the Coming of the Son of Man be. "The flood came and swept them all away" (Matthew 24:39). The Ark, as a means of salvation, was beyond their reach whenever the door was shut. Their day of opportunity was now gone. So shall also the Coming of the Son of Man be. Selah-pause and think. "Tribulation and anguish" (Romans 2:9); "Weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth" will be the portion of every Christ rejecter when He comes. Those who have not on the wedding garment when the King comes will be cast forth into outer darkness. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked." "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be when the Son of Man cometh."

FOOLISH VIRGINS.

Matthew 25:1-12.

From the closing verses of the preceding chapter we learn that the purpose of this parable is to teach the servants of God the necessity of being always ready for their Master's appearing, and that readiness consists not in idly staring into Heaven, but in actively doing those things that are pleasing unto Him. They are always ready who are always doing His will: "Blessed is that servant whom when his Lord cometh shall find so doing" (Matthew 24:46). The good wife may watch for her husband because she longs to see him, but if he, when he comes, finds the house untidy and the supper unprepared, would he be satisfied with her watching? These foolish virgins represent those who have the appearance of being ready, but who will be found unprepared. Notice their-

I. Blameless Character. They were "virgins," their characters were without reproach, blameless in the sight of men; they are typical of a large class of professing Christians whose outward life and conduct are unstained with iniquity. They are found in every sphere of Christian work; their motives are never for a moment questioned. They love the company of the virtuous and the wise, and even

the truly wise love to have their help and fellowship; they are very courteous, congenial, and liberal-minded.

II. Noble Intention. "They went forth to meet the Bridegroom" (Matthew 25:1). The others are going, so they go too. They would like to see the Bridegroom, and to share the marriage feast. They make some little sacrifice for the hope that is in them; they never question their fitness. The counterpart of these is still to be found among us; religious people whose moral lives are beautiful, who have been good all their days, who never question their condition before God, nor imagine that they must be "born again." Their intentions are good, but they are blind to their own real need.

III. Thoughtless Neglect. "They took no oil with them" (Matthew 25:3). All their hope was in their lamps of profession. This could only last for a very brief season. They would not go without their lamps-lamps could be seen, but the invisible oil was unheeded. Type of those satisfied with an outward resemblance to the real while strangers to the Holy Spirit of promise. Oil in the vessel is suggestive of the Spirit of God in the heart, which is the true witness that we are the children of God. This will stand when all outward evidences faint and fail.

IV. Helpless Indifference. "They all slumbered and slept" (Matthew 25:5). The Bridegroom tarried, and they grew tired, and sank into a state of insensibility. The waiting time is a testing time for all. The time the Bridegroom tarried was a time of grace and opportunity for the foolish virgins; now was their time to go and buy the oil they needed, but they slept. Even a little lawful indulgence with self-satisfaction may prove ruinous. Our Lord has tarried now for more than 1900 years; what a long opportunity for lamp-trimming! When the wise sleep, it is no wonder that the foolish become unconscious of their danger. "What meanest thou, O sleeper? "

V. Anxious Request. "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out" (Matthew 25:8). The midnight cry is an awakening cry. There will be many alarming discoveries made when Jesus comes. The midnight cry of warning is followed with the cry of alarm, "Give us of your oil." No oil, and the Bridegroom at hand. No fitness to go in, and the door of Mercy about to close. This oil cannot be borrowed; it must be bought of Him who alone can sell it (Luke 11:13). No mortal can give to another that which will fit him for the appearing of the Lord. "Buy of Me" (Revelation 3:18), saith He. "One thing thou lackest" (Mark 10:21).

VI. Earnest Endeavour. "They went to buy" (Matthew 25:10). They are indeed in dead earnest as they run to the nearest village, wiping the sweat from their faces, but their earnestness does not save them, for "while they went to buy the Bridegroom came." They were busy seeking when they should have been rejoicing. Men may use the right means at the wrong time. Those that were ready went in; those who were getting ready were shut out. Hoping to be ready is no fitness for His coming. "Behold, now is the accepted time" (2 Corinthians 6:2). "Be ye also ready" (Matthew 24:44).

VII. Fearful Disappointment. "Afterward came the other virgins, but the door was shut" (Matthew 25:11). The only answer that came to their urgent appeal, "Lord, Lord, open to us," was, "I know ye not." Notice, a personal acquaintance with Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Ghost is the prime necessity for future fellowship with Him. The foolish virgins hoped to get in, but they were shut out. Out among the scoffing and the unclean, who never expected to be in, their virgin names did not save them. Only those who had met the Bridegroom entered with Him. "Acquaint now

thyself with Him, and be at peace" (Job 22:21). "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Romans 8:9). THE TALENTS.

Matthew 25:14-30.

In the parable of the "virgins" we are taught the great necessity of individual readiness when Christ comes. This parable teaches the need of trading with His gifts till He comes. In both we are shown the twofold attitude of waiting and working. The man who hid his talent in the earth was also waiting, and may have been longing for his Lord's coming, but, like the foolish virgins, found himself unprepared. In gathering up the truth taught here, observe the-

I. Calling of the Servants. "He called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods" (Matthew 25:14). Those called to this more honoured service were His own servants -those who had previously given themselves to Him. They were the disciples of Jesus Christ, whom He called and delivered unto them His goods ere He took His journey into the far country of the Father's presence. His servants are not sent a warfare on their own charges. In John 17 we see what these goods were, the "words," the "joy," and the "glory." With these they were to occupy His place on the earth till He came. "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you" (John 20:21). The power to trade with His goods was given at Pentecost.

II. Measure of the Gifts. "To every man according to his several ability." All have not the same ability, because all have not the same faith. Great faith is great ability. If the man who got only one talent had got the ten he doubtless would have misused them all. It is the Lord Himself who divides to every man. He knows how much our faith is able to receive and use for His own glory. "Unto him that hath shall be given." Even one talent is a great gift. Every gift of God is precious. "According to your faith, so shall it be unto you."

III. Using of the Talents. All who receive the gift of God are compelled to do something with it-either to trade with it or bury it. He that received the five and he that received the two used them, and in the using they were doubled. Think of the two great talents God hath given us-His Son and His Spirit. What spiritual wealth and power are here! The more we use them in our life and testimony the more will their preciousness and blessing be multiplied in our personal experience. But one "hid his Lord's money." Was it pride or shame that made him bury it in the earth? Are there not many still who bury the gift of the Spirit in the earth of a worldly life-those who deliberately hide their spiritual gift from the eyes of men, who trade with their own natural talents, and so cover up their Lord's money.

IV. Coming of the Lord. "After a long time the Lord of these servants cometh, and reckoneth with them." The Lord will come again. Nineteen hundred years may seem a long time, but it is a time of grace and opportunity. The Lord's money is enough for His servants to trade with till He does come. When He comes it is first to reckon with His servants, not to judge the ungodly (2 Corinthians 5:10). Those who are always trading with the Master's gifts are always ready for His appearing. If we would succeed in the Master's business we must see that we trade with the Master's money. His grace is sufficient.

V. Rewarding of the Diligent. "Well done, good and faithful servant." Eternal life is the gift of God to all who believe, but rewards are only for the servants who have been "good and faithful." The promise is not to the successful, but the good and faithful servant will in God's sight always be

successful. This reward was threefold- 1. Commendation. "Well done." An abundant entrance.

2. Exaltation. "I will make thee ruler." A place of distinction and honour.

3. Communion. "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." A condition of fulness of blessing. Happy fellowship.

VI. Doom of the Unprofitable. "Cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness." He was a servant, but as such his life and work were failures, because he used not the gift bestowed upon him by his gracious Lord. This is the secret of every servant's unprofitableness to God- neglecting the gift of the Spirit. There are seven steps in the downward career of this man. Look at the privilege he enjoyed. Numbered with His servants, and the possessor of a special gift from his Lord. The steps are- 1. Wilful Neglect. He hid his Lord's money.

2. Hard Thoughts about his Lord. "I know thee an hard man."

3. Slavish Fear. "I was afraid."

4. Slothfulness.

5. Wickedness.

6. His Talent Taken from Him.

7. Cast Out. As a fruitless branch he was cut off. Like the foolish virgins, he did not enter into the joy of his Lord.

We then, as workers together with Him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

GETHSEMANE.

Matthew 26:36-46.

The supper was finished, the precious words recorded in John, chapters. 14, 15, 16, and 17, having been spoken, Christ and His disciples pass over the brook into the quiet seclusion of the garden. In a garden the first man fell through yielding to the wicked one, in a garden the Second Man conquered through yielding to the Holy One. May the calm of Gethsemane pervade our spirits, as we in thought follow our Lord's footsteps thither. This place called Gethsemane was to Him-

I. A Place of Great Heaviness. "He began to be sorrowful and very heavy" (Matthew 26:37). Mark adds, "Sore amazed." Heaviness of spirit laid hold of Him. Who can tell the weight of this burden to Him? "The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). What a burden! To us the sense of sin is about as natural as the clothes we wear. To the sinner sin is but a trifle, to the Holy Son of God it was very heavy. "It bowed Him to the earth with grief."

II. A Place of Intense Suffering. "He began to be sorrowful" (Matthew 26:38). Then saith He, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" Now that the blessed Lord is entering into the relationship of the sinner's substitute He begins to be sorrowful. Sin and suffering have been joined together by the righteousness of God. The sufferings of Christ were the sufferings of

sorrow, heart sufferings. This sorrow was not the result of the fear of death neither was it the sorrow of regret or failure, but of pure love and sympathy. He was in deep sympathy with the holiness of God and the helplessness of man. May our eyes be opened to see, and our hearts touched to appreciate the "beautiful sadness" of the Son of God! (Isaiah 53:3-4).

III. A Place of Solemn Loneliness. "Tarry ye here and watch with Me... What, could ye not watch with Me one hour?" (Matthew 26:38). The tender heart of the Man of Sorrows yearned for fellowship in His sufferings, but they "could not." They slept even while He was in agony, sweating as it were, great drops of blood. He looked, but there was none to help Him. No; man cannot help the Lamb of God to bare away the sin of the world. "I looked for some to take pity, and for comforters, but I found none" (Psalms 69:20).

IV. A Place of Agonising Prayer. "He fell on His face and prayed, saying, O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me" (Matthew 26:39). "He prayed the third time, saying the same words" (Matthew 26:44). "He offered up prayer and supplications with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared" (Hebrews 5:7). What a contrast between this prayer and the one in John 17! This awful cup contained desertion and death, a most repulsive portion to the loving, holy, obedient Son of God. Around this prayer there is a halo of mystery, both deep and glorious, into which the carnal thoughts cannot enter. We bow in adoration, saying, "Behold, what love!" (1 John 3:1).

V. A Place of Entire Resignation. "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39). My will, not Thine, be done, opened the flood gate of sin, and turned man out of the Paradise of God. In the wilderness, while tempted of the devil, the will of Christ was as firm and unyielding as the mountains. We will be strong to resist evil in proportion as we are willing to resign to the will of God. In every crisis in our spiritual experience let us remember these words of our Lord. Who can tell what tremendous consequences may hang on our "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

VI. A Place of Special Succour. "There appeared an angel unto Him from Heaven, strengthening Him" (Luke 22:43). Blessed be God for this. The place of entire surrender to the will of God will always be the place of special succour from the Lord. "I will glory in my infirmity, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Corinthians 12:9). The angel of His sufficiency will minister perfect strength in our weakness. Be not anxious about the angel, let His promise suffice.

VII. A Place of Heartless Betrayal. "Behold, he is at hand that doth betray Me. While He yet spake, lo, Judas came" (Matthew 26:46). Could anything be more heartrending to the Son of God than this? Kissed with traitor lips while yet the agonising sweat is on His brow. Christ had just accepted the awful cup in man's room and stead, and all the reward He receives at the hands of men is a hypocritical salutation, condemnation, and death. It is possible to play the Judas while sitting at the Lord's table. Salute Him with an holy kiss. Let our whole souls gush in love through our lips while we confess Him as our Lord before men. THE GOSPEL OF AN ANGEL.

Matthew 28:1-8.

Who can reckon up all the omnipotence of grace wrapt up in these words, "The power of His resurrection." The tragedy of the Cross is over, the sympathetic women still stand gazing on the lifeless form of their Beloved. They fear and watch lest His sacred body should be flung into Tophet, the common grave of the outcast and unclean. They see Him laid in a new tomb. Early in

the morning of the first day of the week they come with precious spices to embalm His body and preserve the dead Christ. O how foolish we become when we forget His words! (John 2:19). Unless His words abide in us our devotion is apt to become zeal without knowledge. Earthquakes and angels work havoc to the plans of men; the sealed stone is rolled away before their eyes. From this angel those women received-

I. A Word of Encouragement. "Fear not ye, for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified" (Matthew 28:5). "Fear not"-

1. Because ye Seek Jesus. Those who are intent on seeking Jesus will not be satisfied in finding angels. This great and holy angel that so much frightened the keepers did not alarm or satisfy the seekers. "Sir, we would see Jesus." Jesus the Saviour, my weary, sin-smitten soul needs. "Fear not"

2. Because ye Seek Jesus which was Crucified. Those who seek Jesus apart from the crucifixion may well fear. Only those who knew the Crucified One found the Risen One. To His disciples alone did He appear after His resurrection. If we will not die with Him neither will we rise with Him. "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live" (Galatians 2:20).

II. A Startling Announcement. "He is not here, He is risen" (Matthew 28:6).

1. He is not Here. Mary said, "If ye have taken Him away tell me where ye have laid Him, and I will carry Him hence" (John 20:15). "Why seek ye the Living One among the dead?" (Luke 24:5). How many there are still on this vain search. Seeking the right thing in the wrong place. Seeking life among dead forms, dead works, and dead feelings. These are wells without waters. Graves.

2. He is Risen. Hallelujah! Yet the slow of heart to believe are blinded with the glory of the light. Mary stands weeping because she thinks they have taken away her Lord. Our own thoughts and natural opinions hinder us from receiving at once the great things of God. May we have the open face and the honest heart to believe without questioning all that the Lord hath spoken. "He is risen" (Matthew 28:6), and we are risen in Him.

III. A Tender Invitation. "Come, see the place where our Lord lay" (Syriac) (Matthew 28:6). He is Lord also of the angels. Let us take our stand in the place of death and solemnly meditate on- 1. His Great Humility. He who was in the bosom of the Father was laid in this borrowed grave-the Son of God buried.

2. His Spotless Character. Holy, harmless, undefiled. No sin in Him. Yet the iniquity of us all laid upon Him. Without spot or blemish, yet made a curse for us. Crucified and slain.

3. His Manifold Sufferings. "Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow" (Lamentations 1:12). "A Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3). "He made His grave with the wicked."

4. His Mighty Power. "He is risen," not "He is raised." I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it again (John 10:18). His death was voluntary. He died and rose again.

5. His Glorious Victory. "Through death He hath destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14). "O death, where is thy sting. O grave, where is thy victory?" In laying

aside His grave clothes He laid aside all that belonged to sin, death, and the grave. He rose a glorified Saviour.

6. Our own Privileges and Prospects. "He was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification" (Romans 4:25). Through His precious blood a wide door and effectual has been opened for all. This ladder of salvation reaches from earth to Heaven.

7. The Grave from which there is no Resurrection. "The wicked shall be turned into hell" (Psalms 9:17). Here the great gulf is fixed, so that they which would pass from hence to you "cannot" (Luke 16:26).

IV. A Plain Commission. "Go quickly and tell" (Matthew 28:7). This angel from Heaven did not preach any other Gospel than that preached afterwards by the great apostle. Here it is: (1) Fear not; (2) Come and see; (3) Go quickly and tell. Christ is risen, this is the glorious Gospel. Come and see it, and know the power of it; then go and tell it out, and go quickly, for the need is great. There are so many sad and disconsolate and broken-hearted, and the time is short.

He is risen to save, be entreated. He is risen to intercede, be comforted. He is risen to judge, be warned.

SEVEN STEPS IN THE CONSECRATED LIFE.

Mark 1:9-15.

John was a man sent from God. All God-sent men honour Christ, and feel most keenly their own unworthiness in His presence. "I must decrease, He must increase." This little portion is one of those garden plots so common in Mark's Gospel, and fragrant with many a precious flower. Let us follow the footsteps of the Master. He was-

I. Decided. "In those days Jesus came and was baptised of John" (Mark 1:9). What did this step involve for Him? Was He only following as one of the crowd who flocked to the desert preacher? It was the most decisive and important step in the life of our Lord. It implied the forsaking of all the earthly ties of human relationship, the perfect surrender of Himself to the will of His Father as His Son, the public declaration of His character as a teacher come from God, and as the Lamb that taketh away the sin of the world. From Nazareth to Jordan was a solemn journey for Jesus. Have we taken this step? Have we yielded ourselves unto God that His will may be done in us? Is it the burning desire of your heart that your life should glorify the Father?

II. Accepted. "And straightway He saw the heavens opened" (Mark 1:10). He offered Himself, and was immediately accepted of the Father, through the opened heavens. As sinners, we yield ourselves to be saved; as sons, we yield ourselves to Him for service. Every unsurrendered son is robbing God of the fruit of his life. Don't say your life is not worth offering when it has been redeemed by the precious blood of God's Son. If you wish the heavens to open above you, present yourselves unto God.

III. Anointed. "The Spirit, like a dove, descended upon Him" (Mark 1:10). The holy anointing for service is sure to come when the life has been wholly devoted to God. All Christ's words and works were spoken and wrought in the power of the Spirit. This same baptism every serving Son of God needs and may have (Acts 1:8; Acts 19:2).

IV. Assured. "There came a voice from Heaven, saying, Thou art My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11). Like Enoch, He walked with God, and also had this testimony that He pleased God. This is another blessing that belongs to the path of the consecrated. The anointing of the Holy Ghost always brings with it the comforting voice of God, the sweetest assurance in the soul that the life is accepted and sanctified, and pleasing to Him. Without faith this is impossible.

V. Impelled. "Immediately the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness" (Mark 1:12). This word "driveth" is very strong, it is the same word used in John 2:15, "He drove them all out of the Temple." The leading of the Spirit in the consecrated life is an inscrutable but mighty controlling impulse. It is not a fancy, but the sovereign, governmental authority of God in the soul. As the wind impels the sailship, so does the Holy Ghost drive on the life that has been launched in the ocean of God's will. Driven of the Spirit. What a driver! Who holds the reins of your life? The Holy Spirit of God, or the spirit that worketh in the hearts of the children of disobedience?

VI. Tested. "He was in the wilderness tempted of Satan" (Mark 1:13). It was not till Christ was anointed with the Holy Spirit that the tempter came. This is most suggestive to us. The kingdom of Satan is not in much danger by us until we are baptised with the Spirit of Power. The real warfare against "the principalities and powers" can only begin when we are lifted into the heavenlies, where the forces of evil have their stronghold (Ephesians 6:12). "Greater is He that is in us than all that can be against us" (1 John 4:4).

VII. He Testified. "Jesus came preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God" (Mark 1:14). Luke tells us, "He returned in the power of the Spirit." He came from the conflict a victor, through the anointing of the Holy Ghost, and began to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom. Here, too, we may follow in His footsteps. If the power of the Holy Ghost has come upon us, it is that we might be witnesses unto Him. The early disciples filled Jerusalem with their doctrine. Go and preach the Gospel.

Mark

THE UNCLEAN SPIRIT.

Mark 1:21-27.

Jesus had gone into Capernaum. On the quiet Sabbath day He makes His way to the synagogue, that He might declare the will of His Father in Heaven. Every opportunity of doing good is straightway accepted by our Lord. Instant in season. May His Holy Spirit work this good work in our hearts! Guided by the Holy Spirit, Jesus is brought into contact with an unclean spirit. It is a day of grace for the poor demon-possessed man. Notice His-

I. Character. "A man with an unclean spirit," or we may read it, "A man in, or being controlled by, an unclean spirit. "A man in an unclean spirit is of course an unclean man. It is quite possible, then, for a man to be entirely possessed by an evil spirit. There is a spirit that now worketh in the hearts of the children of disobedience. The God of this world still blinds the minds of the on-believing. If the spirit is unclean the whole man is corrupt.

II. Position. "In their synagogue" on the Sabbath day. An unclean man keeping the Sabbath and reverencing the sanctuary. A religious devil. A man's outward acts do not always determine his moral character. It is possible to have the form of godliness while denying the power. Unclean spirits may go regularly to the house of God.

III. Question. "What have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth?" Just so. These unclean worshippers have nothing to do with Jesus. This evil spirit cries out, "What have we to do with Thee?" The man and the unclean spirit are as one. We are one with the spirit which possesses us, whether it be the Spirit of God or an evil spirit. "His ye are to whom ye yield yourselves" (Romans 6:16).

IV. Confession. "I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God." Why does he not say we know Thee? This demon speaks for himself, and betrays a knowledge Far superior to the poor devil-driven man. Observe carefully his language, "Art Thou come to destroy us; I know Thee." Jesus came not to destroy, but to save. This confession is like that of many a modern unclean spirit, it is a confession without faith. Remember Judas (Acts 3:14).

V. Request. "Let us alone." Although these words do not appear in the Revised Version, they doubtless express the deep-rooted desire of every unclean spirit. Every sin-loving sinner wishes to be let alone by the Holy One of God. They love the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil. Well, if Jesus should let the unclean alone, what then? Just this, they will abide for ever under the damning power of sin and Satan, cast out with the devil and his angels. Abide Thou with us.

VI. Power. "When the unclean spirit had torn him he cried." Beware of sin, it first cries, "Let alone," then tears in pieces. It has power to pollute and to destroy. Self is one of the most dangerous of all the seducing spirits. In the work of God it often is as a fly in the ointment. The spirit of uncleanness

has torn the minds, hearts, lives, and hopes of many to pieces, and would tear the very Word of God out of our hands.

VII. Overcomer. Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Hold thy peace, and come out of him." He gagged him and cast him out. The unclean need to be rebuked, even when they talk religiously, saying, "Thou art the Holy One of God." It is easy for an unclean spirit to overcome an unholy man, but the presence and power of the Holy One is sufficient to silence and to separate. If sin is to be gagged and overcome within, the Holy Spirit must be allowed and trusted to exercise His mighty authority in the soul, for with authority commandeth He the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.

PETER'S WIFE'S MOTHER.

Mark 1:29-31.

In Mark 1:21-34 we have the brief record of what must have been a very busy day for the Lord, and a very blessed day for those who were with Him. In the morning of this Sabbath day He entered into the synagogue and taught, and cast out an unclean spirit; in the afternoon He goes to Peter's house with James and John and heals Peter's wife's mother of sickness and fever; in the evening He healed many that were sick of divers disease and cast out many devils. Yet He did not seem to feel what some preachers call "Mondayish" the next day, for Mark 1:35 says, "In the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out and departed into a solitary place and there prayed." We must be labouring in the energy of the flesh if our work unfits us for secret prayer. Let us note her-

I. Relationship. "Simon's wife's mother" (Mark 1:30). Then Simon Peter must have had a wife. If he were the first Pope, as Papists affirm, where do they get their authority for their dogma of celibacy?

II. Sad Condition. "She lay sick of a fever" (Mark 1:30). Fever and sickness always bring helplessness. "She lay." She was perfectly unfit for work. The fever of worldly excitement brings to many the sickness of spiritual inability. Our Churches are more like hospitals than camps of armed and able-bodied men. Why is so and so not as active as he used to be in the service of Christ? Oh, he is offended, or she is growing cold. Aye, "sick of a fever," and "good for nothing," like savourless salt.

III. Importunate Intercessors. "Anon they tell Him of her" (Mark 1:30). This is a blessed work, making continual intercession for the weak and needy. The Lord is not offended with our continual coming to Him. The condition of our friends and sick and fevered professors may give us many an errand to Christ. "Anon" is the secret of prevailing prayer. Tell Him. Tell Him again and again. Not that He is dull of hearing, or slow to understand our need, but He does love to see in us persistent faith. "Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season ye shall reap" (Galatians 6:9).

IV. Great Deliverance. "He took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her" (Mark 1:31). It is so easy for Him to do a great thing. There was: (1) A personal contact. "He took her by the hand." How tenderly He deals with the sick ones. (2) An uplifting power. "He lifted her up." Every contact with Christ in prayer or fellowship implies an uplifting. The lifting power is His. "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me" (Php_4:13). (3) An immediate cure. "Immediately the fever left her." How could it be otherwise? The personal Christ is the remedy for

all.

V. Willing Service. "She ministered unto Him" (Mark 1:31). What could be more natural than that the saved should serve. It becomes the redeemed not only to say so, but to do so. In serving Him she was only using for Him the strength He Himself had imparted to her. "Will a man rob God?" (Malachi 3:8). Yes. And he does it when he withholds from the service of Christ that which Christ claims as His own. The ministry of Peter's mother-in-law, like all true service, was willing, spontaneous, and hearty. "Him serve with mirth, His praise forth tell." "Worthy is the Lamb" (Revelation 5:12).

CONFESSION, COMPASSION, CLEANSING.

Mark 1:40-45.

Jesus had been preaching throughout all Galilee, and healing "all manner of sickness and all manner of disease" (Matthew 4:23). This poor leper doubtless heard of the great and various cures wrought by the Lord. Good tidings of great joy to him, cold water to a thirsty soul. Would he not long in his inmost heart for an opportunity of getting within reach of such a Physician? How could he refrain from accepting the chance when it did come? Oh! that thou hadst known in this, thy day. Look at-

I. The Need. "There came a leper to Him" (Mark 1:40). Oh, the significance of the terrible word "leper," and its synonymy "sinner," in the light of the presence of the Holy One! Every such leper was shut out from the place of the holy, separated from the fellowship of the pure, and compelled by their own character to keep company with the vile and the outcasts. He was-

1. A Need Deeply Felt. He knew he was a leper. He made no attempt to justify himself or conceal his true state. This is not a comfortable feeling. When a sinner is convicted of sin it is an awakening shock, a self-loathing revelation.

2. A Need No Human Help Could Meet. His cry was "unclean," his prospects were dark and hopeless, his disease was incurable. Sin as a plague in the heart cannot be touched with the plaster of outward reformation "Vain is the help of man" (Psalms 60:11).

3. A Need that Drove Him to Jesus. "There came a leper to Him." Hunger often constrains a child to come home. When the prodigal began to be in want he said, "I will arise and go to my father" (Luke 15:18). Blessed sadness that leads us, though with a rope round our necks, to the overcoming feet of Jesus. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4).

II. The Manner in which he Came. He came-

1. Earnestly. "Beseeching Him" (Mark 1:40). He has a spirit within that is clamouring for emancipation. This cry now reaches his lips and falls on the ear of the Almighty Deliverer. It is easy to be in earnest when the need is keenly felt.

2. Humbly. "Kneeling down to Him" (Mark 1:40). A thorough consciousness of our guilt, uncleanness, and helplessness is enough to bend the stiffened knees and to make "kneeling down" a glad and precious privilege. This poor leper does not need to ask the Lord "to pour

contempt on all his pride."

3. Believingly. "If Thou wilt Thou canst make me clean" (Mark 1:40). He was quite confident that if the Lord was willing He was abundantly able to save. "Is anything too hard for God?" (Genesis 18:14). He willeth not the death of any.

III. The Reception. Infinite holiness and power alone can deal with the pressing and awful need of guilty man, and these flow out and through the channel of compassion.

1. His Heart was Moved. "Jesus, moved with compassion." The earnest, humble, believing cry of need moved the deep waters of sympathy in the soul of the Saviour. His love moved Him from Heaven to earth, and from the manger to the accursed tree. "A high priest touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (Hebrews 4:15). "Jesus wept" (John 11:35).

2. His Hand was Moved. "He put forth His hand and touched him" (Mark 1:41). When the heart moves the hand is sure to be put forth to help. This is the first kindly touch the lonely outcast has felt since the day he became a leper. None can touch the aching heart or soothe the sorrowing soul like Him. He has touched humanity by His incarnation, that we might through faith be made partakers of His divine nature. His heart is tender. Come to Him. His hand is mighty-trust in Him. His arm is not shortened that it cannot save.

IV. The Result. "I will, be thou clean" (Mark 1:41). He was-

1. Made Free. "The leprosy departed from him." The disease, being in his very blood, he could not shake it off. No earthly surgeon's knife can separate between you and your sins, the word of the Heavenly Physician is enough. "He that believeth on the Son is not condemned" (John 3:18). "All that believe are justified from all things" (Acts 13:39).

2. Made Clean. "He was cleansed" (Mark 1:42). To be delivered from the dominion of sin is to be saved from its polluting power. The word of Christ, heard and believed, was the means of the leper's full and perfect salvation. "He spake, and it was done." "Now are ye clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." "Ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth" (1 Peter 1:22).

3. Made Clean Immediately. "As soon as He had spoken, immediately" (Mark 1:42). We are justified the moment we believe. There is no interval between the striking of a light and its shining. Growth must be gradual and progressive, but life as a quickening principle comes instantaneously in answer to the soul's look of trust (John 3:14-15). Look and live! THE SICK PARALYTIC.

Mark 2:1-12.

When Jesus was in the house it was noised abroad. The house perhaps was Peter's, where He had been before (chap. Mark 1:29). In the house or in the heart He cannot be hid. Wherever His saving and healing power are being manifested "many will be gathered together." It is not always a sign that Jesus is in the house when "many were turned away." "Hundreds turned away" is a big advertisement in these days. He will not send the hungry empty away. Here is a picture of- I. Human Helplessness. "Sick of a palsy" (Mark 2:3). He was-

1. Sick. Sickness unfits one for the enjoyment of those things which are even indispensable to life and health. Sin sickens the soul at the sweet mercies of our God; love of the world vitiates the

appetite for the bread from Heaven. "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick" (Matthew 9:12).

2. Sick of a Palsy. That is, he was helplessly sick, deprived of the power of action, his energies withered, unable to do anything for himself. His sickness deprived him of all right desires, his palsy deprived him of all ability to act. Such is the true condition of all who are without Christ. "The heart is deceitful" (Jeremiah 17:9). Their works, their ways, and their thoughts are displeasing to God (Proverbs 15:8-9, Proverbs 15:26). When this is realised it is enough to give a paralytic shock to all pride and self-confidence. "When we were without strength Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6).

II. Brotherly Kindness. "He was borne of four" (Mark 2:3). These four men carrying the sick and helpless one to Jesus show us what united effort can do. One might have said, "I can do nothing for him," but the four say, "We can carry him." How many perishing souls are cruelly neglected for the lack of united effort among the Lord's people. These four nameless friends of the helpless are worth looking at.

1. See their Faith. "Jesus saw their faith" (Mark 2:5). To Him this was a lovely sight, four noble, trusting hearts. They believed that Jesus had, and was willing to give, what this poor, half-dead brother needed. They carry him like an empty pitcher to the fountain. They bring the benumbed and frozen one into the warmth of the Sun of Righteousness. They did their part believingly, and their faith was rewarded. According to your faith so shall it be. It takes four to carry a soul out of the darkness of sin into the light of salvation. (1) The love of the Father. (2) The blood of the Son. (3) The power of the Spirit. (4) The faith of the Christian. The first three are mighties, but the fourth? Ah, me, "Little faith."

2. See their Courage. "When they could not come nigh for the press they uncovered the roof" (Mark 2:4). They did not give up because there were a crowd of difficulties in the way. Wait for a more convenient season? No! Where there is a will to go to Jesus there is a way, if it should be down through the roof. Their method of taking a man to Christ caused a good deal of dust and confusion, and doubtless a good lot of unfavourable criticism, but the Lord never finds fault with the way we come, if we only come believing.

III. Divine Power. When we come to Jesus we are at once convinced that we have come into the presence of the Almighty. "The Word was God." In Mark 2:8 we see His power to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. All things are naked before Him. But see His-

1. Power to Forgive. "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee" (Mark 2:5). This was spoken "when He saw their faith." This is the Gospel of Christ which is the power of God to every one that believeth. Is the Gospel to you an "I hope so," or "I know so." Don't expect forgiveness at the judgment when it is written, "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins" (Mark 2:10).

2. Power to Heal. "Arise, take up thy bed and walk" (Mark 2:9). He forgiveth all thine iniquities and healeth all thy diseases. "Bless the Lord, O my soul" (Psalms 103:1-2). He does not cleanse us from the pollution without delivering us from the power of sin. The salt of His saving grace is cast into the fountain-the spring of the life. In Christ we not only have the forgiveness of the past, but also the renewing of the Holy Ghost. Made new creatures in Christ Jesus.

IV. Conclusive Evidence. When a man has been saved by the Lord it must be seen in the changed life. He-

1. Arose. "Arise, and immediately he arose" (Mark 2:12). The bed that bore him he now joyfully carries. Jesus can easily make the troubles that bring us sorrowfully to Him to be taken up and borne gladly for Him. There is a real rising up of our true manhood when we come in our weakness to the feet of Jesus. As soon as we are quickened we are raised up (Ephesians 2:5-6).

2. Went Forth. When he went forth before them all they were amazed, and glorified God, saying, "We never saw it in this fashion" (Mark 2:12). No! this was a new fashion that did not come from the prince of earth, but from the King of Glory." "All power is given unto Me in Heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18). Go ye forth as one forgiven and healed after this new heavenly fashion, bearing witness to Him and praying that others may follow this fashion.

JESUS IN THE HOUSE.

Mark 2:1-12.

Jesus does not always get into the house. There are some houses where the door is shut in His face (Revelation 3:20). Sometimes He comes in uninvited (Luke 24:36), but He always accepts the invitation to come in (Luke 24:29). "If any man open the door I will come in" (Revelation 3:20). As the air rushes in to fill the empty space, so does the grace of Christ press in at every opening in our hearts. "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." We note some fresh lessons here, that-

1. Jesus condescends to come into the house (Mark 2:1). "Behold I stand at the door and knock." "He that inhabiteth eternity dwelleth with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit" (Isaiah 57:15). The mighty God seeketh an entrance into our hearts that we might "sup with Him." He who was laid in a manger will not pass by the poor and needy.

2. Jesus fills the house when He comes in. "There was no room" (Mark 2:2). There is no need for worldly entertainments to attract when Jesus comes in. When He comes in He brings a great company of new friends with Him. When the glory came into the temple it filled the house. He who is the fullness of the Godhead can surely fill up every desire and longing of the heart. Filled with the fullness of God.

3. When Jesus is in the house His presence cannot be hid (Mark 2:1). We cannot separate influence from the presence of Christ any more than we can have the rose without its fragrance, gold without colour, or the sun without light. If Christ dwells in our hearts the love of Christ will flow abroad. When Jesus comes in He leaves the door open for others to follow, and that His words may be heard without.

4. Those who come to Jesus may meet with difficulties (Mark 2:4). There was a crowd of hearers around the door. Hearers often stand in the way of seekers. Some are so stiff and selfish that they will not move an inch out of the old rut to allow a sinner to get to Christ. They are never out of their pew on Sunday, but they will not lift their little finger to save a soul. They will not enter themselves, nor suffer those who would.

5. Those who bring others to Jesus must not be afraid of new methods (Mark 2:4). If you can't get them in as others have come, let them down through the roof. If you can't get them out at the gate,

let them down over the wall in a basket. If they don't understand the word "believe," try the word "come." If they will not come in go out to them. But what would they say? Well, let them say. Although they should call you a roof-breaking fanatic, what of that if sin-sick souls are saved. This is the new fashion.

6. Some will never come to Christ unless they are brought (Mark 2:3). If this sick man had not been carried to Jesus he certainly never would have been healed by Him. It takes four to bring a sinner to Jesus: (1) The Law of God. (2) The Spirit of God. (3) The Word of God. (4) The Servant of God.

7. When a man is really anxious to be saved he will not be ashamed to be helped. How often we have seen people blush and fidget when talked to about their need of salvation in the presence of others. It was like offering to run for a doctor to a man who believed himself in good health. The man of Ethiopia was glad of direction because his soul was in deep concern (Acts 8:31), so was the jailer (Acts 16:30).

8. When a man is healed his life will show it (Mark 2:12). No man can ever remain the same after coming into contact with Jesus Christ. The sun either softens or hardens, revives or withers. The bed on his back was evidence enough that a great change had been wrought. All whose sins are forgiven are called upon to glorify God in their body.

9. Christ is all sufficient for all who come to Him. He was all sufficient for the sick and palsied, all sufficient for the faith of those who brought him, all sufficient to read the hearts of the reasoning onlookers. "God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:8). "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). Is Jesus in your house? THE CALL OF LEVI.

Mark 2:14-17.

Levi is also called Matthew in the first Gospel. Matthew means God's gift, a beautiful name for a publican hired by the Romans to act as a tax gatherer. Perhaps he coveted this despised trade because of his greed of gain. For such evident backsliding his friends may have all disowned him. They looked upon such business as we would look on a temperance advocate starting a whisky shop, or as a Christian becoming a hawker of infidel books. The poor tax-gatherer's conscience may have been often goaded. His soul may have been at times sick of the whole affair, but what could he do? His opportunity comes-

I. Where he Got the Call. "While sitting at the receipt of custom" (Mark 2:14). While busy at his work. It was a sudden call. Jesus knows where to find those who in their hearts are longing to throw off the bondage of sin. In the midst of all the activities of a questionable business the call may come, or it may be while in the field, the workshop, the office, or the mill that the still small voice of a passing Saviour is heard.

II. When the Call Came. "As He passed by" (Mark 2:14). There is something pathetic about this. Jesus came near, He spake, He passed by. What an opportunity! What a privilege! How unexpectedly it came, how quickly it passes! How short the time to decide, how momentous the consequences! It was a passing offer of salvation, it was the now of the accepted time for him. Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. He may be passing and calling you just now, or has He called and

you refused? Are these things hid from thine eyes? "Oh, that thou hadst known in this, thy day" (Luke 19:42).

III. The Nature of the Call. "Follow Me" (Mark 2:14). He needed Christ, and Christ needed him. Did he not see the unexpressed yearning of his soul? Was it not the call of infinite love to come and partake of His infinite fullness? Jesus knew what Matthew needed, and that He was able to meet that need. It was a call to follow, to a life of constant obedience. All His calls are to higher experiences of grace and usefulness. "Come and see."

IV. The Response Made. "He arose and followed Him" (Mark 2:14). This was an effectual call. Effectual not only because it was the Lord's call, but because his heart had been prepared and made ready for it. The seed fell into prepared soil. So "all God's biddings are enablings." God's call always means separation from everything that conscience condemns. He could not take his toll-booth with him. It is worthy of note that the voice of God in the Word is always in harmony with the work of the Spirit within. The outward call of Christ comes in answer to the inward voice of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit convicts, the Saviour invites.

V. The Change Evidenced. "Jesus sat at meat in his house" (Mark 2:15). Luke says, "Levi made Him a great feast." He had opened the door; now the Lord comes in and sups with him. Yes, communion and fellowship always follow whole-hearted obedience. Some of the publicans, his old companions, are invited to meet with Jesus. This great feast declares that already he has been cured of his covetousness, and that he is now anxious to see others blessed. These are the signs which follow the follower of Jesus.

VI. The Great Question. "The scribes and Pharisees said, How is it that He eateth with publicans and sinners?" (Mark 2:16). We feel much obliged to them for raising this question. It is a far reaching one; it touches the infinitude of the grace of God. How is it? Only the Lord Jesus Christ Himself can answer it. The questioners, of course, have no sympathy for sinners, so they judge Him by their own miserable standard. How dark and hardened are the hearts that see this only fault! He loves the sinner. "Behold what love!"

VII. The Straight Answer. "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Mark 2:17). Have we not a proof in this that Levi felt himself a needy sinner. Because he was sick he needed a physician. The righteous by their righteousness exclude themselves from His healing and saving power. A beautiful window in one of our English Cathedrals was made of rejected pieces of glass by an unpopular workman. Our despised and rejected Lord is building for Himself a glorious Church with such good-for-nothing stuff as publicans and sinners, even the devil's castaways. "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). THE BRIDEGROOM.

Mark 2:18-22.

Another question, "Why do the disciples fast not." There are always those who have got the goggle-eye for differences and difficulties. The Spirit of truth and power is not determined by outward forms. It is always easy to point out what the disciples of the Lord Jesus don't do, while the many good things they are doing are unheeded as if they were not. But this calls forth from the Lord a new revelation of Himself in the character of a Bridegroom.

I. The Character of Christ. "The Bridegroom is with them" (Mark 2:19). The literal meaning of bridegroom is "the bride's man." The Church is the Bride, Christ is her Man. "The children of the bridechamber" are those who have access into the Bridegroom's presence, acquainted with His will and purposes, sharers of His secrets, and one in their sympathies and desires. The connection between the Lord and His people is expressed by two of the closest human relationships, children and bride, or wife; the same thought that we have in the Song of Solomon, "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse" (chap. Mark 4:9). The first relationship is by birth, the second is by mutual choice and agreement. "Ye must be born again" (John 3:3). "Choose this day whom you will serve" (Joshua 24:15).

II. The Influence of His Presence. "Can the children of the bridechamber fast while the Bridegroom is tenth them?" (Mark 2:19). Can the lover be sad in the presence of her sweetheart? Lamps are not needed in daylight. Those who, like the disciples of John and of the Pharisees, are under the law seeking to be justified by their works have need to fast. The disciples of Jesus are not under the law, but under grace, and the God of all grace is with them, making His grace sufficient for them. "Lo, I am with you." "Eat, O friends, and drink abundantly, O beloved" (S. of S. Mark 5:1). As long as they have the Bridegroom with them they cannot fast.

III. The Effect of His Absence. "When the Bridegroom is taken away then shall they fast" (Mark 2:20). This they did for three days after Christ was crucified, and again while they waited in the upper room for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Yes, it is time to fast when the presence of Christ is taken away from our hearts, then we may be sure that some sin has come in between and separated our fellowship. Here is a solemn thought for the unsaved. The Bridegroom with the Bride will be taken away, their day of grace will be gone, then shall they fast, for these things will be for ever hid from their eyes. The rich man lifted up his eyes in hell, being in torment (Luke 16:23). He had entered upon the final and eternal fast.

IV. The Nature of His Work. The work of Christ, or the grace of God which has come to us through Him, is represented here by two new things.

1. It is like New Cloth. New, or raw cloth, is not at all suitable for mending an old garment. "The rent is made worse." There has been a rent. The old garment of human righteousness is in rags. "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). The new cloth of grace has not been given to patch up the old garment of works. When the prodigal came home he did not get his ragged coat repaired with new cloth. "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him" (Luke 15:22). The work of Christ can never be used as a patch, our own works and His will never fit together in making for us a robe of righteousness. The righteousness of God which is upon all them that believe is a new and perfect thing. "By grace are ye saved, that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

2. It is like New Wine. New wine will not abide in the old skin bottles that have already been stretched out to their utmost capacity by the process of fermentation. The law of grace is that "new wine" must be put into "new bottles," else both will be wasted. The new wine of the kingdom needs the new heart as a vessel. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:14; John 14:17). The old bottle, fallen human nature, can never adapt itself to the receiving and preserving of the things of God. The new wine can only be the ruin of the old bottle. Crucify the flesh with its lusts, receive ye the Holy Ghost. If we would be filled with the Spirit (new

wine), we must be made new creatures in Christ Jesus. "New wine is put into new bottles, and both are preserved" (Matthew 9:17). Preserved unto His coming and kingdom. THE WITHERED HAND.

Mark 3:1-7.

Observe here-

I. Where the Saviour Was. He was in the synagogue, the public place of worship. What is the house of prayer if Jesus is not there? A mere recitation hall. When Jesus is present there is sure to be an interest. He loves to frequent the house of prayer. So do all that are like Him. Do you love the prayer meeting, or is it to you a dry, meaningless ceremony? If the latter, you must be a stranger to the loving Jesus. Those who have no desire to commune with Him can have no fitness to dwell with Him. Now notice- II. Whom the Saviour Met.

1. A Man with a Withered Hand. Luke says it was his right hand, the hand we stretch out to receive. This may be taken to represent the faith by which the soul takes hold of the promises of God. How many withered hands there are still to be found at prayer meetings, how little taking hold of God? Friend, is your hand withered? Perhaps you are a backslider, and can remember the time when your hand of faith was healthy and strong. But now you have only the withered and helpless form.

2. Men with Withered Hearts. Those who "watched to accuse" (Mark 3:2). This class is not yet ceased out of the house of God. Besides the sleepy indifference there is often the watchful faultfinder. Is your heart so withered that you have no love to Jesus and no sympathy with His work? To find fault with the all-wise Son of God and His infallible Word and working is surely the height of human arrogance. Remember, the eyes of the Almighty are watching you. Now hear- III. What the Saviour Said.

1. To the Man with the Withered Hand. "Arise, stand in the midst" (margin). This would not be very pleasant exercise for one that desired to conceal his need. He that covereth his sins shall not prosper. You cannot be in a fit state to be saved so long as you are ashamed to confess your need. The Lord could have cured this man sitting as easily as standing, and in his own house as readily as in the synagogue; but in all likelihood if he had remained at his own fireside he never would have been healed. If your backsliding and unbelief are to be healed you must confess them; and if you confess, He is "faithful and just to forgive" (1 John 1:9).

2. To those with the Withered Hearts, the fault-finders, He said, "Is it lawful to do good or evil, to save or to kill?" (Mark 3:4). Not to do good when you can is to do evil; not to save when you might is to kill. "They held their peace." Ah, yes! one word from His lips and the accusers are speechless. Are you among those who would rather hold a certain form of religion that kills than give it up for the reality that gives life? The letter withereth, bindeth, killeth. The Spirit reviveth, liberateth, giveth life. Is yours, then, the religion of joyous liberty, or formal, miserable bondage?

IV. What the Saviour Felt. He-

1. Was Angry. "He looked round about on them with anger." In the Old Testament much is said about "the anger of the Lord." In the New much is said about "the love of the Lord." But remember, this is one Lord. "The wrath of the Lamb" is as holy as "the blood of the Lamb." Oh! poor,

self-righteous, fault-finding sinner, beware! If you do not confess your sins, and seek His mercy, and receive His forgiveness now, the awful look that renders speechless, and the awful wrath that makes eternal misery, will be yours. Despise His love, and you shall be despised. But more-

2. Was Grieved "at the blindness (margin) of their hearts." While He is justly angry at man's presumption, He is sadly grieved at man's ignorance. He was not grieved because He was watched and misunderstood and maligned. He says, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and your children" (Luke 23:28), for well the Saviour knows what your end will be if you refuse Him. If you have never grieved over your own ignorance and hardness of heart, just think of the merciful Saviour's grief over you.

V. What the Saviour Did. He-

1. Restored the Withered Hand. Nothing is impossible with Him. When this man "stood forth" at the word of Jesus, he no doubt expected that Jesus would heal him. So if you make full and honest confession of sin you may confidently expect forgiveness. Adam put forth his hand and took forbidden fruit, and immediately his spiritual hand was withered. All his sons are born with a withered hand. They can receive nothing unless it be given them of God. But when the hand is restored they can lay hold on eternal life. Is your hand withered? Jesus only can restore it.

2. Withdrew Himself (Mark 3:7). There are three classes from whom Jesus withdraws Himself: the faultfinding, as we see here; the curious (John 12:21-36); and the unwilling (Luke 8:37). How sad when He who is the Light of the world turns His back upon those in blindness! Take care how you treat the gentle Lamb of God. Say unto Him, "Come," and He cometh; but say, "Go," and at last He goeth.

Here is your Solemn Choice: Restoration or withdrawal. Wilt thou be made whole, or must He depart? THE SECRET SEED.

Mark 4:26-29.

The history of the kingdom is very briefly portrayed in these few pithy words. The Church as a heavenly principle is planted, it grows, and apart from the fact that it is divine in its nature, who can explain its growth? The earth has a power to make the seed spring up that we cannot explain, invisible but mighty. The Holy Ghost is this mysterious, life-giving, invisible energy in the world. Christ has gone into His rest, but still the seed grows. The world wonders, but the believing rejoice. The withering frosts of unbelief, the sweeping storms of persecution, have not hurt the blade, neither will they injure the ear nor lessen the fruit. Secret power gave it life, mysterious influence nurtured it. Now the reaping time comes, and the separating sickle passes over the field, and the harvest is translated (caught up) into the more immediate presence of the owner ere the winter of judgment and desolation comes upon the earth. But we have here also practical lessons for the sowers of the Word. Notice then-

I. The Committal of the Seed. "Cast into the ground" (Mark 4:26). This is the first step toward a harvest. Gathering seed may be pleasant, but scattering it is profitable. There are those who are so taken up with searching the Word that they neglect to preach the Word. It is good to learn, but we must learn to do. There are others who sow, sow, sow, at least they go through the form, whether they have any seed or not. But the form without "the Word" can never bring a harvest.

Seed is either for eating or for sowing. Don't sow that which you ought to eat. Let your own soul first be fed, but don't keep that which you ought to cast forth.

II. The Attitude of Faith. "Sleep, and rise night and day" (Mark 4:27). Having sowed the seed he rests; he does not fret and worry himself about the results. But this is not the sleep of idleness. He rises night and day and pursues his needful work, but the seed is left where it should be and as it should be. How much dreaming and anxiety there is in the minds of some Christian workers about the seed sown, how little they rest in faith! He sowed the tares and went his way, no doubt confident that they would spring up. He had faith in his seed. If we sow the good seed we may be confident that it will grow, it is incorruptible. But it will grow none the better through our sleeplessness and painful staring at the field. Put in the seed, have faith in God, and go on rejoicing in the hope of a harvest.

III. The Mystery of Life. It springs and grows "he knoweth not how" (Mark 4:27). The sower believes the seed will grow, not because he understands the hidden mystery of life, but because he believes in God's wonderful arrangement in nature. All life in the earth is a mystery, but how much more the life of God in the human soul. But no sower need be discouraged because he cannot exactly explain the mystery of the second birth, the good seed sown will grow all the same. In the wonderful arrangement of the Triune God it is so. It is the Spirit that quickeneth. "Born again by the incorruptible Word of God" (1 Peter 1:25). This is the mysterious life of the kingdom of grace, and even the subjects of it "knoweth not how." But though life, as such, is a mystery, yet it is a great undeniable fact. It proves itself. Every springtime is a revival. So the new life in the soul will manifest its own existence like Aaron's rod (Num. 17).

IV. The Revelation of Earth. "The earth bringeth forth fruit of herself" (Mark 4:28). It is the nature of the earth to manifest that which it receives in a more fruitful form. Everything hid shall be revealed, that which was buried in secret shall come abroad (Mark 4:22). It is the light of Heaven that draws the hidden things to light. There is a solemn heart-searching principle here. Nothing shall be hid from the face of God. The light of the Great White Throne will bring the hidden and the secret seeds of man's sowing to light. The good and the bad must all appear, and that in their most fruitful form. They that "sow the wind shall reap the whirlwind" (Hosea 8:7). The earth may hide for a time, but yield it must. Even the dead committed to its dark, cold bosom must come forth at the brightness of His rising. Oh! what shall the harvest be? Just what the sowing has been. What man casts in, the earth casts forth, some thirty, some sixty, some a hundredfold.

V. The Degrees of Growth. "The blade, the ear, and the full corn" (Mark 4:28). The blade is the first manifestation of life. There was life before it was visible, but it was wholly earthly, until now it was judged as dead. True, the work was going on, as the Word acts in the heart. We might look on-

1. The Blade as the tongue of outward profession. It makes a show openly, and declares its intention of bearing fruit. But every blade does not blossom into the full corn in the ear. There is the worm, the fowl, and the weather, the world, the flesh, and the devil, by which many a hopeful blade is blasted.

2. The Ear may represent that preparedness and readiness to receive without which there can be no fruit. Before the soul comes into this hopeful state many a cold night and many a trying day has to be endured, but when through suffering the soul is made meet for Himself, then the fruit will be

found. An open ear to Heaven will soon be abundantly satisfied.

3. The Full Corn. Here we see the soul filled with all the fullness of God. Now there is the full ear bending under the weight of precious treasure, the soul satisfied and bowing in lowliness in the breath of Heaven, in the atmosphere of the Holy Ghost. Waiting on the Lord, and showing forth His praise till He come.

VI. The Sickle of Death. "He putteth in the sickle" (Mark 4:29). The sickle does not in any way destroy the grain, but only separates it from the earth, and separation is the only way to security. The action of the sickle is but the parting stroke. How beautiful that while one hand wields the sickle there is another hand which immediately grasps the falling corn. That is the hand of Him who saves. Why should we fear death when it cuts our connection with the earth, where we were bound and exposed to the nights of chill and days of scorching, and liberates us from all that is earthly and fits us for the Father's house of shelter and repose. The ripened grain dreads not the sickle, but can say, "0 death, where is thy sting?" (1 Corinthians 15:55). Why should I dread Him who comes to break my fetters and send me home to my Father's house. But awfully solemn thought to the tares, the sickle means the fire, it is separation from all the present, without a fitness for the garner, and only fit for the place of burning.

LET US PASS OVER.

Mark 4:35-41.

The circumstances are well known. But might we not use this incident as a parable of the whole Christian life. When Christ comes into our hearts, as He came into the disciples' hearts, does He not in a spiritual sense just say to us what He said to them as He cast His eye on the other side of the sea, "Let us pass over unto the other side." So with Him we turn our eyes Heavenward, and make for the shore. We will look then at the Christian life as-

I. A Voyage. "Let us pass over" (Mark 4:35). Death is sometimes spoken of as a "passing over to the great majority." Every day we are passing over the waters of life to the other side. The sea is a fit emblem of life, or rather the varied circumstances that go to make up a human life. There go the ships, "not painted ships upon a painted ocean," but immortal souls rising and falling upon the billows of time, and disappearing one by one, as they pass beyond the horizon of mortality where earth and sky meet.

II. A Voyage fraught with Trial. "There arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship" (Mark 4:37). The believers' trials and difficulties spring from two sources. The wind of circumstances without, and the waves of doubt and fear within. As long as the waves are kept out of the boat the storm will do little damage. Into the tempest of sorrow and affliction we must often go; even the presence of Christ with us does not save us from these, but His presence assures safety in the midst of them. Following Christ always implies cross-bearing (Acts 9:16).

III. A Voyage Accompanied with Christ. "Let us pass over.... He was in the hinder part of the ship" (Mark 4:38). Lo, I am with you, He hath said, "I will never leave thee" (Hebrews 13:5). Jesus was silent, but His presence should have comforted their hearts. We may be sweetly conscious that a friend is in the room with us, although there is silence as though both are differently engaged. Christ dwells in our hearts by faith. No storm in itself can ever disturb the calm repose of the soul

of Christ. His faith casts out all fear.

IV. A Voyage Signalled with Miraculous Deliverances. "He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm" (Mark 4:39). Thus their sore trouble was the occasion of the manifestation of His great power. Who would choose to escape the storm when such wondrous grace is given. In the fiery furnace the reality of His preserving power is felt and known. "No chastening for the present seems joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness" (Hebrews 12:11). God is able. God is with us.

V. A Voyage that Should be without Fearfulness.

Jesus said, "Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?" (Mark 4:40). They were fearful because their faith in Him was faulty. Fearfulness, like a rank weed, springs up out of the soil of weak faith. Why are ye fearful?

1. Christ is in the Boat of the Heart. "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). "Greater is He that is in you than He that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). Can the boat sink when the Son of God is in it? Let the oarsmen-thoughts, feelings, and affections-cheer up. None perish that trust Him. "Why are ye fearful?"

2. Christ is in the Boat of the Church. "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved" (Psalms 46:5). God shall help her. He walketh "in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks" (Revelation 2:1). "The Lord thy God is in the midst of thy camp" (Deuteronomy 23:14). She will be brought safe to the other side. Not one passenger wanting. Though now greatly tossed with tempest, and the waves of worldliness beating into the ship, He will come in His great glory and deliver from all her fears. "Why are ye fearful?"

3. Christ is in the Boat of the Scriptures. His Word is settled in Heaven, and can never be broken. All the winds and waves of criticism will never swamp this holy craft. "They testify of Me" (John 5:39). With one word He can hush the overwhelming storm and calm the rage of the invading breakers. He speaks, and it is done. "Why are ye fearful?"

4. Christ is in the Boat of Providence. We don't trust providence, but the God who ruleth over all and in all. "All things work together for good to them that love God" (Romans 8:28). By Him all things consist or are upheld. Then Christ who is with us has all in His own hand. "All power in Heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18), therefore fear not, little flock. Cast all your care upon Him, for He careth for you. "Why are ye fearful?" "Be not afraid, only believe" (Mark 5:36). THE CRY OF THE PERISHING.

Mark 4:36-41.

Although Christ be in the ship it is not always smooth sailing, but it is safe. Those in company with Him are as safe as Himself. We can easily see in this incident a picture of the Great Salvation. Christ's acts are parables as well as His words.

I. Those Ready to Perish. "The waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full" (Mark 4:37). The boat was waterlogged, and at the point of sinking. The cause was twofold. There was-

1. The Storm Without. Circumstances had changed, all things seem to be against them. The wind of adversity comes from different quarters. Business may fail, a member of the family may have gone astray, disease may have fastened like a viper on some beloved one, death may have visited the home, and Jesus seems to sleep, no help seems nigh. Or, perhaps it is-

2. The Waves Within that fills with dread and alarm. A ship in the sea may weather the storm, but when the sea is in the ship this is hopeless. When the elements of sin and iniquity flood the soul, then all prospect of safety is cut off. All the oars and pumps of human effort are unavailing. Cease your struggling and call upon the Lord.

II. The Great Question. "Carest Thou not that we perish" (Mark 4:38). Only when the ship began to fill did they begin to cry. It is surely time to call upon God when we find that the more we try to keep afloat the deeper we sink into the sea of iniquity and failure. There is something startlingly harsh about this cry, "Carest Thou not." Did He care not? Did He sleep the sleep of indifference? His undisturbed composure might have rebuked their fears and unbelief. If He could afford to take it easy so well might they. "Carest Thou not that we perish?" Let His humiliation, suffering, and death on the Cross be the answer. "He careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7; 2 Peter 3:9). "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you."

III. The Divine Response. "He arose and rebuked the wind and the sea" (Mark 4:39). When He arises to the help of the needy it is Almighty help He gives. All the resources of Heaven and earth, of God and eternity, centre in Him (Colossians 1:17). He rose again for our justification.

Jesus Christ fully answers the cry of the perishing by-

1. His Rebuking Word. "He rebuked the wind" (Mark 4:39). It is not-blessed be His Name-the cry of the needy that He rebukes, but the cause of their distress. He rebukes the stormy power of sin that lashes its waves of sorrow and fear into the sinking soul. By His rising from the dead the tempest of God's righteous wrath has been rebuked for every believer. There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. He hath delivered us from the wrath to come.

2. His Peace-speaking Word. "He said unto the sea, Peace, be still" (Mark 4:39). He not only removes the cause, but also heals the effect. He not only saves from wrath, but from the power of sin. He not only saves from fear, but fills the soul with the peace of God. These disciples could not get this peace apart from His Word, no more can you. It was His peace. He "hath made peace through the blood of His Cross" (Colossians 1:20). "My peace I give unto you" (John 14:27). Believe Him, and enter into His rest.

IV. The Amazing Effect. There was-

1. Instant Obedience. "The wind ceased" (Mark 4:39). They called, He spoke, and it was done. His Word was with power. Oh, the divinity that may be sleeping at our side like the great forces in nature that have just lately been awakened to the help of man! Do we really know what "God with us" means? The wind and the waves obey His will. He shall take vengeance on "them that obey not" (2 Thessalonians 1:8).

2. A Great Calm. The calm of Christ is always as great as the storm of sin. "He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still" (Psalms 107:29). The sacrifice of Christ has a mighty stilling effect upon the judgments of God, and upon the restless waves of doubt in the human soul.

"Great peace have they that love Thy law" (Psalms 119:165). This is a calm the storms of life or the billows of death cannot disturb. Our heavenly Jonah was cast forth into the sea of sin and suffering, and for us "the sea ceased from her raging" (Jonah 1:15). May His "peace be still" still be our peace.

3. A Trembling Astonishment. "They feared exceedingly, saying, What manner of man is this? or, Who then is this?" (r. v.). Their fearfulness and unbelief is rebuked by this gracious manifestation of His care and conquering power. "Who then is this?" Shall we ever know all that Jesus Christ is able to be to us and do for us? When we shall see Him as He is in the glory of His Father, then may we say with a still deeper meaning, "What manner of man is this?" (Revelation 1:13-18). THE TERRIBLE DEMONIAC.

Mark 5:1-20.

Christ had just calmed the sea and made the furious billows to sleep at His feet. At the other side He is again face to face with a perishing soul caught in a hurricane of wicked spirits. This soul, like the disciples' ship, was now full, but He who cares for the perishing has come to seek and to save. The character of an unclean spirit comes out in the acts of this man. He-

I. Dwelt Among the Tombs (Mark 5:3). What took him there? Like draws to like. An unclean spirit will always choose an unclean place. There is nothing in the man to contradict or resist this foul passion. The evil spirit within is his master. He is the helpless instrument in the hand of the devil. "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20). Figs never grow on thistles.

II. Wandered Among the Mountains (Mark 5:5). The path of his daily walk was a very uneven one. The ways of transgressors arc hard. Those driven by the spirit of uncleanness will have many a stumble upon the dark mountains of remorse and despair. These are the paths of ravenous beasts, loathsome things, and treacherous pitfalls. Darkness within and darkness without, and no friendly hand or guiding star to lead. Oh, Christless soul, this is you! (Ephesians 2:12).

III. Could not be Restrained. He had been "often bound," but the chains and fetters he had "broken in pieces" (Mark 5:4). Now they have to confess that "no man could tame him." Humanly speaking his case is utterly hopeless. What a picture of a man possessed by the drink fiend or the lust of uncleanness! No temperance pledge or human restraint will ever be able to tame an ungodly man sufficiently to live the life of a Christian. The wicked, selfish, unbelieving spirits of darkness must be cast out. Moral suasion has not much effect on a demoniac. Regeneration is the only remedy (John 3:3). The chains of social propriety are but rotten straws to the unprincipled dupes of the devil.

IV. Cried and Gut Himself with Stones (Mark 5:5).

"Crying and cutting" themselves describe the feelings and actions of many who are the servants of sin. Cutting themselves at night with the sharp stones of lust and drunkenness, and crying in the morning with the pain of remorse or physical prostration. Self-inflicted misery characterises the demon possessed. They serve a hard master, one who cruelly compels, with their own consent, to work out their own destruction.

V. Was Afraid of Jesus. He cried, "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, Son of the most high God?" (Mark 5:7). Those possessed by an unclean devil look upon the holy Son of God as an enemy to

their lives. The light is blamed because it reveals the corruption within. "What have I to do with Thee?" Just what guilt has to do with mercy, or abject poverty with infinite sufficiency. Every one must have to do with Him. Sin takes such a grip of the spirit of man that it makes him even afraid of Him who came to save.

VI. Prayed for the Devils. "He besought Him that He would not send them away out of the country" (Mark 5:10). The unity of interests between the man and the unclean spirit is awfully real. When the ungodly justify themselves they are advocating the cause of Satan. If there is no separation of interests now there, will be no separation of punishments hereafter (Matthew 25:41). A man is justifying the devil when he seeks to be safe in his sin instead of from it, when he seeks peace without forgiveness.

VII. Sat at Jesus' Feet (Mark 5:15). What a change now! What a mercy that Jesus knows how utterly helpless a demon-possessed soul is, and that He is able and willing to deliver even when there is nothing but dread and alarm at His Name. He was-

1. Sitting. The poor devil-driven man who wandered "day and night in the mountains" has now found a resting-place at the feet of Jesus. No man could bind or tame him, but the grace of God was sufficient for him. He breathes freely now, being delivered "from the kingdom of Satan and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son" (Colossians 1:13).

2. Clothed. Luke says that he "wore no clothes." The servants of Satan are all naked madmen in the sight of God. A new robe is put upon this returned prodigal, the righteousness of God which is unto all and upon all them that believe.

3. In His Right Mind. It is an evidence of insanity when a man prefers the tombs of the dead to the fellowship of the living. No one is in their right mind who has not the mind of Christ.

VIII. He Witnessed for Jesus. "He began to publish what great things Jesus had done for him" (Mark 5:20). He was now animated by a new spirit, the evidence of being a new creature. Witness-bearing is the natural result of the joy of salvation (Psalms 51:12-13; Isaiah 38:9-19; John 1:40-42).

JAIRUS' DAUGHTER.

Mark 5:22-24; Mark 5:35-43.

"Behold there cometh one Jairus by name." Jairus means a diffuser of light. As was his name, so was his nature. May the light of his life, as brought before us here, be diffused in our hearts. In this incident we have much food for thought. See the-

I. Blessed Result of Affliction. "He came and fell at His feet" (Mark 5:22). His daughter's dangerous illness drove him to Jesus. If we have any light in us at all we will flee to Him in the day of trouble. In a godless home there was one lying at the point of death. A neighbour said to the mother, "You should send for the minister." "Ah, me, has it come to that?" was the reply. Why should the appeal to God be always the last?

II. Readiness of Christ to Help. "And Jesus went with him" (Mark 5:24). He may have had a heavy heart in coming to Jesus, but now the burden is lightened when Jesus is with him. It is always

much easier facing the difficulties when He is with us. None dare doubt or despair in His presence. "If Thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence" (Exodus 33:15). It is one of the blessed wonders of grace that each troubled believer may have Jesus all to himself. Christ in me. "I will never leave thee." "The Lord is my Shepherd."

III. Trial of Faith. "Thy daughter is dead. Why troublest thou the Master any further?" (Mark 5:35). This would have been a fatal blow to staggering faith. Still here was a new difficulty. It was disease before, now it is death that Jesus had to face. Is Jesus sufficient still to satisfy all the desires of his heart? Those who would walk with Him will have their faith severely tested. But the trial of your faith is precious. "Why trouble the Master any further?" These words reveal the limit of their faith and expectations. It is possible to honour Him with the life-calling Him Master-while the heart's confidence is far away. How far are we prepared, through faith, to let the Master go with us into the human impossibilities that are ever before us? Or have we ceased to trouble Him about the dead that are around us?

IV. Master's Encouragement. "He said unto the ruler, Be not afraid, only believe" (Mark 5:36). This word was given "as soon as He heard the word that was spoken." He knows how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. He means to meet and satisfy the trust reposed in Himself. With Him nothing shall be impossible. "If thou wouldst believe thou shouldst see the glory of God" (John 11:40). The formal professor with his outward reverence and inward distrust has no faith in the miraculous; but to the simple, trustful heart Jesus whispers, "Be not afraid, only believe" (Mark 5:36). "Look unto Me, for I am God."

V. Rebuking Power of His Presence. "Why make ye this ado" (Mark 5:38-39). It is altogether unbecoming to make an ado when the presence of Him who is the resurrection and the life is with us. But these hypocritical mourners (hired ones) had no faith in Jesus, and so went on with their howling till His word of power fell on their ears, and turned their weeping into mocking. Christ as the Truth and the Son of Righteousness always pours His withering influence upon the hypocritical and unreal (Matthew 23:23; Mark 11:13-14).

VI. Place of the Unbelieving. "They laughed Him to scorn, but He put them all out" (Mark 5:40). Even He, who came to give His life a ransom for us, finds it needful to turn some outside ere He manifests the glory of His power. "The wicked shall be turned into hell." The good seed will only be fruitful in a good and honest heart. Man by his persistent unbelief renders himself unfit even to see the glory of His saving grace. "All liars," and the "unbelieving," "shall have their place in the lake of fire." When these sneering hypocrites were put out they no doubt would be justifying themselves, but they did not taste of the supper. The Lord could get on perfectly well without them. The foolish virgins were shut out.

VII. Awakening Call. "He took the damsel by the hand, and said, I say unto thee, arise, and straightway she arose and walked" (Mark 5:41-42). It was as easy for Him to raise the damsel out of the state of death as to put the mockers out of the house. Christ does His mightiest work as easily as He does the most simple and natural act. He can still the storm or raise the dead with the same ease that He brushed the locks of His hair off His brow with His fingers. Is not this the call that still comes through His Word to sleeping saints and dead sinners, "I say unto you, arise, for the day is far spent, and the night is at hand?" (Romans 13:11-12). THE HELPLESS WOMAN.

Mark 5:25-34.

Like nature, Jesus works without fuss or difficulty. He scatters profusely His gracious deeds of mercy without any thought of the praise of men. While on the way to raise the dead daughter of Jairus, virtue flows out of Him and revives this drooping, trusting spirit. What an inspiration this episode would be to Jairus, a handful on purpose. Notice her-

I. Disease. "She had an issue of blood twelve years" (Mark 5:25). Her very life was slowly ebbing away-the life is in the blood. In this condition she was: (1) Weak; (2) Unclean; (3) Miserable. Such are the effects of sin. The love of sin is a cancer in the soul. No mere external application can touch it, the wisdom of man has never yet found a remedy for it. She has been twelve years in the process of dying. We must die to live.

II. Effort. "She had spent all that she had" (Mark 5:26). She knew that she was diseased, and was willing to give, and did give, her all that she might secure deliverance from her misery. There is hope for a soul when it comes to this. No shamming or scheming, no pretence of being good enough, no self-justification. She was earnest enough, but she went to the wrong source. Her cure was not to be purchased, she was spending her "money for that which was not bread" (Isaiah 55:1-2).

III. Failure. "Nothing bettered, but rather grew worse" (Mark 5:26). Worse than ever, and all her means gone. She is now "without hope" as far as her own resources are concerned. Her physicians were all of no value. Neither Dr. False-peace, Dr. Good-enough, nor Dr. Do-better can touch the sore of sin. The prodigal did not earn the best robe. The thirst can only grow worse when water is sought at broken cisterns (Romans 4:5).

IV. Faith. "She said, If I may but touch His clothes, I shall be whole" (Mark 5:28). She had evidently heard of Jesus, and believed what she heard. Faith cometh by hearing. Her faith was simple, yet, O so great. She is poor, has nothing to give, she expects no medicine from Him, yet she believes that a touch of the fringe of His garment will bring instant salvation. Jesus was to her the source and centre of almighty fullness. Weak faith may touch a great Saviour. "Believe and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31).

V. Victory. "Straightway she felt that she was healed" (Mark 5:29). According to your faith, so shall it be unto you. She did not say, "If I touch I shall be healed," and sit still, hoping to have another chance some future day. Her faith brought her into personal contact with the Lord. The faith that does not do this is no faith.

1. Her cure was sudden. "Straightway." Immediately Christ answers the cry of trust and fills the hand of faith.

2. Her cure was complete. "Dried up." The very fountain of her trouble was dried up. His remedy goes to the root. "Convalescent" does not belong to the vocabulary of the Great Physician. Perfectly whole.

3. Her cure was consciously enjoyed. "She felt." She could not feel better till she was better. We cannot feel saved till we are saved.

VI. Confession. "She came and told Him all the truth" (Mark 5:33). The question of Jesus, "Who touched My clothes," was designed to bring her to a public acknowledgment of the blessing received. He would not have her go away with the uncomfortable feeling that she had stolen the cure, or with the unconsciousness that it was (he gift of God. This healing virtue went forth in answer to her faith and according to His will. She had believed with the heart, now she must "confess with the mouth" (Romans 10:10). We may be healed by the touch of trust, but we are strengthened in our trust by confession with the lips. "Whosoever is ashamed of Me and My Word, of him will I be ashamed" (Mark 8:38).

VII. Assurance. "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole, go in peace" (Mark 5:34). She would not have had this comforting word had she not made open confession. She was saved by faith, and assured by His word. If she had gone away without this promise she might have been in constant dread of the terrible disease returning; but now she not only feels well, but she has His word for it that she has been made whole of her plague. There are many who lack the joy of salvation because they do not in their lives confess Christ before men (1 John 4:15).

HEROD; OR, THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN.

Mark 6:14-28.

The struggle of darkness and light was never more apparent than in the case of Herod and John Baptist. Here the purity of Heaven comes into contact with the foulness of Hell. The herald of Christ and the ambassador of Satan face to face. Such a meeting is sure to be a crisis in the lives of both. But it is with Herod we wish specially now to deal. Let us try and set his terrible downgrade experiences in order See him-

I. Warned of His Sin. "John said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife" (Mark 6:18). The heavenly searchlight is made to flash into the dark, hidden parts of his life. His besetting sin is pointed out, his unlawful life exposed (Leviticus 20:21). This was the day of his merciful visitation if he had only known it. The light of deep conviction is often like the glare of the bull's-eye lamp, it blinds to everything else. Saul kicked against the pricks, but the goad was in the hand of his Redeemer.

II. Reforming through Fear. "Herod feared John, and did many things" (Mark 6:20). He seems now on the fair way to work out his own salvation. This is the usual course with those animated only by the "pride of life." The sense of sin is frequently followed with attempts at reformation. But with Herod, as with many, the power of his darling sin remained unbroken and unchecked. One thing was needful. "Let the wicked forsake his ways" (Isaiah 55:7).

III. Enslaved by the Opinions of Others. "He laid hold on John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake" (Mark 6:17). The voice of lust gets the victory over the voice of conscience and of God. By one rash act he quenches the light of the Heaven-sent message. In pleasing Herodias he turns away from, and sets at naught, the divine warning. It may be that the fear of others is even now hindering you from acting up to the measure of light you have. What about companions, your own opinions, or worldly pleasures and associations? Are they bond-slaves or masters? For whose sake is your life fashioned?

IV. Pleased with a Passing Show. "The daughter of Herodias danced and pleased Herod" (Mark 6:22). The moral passage from hearing John gladly down to being pleased with the dance of a strumpet is very short. When the cup of salvation has been deliberately rejected with what nervous greed men grasp the poisonous cup of sinful pleasure. "As soon as Judas had received the sop he went out, and it was night" (John 13:30).

V. Surrendering His Dignity. "Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom" (Mark 6:23). Sin first interests, then excites, then captivates. Where are thousands of young men and young women to-day? They have allowed the god of pleasure to dance so long before their eyes, and their passions to be so inflamed, that all that goes to dignify their natures have been rashly sacrificed to this god. "The god of this world hath blinded their minds." Yielding to temptation leads to being "led captive by the devil at his will."

VI. Driven by Compulsion. "The king was exceeding sorry, yet for the oath's sake he would not reject her" (Mark 6:26). Herod was rather startled when she asked the "head of John the Baptist. "He had sold himself, now he is the slave of another. Sin's pleasures ripen into terrible demands. The pleasant tippling often leads to the drunkard's crave. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:15).

VII. Remembering the Past. "When Herod heard thereof he said, It is John whom I beheaded" (Mark 6:16). The words and works of Christ revive his guilty conscience. If John had not risen from the dead a sense of his guilt and crime had. There is no grave of man's making deep enough to bury sin. Oh, unsaved one, will you be constrained to say in that day when Christ shall come again, "It is Jesus whom I crucified, therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in Him." "What wilt thou do in the solemn day?" (John 13:30). THE MYSTERIOUS FEAST.

Mark 6:35-44.

In following Jesus we may sometimes be led into what many would call "a desert place," but such places are made to blossom like the rose when His presence is with us. Our desert places shut us up to faith in Him, and afford Him an opportunity of showing forth the glory of His power. The lion's den was a desert place for Daniel, but it proved, through the grace of God, a place of marvellous blessing and triumph. In the tedious and lonesome hours of trial and bereavement the Christian has a meat to eat that the world knows nothing of. See here-

I. The Scheme of Human Reasoning. "The disciples said, Send them away, that they may buy themselves bread " (Mark 6:36). Go and help yourselves; do as well as you can. This is all the Gospel any man can preach who is yet a stranger to the infinite grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Send them away." He never sends the hungry empty away. Send them away! Away where? Away from the Fountain to seek water; away from the Living Bread to buy for themselves? Their reasons are: Because-

1. They Had Nothing to Eat (Mark 6:36). They had nothing of their own whereby to satisfy themselves (who has?). So they must go and seek it elsewhere, but not in Christ. Such is the Gospel of carnal wisdom, a wisdom which is foolishness with God.

2. This is a Desert Place (Mark 6:35). Yes, this world is a desert place, and apart from Christ there is no satisfaction in it. Perplexity is sure to overtake those who trust more in circumstances than in

the Lord. If while following Him we have been led into the "desert place," we may be sure that even here His grace will be made sufficient for us.

3. The Time is Far Passed (Mark 6:35). According to their seasonings the longer they continued with Jesus the more hopeless did their case become. "Send them away." Although the present dispensation is far spent, although your own lifetime is far spent, and the night of old age fast settling down, you need not depart. "My God shall supply all your need" (Php_4:19).

II. The Language of Divine Compassion. "Jesus was moved with compassion" (Mark 6:34). Human need appeals to the heart of Christ, and not it vain, for He is moved. "We have not an High Priest who cannot be touched" (Hebrews 4:15). His compassion being moved. His almighty power is ready to act. But meanwhile He says-

1. "Give Ye Them to Eat." In so saying He reveals His desire toward the hungry that they might be fed, and brings out their utter helplessness that they might have faith in Him. He says, "Feed My sheep," that we might say, "Lord, evermore give us this bread."

2. "How Many Loaves Have Ye?" He asks no more than we have. If His wonder-working power is to be seen through us as His servants we must give Him what we have. "Bring them to Me." The gifts may be small, the talents may be few, but in His hands they will be made sufficient to accomplish the purposes of His grace concerning us. Even the two hundred pennyworth of man's natural wisdom and effort will be insufficient without Him.

3. "Make Them All Sit Down." The disciples would send the tired and the starving away, but Jesus says to such, "Sit down." Your strength, exhausted one, is to sit still, not to sit down in despair, but to rest in faith, looking unto Jesus.

III. The Attitudes of Almighty Grace. His actions are as weighty as His words. He-

1. Looked Up. Those who have hungry souls to feed will need often to look up. This bread must come down from Heaven (Matthew 4:4).

2. Blessed. We will have good cause for thanksgiving if we have exercised the look up of faith. The disciples could see nothing worthy of such special thanks, but He believed that having asked He had received (see Mark 11:24).

3. Gave. He that, in this sense, looketh and blesseth, will surely have something to give. He gave, He did not sell. The Lord of life does not deal out His blessings in pennyworths. The disciples were here taught that in giving it would be given them. He gives "to all liberally" (Romans 6:23).

IV. The Provision of Infinite Love (Php_4:19). It was-

1. Suitable. "They did all eat." It suited their poverty, it was free. It suited their perplexity, it was given them just where they were. There is a beautiful and exact fitness in the salvation of God. "Eat, O friends!"

2. Satisfying. "They all did eat, and were filled." "He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness" (Psalms 107:9). The world can only give stones for bread to those who seek to glorify God. Hungry soul O take the bread of God.

3. Sufficient. "They took up twelve baskets of fragments." If any one went away dissatisfied these fragments which were left testified that it was not Christ's fault. In the atonement of Jesus, the Son of God, there is ample provision for every creature under Heaven. If you are not saved it is not because there is not enough for all. The twelve baskets left will be a swift witness against the unbeliever. Why will ye die? THE IMPEDIMENTS REMOVED.

Mark 7:31-37.

In Christ there was an all-sufficiency for all times. The holy anointing was upon Him, so that He could preach the Gospel by His mighty saving acts as well as by His comforting words. Our words are plentiful, but how much Gospel has been found in our deeds?

I. The Sorrowing Subject.

1. He was Deaf. The most joyful tidings met with no response in his soul, this avenue was closed. But although he could not hear the words of love, he could see an act of grace. Like many more who are deaf to the preached Word but not blind to the acted Word.

2. He had an Impediment in his Speech. Those deaf to God's words will never be able to speak freely for Him. A dull ear makes a stammering tongue. His promise is, "When I speak with thee I will open thy mouth" (Ezekiel 3:27).

3. He was Brought to Jesus. This is better than trying to argue with him. If our friends are deaf to the call of God let us take them to the Lord in prayer. His virtue can adapt itself to the need of all (Luke 8:46).

II. The Saving Acts of Jesus.

1. He Took Him Aside. The first step into the liberty and joy of His salvation is to get alone with Jesus. Let us turn aside, like Moses, "and see this great sight" (Exodus 3:3). Enter into thy closet, and in the sanctuary of thy soul hear Him.

2. He Put His Fingers Into His Ears. It is often the din of the world that deafens the ear to the voice of God. Yes, when alone with Him His fingers are sure to find out the hidden cause of every impediment. Has it not been so in our experience? Have we not been constrained to say again and again, "This is the finger of God" (Exodus 8:19).

3. He Spit. This common act may deem unworthy of the Son of God. But there is nothing insignificant in the doings of Christ. Out of His mouth comes the healing balm (Mark 8:23). "He sent His Word, and healed them" (Psalms 107:20).

4. He Touched His Tongue. When the ear is opened the tongue is loosed. Those who have really heard what God the Lord hath spoken "cannot but speak the things which they have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). A dumb tongue indicates a deaf ear.

5. He Looked Up to Heaven. The source of all grace and blessing is in the heart of the Father. Every good gift is "from above." All who would follow His steps in doing the works of God must be conscious of the need of "looking up."

6. He Sighed. What a spontaneous expression of the depth and reality of His sorrow and sympathy! Blessed sigh that betrays the secret, sacred, suffering soul of the Saviour. He can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities. "Set a mark on those that sigh" (Ezekiel 9:4).

7. He Said, "Be Opened." He spake, and it was done. His Word shall not return void. His Word was with power (Luke 4:32) Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. With equal authority He, by the Holy Ghost, hath said, "Be filled with the Spirit." Be opened, be saved, be filled.

III. The Sudden Change. Straightway his ears were opened The Word of God is intended to, and always does, and always will, take immediate effect when spoken in the power of the Holy Spirit.

1. His Ears were Opened. The need was great, the will was yielded, the work was done And it was all His doing. Opened ears and honest hearts to hear and receive the Word of God form the channel through which the fullness and power of God flows.

2. His Tongue was Loosed. How could he speak of Him of whom he had not heard} A draught of the new wine from heaven was a wonderful power in loosening the tongue (Acts 2 1-13). The tongue can no man tame, but the Holy Ghost can both tame it, and tune it, and make it a weapon mighty for God.

3. He Spake Plain. A man usually speaks plain when he thoroughly knows what he is talking about, and feels the power of it in his own soul Abraham declared plainly, because he was persuaded of the promises, and had embraced them (Hebrews 11:13-14), We believe and therefore speak. If Pentecost means anything it means plain speaking, because it implies definite and powerful conviction. THE SATISFYING POWER OF JESUS.

Mark 8:1-9

From whence hath the lowly Jesus this fascinating influence that constrains a hungry multitude to follow Him into the wilderness, and in spite of their physical weakness to hang on the words of His mouth? In Him are the springs of life and eternal blessedness. Blessed are all they who have made this soul-ravishing discovery. Like Abraham, they will go out, although they know not whither they are going. When, like Elisha, the mantle of His prophetic influence is cast over us we cannot but follow. It was so with Moses and David, with Matthew and Saul, with all who have come within the Spirit's constraining power, the called of God, as was Aaron.

I. A Picture of Need. "The multitude have nothing to eat" (Mark 8:2). They were in the wilderness, a barren place, in circumstances that could by no means afford satisfaction. Nothing to eat. How expressive of an awakening soul, still a stranger to the covenants of promise, having no hope. In His mercy He leads us into such desolate places that we might see His saving power.

II. A Revelation of Love. "I have compassion on the multitude" (Mark 8:2). They had been with Him for three days. The Lord not only counted the days, but also measured the depths of their need. Their poverty and helplessness moves His heart, and stirs up His soul into tenderest compassion and practical sympathy. "I have compassion." Hungry soul, look up, here is a door of entrance into the fullness of God. It is said of the prodigal that "no man gave unto him" (Luke 15), but the father had compassion. This was enough.

III. A Consideration of Grace. "If I send them away fasting they will faint by the way" (Mark 8:3). Yes, if He sends us away there is nothing before us but fainting and perishing. If He cannot satisfy the longing soul with good, who can? If He sends the hungry empty away to whom can they go? But "we have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities" (Hebrews 4:15-16).

IV. A Question of Helplessness. "From whence can a man satisfy these with bread here in the wilderness?" (Mark 8:4). Those disciples who are really anxious to satisfy the multitude with bread will be deeply conscious of their own inability. Vain is the help of man. Instead of seeking to satisfy them with bread, how many there are who seek merely to entertain and amuse them, endeavouring to get them to forget their hunger. Miserable comforters! It is not in man to satisfy these. But one is near who is able to supply all their need, the Man Christ Jesus.

V. An Attitude of Trust. "He commanded the people to sit down" (Mark 8:6). Jesus asks, "How many loaves have ye?" They said, "Seven." He said, "Sit down." In sitting down doubtless their expectation would be awakened. Their faith could not rest on the seven loaves, but on the compassionate and almighty Saviour Himself. It does take a measure of faith to "sit down" in circumstances like these. Wouldst thou see the salvation of God? Sit down and look up. Rest at His bidding and leave it all to Him.

VI. A Manifestation of Power. "He took the loaves and gave thanks, and brake and gave to His disciples, and commanded to set them also before them" (Mark 8:6-7). They gave Him what they had, and He through their little wrought the all-satisfying work. Your faith may be little, but if it is in Him He will prove Himself sufficient for thee. How the few loaves gave place to the miraculous bread no one could tell. It was enough for them that they got what they needed. How our simple trust in Him brings the divine and miraculous life within our souls we cannot tell, but we praise God that He does satisfy us with His own life, and that we know that we are born of God.

VII. A Superabundance of Supply. "They took up of the broken meat that was left, seven baskets" (Mark 8:8). The provision made was such as would condemn any who went hungry away. In the salvation of Christ there is enough for every fainting soul. When the day of salvation has gone there will be virtue enough left in the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ to condemn those who have condemned themselves by their not believing in the sufficiency of Christ's atoning work for them. He made provision for all. It is an awful thing to pass into eternity with a hunger gnawing at the heart that can never be satisfied. Those who have eaten and axe full bless the Lord their God (Deuteronomy 8:10).

JESUS LEADING AND HEALING.

Mark 8:22-26.

Why seek ye the living among the dead? An old author says, "We ought not to look for that in the law, which can only be found in the Gospel; nor look for that in ourselves which can only be found in Christ; nor to look for that in the creature which can only be found in the Creator; nor to look for that on earth which can only be found in Heaven." "Look unto Me, and be ye saved" (Isaiah 45:22). We observe here-

I. A Merciful Work. "They bring a blind man unto Him" (Mark 8:22). Their names are not given, but their work will never be forgotten.

1. Whom They Brought. "A blind man." A man utterly helpless to find the way for himself. A man deprived of the very capacity of discerning Him who alone could deliver. Such are the spiritually blind. "Eyes have they, but they see not" (Psalms 115:5). Minds blinded by Satan. Even when awakened to a sense of their danger and need can only grope after the door of salvation like the blind men of Sodom.

2. Where They Brought Him. "They bring him to Jesus." His Name is called Immanuel, God with us. What a privilege! Is there anything too hard for Him? Have we proved His grace and power by bringing our needy friends to Him. Oh, how much the blind ones do need our help!

3. Why They Brought Him to Jesus. Because they believed in Him. And they backed up their kindly act by an earnest prayer. They "besought Him to touch him." What an object lesson to Christian workers! Let us show our sympathy for the perishing and our faith in Christ by bringing them to Him individually and beseeching Him on their behalf.

II. A Wonderful Healer. It is most interesting to note how the Lord dealt with this poor blind one. We must remember that His actions are as eloquent of divine meaning as His words. When they brought him to Jesus, observe that they left him entirely in His hands. He does not deal with all in the same way. His manifold wisdom and grace is seen in His manifold manner of dealing with individual souls. Note the process-

1. "He Took Him by the Hand." Here was personal contact. The grip of Christ's hand must have sent a thrill of hope through the poor man's soul. Our first contact with Jesus is a memorable experience. When we felt the grip of His truth in our hearts, and knew that we had got into personal touch with the Son of God.

2. He Led Him Out of the Town. He took him away from everything that would hinder him from feeling that he was alone with his Saviour. His operating hand requires the concentration of the heart. The town, with all its excitement and attractions, still hinders multitudes from getting alone with the redeeming Lord. Are you willing to have your affections led out of the town and centred in Jesus Himself?

3. "He Spit on His Eyes." This was rather a humbling treatment, but it is always so when salvation is in prospect. The spittle of Jesus on the sightless eyeballs indicates the virtue of Christ personally applied by Him to the sin-blinded hearts of men. His spittle, given with a purpose, is of more value than the blood of others. "To you that believe He is precious" (1 Peter 2:7).

4. "He Put His Hands Upon Him." If His spittle was humbling, His hands would be comforting. Those blessed hands, so full of power and blessing, how assuring to the soul, to feel that they are on us. The Lord in mercy suits Himself to the need of each. If this anxious blind man could not see Him, He makes him feel His presence nigh.

5. He Questioned Him. "He asked him if he saw aught" (Mark 8:23). It is good to make confession, and to be honest with it, not pretending to see more than we really do. He said, "I see men as trees, walking." A man's eyes are not very clear when he only sees men as irresponsible trees. This is not the full light of His revelation, but the day is dawning, and He that hath begun the good

work will perfect it.

6. He Enlarged the Blessing. "He put His hands again upon his eyes and made him look up" (Mark 8:25). A perfect cure because the perfect One. It is no honour to Him that our eyes should only be so far enlightened as to enable us to form false opinions. When He made him look up "he was restored, and saw every man clearly." It is a great revelation to see "every man clearly." To see who he is, what he is, and where he is going; to see the character and destiny of every man clearly as in the sight of God. Perfect restoration means a clear sight of human need. It is a solemn responsibility to have our eyes open to see "every man clearly."

7. He Commissioned Him. "He sent him away to his house" (Mark 8:26). Doubtless there were in his house those who needed to hear his testimony to the saving power of Jesus Christ. The man's life would henceforth be a constant witness for the Lord. Have your eyes been so opened as to change the whole manner of your life? THE DEVIL-POSSESSED SON.

Mark 9:17-29.

On the platform of this narrative we see the characteristics of Heaven, earth, and hell. (1) Compassion and power; (2) Doubt and weakness; (3) Hate and misery. But the power of the compassionate Christ can overcome the weakness of His disciples and the work of the devil. We have here-

I. Satanic Influence. The Lord Jesus Christ believed in personal wicked spirits. We think lightly of them, but He had to face them and overcome. This evil influence had-

1. An Early Beginning. "Of a child" (Mark 9:21). Being born in sin, the natural soil of the heart is at once favourable to the seeds of evil. The Psalmist says, "We go astray as soon as we be born" (Psalms 58:3), and we keep going astray like lost sheep until we are born again.

2. An Overpowering Mastery. "He teareth him, and oft-times casteth him into the fire, and into the waters" (Mark 9:18, Mark 9:22). He was simply led captive by this devil, having no power at all to resist him. His purpose was to kill and to destroy. Such is the power of sin. Has sin dominion (mastery) over you? Are you dominated by principles you know to be contrary to your conscience and your God? Are you under law or grace? (Romans 6:14).

3. A Fearful Effect. Mark's pen is graphic here. What a terrible catalogue of evils, "Teareth, foameth, gnasheth, pineth, wallowing, foaming, cast him into the fire, into the water, and rent him sore" (Mark 9:20). Just one thing awanting, the awful "for ever," to make his hell complete. Those under the power of the devil, if they escape the tearing, the gnashing, the wallowing, and fire in this life, will not escape in the next (Matthew 13:40-42; Revelation 20:15).

II. Disciples' Failure. "I spake to Thy disciples that they should cast him out, but they could not" (Mark 9:18). Great things are expected from those who belong to Christ, and justly so (Php_4:13). Peter and John said to the lame man, "Look on us" (Acts 3:4). They knew what possibilities were within their reach through faith in the risen Saviour.

They could not because of-

1. Failure in Faith. The Lord rebuked them with, "O faithless generation, all things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark 9:23). Their lack of faith brought dishonour upon the Name of their Master. "Abraham was strong in faith, giving God the glory" (Romans 4:20). Yes, strong faith glorifies God. Our unbelief is a stumbling-block in the way of others. "Have faith in God" (Mark 11:22).

2. Failure in Prayer. "This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting" (Mark 9:29). Prayer means communion with God; communion means power for service. Those who have only fixed times for prayer may be often caught napping in weakness and inability. The spirit of prayer is better than seasons of prayer.

3. Failure in Fasting (Mark 9:29). Prayer and fasting forms the two-edged sword that gets the victory. It is questionable if we really pray as we ought, unless we esteem it better than our daily food. If preaching and feasting would cast out devils, then there would be a general exodus. This overcoming power does not belong to us merely as disciples. There are many powerless disciples. This Christ-honouring authority can only abide with those who abide in fellowship with Him by continual prayer and hearty self-denial for His sake. This is one of the things that are hidden from the worldly-wise, but revealed to the humble, trustful babes.

III. Christ's Victory. The disciples having failed him, the young man's father carried his request to Jesus Himself, saying, "If thou canst do anything, have compassion and help us." If the followers of Christ have disappointed you, try the Lord Himself. Don't be discouraged by the powerlessness of His professing people. He who wept over Jerusalem will compassionate your case Notice the order of deliverance-

1. The Invitation. "Bring him unto Me." "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Let there be an entire yielding up of ourselves in all our helplessness and misery into His hands. As a physician He had never failed. Is there anything tearing your heart and causing your life to pine away? Bring it to Him. Any wayward son possessed with a deaf and dumb spirit toward God and the things of eternity? "Bring him to Me," says the Redeemer of men.

2. The Word of Power. Jesus said, "Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him" (Mark 9:25). He speaks and it is done. He sent His Word and healed them. The deliverance was complete, the evil spirit must enter no more into him. In obeying His invitation we shall find His Word to be with power. He can separate between you and your sins. He can give us the victory over all our enemies.

3. The Uplifting Hand. "Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up" (Mark 9:27). When the veil is cast out we are lifted up into newness of life. Made a new creation by Christ, Jesus. The Word and the hand of Christ work together for the salvation of those who flee to Him for refuge. The Word of grace, the hand of power, both moved by a heart of love. THE CHILDREN FOR CHRIST.

Mark 10:13-16.

We are not told who brought the young children to Jesus, but most likely the mothers. Blessed are those mothers who have so believed in Jesus as to bring their children to Him. In Belgium boys are taught to run up to religious teachers and ask them to sign them with the sign of the Cross. Are

we anxious that the sign of the Cross should be impressed upon the lives of our offsprings. If so, let us bring them to Jesus. A mother's influence casts the longest shadow over the lives of the children. It was the patient, gentle influence of Monica which turned her gifted son Augustine from a profligate to a saint. George Washington confessed that he owed his character to the influence of his mother. A dying infidel prayed, "God of my mother, have mercy on me." Children are to be pitied whose mothers pray not. Jesus loves the children, and will readily hear a mother's cry on their behalf.

I. Children Need the Touch of Jesus. "They brought them to Him that He should touch them" (Mark 10:13). None are so innocent as not to need the touch of His atoning power. His redeeming blood alone is the ground of acceptance before God. There is "none other Name."

II. Children are Welcome to the Arms of Jesus.

"Suffer them to come unto Me" (Mark 10:14). The Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Mighty God is the children's Saviour. Weakness in the arms of Omnipotence. Parents, suffer your children to come to Jesus by your precepts and example. How awful to be a hinderer!

III. Children should be Brought to Jesus. "They brought young children to Him" (Mark 10:13). This we can do by prayer and dedication Claiming the promise, "Which is unto you and to your children" (Acts 2:39). Christian parents should not rest in the general belief that all children are saved through the grace of God in Christ, but must definitely bring them to Christ, and by faith rest assured that He does bless them.

IV. Children should not be Hindered by Disciples.

"His disciples rebuked those that brought them" (Mark 10:13). The Lord has still many bachelor disciples who hinder the little ones by their cruel indifference to their spiritual well-being. Those who stand in the way of children don't know the love of Jesus, and are in heart out of sympathy with Him in His great saving grace. Children are often hindered by long sour faces and bombastic phrases about the Gospel of Christ. Don't rebuke them by your unchristlike life. May the love of Christ constrain them through us!

V. Children are Fit Subjects for the Kingdom of God.

"Of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14). It is suggestive to note that when Jesus entered the house of Zacchaeus He said, "For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10); but when He speaks about the little ones, He adds, "For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost" (Matthew 18:11). Leaving out the word seek, as if the little ones are not yet reckoned among those who have deliberately gone astray (Matthew 18:3-5).

VI. Children are Examples to Others. "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein" (Mark 10:15). Little children receive the kingdom of God without doubt or questioning, with an honest, simple heart. "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise" (Matthew 21:16) VII. Children are Accepted and Blessed by Jesus.

"He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them" (Mark 10:16). These words indicate a threefold blessing.

1. Safety. "He took them up in His arms."

2. Fellowship. "He put His hands upon them."

3. Sufficiency. "He blessed them." His blessing is no empty form, but the imparting of grace sufficient for their need. "The blessing of the Lord it maketh rich" (Proverbs 10:22). Who would not be a child to enter into such an inheritance? "In malice, be ye children" (1 Corinthians 14:20).

LOVED, YET LACKING.

Mark 10:17-22.

"Can gold calm passion, or make reason shine? Can we dig peace or wisdom from the mine? Wisdom to gold prefer, for 'tis much less To make our fortune than our happiness; That happiness which great ones often see, With rage and wonder in a low degree, themselves unblessed." -Edward Young. This was a critical point in this young man's life. It is always so when we come face to face with Jesus Christ. By a flood of earnest emotion he was lifted to the very feet of the Saviour. But this spring time of privilege passed without receiving the seed of the Word, which would have sprung up into eternal life and fruitfulness, so he passed into the desolate winter of a hopeless future. Young men, "Behold, now is the day of salvation."

I. The Love of Jesus. "Jesus beholding him, loved him" (Mark 10:21). There is something heart-melting about this calm, careful, pitiful "beholding him" of Jesus. This is not a superficial glance at his attitudes, but a divinely compassionate weighing of the inner motives of his heart. He beheld- 1. His Earnestness. "He came running."

2. His Humility. "He kneeled to Him."

3. His Important Request. "What shall I do?"

4. His Moral Goodness. "All these have I observed from my youth."

He beheld it all with eyes moistened with infinite love. There is much that is lovable about all this, but observe that it was not his earnestness, his humility, nor his moral goodness that He loved, it was him. The love of Jesus goes deeper down than the mere garnishings of a human life. It goes down to the individual spirit within. "Jesus beholding him, loved him." "The Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). "He loved me, and gave Himself lot me" (Galatians 2:20). Precious love!

II. The Startling Statement. "One thing thou lackest" (Mark 10:21). There were many things he did not lack. He did not lack desire, earnestness, nor wisdom to go to the right source. There was no lack in his creed; he was quite orthodox and well taught. But the Lord saw that there was one fly that spoiled the ointment of his life. A statue may be perfect in every part, but it is only a statue, because it lacks the one thing-life. His life was like a sundial without its gnomon, there was no finger of decision pointing heavenward. A compass may be otherwise perfect, but if it lacks the needle it is valueless. The great Physician put His finger on the spot. One thing lacking, the love of God which constrains to self-sacrifice. It is said that Whitefield once stayed in a house where they were so kind that he did not like to speak to them about their souls, but he wrote on a pane of his bedroom window, "One thing thou lackest," which proved the message of God to the family. May it be written on the window of your soul if you have not yet surrendered all to Christ!

III. The Testing Call. "Go and sell whatsoever thou hast" (Mark 10:21). It was-

1. Severe. "The Word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword" (Hebrews 4:12). Put yourselves in his place, and think of how you would stand the test. A deep seated disease needs a severe remedy.

2. Needful. He needed to be convinced of his own self-satisfied condition. We are so insensible to the pride of our own hearts that nothing but deep cutting will touch the disease. The Lord is too faithful to heal the disease slightly, but if the wound is great, so is the plaster offered. "Thou shalt have treasure in Heaven."

IV. The Sorrowful Departure. "He was sad at that saying, and went away grieved" (Mark 10:21). Where did he go? Where would he find a grave for his grief? Would his possessions be as precious to him now as before? What a choice: treasure on earth, but not rich towards God. Convicted, but not converted. Not far from the kingdom, but he stepped back into the darkness of a selfish life, preferring the things which are seen and temporal to the things which are unseen and eternal. How different with Moses (Hebrews 11:24-26). If you turn away from the demands of Christ you turn into the paths of sin and death, yet He loves you. THE CUP AND THE BAPTISM.

Mark 10:35-40.

"When earth has nothing to bestow, And every flower is dead below, I look to Thee alone." So said James G. Percival, and such has been the expression of multitudes in every age. When the things of earth and time have failed to meet the deeper cravings of the inmost heart, the languid eye has been lifted to the Lord of life, and heavenly and eternal things besought. Perhaps some such feeling possessed the hearts of James and John when they uttered the prayer recorded here.

I. The Bold Request. "Master, we would that Thou shouldst grant unto us that we may sit, one on Thy right hand, and the other on Thy left, in Thy glory." Here there is much, perhaps, for both blame and praise. Blame, in that this prayer reveals-

1. Great Selfishness. An intense desire for preeminence in the coming glory. They certainly coveted earnestly the best gifts. But perhaps their motives were to get the chief seats, and to be exalted above their brethren But it also reveals-

2. Great Faith. They believed Him to be a King, and that He will come in great power and glory, so they ventured to offer this great petition. Let us not condemn them, but let us rather condemn ourselves, that we ask and expect so little.

II. The Gentle Rebuke. Jesus said, "Ye know not; or, Do you know what ye ask?" He did not upbraid them for their pride and selfishness, but calmly asked them if they knew what the way to such places of honour meant, as if He said, "To reach My place of honour and glory you must go My way." The conditions are still the same. "If we suffer we shall also reign with Him" (2 Timothy 2:12). Now let us look at-

III. The Searching Question. Jesus said, "Are ye able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with?" (Mark 10:38, R. V.). We must tread with gentle step here, as the truth suggested is both deep and solemn. Let all criticism be laid aside, and also the shoes from off our feet. Does the cup and the baptism not indicate two definite experiences that

we must have if we would rise to a prominent place in the kingdom of glory. The cup is something deliberately accepted, the baptism is something graciously imparted.

1. The Significance of the Cup. The cup that Christ drank of was the cup of His Father's will (Psalms 40:8; John 4:34); the cup of patient suffering at the hands of men (1 Peter 2:21-25; Hebrews 12:3); the cup of obedience unto death (Php_2:8). "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I drink of?"(Matthew 26:42).

2. The Significance of the Baptism. The baptism of Christ implied: (1) Humiliation. "Suffer it to be so now," He said, as He submitted to the baptism of John. We must also humble ourselves under the mighty hand of His purpose. (2) Consecration. At His baptism He made entire surrender of Himself to do the will of God in the presence of the people. Are you able to be baptised with this baptism? (3) Anointing. At His baptism the Holy Spirit came upon Him, so that He was divinely fitted as a man for all the work the Father had given Him to do. The baptism of anointing comes after the cup of obedience and submission.

IV. The Ready Reply. "They said unto Him, We are able" (Mark 10:39, r. v.). See their-

1. Faith in the Possibility of It. Yes, we are able to follow Thy steps. By Thy grace we can. We are able to drink of Thy cup and to receive Thy baptism. The cup and the baptism are the solemn symbols of a Christlike life, the badges of a candidate for nearness to Him in the glory.

2. Willingness to Possess It. They said at once, "We are able," as if they were prepared to suffer anything rather than lose distinction in eternity. Does not our very ability lie in our willingness. Can we say that "we are able?"

V. The Assuring Answer. When they said, "We are able," Jesus immediately adds, "Ye shall indeed," and they did. They received of His baptism at Pentecost, and in their sufferings and martyrdoms they did indeed drink of the cup that He drank of. (1) James was the first martyr, (2) John was the last, and who suffered a living martyrdom on the isle of Patmos. Both glorified God, and will no doubt occupy a place of honour in the kingdom of His glory. What is this cup and this baptism to you? Do you dread them or covet them? Our relation to them determines our present character as Christians, whether or not we are glorifying God in our bodies and spirits which are His, and may also determine our position in the world to come. "Are ye able?" THE BLIND BEGGAR.

Mark 10:46-52.

This poor man seems to have dwelt in Jericho, the city that was under the curse (John 6:26). Where dwellest thou? Under the curse of the broken law, or in the secret places of the Most High? The beautiful, but wretched, Jericho was visited by the Son of God. The visit was but brief. "He came to Jericho, and went out of Jericho." But it was a day of grace to one poor benighted soul. Here let us see-

I. Mercy Needed. Sin-blinded man has many needs, but his chief need is mercy. As all light comes from the sun, so the mercy he needs is the mercy of God, the mercy that acts in help and healing. He was-

1. Blind. The blind are to be pitied, because they can neither see themselves nor others. They cannot enjoy the light, and are ignorant of what the light reveals. Those whose minds axe blinded by the god of this world can neither see their own deformity and filthiness, nor the beauty and preciousness of the Saviour.

2. Poor. "He sat by the wayside begging." A man must surely be conscious of his poverty before he sets to begging. Those who think they have need of nothing are not likely to frequent the prayer meeting. Alas, for the poor rich (Revelation 3:17).

3. Hopeless. He could not expect to receive his sight except through a miracle wrought by a divine hand. In all likelihood he had expected to die in his blindness. None but Christ could deliver him, and, praise be to God, the saving Christ had come within reach, and was actually passing by. "Behold, now is the accepted time." "Call upon Him while He is near."

II. Mercy Asked. "When he heard it was Jesus he began to cry out," and when others rebuked him, "he cried the more a good deal." It is not easy to still a hungry man where bread may be had for nothing. This is deep need calling unto the deep of Divine mercy, and not in vain. He cried-

1. For the Right Thing. "Have mercy on me." If he finds mercy, he knows that he will find all else that he needs. Many, when they become conscious of their need, cry for peace, for joy, or for consolation. Mercy is the first necessity. "God be merciful to me."

2. To the Right One. "Jesus, thou Son of David." Oh! how sweet the Name of Jesus sounds in the ear of this blind believer! All his hopes are centred on Him. "There is none other Name under Heaven whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). If He fails him there is nothing left for him but despair and the blackness of darkness. "To whom can we go." "Let your requests be made known unto Him" (Psalms 60:1-3).

3. At the Right Time. Jesus was passing by (Luke 18:37). He did not wait for a more convenient season. He knew the danger of delay. Take care that you are not letting your last opportunity slip past without a cry for help.

"There is a line, by us unseen,

That crosses every path;

The hidden boundary between

God's patience and His wrath."

III. Mercy Offered. He who hears the cry of the raven will not turn a deaf ear to the cry of a needy, trusting soul.

1. He Stood. "Jesus stood still." The goal of prayer is the ear of God. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him. He stood that he might give Himself to the help of this believing but destitute beggar. To every such soul Jesus gives Himself.

2. He Called. "Be of good comfort, He calleth thee." This was indeed the Gospel of Christ to the blind petitioner. See how quickly he obeys the call. Casting away his outer garment in his haste. Vain will be your cry if you refuse to obey His call. "Rise, He calleth thee" (Mark 10:49).

3. He Offered. "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" When Jesus said this He was laying all the riches of His grace at this anxious pauper's feet. Oh, unfathomable mercy, let me plunge into thee, and let thy deep and tender billows bear me into the light and joy of thy saving presence! All of grace IV. Mercy Enjoyed. Jesus will not send the hungry empty away.

1. He Believed. "Go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole." "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6). "By grace are ye saved through faith" (Ephesians 2:8). It is the prayer of faith that saves.

2. He Received. "And immediately he received his sight." Sight was offered him, and he accepted the gift by faith. Those who believe on Him will not need to walk in darkness. The power and grace of Christ are all-sufficient for all who trust.

3. He Followed. "He followed Jesus in the way." The Lord by His grace spoiled his begging business. He has no desire nor capacity for it now that he has met the Lord and got his life renewed. His love for Christ now constrains him to follow Him in the way. His back is turned on Jericho the cursed, and his face is set toward Jerusalem the blessed. Following Jesus is the evidence of being blessed by Him. Blind men cannot follow. Are you a follower of the Lamb? THE BARREN FIG-TREE.

Mark 11:12-14; Mark 11:20-22.

"I remember, I remember,

The fir trees dark and high;

I used to think their slender spires

Were close against the sky.

It was a childish ignorance-

But now 'tis little joy

To know I'm farther off from Heaven

Than when I was a boy." -T. Hood.

It is a sorrowful discovery to make that our years of privilege and opportunity, through sin and indifference, are only carrying us farther and farther from God. It was so with the Jewish nation, represented here by the fruitless fig-tree, of which Christ had to say, "I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat." Is the Lord making this lament over your life? Or in answer to His "I thirst," are you offering Him vinegar to drink?

I. The Search. "He came if haply he might find any thing thereon" (Mark 11:13).

1. Who is the Seeker? The hungry, saving Son of God (Mark 11:12). Think of how much He had done for the tree; its very existence depended on His goodness. Think of all that had been done for Israel as a nation, and how little He had received at their hands, when "last of all God sent His Son, saying, They will reverence Him when they see Him" (Matthew 21:37). What is He receiving of your life? This same Jesus is seeking from you that which will satisfy His soul.

2. Where He Seeks. From "A fig-tree." He does not seek figs from thistles; He does not look for that which would satisfy His hunger from the thorns and briars of infidels and unbelievers. This tree had the name of a fruit-bearer, but was a deception. If we bear the Name of Christ He looks for the fruits of Christian life. In the fig-tree the fruit appears before the leaves, so that where there are the leaves of profession there ought to be the satisfying fruit. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace" (Galatians 5:22).

II. The Discovery. "He found nothing but leaves" (Mark 11:13). There was-

1. Abundant Profession. It had the appearance of abundance of life. There was a great display of activity and attractiveness lent. "One thing thou lackest." So with our lives, we may be full of vigour., and our character morally beautiful and attractive, but if there is no recognition of the claims of Christ we are only as painted Jezebels, clouds without water, barren fig-trees, whited sepulchres. A name to live, but art dead (Revelation 3:1).

2. Perfect Destitution. "Nothing but leaves." Much for itself, but nothing for Christ. A picture of those who spend all their strength and time merely for their own selfish aggrandisement. Christ's desires are unheeded (Revelation 3:17). But note, that show and profession will not deceive Him. He looks, and takes time to look carefully, beneath the leaves. God judgeth the heart. A show of leaves, fresh and green, may hide your nakedness from the eye of man, but not from the all-searching eye of the searching Son of God. "Search me, O God, and try me" (Psalms 139:23). Adam tried the covering of leaves, but God did not acknowledge such, looking upon him still as one naked. "Nothing but leaves-the Spirit grieves." "By their fruit ye shall know them."

III. The Judgment. "The tree which thou cursedst is withered away" (Mark 11:21). "Woe unto you hypocrites, how shall ye escape the damnation of hell" (Matthew 23:33). It was cursed because it was useless. What is the value of a creed, a Church connection, a hope, or a life, if there is naught to satisfy the living, yearning soul of Jesus? Its day of grace is now passed, it was accursed at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 16:22). When He comes it is not to make us fruitful, but to seek fruit. We note that-

1. The Curse Affected the Roots. "It was dried up from the roots" (Mark 11:20). With His withering word went forth the power that kept back the sap of the earth from the roots of the tree. He that hath not (fruit), from him shall be taken away even that which he hath (sap). When He withdraws the means of grace immediately the withering process of death and destruction begins. It was so in the days of Noah and in the days of Lot, and will be so when the Church is caught up (2. Thess. Mark 1:7-10). If the talent of privilege is not used it will be taken away. If the sap of God's Word in your heart is not allowed to become fruitful in your life it will be dried up, and your barren life will become like the cursed fig-tree, only fit for the fire.

2. The Curse Affected the Leaves. "It withered away." The sin of the fig-tree was the sin of omission. Alas, for its beautiful appearance, its plentiful leaves of profession, what can they do for it now? All withered away. Scribes and Pharisees beware! Moral and religious professors take warning! That beautiful, honest, upright, man-pleasing, but Christ-grieving life of yours will one day, when you come face to face with Jesus, wither away, dried up from the root, and nothing on earth, in Heaven, or in Hell, will prevent it (see John 15:1-8). A SPECIAL COMMISSION.

Mark 11:1-10.

"Our lives they are well worth the living.

When we lose our small selves in the whole,

And feel the strong surge of being

Throb through us, one heart and one soul.

Eternity bears up each honest endeavour.

The life lost for Him is life saved, and for ever."-Lucy Lancom. The dark shadow of the Cross was already falling heavily across the pathway of the Lord Jesus. Just four days, then the Crucifixion. Yet how calm the Lord is, how careful about every detail concerning His entry into the holy yet deceitful city! Yes, that the Scripture might be fulfilled (Zechariah 9:9). What lessons have we here-

I. The Lord's Commission. "He sent forth two of His disciples, saying, Go your way into the village" (Mark 11:2). This simple commission, like the great one mentioned in Matthew 28:18-19, is a revelation of his character. How full of meaning His words are. Does these words not reveal-

1. His Faith. "Ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat." How could He know except by faith. He reckoned on the fulfilment of the prophetic Word (John 12:14-15). Was it not the confession of His enemies that "He trusted in God?" (Matthew 27:43). True, He was God, but we are to remember that He emptied Himself, and "took upon Him the form of a servant" (Php_2:7). Oh, for such an honest, simple, expectant faith!

2. His Obedience. "Say ye that the Lord hath need of him." He must needs enter Jerusalem riding on the foal of an ass, because He knew that it was the will of His Father. It may be humbling to Him, but it was honouring to God and His Word, and perhaps His physical weakness intensifies this need. Blessed weakness that makes us more fit for the accomplishing of the Father's will.

3. His Assuring Confidence. "And straightway he will send him hither." He encouraged His disciples to act on His Word, just as He Himself was acting on the Father's Word. Believe and thou shalt see.

II. The Disciples' Acceptance of the Commission. Observe-

1. Their Obedience. "They went their way." They stepped forth on the strange errand by faith in His Word. His promise was all they had; it was all they needed. Peter walked on the water at the simple bidding of Jesus. They did not reason with one another, they obeyed from the heart. What a precious lesson on the life of faith!

2. Their Experience. "They went their way, and found even as He had said unto them" (Luke 19:32). It is not always so? When we venture out on His Word, do we not find it just as He said? Is it not so with salvation (John 3:36)? He promises salvation to those who believe on Him. Trust Him, and you will find it even as He said. Is it not so with the deeper life of consecration? Rest on His Word, and it will be fulfilled in your experience.

3. Their Testimony. When they were asked, "What do ye, loosing the colt? they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded." Their commission was from the Lord, so they must use His

Name and declare His will. As ambassadors for Christ we don't seek colts (souls) for ourselves, but for Jesus. We have, like these two disciples, to make known His will, depending on His power to give the willing mind. Not seeking our own honour, but His who sent us.

III. The Result which Followed. His word was fulfilled, His will done, and-

1. His Coming was Honoured. "Many spread their garments in the way." This is a small matter when we consider how the Lord stripped Himself for us. He who was rich, for our sakes became poor. Jonathan stripped himself for David. Let us lay the garments of our glory in the dust and crown Him Lord of all.

2. His Name was Praised. They cried, "Hosannah! blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord." Hosannah means, "Save, I beseech thee." Such prayer and praise go well together. Well may He be praised, for He has come, not to be ministered unto, "but to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). In the Name of the Lord He has come, and he will finish the work the Father hath given Him to do. "Behold the Lamb of God" (John 1:29).

3. His Kingdom is Acknowledged. "Blessed be the kingdom of our father David." "Blessed be the King that cometh" (Luke 19:38). The kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. The foundation was laid at Calvary. The characteristics of it are imparted to us through faith in His Name. As the King of Israel He was put to death, so just now His kingdom is not of this world. "The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21). Has this humble, royal Saviour had such an entrance into your heart and life as He had into Jerusalem, or are you among those who once cried "Hosannah!" but now art gone with the course of this world, and are by your heartless indifference crying, though inaudibly, "Away with Him, we will not have this Man to rule over us?"

WHY TEMPT YE ME?

Mark 12:13-17.

Tempted Thyself, Lord, Thou dost know

How hard 'tis in the way to go;

How foes without and foes within

Still hold us captive unto sin;

How, even with Thy full grace given,

Earth too, too oft vails Thy pure Heaven.

O break our chain, Lord, set us free,

Thou tempted once, us tempted see." The Lord had just spoken a parable that cut some of them to the quick (Mark 12:12). So they sent a few picked Pharisees to "catch Him in His words," but they themselves are caught. The Word of God is quick and powerful, even to catch word-catchers. It is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Observe here that even in scorn the truth may be spoken.

1. A truthful confession. These faultfinders unconsciously said what was true as to-

1. His character. "We know that Thou art true?" (Mark 12:14). His words were true. His heart was true. His motives were as pure as light. He is the truth. When Pilate asked, What is truth? the answer might have been given: The life and testimony of Christ. But they loved the darkness (John 3:19).

2. His courage. "Thou carest for no man, and regardest not the person of men" (Mark 12:14). He cared not for the power or threatenings of man, but He loved their souls, and cared for the poor, humble, needy. The many waters of hatred and opposition could not quench His zeal to do the will of His Father in Heaven. May such holy boldness be ours.

3. His mission. "Thou teachest the way of God in truth" (Mark 12:14). Nicodemus confessed that He was a Teacher come from God (John 3:2). He came from God to teach us the way to God. Never man spake like this Man. His way is God's way, and there is no other. "I am the Way, no man cometh to the Father but by Me." Coming any other way is coming to shame and confusion and disappointment, but not to the Father.

2. A critical question. "Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?" (Mark 12:14). This was perhaps the most puzzling question that they in their wisdom and hate could devise. If He answers yes, then they will charge Him as a traitor to His nation. If He says no, then they will report Him at once to the Roman tribune as a teacher of sedition. How glad some people would be to get the Lord in a dilemma, but the spirit of wisdom in Christ Jesus is able to quench all the subtle darts of the evil one. It is not ye that speak, but the spirit of your Father which is in yon. Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.

3. A discerning mind. "But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye Me?" (Mark 12:15). The eyes of Christ are as Heaven's searchlights, before which nothing can be hid. In coming to Christ as they did, with words of flattery on their lips, they only proved their ignorance of Him whom they professed to know. Had they known that they were standing before the heart-searcher they would certainly have preferred the darkness to such piercing light. Be not deceived, God is not mocked. Let your prayers be honest before Him, or they will prove self-condemning. "The Lord looketh upon the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

4. A suggestive request. "Bring Me a penny that I may see it." If He, who was rich, but for our sakes became poor, had had a penny in His own possession He would not likely have asked them to bring Him a penny. A penniless Saviour, yet making many rich. This is not after the fashion of the world, but there is a world of consolation in the thought. We may be rich in faith, bringing glory to God, even when we cannot show a penny.

5. A conclusive answer. "Whose is this image and superscription?" They said, Caesar's. Jesus answered, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (vs.. 16, 17). The image of Caesar on the coin was evidence enough that it was connected with Caesar. Likeness proves relationship. Those who have the image of the world and the devil stamped upon their lives declare that they belong to the world and the devil, and are rendering themselves to such. Has the image of Christ been stamped upon your soul? Then render to God the things which are God's. This is your reasonable service (Romans 12:1). THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.

Mark 12:28-34.

"Thy love, Lord, is serene,

No tumult marks its flow;

Calm as that sea was seen

When forth Thy Word did go.

O that my love to Thee

Show'd Thy tranquillity." The love of God is stronger than death, and as calm and steady as the mountains that are round about Jerusalem. The Pharisees had come to catch Him in His word (Mark 12:13), then came the Sadducees to entangle Him in His teaching of the resurrection (Mark 12:18), then this lawyer comes with the disputed question as to which was the chiefest among all the commandments. We certainly are much obliged to them for their questions, for each one gives the Saviour a fresh occasion to emphasise some things which we all need to know. In this answer we are forcibly reminded that love is the fulfilling of the law.

1. The question asked. "Which is the first commandment of all?" It betrays-

1. Some curiosity. It seems to have been a disputed point among the scribes as to which of the commandments was the most important. Although it looked like asking which of the ten links of a chain, or which member of the body is of chiefest consequence, yet how graciously the Lord deals with even such.

2. Some anxiety. Beneath the mere cavil the Master seems to see in the scribe an earnest desire after truth, which brought him to the very door of the kingdom (Mark 12:34). Deal tenderly with questioners. The Holy Spirit may be at work.

2. The answer given. All the Lord's answers to questions are polished shafts from the quiver of the Almighty. In this reply we have a call to-

1. Attention. "Hear, O Israel" (Mark 12:29). The answer is not for this scribe alone, but for all professed seekers after truth. Well may we hear when He speaks, who can meet and answer the deepest longings of the human soul. "Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat ye that which is good" (Isaiah 55:2).

2. Faith in the unity of God. "The Lord our God is one Lord" (Mark 12:29). The great mystery of the Trinity is clearly revealed, but never explained (2 Corinthians 13:14). Like the mystical union of the Church, and of the individual believer with Himself, it is received by faith. All one in Christ.

3. Perfect surrender. "Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy heart, all thy soul, all thy mind, and with all thy strength" (Mark 12:3). This is a demand made upon: 1, The whole of our affections, "all thy heart." 2, The whole life, "all thy soul." 3, The whole realm of thought, "all thy mind." 4, The whole energy of our being, "all thy strength." A whole burnt-offering unto God. This, the first commandment, is fulfilled in one word: Love. That love of God in our hearts that constrains us to yield ourselves completely unto Him (1 John 5:3).

4. Brotherly kindness. "The second is like, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Mark 12:31). It is very significant that our Lord links the first and second together, making them one commandment of equal importance. The love of God, and love to God, must manifest itself in love to others (1 John 4:11-12). If a man love not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? (1 John 4:20; Ephesians 4:32).

3. The effect produced. There was-

1. Acquiescence. "The scribes said, Well, Master, Thou hast said the truth" (Mark 12:32). It is quite possible to admire the wisdom and character of Christ and yet not to enter into the power and blessedness of His life. A mere mental assent to the truth taught by the Saviour is not salvation.

2. Commendation. "When Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, He said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God" (Mark 12:34). He evidently had an intellectual apprehension of the meaning of the Lord's words. His teaching was so far understood that he had in thought come to the very threshold of the kingdom of God, theoretically near, but experimentally outside. His reason and conscience were both on the side of the truth.

3. A coming short. "Not far from the kingdom." These are encouraging, yet O how mournful the words! "Not far," but not near enough to be inside. The mind enlightened, but the heart unyielded; the conscience convicted, the reason convinced, but the will still stubborn and unsubdued. Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life. He will have a willing people in the day of His power. Not far from the cities of refuge was no guarantee of safety.

THINGS TO COME

Mark 13

"O Thou blessed Holy Ghost,

Pleading we dare Thee accost;

Hast Thou not from days of old

Of His second coming told?

Hast Thou not by word and trope,

Given Thy Church this mighty hope

How long till Thou, the Crucified,

Take the world for which Thou'st died." As Jesus went out of the temple, one of the disciples could not help, as he passed, commenting on the greatness of the stones and of the buildings. The Master answered, Seest thou these buildings, there shall not be left one stone upon another. And immediately it would seem that the thoughts of the Master went out to other great stones and to other buildings in connection with God's great purposes in the ages to come. Stones more costly and a building more wonderful, from which no stone will ever be thrown down. Ye are God's building, fitly framed together, growing into an holy temple in the Lord. While the disciples sat with Him in the mount having a private talk, they asked these two questions: When shall these things be? What shall be the sign? While the remarks about the temple originated these queries, the

answers of Christ stretch far beyond the destruction of Jerusalem to the coming of the Son of Man with great power and glory (Mark 13:28). It is impossible to believe that all the signs mentioned here were given before the sack of the city by the Romans (Mark 13:10, Mark 13:24-27). The teaching of Christ in this chapter may be taken as a reply to these two questions, When shall these things be? and, What shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled? (Mark 13:4).

1. What are the signs? Christ speaks of them as one continued unbroken sign, extending from the time He spoke right down till the day of His appearing again the second time. There will be- 1. False prophets (Mark 13:5-6). Men who will seek to deceive with vain words (Ephesians 5:6). Messengers of Satan.

2. Wars and rumours of wars (Mark 13:7). These we assuredly have always with us, they are a testimony that the King of kings and Prince of Peace is not yet seated on the throne of David.

3. Hated for His sake (Mark 13:9-13). This hatred to the Lord's people, that leads to imprisonment and terrible trial, is ascribed to the work of the devil (Revelation 2:10). The Millennium is not yet.

4. Natural affection perverted (Mark 13:12). A man's enemies shall be those of his own household (Micah 7:6). Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold (Matthew 24:10-11).

5. Unparalleled affliction (Mark 13:19). This same time of awful trial is predicted in Daniel 12:1, repeated in Joel 2:2, and explained more fully in Luke 21:24-28.

6. Deceitful wonder-workers (Mark 13:22). Demon-possessed men, claiming the homage of Christ, whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders, captivating them that perish (1 Thessalonians 2:9-10). The presence of antichrists declare the absence of Christ.

7. Changes in the natural Heavens (Mark 13:24). There will be darkness and gloominess, clouds and thick darkness, distress and desolation (Zephaniah 1:14-15). These are the infallible signs given by Him who is the Truth.

2. When shall these things be? We would note that-

1. The exact day cannot be known (Mark 13:32). As it was in the days of Noah, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. The fact of the coming flood was revealed, but the moment the door would be shut no man could tell.

2. The certainty of His coming cannot be denied (Mark 13:30-31). He will come again, and the generation of the Jewish people shall not pass away as a distinct nationality till all these things be fulfilled. "Ye are My witnesses."

3. The Gospel is to be first preached unto all nations (Mark 13:10). It is to be preached unto all nations for a witness (Matthew 24:14). It would seem that even in the apostles' day this was accomplished (Romans 10:18; Colossians 1:6-23).

4. The abomination of desolation will be set up (Mark 13:14). This prediction is found in Daniel 9:25-27, and must be fulfilled before His appearing.

5. The fig tree must first blossom (Mark 13:28-29). The fig tree doubtless denotes the Jewish nation, who are showing remarkable activity in the so-called "Zion movement."

6. The great crisis is His personal appearing. "Then shall ye see the Son of Man" (Mark 13:26-27). This same Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go (Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Revelation 1:7).

3. What is to be our present attitude? Here the language of the Master is very urgent, condemning thereby the apathy, indifference, and unbelief of many with respect to His coming again. We are to be-

1. Trustful. "Take heed, behold I have foretold you all things" (Mark 13:23). Is it possible for a Christian to continue growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, who wilfully ignores this solemn and timely warning?

2. Watchful. This is urged three times over in verses 33-37. How many are fast asleep with regard to His coming. Watching keeps awake in sleepy times.

3. Prayerful. "Take heed, watch and pray" (Mark 13:33). The watcher will surely become an intercessor. Faith in His coming will have a wholesome effect on the life. THE MASTER AND HIS SERVANTS.

Mark 13:33-37.

" Many men seek themselves in seeking God,

And serve Him, that they may serve themselves of Him." -Venning. The subtleness of self is almost fathomless. Our Lord in closing this outline of coming events sums it up in a little parable concerning Himself, which reveals the present relationship that exists between Him and His servants in view of His coming again. Observe- 1. What He has done.

1. Taken a far journey (Mark 13:34). This journey is His going into Heaven. "If I go away I will come again." It was a far journey in that it was from weakness and shame to power and glory, from humiliation and death to glorification and resurrection life, from a God-hating earth to a God-honouring Heaven.

2. Left His house. The temple was the recognised house of God, but the people know not the day of His visitation. They cast Him out; now He could say, "Your house is left unto you desolate" (Matthew 23:38).

3. Given authority to His servants. This the Master did when He sent down the Holy Spirit from the presence of the Father upon His waiting servants in the upper room on the day of Pentecost. This power every servant must have if he would speak with authority, and not like the self-ordained scribes.

4. Given to every man his work. Every son of God should be a servant, and every servant may have his work from the Master. To every man his work. Is every man doing his Christ-appointed work? If you don't do your God-given work it will remain undone through all eternity, and may be to you an everlasting reproach. "What wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6).

5. Commanded the porter to watch. The porter is the Holy Spirit, who opens the door to Jesus as the Shepherd of the sheep, by resting upon Him when baptised in Jordan (John 10:2-3). He is watching the interests of Jesus Christ on earth, and looking and longing for His coming. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come" (Revelation 22:16-17).

2. What He will do.

1. Come again (Mark 13:35). He has left His house, but it is only for an indefinite season. "If I go I will come again." As servants we are occupying till He come. At the Lord's Supper we show forth His death till He come.

2. Come as Lord (Mark 13:35, r. v.). Not in the lowly humiliation of His first coming, but as King of kings and Lord of lords, to reward His faithful servants, and take vengeance on them who obey not the Gospel.

3. Come suddenly. "Ye know not when the Master cometh" (Mark 13:35). The very uncertainty of the time of His coming is surely intended to keep our eyes awake and our faces heavenward (Hebrews 12:3).

3. What His servants are expected to do.

1. Watch. "Watch ye therefore." The meaning is, be wakeful. Be alive and all alive, be awake and wide awake, for the good of His cause and the honour of His Name. Watch for souls, and watch for the coming of "His Son from Heaven (1 Thessalonians 1:10).

2. Pray. "Take heed, watch and pray" (Mark 13:33). The manner of our Lord while in this world is a soul-stirring example of the purpose, power, and privilege of prayer. Looking for His coming will revive the spirit of pleading in us. Looking at persons and things around us, in the light of His coining, will surely humble us at His feet, and keep us near the blood-sprinkled throne of grace.

3. Work. "He gave to every man his work" (Mark 13:34). Watching and praying will all the more fit us for the work given us to do. Work while it is day. In connection with our individual task let us keep in mind that this is the work of God, that ye believe in Him. Let it be the work of faith, and then it will be the labour of love, and when He does come may we hear His well done, good and faithful servant.

SHE HATH DONE WHAT SHE COULD.

Mark 14:1-9.

"The iron is hot for the striking,

Do, man of God, thy part;

O weigh not disliking or liking,

Speak from a burning heart.

Work, for the harvest now whitens,

Go in, man of God, and reap,

For he who dark souls enlightens

Is gathering Christ's lost sheep."

While the chief priests and scribes were seeking to take Jesus by craft and put Him to death, there was a loving woman seeking a chance to honour Him by pouring the precious spikenard upon His head. In the house of Simon the leper she found this opportunity, and she did what she could, and did it at a time and in a manner which shows her deep insight into the character and purposes of her Lord. Perhaps this great work is the result of her sitting at His feet and learning of Him (Luke 10:39). All powerful testimony for God has its origin in secret communion.

1. The good work. "She hath wrought a good work on Me." It was-

1. A work of love. The emptying of the liquid perfume upon the head of Jesus was an expression of the affection of her heart freely poured out on Him. What is the value of our service if our hearts are not in it? The first commandment is, Thou shalt love the Lord.

2. A work of sacrifice. "Very precious." The cost of the ointment in our money might be about $9. She did not give to Christ what cost her nothing. We have never really done what we could for Him if our service has not been costly to us. Spare moments and odd coppers are the expressions of a heartless, thankless soul.

3. A work of faith. "She is come aforehand to anoint My body to the burying." How did she know that He was so near His death and burial? She had doubtless believed that the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many. May the Lord the Spirit work in us this Christ-refreshing faith. "I will show you my faith by my works."

4. A work in season. Jesus said, "Me ye have not always." She embraced the present passing opportunity. She will be eternally glad that she did so. You may honour Christ now by serving Him, but the brief day of privilege will soon be past. How sad to meet the Lord without ever having made one single sacrifice for the glory of His Name! Shall you? Shall I?

2. The different results. There was-

1. The indignation of some. Some had indignation, and said, "Why this waste?" This is the language of blind greed and self-interest. In the eyes of such everything is wasted that is given to Christ and His cause, only that which is given to themselves is put to a proper use. Small doubting souls reckon it only waste of time to wait on God, but they may be heard sometimes singing:

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,

That were a present far too small."

2. The approval of Christ. "She hath done what she could."

(1). He accepted the offering. He said, "She hath wrought a good work on Me" (Mark 14:6). Done for Him, it is acceptable to Him.

(2). He justifies the offerer. "Let her alone." It is God who justifieth; who is he that condemneth? The Lord is our defence in the time of trouble. He careth for you.

(3). He rewards the good work. "Throughout the whole world this that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her" (Mark 14:9). The fragrance of that self-sacrificing act has been felt all down the ages. Everything done for Christ in such a spirit will have an enduring influence. Palestine is called "the glory of all lands" just because of its connection with Him who glorifies all that is associated with Him. In union with Him there is salvation for the sinner, sanctification for the saved, and eternal reward for the self-sacrificing servant. THE BREAD AND THE CUP.

Mark 14:22-25.

"On the night of utmost trial,

When Gethsemane was near;

Traitor's kiss and friend's denial,

Cross of shame and piercing spear.

Thou didst give these symbols holy

Of Thy sacrifice and love;

Spread'st a table for most lowly,

Antepast of bliss above." The acts of Jesus are as significant as His words, especially those acts in the upper room, while handling the symbols of His own body and Blood the day before His crucifixion. As a dying man Ha here calls His friends together while He makes His last will and testament.

1. The bread a symbol of His body. "Jesus took bread, and said, This is My body." The symbol is beautiful, for bread is not more indispensable than the sufferings of Christ for the life and salvation of man. "Except ye eat His flesh, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you" (John 6:53).

1. He took it. It was His own voluntary act. He took on Him the likeness of sinful flesh. He was God manifest in the flesh. In taking a visible body He was taking that which was to be "life for the world." This He did at His incarnation, a humbling but God-glorifying act.

2. He blessed it. That is, in the taking of it He sanctified it and made it holy. His body became a holy thing, fit to be offered as a sacrifice unto God. It was blessed by the Holy indwelling Spirit in a life of blameless service to God. Blessed with infinite blessing.

3. He brake it. This also was His own doing. Although with wicked hands they crucified Him, yet He could say no man taketh My life from Me, I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again, this authority I received of My Father. He gave Himself for us. Yes, the breaking of His body was by His own willing consent. This gives additional virtue to His sacrifice.

4. He gave it. In giving the broken bread to His believing disciples He thus indicated that the bestowing of the saving virtue of His broken body is in His own hands. "I give unto My sheep eternal life." There is none other Name under Heaven. This is My body which is broken for you. Substitution is here clearly taught.

2. The cup a symbol of His Blood. The life is in the Blood. In pouring out His Blood He was pouring out His soul unto death.

1. He took the cup. The cup of sorrow and suffering put into His hand by His loving and righteous Father. What it all meant when He said, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Thine be done," we cannot tell; into such profound depths we cannot go. This cup meant for Christ infinitely more than it can mean to us; He tasted death for every man.

2. He gave thanks for it. Selah! Let us pause and think. He gave thanks for the cup that was His own appointed symbol of His agony and awful death. O the depths of His grace! Thanking the Father for the privilege of suffering and dying in the sinner's stead. What love! Herein is love. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.

3. He gave it to them. Paul tells us that it was after He had supped that He said "This do ye" (1 Corinthians 11:25). After His atoning death comes the gift of life. The giving of the cup also suggests His desire that we should enter into "the fellowship of His suffering, and be made conformable unto His death" (Php_3:10). "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of? "

4. They all drank of it. "Ye shall drink of the cup that I drink of" (Mark 10:39). And they did by becoming martyrs for His sake. If any man follow Me, let him take up his cross. He that loseth his life for My sake, and the Gospel's, shall save it. To drink of this cup is to bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in the body (2 Corinthians 4:10). I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live. The partakers of Christ's sufferings will be made glad when His glory shall be revealed (1 Peter 4:13). In observing the Lord's Supper we are not called upon to remember Him as a Teacher, nor as an Example, but as our Sacrifice, to show forth His death till He come. This is My body broken for you, take, eat. O ye guilty sons of men, take this great atoning work and divide it among yourselves (Luke 22:17).

BETWEEN THE CUP OF BLESSING AND THE TRAITOR'S KISS.

Mark 14:26-42.

"Most hidden and most manifest,

Thou the mystery dost invest

With Thy humaneness, O Christ!

Sweetness, tenderness unpriced,

With this grace may we be blest,

Most hidden and most manifest." The experiences of our Lord and Saviour between the giving of the cup (Mark 14:23) and the getting of the kiss (Mark 14:45) were numerous, varied, and well defined. A close examination of them reveals the awful intenseness of His life in its closing hours. We select the above portion of Scripture only as an example of how the last days of Christ's life might be studied. Within the compass of these few verses we have the Lord Jesus-

1. Singing. "They sang a hymn" (Mark 14:26). Jesus sang, although the thorn of the cross was at His breast. What if it were the twenty-third Psalm, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the

shadow of death, I will fear no evil."

2. Predicting. "All ye shall be offended because of Me this night" (Mark 14:27). What a sudden change. In a few hours the clear sky of communion will be thick with the dark, ominous clouds of desertion. While He was singing He knew that the Shepherd was about to be smitten and the sheep scattered. The sword was about to awake against the Man that was God's fellow (Zechariah 13:7). This sword now sleeps for us.

3. Suffering. "He began to be sore amazed and very heavy" (Mark 14:33). The iniquities of us all were beginning to meet on Him (Isaiah 53:6, margin). Was He amazed at the number of them, while He felt the awful burden very heavy! May we, like these disciples, "sit here," and see the salvation of God.

4. Sorrowing "My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death" (Mark 14:34). The bearing of our sins by the Holy Son of God was no heartless mechanical process. He could not come into contact with sin and guilt without His spotless soul becoming "exceeding sorrowful." In bearing our sins He also experienced the indescribable agony incurred by the guilt of them in His own soul. "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him, He hath put Him to grief." Be still my soul.

5. Praying. "He went forward and fell on the ground and prayed" (Mark 14:35). What a prayer! We have never been deep enough in the fires of an agonising abhorrence at sin to know what it all means. It was not possible this hour and cup could pass from Him if guilty men were to be saved by the grace of God. Still His prayers with strong crying and tears were heard (Hebrews 5:7-8).

6. Yielding. "Nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou wilt" (Mark 14:36). I came down from Heaven not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me (John 5:30). Why did He shrink from the cup? Would He have been true as a Son if He accepted without any expression of dislike that which would break up His fellowship with His Father and turn His Father's "Beloved" into a curse? Nevertheless He yielded to be made a curse for us, and became obedient unto death.

7. Exhorting. "Watch and pray" (Mark 14:37-38). Given at such a time and in such an agony of spirit, we may truly learn our need of this. O how tenderly His sorrowful soul deals with His drowsy disciples! "The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak." He knows the frailty of our frames, He can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities.

8. Confessing. "Behold, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners" (Mark 14:41). What a confession for this Mighty One to make, who could call legions of angels from Heaven. Betrayed by a professed disciple. He knew what was in man. Had He not been already entirely abandoned to the suffering of death He never could have been betrayed. He gave His life a ransom for all.

9. Commanding. "Rise up, let us go" (Mark 14:42). But, alas, how far off did they follow Him. "Let us go." Are we ready to go to death with Him? Is crucifixion not as needful for us as for Him if we would know the fellowship of His sufferings. "I am crucified with Christ." He must be crucified that the body of sin might be put away for us. Our old man must be crucified that the body of sin might be destroyed in us (Romans 6:6). O that a sleepy, worldly Church could hear this call, "Rise up, let us go." THE STEPS IN PETER'S DOWNFALL.

Mark 14:29-72.

"Speak gently to an erring one,

E'en if a deed of shame be done;

We see the deed and instant blame,

But not how hard it is to tame

A heart of sin that has not died,

A rebel will unsanctified. "

Backsliding is a process. Eve first saw, then desired, then took, then eat before she gave to Adam. Falling away out of the company and fellowship of Christ is the result of an inward disease preying upon the vitals of our spiritual being. That disease is self-will. Let us follow Peter in his downgrade march step by step. There was-

1. Self-confidence. Peter said, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I" (Mark 14:29). The "I" here is very self-assertive, comparing himself with the others he believes himself more trustworthy than any. Yet it was written that "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool" (Proverbs 28:26). "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12).

2. Proud boasting. "If I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee in any wise" (Mark 14:31). So said they all, but Peter spoke vehemently. Peter was as yet unbelieving and ignorant of his own weakness. Had not the Lord said unto him, "Whither I go ye cannot follow Me now?" (John 13:36). All self-boasting is a contradiction to His Word.

3. Unwatchfulness. He said unto Peter, "Simon, sleepest thou?" (Mark 14:37). Pride and self-confidence are sure to lead to unwatchfulness. It is the consciously weak ones who lean hard. Sleepy souls are easily tempted (Mark 14:38). By his sleep he became insensible to the sufferings of Christ. The next step down is-

4. Ashamedness. "Peter followed Him afar off" (Mark 14:54). Jesus is not so popular now with the multitude. Peter follows; but far enough off as not to be identified with Him. A professing Christian is indeed afar off when he is ashamed of Him and His Word. At this stage the Word of God is neglected, prayer given up, and the company of those who testify for Christ forsaken.

5. Worldliness. "Peter sat with the servants, and wanned himself at the fire" (Mark 14:54). Having fallen out of company with Christ, he now finds his company among those who know him not, and warms himself at the enemy's fire. While the prodigal was spending his all in the far country he was just seeking to warm himself with the coals of the enemy's fire. This is what the backslider is doing in seeking to find pleasure and comfort in the ways and things of the ungodly. A Christian must be cold indeed when he turns to the crackling thorns of worldly delights for heart warmth.

6. Denial. While he was warming himself he was charged with having been with Jesus. But he denied, saying, "I know not" (Mark 14:67-68). When a man has gone the length of finding warmth among the Lord's enemies we are prepared for the next sad step-denial. This is often done, if not by lip yet by wicked works. The Lord has uttered a solemn warning to such in Matthew 10:33.

7. Recklessness. "He began to curse and to swear saying, I know not this Man" (Mark 14:71). He had said, "Though all shall be offended, yet will not I," yet he becomes more easily offended than any, and now staggers into the ditch of open profanity. If a backslider be not restored before he goes the length of shameless lip denial the likelihood is that he will soon be found in the ranks of the reckless, the drunken, or some other open sin.

8. Repentance. Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, and when he thought thereon he wept (Mark 14:72). The Lord had not prayed for Judas that his faith fail not, and he went out and hanged himself. It was when the prodigal son thought of his father's house that he said, "I will arise and go to my father." It is usually by some word of Christ that the backslider is brought to think of his ways, and to weep the bitter tears of repentance.

PILATE AND JESUS.

Mark 15:1-15.

"The waves of the world's sea may surge, But the blue sky above is calm." The life and character of Jesus is like the calm blue of Heaven compared with this restless world of troubled human spirits. The calmness of Jesus in the presence of the excited and bewildered Pilate is full of deep significance. A witness to the majesty of truth. Small men are fussy. "Still waters run deep." Pilate's treatment of Jesus is an example of how multitudes to-day treat the Gospel of Christ. Note that he-

1. Had Jesus given to him. "They delivered Him to Pilate" (Mark 15:1). Now was Pilate's opportunity of justifying himself by justifying Jesus. When the Gospel is preached in the power of the spirit it is as it were a delivering up of Jesus for the acceptance or rejection of the hearer. How often has He been brought within your reach? What a solemn privilege!

2. Ascertains His character. "Pilate asked Him, Art Thou the King of the Jews? He answered, Thou sayest it" (Mark 15:2). "To this end was I born" (John 18:37). He has Christ's own testimony as to His kingly character, although He was of no reputation. Gospel hearer, you know the claims of Jesus, you too are familiar with His poverty and His dignity; yea, more, with His death and resurrection, with His power to save and keep.

3. Marvels at Him. When Jesus answered nothing to the many things charged against Him, Pilate marvelled (Mark 15:5). He whose Name is "Wonderful" must in His manner be marvellous to many. The silent submission of Jesus to such false accusations (for He knew that for envy they had delivered Him) was a revelation. Gospel hearer, have you never been led to marvel at the uniqueness of His character, the profundity of His teaching, or the richness of His grace?

4. Was inclined to favour Him (Mark 15:9-10). He found no fault in Him, and was disposed to release Him. Gospel hearer, you must surely confess that you have no fault to find with Jesus. Does not your deeper convictions tell you that He is the Truth? Have you not at times felt inclined to believe Him, and release Him by confessing Him before men? Have you not also, like Pilate's wife. "suffered many things because of Him?"

5. Submits his will to the people regarding Him. "Pilate said, What will ye that I shall do unto Him?" (Mark 15:12). His vacillating spirit would deal with Jesus according to the fickle and perverted will of the multitude. Gospel hearer, are you treating Christ according to your better convictions, or in a manner only to please the Christ-hating world? Is the will of the ungodly to be your guide as to

what ye shall do with Jesus? If you judge Christ by the opinions of His enemies you will be verily guilty of the Blood of God's Son.

6. Questions the justice of their judgment concerning Him. "They cried out, Crucify Him. Pilate said, Why, what evil hath He done?" (Mark 15:13-14). Self-righteous priests and a wilfully ignorant and prejudiced people have no need of the Christ, and nothing to give Him but a cross. Gospel hearer, have you not thought that it was unjust and grossly wicked to cast out and crucify the meek and lowly Jesus? Yet by your refusing to receive Him you are deliberately casting Him out of your life, and virtually saying by your unbelief, "Away with Him, I will not have this Man to rule over me."

7. Scourged Him (Mark 15:15). The barbarous thongs, tipped with bones and lead, in the hands of a heathen, ploughed His back and made deep their furrows, making His very bones to stare out. Yet he found no fault in the Man. Gospel hearer, are you scourging the soul of Him, whom you know to be faultless, by your love of the world, your indifference to His redeeming Blood, and your unwillingness to submit yourself to Him?

8. Delivered Him up to be crucified. "Pilate, willing to content the people, delivered Jesus" (Mark 15:15). He handed Him over as one who wished to have no more to do with Him. But Pilate shall meet Him again at another tribunal. Gospel hearer, Jesus has been delivered up by God for you, and in His Word to you. Are you, like Pilate, anxious to get quit of Him, or, like Mary, anxious to have Him? Pilate, with all his great privileges in having Jesus brought near to him, profited nothing, but augmented his guilt. What have you profited by many similar opportunities? What shall ye then do with Jesus? THE ATTITUDE OF UNBELIEF.

Mark 15:26-32.

" A cross without a Christ; the heavens dumb; Oh, who may dare the mystery to plumb? Or who to such a God will longer come?"

"Throned upon the awful tree" is how John Ellerton puts it. The crucifixion was the coronation of the Son of God as our Substitute. The immeasurable soul-exalting power of it lies in the fathomless depths of the humiliation of it. This is foolishness in the eyes of men, but it is the wisdom of God. "Let Christ descend from the Cross that we may see and believe" (Mark 15:32). Like modern rationalists, they would prefer a crossless Christ. It was not the nails that held Him to the tree, but His love for the perishing and His determination to finish the work given Him to do. The-

1. Titles given Him. "Christ the King of Israel" (Mark 15:32). This they said in mockery, because they knew He claimed to be-

1. The Christ. The Messiah, the Lord's Anointed. They spoke the truth nevertheless. When Jesus said, "Whom say ye that I am?" Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16).

2. The King of Israel. It was hard for human reason to believe that this despised and rejected One was God's appointed Ruler of His ancient people. Wise men, inspired by the message of God, come saying, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" Yes, this is His true title.

2. Place appointed Him was a place of-

1. Shame and suffering. "They crucify Him, and with Him two thieves." The chosen and anointed One, the One preferred by God above all others, because of His holy devotedness, is classed by religious men with the vilest of the vile. What place has He now, even amongst so-called Christian men?

2. Derision and death. "They that passed by railed on Him, and they that were crucified with Him reviled Him" (Mark 15:29-32; Psalms 22:7-8). Yet this is He who cried with a loud voice "Lazarus, come forth," and he that was dead came forth. He who of old "spake and it was done."

3. Proposal made to Him. "Descend from the Cross that we may see and believe" (Mark 15:32). They might as well say let God change His character and purposes that they might see and believe. This presumptuous God-dethroning we. "That we might see." Why, He could not descend from the Cross because-

1. He could not disobey His Father. He had already said "Not My will, but Thine be done." To die was the will of Him that sent Him.

2. The Scriptures could not be broken. The prophet Daniel had said, "The Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself" (chap. Mark 9:26). Isaiah also by the same Spirit declared that "He would make His grave with the wicked, and be numbered with transgressors" (chap. 53). If He came down from the Cross the Scriptures, as the pillar of truth, would be broken.

3. He could not suffer man to perish. Without shedding of His Blood there was no remission of sin and guilt for us. His love constrained Him to give His life a ransom for many.

4. He could not be untrue to Himself. The Cross is the evidence of His truthfulness, to His own inner consciousness, as the Redeemer of men, the Saviour of the world. What a revelation of the hidden man of His heart! He abideth faithful.

4. Reasons why some prefer a crossless Christ.

Because-

1. The Cross reveals their guilt. It is the manifestation of man's inert hatred to holiness and God-likeness. To have no personal dealings with the Son of God any more than with the dead in their graves is just another way of appointing Christ to the place of death.

2. It is God's only way of life. The Cross reveals the need of a Substitute, the need of an atonement by the Blood of His Cross, and the only possible way of access unto the Father (John 14:6; Hebrews 10:19-20). That we can only be saved as sinners through the Blood of His Cross is rather humbling to the pride of man's self-confident and deceitful heart. A crossless Christ can only make life to be a Christless cross.

TAUGHT IN THE SEPULCHRE.

Mark 16:1-8.

"When brighter suns and milder skies

Proclaim the opening year,

What various sounds of joy arise,

What prospects bright appear 1

Thus like the morning calm and clear,

That saw the Saviour rise;

The spring of Heaven's eternal year

Shall dawn on earth and skies."

Very early in the morning the two Marys came to the sepulchre at the rising of the sun, but the Son of God had already risen. He who was before all things rose from the dead before sunrise.

1. Whom they sought. "Ye seek Jesus," said the messenger from Heaven to them. They sought Him that they might anoint Him (Mark 16:1-6). But the living Christ is never found among the dead. Anxious sinners often seek Him where He cannot be found, among their own dead works or in their own unregenerate hearts. He is not here.

2. When they came. "Very early in the morning, the first day of the week" (Mark 16:2). Although they did not find Him where, and as they expected, yet they found Him (John 20:18). "They that seek Me early shall find Me." Seek Him early in the morning of life, early in the morning of each day, especially the first day of the week. This first day of the week was the first new Sabbath of the new creation.

3. Where they went. "And entering into the sepulchre" (Mark 16:5). It would appear that they stooped down and went right into the grave (John 20:11). In this place of death they had this great revelation of His resurrection power. Where else can we learn it as an experience but by stooping down into His grave? It is by being made "conformable unto His death" that we are made to know the "power of His resurrection" (Php_3:10). We must stoop down to be crucified with Christ if the risen One is to live in us (Colossians 3:1-3). We stoop to conquer.

4. What they received. They found precious treasure in the tomb of Jesus. It is not death to enter here, but life for evermore. Here they pass from the natural life of sense into the spiritual life of faith. By faith enter the grave of Christ as crucified for you, and ye shall be quickened by resurrection life. They received-

1. A vision of the Heavenly One. "They saw a young man sitting, clothed in a long white garment" (Mark 16:5). Here in this new tomb, where the Lord Jesus was the only one that ever lay, are they brought into fellowship with a sent one from Heaven. As the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus Christ was not yet glorified, may we not suppose that this young man came as a timely and temporary substitute to take the things of Christ and show them to these early seekers? It is still true that when we put self and self-wisdom in the place of death we shall be taught of God.

2. A word of comfort. "He said, Be not affrighted" (Mark 16:6). There is nothing to fear in the grave of your Redeemer, There is a living One there, the ever youthful Spirit of God, waiting to comfort the sorrowful seeker.

3. A proof of heavenly sympathy. "Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth." It must have been a relief to them that this God-sent messenger knew the deeper yearnings of their soul, and was at one with them in their interest. The Holy Spirit is all this and much more to us. "He helpeth our infirmities and maketh intercession according to the will of God" (Romans 8:26-27)

4. The assurance of victory. "He saith unto them, He is risen." This was exceeding abundantly above all that they asked or thought. He is not stolen; He is risen. He died for our sins and rose again for our justification. This young man, sitting in the place where Jesus was laid, acts the part of a forerunner of the Holy Spirit in bringing the assurance of life to the hearts of these Saviour-loving women. Peter tells what effect this renewed hope had (1 Peter 1:3).

5. An evidence of resurrection. "He is not here; behold the place where they laid Him." The place where they laid Him was empty. The clothes were there, and perhaps lying folded (not doubled up), just as they were when He was in them. The position of the linen clothes and the napkin evidently astonished the disciples (John 20:6-8). Who could doubt the resurrection who have themselves passed from death into life, and "know Him and the power of His resurrection" (Php_3:10).

6. A great commission. "Go your way, and tell." Testimony for Christ must follow the reviving influence of His resurrection life. They received their commission from an angel from Heaven. The Holy Ghost said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" (Acts 13:2). "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me... to the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

7. A precious promise. "He goeth before you into Galilee, there ye shall see Him." Blessed prospect that is ever before them that go in His Name. Ye shall see Him, and be made like Him (1 John 3:2). Having been sent "they went out quickly." They were not disobedient to the heavenly vision. Go thou and do likewise, and in the doing of His will there ye shall see Him.

RESURRECTION REVELATIONS.

Mark 16:9-14.

"The Lord is risen indeed,

We say it as a creed:

But O to feel its power

Daily through every hour." This first day of the week was full of new things for the disciples of the Lord. A new order of things was now being established. When a soul passes from the old natural life into the new resurrection life in Christ it is a new creature entering into a new kingdom, where all things are made new. It is to such the first day of the first month of the year of their eternal life. There are here what might be called some incidental revelations connected with His resurrection worthy of notice. We have a-

1. Revelation of His power. "Jesus was risen" (Mark 16:9). He had said "I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it again." He had now taken again that which He had freely given up for us all. The taking again proves how completely His life had been given away. Having power to take it, He has now power to bestow it in its fulness to all who believe.

2. Revelation of grace. He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils. She who was the greatest sinner among His followers receives first of His resurrection favours. Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. The mighty, pitying Saviour favours the humble, thankful, trustful follower.

3. Revelation of deep sorrow. "Them that had been with Him mourned and wept" (Mark 16:10). The curtain is lifted, and we get a glimpse of how those that had been with Him felt and regarded the crucifixion, they mourned and wept. They were like a young motherless family, suddenly bereaved of their wise and loving father, their only real friend on earth. Their tears, though partly caused by unbelief, showed at least the place He had in their affections. Did not the enemies of the Cross make Paul weep? (Php_3:18).

4. Revelation of unbelief. "When they heard that He was alive and had been seen of her they believed not" (Mark 16:11). We don't wonder so much at them not believing Mary as at their failure to remember or believe the words spoken to them by the Lord (see John 16:20-22). Unbelief always brings disappointment and sorrow. Tears mingled with distrust may be but the tears of wounded pride.

5. Revelation of Divine adaptation. "After that, He appeared in another form" (Mark 16:12). The same Saviour in a different form. O the depths of His wisdom and riches. He appeared to Stephen as the glorified One, but to Saul as the persecuted One (Acts 7:55; Acts 9:5). It does not matter what our circumstances or condition may be, when He appears it is always as such a One as we need. His grace is always made suitable and sufficient.

6. Revelation of His faithfulness. "He upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart" (Mark 16:14). While they mourned and wept they did not look like those who were unbelieving and hard at heart. But the Lord looks deeper down than groans and tears, and like a wise and true Physician He lays His finger upon the diseased spot, and tells them plainly what is wrong. This is why many professing Christians are afraid to get into very close quarters with Jesus, lest these hidden things should be revealed, lest the real man of the heart should be unveiled. If we do come near to Him He will be faithful with us.

7. Revelation of the responsibility resting on His witnesses. "He upbraided them, because they believed not them which had seen Him" (Mark 16:14). The Lord expected that the testimony of those to whom He had revealed Himself would be believed. Those only can be witnesses for Him to whom He hath manifested His saving grace and resurrection power, and those who hear such witness-bearing and yet do not believe are charged with unbelief and hardness of heart. In our Lord's great priestly prayer, recorded in John 17, He prayed for them who shall believe through their word. If the Lord believes and expects that men will believe in Him through our word, how is it that we don't look for immediate results when the Word is spoken? Lord, increase our faith. THE GREAT COMMISSION.

Mark 16:15-20.

"The round world before Him lay,

For that world this one command:

' Go, and I am with you alway, '

Send it out o'er every land.

North and south, and east and west,

At His Cross shall ransom'd rest.

Mighty charter! Great commission!

Till this earth be Christ's possession." A well known authority on missions has said, "Christianity is the only religion that is missionary." This call, like a stream of light, has come down through the ages, beckoning weary souls to the harbour of rest.

1. The need. This is summed up in one word, "World." "Go into all the world." The world of-

1. Sinful self within. This is the devil's nursery, where every evil in the world is germinated, and afterwards transplanted by actual deeds. Into this world the power of Christ must come.

2. Fashion and pleasures around. That which ministers to the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. That world of custom and habit and godless living.

3. Heathen darkness beyond. A world of perishing, yet immortal souls. A world loved by God, and for which Christ died (John 3:16). The whole world lieth in wickedness. The need is great.

2. The provision. "The Gospel." "Preach the Gospel to every creature." Just as there are different elements in air and water, so are there in the Gospel. It contains good tidings of great joy. There is in it-

1. The incarnation of the Son of God. God manifest in the flesh. His Name shall be called Emmanuel. "God with us." God with us seeking to save the lost, in the form of a servant. What news!

2. Propitiation by the Blood of God. "The Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own Blood" (Acts 20:28). "He is the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2:2). The Blood of His Son is God's great covering for sin. This has been provided, this is offered.

3. Regeneration by the Spirit of God. This is a recreation of the human spirit after the likeness of God. Made new creatures (2 Corinthians 5:17).

4. Justification by the faith of God (Mark 11:22, margin). "Have the faith of God" is the literal meaning. It seems a strong expression. But every one who exercises faith in Jesus Christ is having the faith that God has in Him. As David showed the kindness of God to Mephibosheth (2 Samuel 9:3).

5. Sanctification by the Word of God. Thy Word was found, and I did eat it. Now are ye clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you. He has given us exceeding great and precious promises that by these we might be made partakers of the Divine nature. All the promises of God are in Christ for the support of faith and the strengthening and growth of the new life.

6. Resurrection by the power of God. He shall come in great power and glory. The dead in Christ shall rise first. The mortal shall put on immortality (1 Corinthians 15:38).

7. Glorification by the presence of God. The "Great God, our Saviour, shall appear," and we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. These seven elements belong to the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, which is His alone remedy for the manifold need of a perishing world.

3. The commission. "Go ye into all the world." Clear, simple, definite.

1. Who? "Ye." Ye who have believed, and have known the reviving power of His resurrection (1 Peter 1:3).

2. What? "Go." "As My Father sent Me, so send I you" (John 17:18). Go. Don't sit down and theorise about it. Go, and make this the chief business of your life.

3. Where? "Into all the world." The world loved by God (John 3:16); the world atoned for by the Son (1 John 2:2). If you cannot go here or there in person, go in your love and prayers and practical sympathy (Psalms 126:5-6).

4. The promise. Lo, I am with you alway. "In My Name shall they cast out devils" (Mark 16:17-18). His presence with us is the pledge of-

1. Continual fellowship. If His sanctifying, soul-soothing presence is not realised or enjoyed, it is not that His promise has failed, but that self or sin has grieved the Holy Ghost, who makes His presence a reality and a power.

2. Continual victory. Moses said, "If Thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence." There can be no victory over the enemies of God if His presence is not with us (see Numbers 14:42-45). If devils are to be cast out it must be by the power of His Name (Mark 16:17). His Name implies all that He is.

5. The fulfilment. "They went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them" (Mark 16:20).

1. They were obedient. "They went forth." They went forth like Abraham, leaning on His Word. Not waiting till they were burned out, like Lot in Sodom. In the light of this urgent commission, does it not seem to savour of unbelief to be still saying, "What wilt Thou have me to do? "

2. They were successful. "The Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with signs following." If the Lord is not working with us our labour is in vain. If the Word preached is not confirmed with signs there is no evidence of the Lord's presence. The Lord will work with us if we, like them, are wholly yielded to the doing of His will, preaching the Gospel to every creature. A FAITH CONFIRMING PROLOGUE.

Luke 1:1-4.

"Amid the Babel of men's clam'rous speech,

Lord Jesus, what a ' still small voice' is Thine,

And yet where are there words that men's hearts reach

Like those of Thee, the human and divine?

How have Thy words, Lord, quicken'd human thought?

How have they penetrated human lives?

How have they into grandest deeds been wrought,

And how on their deep lines all progress drives?" The voice of Jesus in His Gospel is a very "small voice" compared with the clamorous speech of political partyism and the strife of modern ungodly tongues, but like a spring silently making its way through the rocks it comes to the surface and refreshes many a thirsty soul. What Luke says about the things of the Gospel in this brief introduction is worthy of our closest attention. We learn that these things-

1. Were the chief topic in the days of Luke. This we infer from the fact that "Many had taken in hand to set them forth in order" (Luke 1:1). The words and deeds of Christ were in everybody's mouth. These things were not done in a corner, many were anxious to have them in a connected form, and many had attempted so to put them. But any spiritual man, such as Luke, could easily detect distorted representations of the life and character of Jesus Christ.

2. Were delivered by eye-witnesses. "They delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses" (Luke 1:2). John could say, "That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes" &c. (1 John 1:1-2). "He was seen by five hundred brethren at once." Men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and so the men of the new dispensation spake as they were moved by the living personal Christ among them. The great salvation which at first began to be spoken by the Lord was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him (Hebrews 2:3).

3. Were most surely believed in Luke's days (Luke 1:1).

If they were accepted without doubt by multitudes in the time of Christ and in the days immediately following, where is the ground for questioning them now? They did not follow cunningly devised fables in making known the Gospel of Christ (2 Peter 1:16). These things were tested in the seven times hotter furnace of the days in which they were spoken and wrought. The power and truth of them is being yet proven in the experience of them that believe and do the will of God (John 7:17).

4. Have been recorded by one who had a perfect knowledge of them (Luke 1:3). Although Luke's name does not occur among the twelve apostles, yet he was familiar with all that had been done, being intimate with the chosen twelve and a close companion of Paul the great apostle of the Gentiles. The Gospel according to Luke is confessedly the fullest record of all that Jesus began to do.

5. Are here written in order (Luke 1:3). Luke professes to give us the order in which the events of Christ's life took place. This, to the simple Bible student, is a great blessing, as the very connection between the recorded deeds of our Lord is full of deep significance. If not in their mutual relationship, yet in point of contrast.

6. Were written that we might have certainty (Luke 1:4). Luke evidently wrote that the honourable Theophilus might be confirmed in his faith. "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God" (John 20:31). In the written Gospel we have a sure Word, wherein we do well to take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place. The Gospel offers both Salvation and the certainty of it. Yet how many Gospel hearers there are who have not yet known the certainty of those things wherein they have been instructed. Make your calling and election sure.

ZACHARIAS MADE DUMB THROUGH UNBELIEF.

Luke 1:5-22.

"O Father, God, to Thee I come! Rather in mercy hold me dumb Than that, unto Thee drawing near, I think of mortal men that hear. O may I reverence more and more, And in every deed adore."

Nothing fetters the hand of God from working like unbelief; nothing grieves the Spirit more readily. But although he was smitten dumb he did not flee from the presence of the holy Smiter. He did not give up his work for the Lord although this sore affliction came upon him. Zacharias would teach us not to be so engrossed with our trials even if they should be most sudden and severe as to neglect our work for Christ. After reflecting on this incident we desire to point out that-

1. Visions may come while doing our ordinary work. "While he executed the priest's office, there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord" (Luke 1:8, Luke 1:11). Moses kept the flock of Jethro when the call came through the burning bush (Exodus 3:1). Gideon was threshing wheat (Judges 6:11). Elisha was ploughing when the prophetic mantle fell upon him (1 Kings 19:19). David was in the sheepfolds (Psalms 78:70). Matthew in his toll-booth. Thy God is sufficient for thee, wait on Him and look up.

2. Our prayers may be answered very unexpectedly (Luke 1:13). When the angel said to him, "Fear not, for thy prayer is heard," it was to him staggering news, although he had been praying many long years that a son might be given them. They were both now "well stricken in years" (Luke 1:7), suggesting that he had continued this prayer long after the expectation had died away. If the Lord lays it on the heart to continue in prayer for any definite thing, is this not in itself an evidence that He desires so to bless us? Believe, and thou shalt see the glory of God. "Ye shall reap if ye faint not" (Galatians 6:9).

3. The Lord is able to do far above what we ask.

He not only would have a son born to him, but that son "would be great in the sight of the Lord, and filled with the Holy Ghost" (Luke 1:14-15). A son worthy of the God who gave him. The good old man and his humble, blameless wife were now abundantly rewarded for their many years of praying and waiting. God is not unfaithful. Wait on the Lord. Though the vision tarry, wait. You long for a revival, let not thy faith fail (Psalms 126:6).

4. The promises of God test our faith. " Zacharias said, Whereby shall I know this?" (Luke 1:18). It was a big order he received that day from the Lord (read carefully Luke 1:14-17). It was as if the fountains of the great deep of God's infinite grace had just opened up and poured their unspeakable riches at his feet. Is it not the very greatness of His grace that staggers our weak faith? If you wish to find out the measure of your faith, just try some one of His great and precious promises. "In My Name ye shall cast out devils" (Mark 16:17). Try that one.

5. Unbelief fetters the tongue of testimony. "Behold, thou shalt be dumb, because thou believest not My words" (Luke 1:20). What a God-dishonouring thing unbelief is! How many tongues among the children of God are under the condemnation of dumbness because of their unbelief? How many of us are dumb with regard to the Lord's coming, the filling of the Spirit, the consecration of the life, answered prayer, and the deeper experiences of the things of God, all because of

unbelief? "Because thou believest not My words." According to Grosart he became a D. D. through unbelief-deaf and dumb.

6. Real contact with the Lord makes men to marvel.

"The people marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple" (Luke 1:21). As for Zacharias, he did not feel the time long. Who does when they are in real communion with God? A man is sure to get out of the old rut and to do unprecedented things when his ministry becomes a living and solemn reality before God. Zacharias, during the hours of public service, forgot all about the clock that day. He was late in getting through, but the people, when they did see him, were convinced that he had seen a vision (Luke 1:22). Short services are not always the best. Where a preacher's soul is filled with the vision of God, both time and men have to stand back. There is more blessing through one day with God than twenty years without Him. Have faith in God.

Luke

JOHN THE BAPTIST AND THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Luke 1:12-17.

"Lord, what is this that Thou hast sent?

My heart, like sea-wave turbulent,

Grieves with strange sweet agony;

O born not of the earth but sky!

Of sin Thou seek'st me to convince,

And 'neath Thy probing touch I wince."

There is a singular resemblance between the work of John and the work of the Holy Spirit. Both came to convince men of sin, to bring them to repentance, and to point them to Christ as the Lamb of God who taketh away sin. The points of likeness are not few-

1. The coming of both was foretold (Luke 1:13; John 14:16). John's birth was predicted by the angel, and Christ promised to send another Comforter. Every event foretold by God is a link of connection between earth and Heaven; an evidence of the reality of unseen and eternal things.

2. At the coining of both many were made to rejoice.

It was said of John "that many shall rejoice at his birth" (Luke 1:14). The advent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost filled many with joy. Three thousand souls gladly received the Word, and did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God (Acts 2:41-47). The fruit of the Spirit is joy.

3. Both were to be great in the sight of the Lord "He shall be great in the sight of the Lord" (Luke 1:15) John's testimony was to glorify the Lord, even though in the sight of men and in his own estimation he was but a voice crying in the wilderness. Jesus said of the Holy Spirit, "He shall glorify Me" (John 16:14). The blessed Spirit is indeed great in the sight of the Lord, although men should ignore Him and close their ears to the crying of His voice. Have you heard this voice crying in the wilderness of your desolate heart and fruitless life?

4. Both were to prepare the way for the Lord. "He shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias" (Luke 1:17). The Holy Spirit also prepares the way for Christ's salvation to come to us by "convincing of sin" (John 16:8). John prepared the way of the Lord by convincing men of their need of repentance; the Holy Spirit prepares the way of the Lord into our hearts by revealing to us our need of salvation.

5. Both were to turn many to the Lord. "Many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God" (Luke 1:16). This also is the mission of the Holy Ghost. "He shall testify of Me," said Jesus. "When the Spirit of grace and supplication is poured out they shall look upon Me" (Zechariah 12:10). The turning of men to the Lord is His overcoming work. It is the Spirit that quickeneth. There can be no salvation or joy in the Lord without this turning, for all like sheep have gone astray. Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?

6. Both came to give knowledge of salvation.

"Thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to give knowledge of salvation" (Luke 1:76-77). John gave the knowledge of salvation by declaring that the Saviour was at hand. The Holy Spirit gives the knowledge by revealing Christ in the heart. He that believeth hath the witness in himself (1 John 5:10).

7. Both came to make ready a people for the Lord. This was the outstanding feature of John's mission (Luke 1:17); this is pre-eminently the great mission of the Holy Spirit, calling out a people for His Name, and preparing them for the coming of the Lord (Acts 15:14). The Church is the Lamb's wife, called and comforted, and led by the Spirit, just as Eliezer made ready Rebekah by giving her the gifts of Isaac, and led her right into the presence of him whom she had not seen yet loved (Gen. 24).

8. Both came to honour the Lord and not themselves. John kept himself, as it were, out of sight, saying, I am a voice, one to be heard but not seen. So the Spirit, we are told, shall not speak of Himself. The mission of the Spirit, like that of John, is to point out Jesus as the Lamb of God. He shall take of Mine and show it unto you (John 16:13-14). Those rilled with the Spirit will in this respect become like the Spirit, seeking only to glorify Jesus. Their language is: "He must increase; I must decrease" (John 3:30). A GREAT CHARACTER.

Luke 1:15-16.

"Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist." He was a Nazarite unto God, drinking neither wine nor strong drink. Wherein did his greatness consist? He was great-

1. Before the Lord. "He shall be great in the sight of the Lord." This assures us that he must have been in a condition of-

1. Rightness with God. No one can be great in the favour of God who is not right with Him. Reconciliation is needed to acceptance.

2. Likeness to God. It is possible to be justified before Him and yet not be fully conformed to Him. He made the first man after His own likeness. The second Man is the Lord from Heaven, after whose likeness we are now to be created by the same Spirit.

3. Readiness for God. A man entirely separated for Him, with no interest to come between him and his service for God. He was in no way entangled, a free man to do His will. This is greatness.

2. In himself. "He was filled with the Holy Ghost." Not the greatness of his own will, of purpose, or goodness, but the greatness of God dwelling in him. This implies-

1. Self-abnegation. He died to himself that God might live and move in him. Not I, but Christ in me. Man's original greatness was lowered to the dust through sin, and eternally ruined. The way into greatness in the Divine eyes is not by self-reformation, but by self-abnegation. A going out of the ruined nature into the life of God. I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live.

2. Divine possession. Filled with the Holy Spirit. Yielded up to the will of God as taught by His Spirit abiding within. Be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit. All true greatness comes from Him who alone is great. Great in wisdom, holiness, and power. "Thy gentleness hath made me great" (2 Samuel 22:36).

3. Heavenly wisdom. To be filled with the Spirit is to be filled with the knowledge of His will, so that every thought and act may be in perfect harmony with the mind of God. He worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. Ye are wise in Christ.

3. Among his fellowmen. "Many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God." This greatness then lies in holiness and usefulness. It is not something given us for our own honour, ease, or aggrandisement, but whereby the power of God may come into contact with others. If you would have this greatness you must not seek it for yourself. He will not give His glory to another. Here we see-

1. Great faithfulness. His ministry gives abundant evidence of his fearlessness and devotion to the work of God. Like the apostle of the Gentiles he could say, "This one thing I do" (Php_3:13).

2. Great power. Like the greater One who was to come after him, he spoke with power. His word was sharp, and quick, and powerful, because it was a word that burned in his bones. He was in vital sympathy with his message. It was to him no task committed to memory, but the living truth, blazing in a living soul, and dropping from his glowing tongue like coals of fire.

3. Great success. "Many turned to the Lord." A Holy Ghost ministry is always a success. It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which is in you. The Spirit of your Father will never speak without telling effect. The secret of his success lay in his exalting the Lord and not himself. He must increase, and I must decrease. "Go thou and do likewise" (Luke 10:37).

JESUS AS SAVIOUR AND KING.

Luke 1:30-33.

"Great disaster of the world,

When Adam from his throne was hurled;

When the tempter seem'd to win

Through unfathomable sin.

Ah! but it was only seeming;

Lo! the Christ has come redeeming."

Jesus the Lowly Child, yet the "Mighty God," stripped of His glory, and still glorious in His weakness. Great is the mystery of godliness.

1. His saving Name. "Thou shalt call His Name Jesus." Jesus means Saviour. God in measuring the depth of man's need could only meet that need by the gift of His only Son. As a Saviour He saves from-

1. Sin (Matthew 1:21). From its defiling and condemning power, from the love of it, and from the wrath that is to come because of it (1 Thessalonians 1:10). He saves from sin by putting Himself between the sinner and his guilt (Isa. 53).

2. Self (Galatians 2:20). The I is to be crucified with Christ that the body of sin might be destroyed (Romans 6:6). Self-wisdom, self-effort, and self-righteousness are all enemies from which we need to be delivered, and from which we are saved when Jesus reigns within.

3. This present evil world (Galatians 1:4). By being crucified with Christ we are crucified to the world and the world to us (Galatians 6:14). The Cross of Christ comes between us and our sins, between us and the flesh, and between us and the world. Did not our Lord pray that we should be kept from the evil? (John 17:15). He is mighty to save.

2. His wonderful character. "He shall be great" (Luke 1:32).

1. Great in His origin. "Called the Son of the Highest." As a Child He was born, as a Son He was given (Isaiah 9:6). Being the Son of the Highest, He is higher than angels, or than any created one. Yet He who belonged to the Highest descended to the lowest for us, becoming obedient unto death.

2. Great in His love. He so loved us that He gave Himself for us. Being the Son of the Highest His love was of the highest possible order. Behold what love! Herein is love (1 John 4:10). His love was consistent with the greatness of His character, and was stronger than death.

3. Great in His power. The power of Christ was the power of faith. He believed, and therefore spake, and it was done. There is nothing impossible with Him (Luke 1:37). All power, He says, is given unto Me. He is able to save to the uttermost. As many as touched Him were made perfectly whole.

3. His glorious prospect. "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame."

1. He shall have a throne. "The Lord God shall give Him the throne of His father David" (Luke 1:32). He shall do it. He has not yet received this throne, for the house of Jacob (Luke 1:33) still despise and reject Him as their Messiah King. Jesus Christ is God's appointed heir to David's throne (Jeremiah 23:5; compare Psalms 132:11 with Revelation 22:16; see also Isaiah 9:6-7).

2. He shall reign over the house of Jacob (Luke 1:33). Would Mary remember this while she stood by and saw Him crucified? Is His promise to come to naught? He as King has been rejected, and His reign over them as a people delayed, but the Word of God cannot be broken. The gifts and callings of God are without repentance. That foretold by Daniel must be fulfilled (chap. Luke 7:13-14). He was born King of the Jews. God hath given Him the throne of David, and He shall reign over the house of Jacob. To spiritualise this at the sacrifice of its literal meaning is to wrest the Scriptures. Render to God the things that are God's.

3. His kingdom shall have no end (Luke 1:33). The Kingdom of God that is within us shall certainly have no end. We shall never cease to be under the rule of Him who is our exalted Redeemer. But the kingdom of this world has not yet become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ (Revelation 11:15). The time has not yet come when the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, shall reign over all blessed for ever. These times cannot come "until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Timothy 6:14-16).

MARY'S PRAYER.

Luke 1:30-38.

"Thou stooped'st over Thy bruised child, O Lord,

And 'mid the dark didst breathe the healing word;

Thou knowest all, and with mild mightiness

Granted'st a mother's kiss in my distress." When the power of the Highest stooped to overshadow the lowly Mary, it was to her indeed a manifestation of mild mightiness. She could truly say, "Thy gentleness hath made me great" (2 Samuel 22:36).

1. The promise. "Fear not, thou hast found favour with God, and shalt bring forth a Son, and call His Name Jesus" (Luke 1:30-31). She found favour, not as one who deserved it or bought it. The grace of God, which is favour, is never found by those who seek it as wages. The gift of God is eternal life.

2. The question. "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" (Luke 1:34). To have Christ formed within us is to be blessed above all. But how can this be? Hear, O heavens, and give answer, O earth. How shall this be? It is not in man to reason, and in all mere human experience impossible. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Ye must be born again. How shall this be?

3. The answer. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee" (Luke 1:35). To Mary's question, How shall this be? God's answer is "The Holy Ghost." How is His Son to be revealed in me? (Galatians 1:16). The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee. It is not of man, not of the flesh, not of works, not by might or by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord. He who brooded over the creation of old must overshadow thee. It is the Spirit that quickeneth. Let us apply this great thought to-

1. God's way of salvation. How shall this be? Well, it must just come to you as this honour came to Mary. As the favour of God. You cannot purchase it, and you never shall deserve it. God's answer to your question as to how it is to come into your heart and life is, "The Holy Ghost" (John 3:5). Like Mary, believe God's Word and rest.

2. God's way of sanctification. This, like salvation, and the forming of the new nature within us, is all of Grace. It is the favour of God. It is God who worketh in us, both to will and to do of His good pleasure. How shall this be? The Divine answer again is the same: "The Holy Ghost shall come unto thee." The storms and trials of life may blow off many withered leaves from an outward character, but there is nothing like the rising of the new life for putting off the old. Be filled with the Spirit.

3. God's way of service. To all our questions as to how we shall be made fruitful in the work of the Lord He has but one answer: "The Holy Ghost." From Me, saith the Lord, is thy fruit found. How shall I glorify God in my body and spirit? The power of the Highest shall overshadow thee. As vessels, we are to be filled with the Spirit and the knowledge of His will. As instruments, we are to be polished, and entirely yielded to His will. As agents, we act in His Name and for His sake. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19-20). "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:20).

4. The prayer. Mary said, "Be it unto me according to Thy word" (Luke 1:38). This is very precious. Mary could not understand how the Son of God was to be formed in her, but she believed that it was His gracious will that it should be so. And she immediately yielded herself, spirit, soul, and body, that the will of God might be done in her and through her. "Be it unto me according to Thy word." This brief, deep, self-surrendering, God-glorifying prayer breathes the secret of salvation, sanctification, and successful service. Not My will, but Thine be done. Take this as an example of how His gracious words may be received and fulfilled in us. Be ye holy, for I am holy. How shall this be? The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee. Be it unto me according to Thy word.

HOLY JOY.

Luke 1:46-55.

"Bethlehem and Calvary-

A human child that God might die;

This the stupendous mystery.

Bethlehem and Calvary-

Sweet picture of humility,

And earth and Hell's hostility."

Bethlehem and Calvary are the two poles of Divine grace and human guilt. In the one we see the evidence of God's love to man, in the other the proof of man's hatred to God. In this chapter we have three holy songs:

1. The song of Elizabeth (Luke 1:41-42).

2. The song of Mary (Luke 1:46).

3. The song of Zacharias (Luke 1:67).

It is with the song of Mary that we have now specially to do. It is pleasant to think of Mary as a singer. Did ever mortal voice sing a sweeter song than this? Her joy was holy, deep, Divine. It was-

1. Spiritual joy. "My spirit hath rejoiced" (Luke 1:47). The tidings of the grace of God, in the gift of His Son, filled her soul with joy and made her spirit sing. The Gospel of God is intended to reach the very spirit of man, to touch and revive the innermost spring of His being. The lip songs of the

hypocrite and the sentimental songs of the world never penetrate to the needy spirit in man.

2. Joy in God. "My spirit hath rejoiced in God" (Luke 1:47). God revealed Himself, and He was known to Mary in the gift of His Son, and so known and believed that her spirit rejoiced in God. It cannot be said of us that we know God if in our spirits we do not rejoice in Him. We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:11). The joy that is in God is pure and blameless, and may be changeless and eternal.

3. Joy of salvation. "My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour" (Luke 1:47). How near the heart of the virgin mother comes to her God in these words, "My Saviour." Mary needed a Saviour, and she found Him in the Son of the Highest, begotten in her by the power of the Holy Ghost. Where and how else can we find Him? My Lord and my God. Christ dwells in our hearts by faith.

4. Praiseful joy. "My soul doth magnify the Lord" (Luke 1:46). Even the joy of salvation may be a selfish joy, but the joy of adoration is God-glorifying. Hannah also knew this double joy. Joy in the salvation of the Lord, and joy in the Lord Himself (1 Samuel 2:1). O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His Name together (Psalms 34:3).

5. Grateful joy. "For He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden" (Luke 1:48). She is deeply conscious that she could never merit the exceptional honour conferred upon her. No more can ye. Every one who knows God and lives in the light of His presence cannot but be conscious of his or her utter unworthiness of such love and favour. It is when, like Mary, we are in the low estate that the Lord will lift us up. Humble thyself and He will honour thee (Psalms 138:6).

6. Hopeful joy. "Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed" (Luke 1:48). She was blessed indeed, and blessed down through the generations, all because of her very close relationship to both her Lord and ours. May we not learn from this that it is our nearness to Christ that is to tell on our children and the generations yet to come? The memory of the wicked shall rot, rot like a rootless, lifeless tree, but those planted by the river shall never wither (Psalms 1:3).

7. Reasonable joy. "For He that is mighty hath done to me great things" (Luke 1:49). When we are so really conscious that the Lord hath done great things for us and in us, by the mighty operation of His Holy Spirit, the joy becomes, as it were, natural. The fruit of the Spirit is joy. The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad (Psalms 126:3). Think on these things. He that is mighty is still able to do for us great things (Ephesians 3:20).

8. Joy that constrained to testimony. In the following verses (50-55) Mary testifies to-

1. The power of God. "He scattereth the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, He hath sent the rich empty away. The arm that is strong to save is also strong to smite down everything that exalts itself against God. Those who know the joy of the Lord know this also.

2. The grace of God. "His mercy is on them that fear Him." "He hath exalted them of low degree." "He hath filled the hungry with good things." "By grace are ye saved, that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Luke 18:14). It is the hungry and thirsty that are filled (Matthew 5:6). Our testimony will be blessed if it is given as Mary gave hers.

DELIVERED TO SERVE.

Luke 1:74-75.

"Lord, keep alive my sense of wonder,

Cent'ring in the living Christ,

Oft placing me, His great throne under,

To hold with Him a gracious tryst;

The 'old, old story' every new.

And ever proving itself true."

It is a great and cruel fallacy toward God and man to believe that we are saved merely to be satisfied. Such a debased thought is not worthy of the grace of God. The man who eats only to be satisfied is a selfish glutton and a worshipper of his stomach. We eat to live, and love, and labour. The provision of God made for us in Christ is to enable us to live before God, to love our fellowmen, and labour for Christ and His cause.

1. The great deliverance. "We being delivered out of the hand of our enemies." We are here reminded that this deliverance is-

1. All of grace. "That He would grant us." It is in reality a Divine grant. It is because of His mercy that we are not consumed. When any board or society allows a grant to any one, the idea of merit and desert is often present, but with God's grants there can be no plea of merit, else grace is not grace.

2. From the enemy, SIN. Sin is one of the enemies out of whose hand we need deliverance. In giving us His Son, God has also given us a grant of freedom from sin (Romans 6:18). "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14). Claim this grant.

3. From the enemy, SELF. If sin is not to be allowed to lord it over us, the self-seeking I must be put in the place of death. As long as the carnal I lives it will be the servant of sin. By the atoning Blood the victory is won.

4. From the enemy, SATAN. The great accuser is always ready to bring some railing accusation against the Lord, against His Gospel, or against ourselves. We are not ignorant of His devices." Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand" (Ephesians 6:11).

2. The purpose of it. "He hath delivered us that we might serve Him." We are saved to serve. We have been freed from sin that we might become servants to God (Romans 6:18). It is good to be able to say "Thank God, I am saved," but it is better to be able to say "Thank God, I am the bondslave of Jesus Christ." That we might-

1. Serve Him. One is your Master, even Christ. Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth. Serve Him, God first, not the Church, not a cause, not the good principle, but the living Christ, our ever present gracious Lord, whose we are.

2. Serve Him without fear. If we love the Lord with all our heart this will be the character of our service, for there is no fear in love; perfect love casteth out fear. Having received the Spirit of adoption we are saved from slavish fear and serve in the love of a son (Romans 8:15).

3. Serve Him in holiness. As saved ones we are "called with a holy calling" (2 Timothy 1:9). Called into the holy priesthood, having been washed and clothed with holy robes that we might minister in holy things as we eat the holy meat. They must be clean who bear the vessels of the Lord. He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy (1 Peter 1:15).

4. Serve Him in righteousness. Our new man is created after God in righteousness and true holiness (Ephesians 4:24). So the new man is expected to serve God in righteousness as well as in holiness. "In holiness" may refer to the nature of God within us; "in righteousness," to the Word of God before us. His holy nature imparted to us gives us fitness for service. His Holy Word gives us righteous principles for guidance in service.

5. Serve before Him. Sweet is the service that is rendered in the consciousness of His presence and done as standing before Him. Elijah could speak of "the Lord God of Israel before whom I stand" (1 Kings 17:1). Abraham walked before God. Serving before Him is the remedy for the fear of man, and the secret of deliverance from dishonouring God by presenting eloquent prayers to great audiences.

6. Serve Him all the days of our life. There is no discharge in this holy war. The Levite might retire after a limited number of years' service, but those delivered from sin and wrath by the agony and blood of God's beloved Son are to serve Him all the days of their life. All the days of that life which is Divine and eternal. In the days of bodily infirmity and weakness, when we can do nothing but look, may that look be the look of blessed submission and holy trust. Yes, Lord, all the days of my life and of Thy life. THE NIGHT OF THE INCARNATION.

Luke 2:1-20.

"O prodigious wonder!

To be sounded by the thunder-

Our God on earth a Child.

But as the light, not lightning,

Attracting and affright'ning,

Earth and Heaven reconciled." This is in truth what one has called "The birth supreme 'midst things ajar." The Light of the World was born in the night. Naturally and spiritually the world at His coming was wrapped in sullen, helpless darkness. The cold, chilly mists of form and ceremony are now to melt away before the warmth and brightness of His rising. Thank God that He came as "light, not lightning." Notice the-

1. Preparation. "Joseph and Mary, because they belonged to the house of David, went up to Bethlehem to be taxed" (Luke 2:1-5). God had foretold, through the mouth of His prophet Micah, that Christ the King of Israel was to be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). The decree of the Roman Emperor helped on the fulfilment of God's Word. Our circumstances are in the hand of God as well

as our soul.

2. Arrival. "She laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7). No room in the inn for Him is strangely prophetic of the reception He was to have as the Saviour of men. Other persons and things first. Is it not so still? We are told that there is a place for everything. What place has Jesus Christ in politics, in business, in society (so-called), in the home, or in the heart. Like that inn in Bethlehem they are already full. No room for Jesus with regard to the affairs of daily life. Is it not still true that "the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head?" (Matthew 8:20).

3. Proclamation (Luke 2:8-12). It was divinely fitting that "Christ the Lord" should be heralded by the "angel of the Lord," and accompanied with the "glory of the Lord." We have here the gospel of the incarnation, declaring "good tidings of great joy." Good tidings of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, emptying Himself unto poverty that He might make many rich (2 Corinthians 8:9).

4. Accompaniment. "Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host praising God" (Luke 2:13-14). If there was indifference among men on earth at the coming of the Son of God there was no indifference in Heaven at His going. There is joy in Heaven still over one sinner repenting and believing in Him (Luke 15:7).

5. Inquiry. "Let us now go and see this which the Lord hath made known unto us" (Luke 2:15-16). The shepherds believed the Word, and acting on it, they found Him just as it was told them. Instead of reasoning and cavilling, would that men had the wisdom of these shepherds, and just say, "Let us go and see." Put the Word of God to the test. Believe, and thou shalt see. Seek, and ye shall find.

6. Testimony, "When they had seen they made known abroad the saying" (Luke 2:17). They believed, and therefore they spoke. Those who have proved the power of God's revealed truth in their own experience are better able to speak of it to others. They cannot help speaking it, it is such good tidings of great joy. They make known the saying because it is a faithful one and worthy of the acceptation of all (1 Timothy 1:15),

7. Rejoicing. "They returned glorifying and praising God" (Luke 2:20). We may well question whether we have ever found the Lord if we have no joy in speaking of Him, and not constrained out of a full heart to glorify and praise Him. If the Gospel is not tidings of great joy to us it is clear that we have never yet believed it. The shepherds: 1. Heard; 2. Believed; 3. Obeyed; 4. Received; 5. Testified; 6. Rejoiced; 7. Praised. "They returned praising God." Returned to their daily avocation, but with a new vision before their souls, and a new power in their lives. Finding Jesus the Saviour is a very practical discovery.

GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY.

Luke 2:8-14.

"I, too, would seek the angels to follow,

Lord of all angels, wilt Thou me hallow?

I fain would emulate their holy zeal,

I fain would their glad obedience feel,

My forehead, like theirs, Thy holiness seal." In those broad undulating fields lying around Bethlehem, where Ruth began her mission of gleaning, and where David tended the flock of his father Jesse, shepherds were still keeping watch over their flock by night. But that was a night never to be forgotten. That night a star appeared that was destined to supersede the brightness of the sun, and to fill the whole earth with the glory of the invisible God. Good tidings. Look at-

1. The Preacher. "The angel of the Lord." This is the first herald of the new dispensation. It was a great occasion, but it was not what the wisdom of men would call an eloquent sermon. It was brilliant in its simplicity, though in meaning fathomless as eternity. "Fear not, I bring you good tidings of great joy" (Luke 2:8). It was what all sermons should be-plain, pointed, practical, powerful.

2. The hearers. "Shepherds in the fields." They were both intelligent and attentive. They were more. They were hungering and thirsting for the tidings which now fell so suddenly upon their startled ears. They were anxious souls, looking and longing for His appearing. Just as the highest hill top catches the first glory beams of the rising sun, so these shepherds, standing on the heights of believing expectation, are first bathed in the glory that was coming to bless a sleeping world. They that honour Me, I will honour.

3. The Gospel. "Behold I bring you good tidings." Let us examine the characteristics of this wonderful God-spell that was in the approaching ages to hold so many spellbound amidst all the fascinations of the world and pleasures of sin. It was-

1. Mysterious. "Unto you is born Christ the Lord." Who can by searching find out this? The Lord of glory born and lying in a manger, stripped of His ineffable majesty and wrapped in swaddling clothes. This is the sign (Luke 2:12). The sign of infinite grace and compassion. Great is the mystery of godliness. God manifest in the flesh.

2. Good. "Good tidings." The voice on the mount at the giving of the law only brought fear and quaking. The law proclaimed was holy, just, and good, but that was no tidings of good to sinful men. The Gospel brings good tidings, because it declares a Saviour born. Without the birth of God's Son, no son could be born of God. He who was to bring sons to glory must be "made perfect through sufferings" (Hebrews 2:10; Isaiah 52:7).

3. Joyful. "Good tidings of great joy." Its first note is "Fear not." Fear not the depth of your sinfulness, the number of your sins, your own weakness, or the foes of the soul without, for unto you is born a Saviour. God has laid help on One that is mighty, Christ the Lord. We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:11).

4. Personal. "I bring you good tidings. For unto you is born this day." The voice of this heavenly wisdom is still crying out, "Unto you, O men, I call." The shepherds could not but believe that this blessed message from God was for all that heard it. Hear, and your soul shall live. This Gospel is unto you first (Acts 3:26).

5. Universal. "Which shall be to all people" (Luke 2:10). When our Lord lay in His swaddling clothes, or when He stood before Pilate, He was in the eyes of men a very insignificant object compared with Pilate and the pagan Emperor of Rome, but where are they now? The world for

which Christ died shall yet be blessed through His Name. "All nations shall call Him blessed" (Psalms 72:11). Are you blessing Him now?

6. Confirmed. "Suddenly a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest" (Luke 2:13-14). This thing was not done in a corner. Those who believe the Gospel will have ample reasons for cleaving to it, both miraculous and otherwise, the Word will always be confirmed with signs following. The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God (Romans 8:16; 1 Corinthians 1:22).

SIMEON-A HIDDEN ONE.

Luke 2:25-32.

"My mother's grave my Sinai was,

But light, not lightning, was the cause

That won me from my unbelief,

And staunch'd an ageing father's grief;

Softly my childhood's prayer returned,

And my old faith within me burned."

Simeon seems to have been one of the Lord's hidden ones, who, under the guidance of God, calmly and quietly served Him in waiting. But the hidden one is here brought into light. He has prayed in secret, he is now rewarded openly.

1. See his holy character.

1. He was just and devout (Luke 2:25). Just in his dealings with men, and devout in his dealings with God. Righteous and holy. These are the two sides of a Christian life, they must be equally honest and true.

2. He waited for the consolation of Israel. He waited and prayed because he believed. This dear old man of God had no faith in any other means or efforts to comfort Israel than the coming of the King. This is still Israel's hope, for "the Lord shall comfort Zion" (Isaiah 51:3). His waiting was rewarded; his hope was fulfilled. "They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me" (Isaiah 49:23). Wait on the Lord.

3. He was endued with the Spirit. "The Holy Ghost was upon him." There is always a very vital connection between waiting on the Lord and being endued with power (Acts 2:1-4). The effect of the Holy Spirit resting upon Him was twofold: 1. He was taught. It was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 2. He was led. "He came by the Spirit into the temple" (Luke 2:27). Every Spirit-possessed one has the things of Christ revealed to him or her, and will be led by the Spirit. It may simplify the matter to reverse the order here: (1) Be filled with the Spirit, then you will (2) be willing to wait on and for the Lord; and then (3) you will be able to live a just and devout life before God and men, being taught of God and led by the Spirit.

2. Hear his joyful testimony. His is indeed a striking attitude as he stands with the infant Saviour in those arms so long outstretched in prayer and patient waiting. Who can refrain from giving a glowing testimony when the arms of their faith have been filled with the personal Saviour? He blesses God as one whose life had now been fully satisfied with his gift. Crowned with his honour, and ready to depart in peace. Such is always the satisfying power of Jesus Christ when received by faith. He testifies of-

1. Christ as the Salvation of God. "Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation" (Luke 2:30). Beautiful is the title thus given to Jesus. "Thy Salvation." God's great love, mercy, and power united to redeem and bless us in the person of His Son. This was the making bare of the arm of the Lord for salvation (Isaiah 52:10). This naked arm reveals, if we might so put it, the strong and mighty saving muscle of Jehovah. "O arm of the Lord, awake, awake!" What else but the living Christ in our hearts will ever fit us for departing in peace?

2. Christ as the Light of the Gentiles (Luke 2:32). "As a revelation to the nations" (Newberry). Christ is God's revealed Light to the nations of the earth. With regard to the character of God and the way of salvation there is no other light. All else is but the light of sin-blinded reason, which is only supposition or superstition. "I am the Light of the World." Salvation is a coming out of darkness into His marvellous light. The sparks of our own making will never turn night into day (Isaiah 9:2). No more can our own work save us. The presence of Christ with us and in us is as Heaven's own searchlight turned upon the Father that we may see Him, and turned upon ourselves, upon sin, death, and eternity that we might see these, as it were, with His eyes. "Walk in the light" (1 John 1:7).

3. Christ as the Glory of Israel (Luke 2:32). This is the order revealed by the Holy Ghost to Simeon. Christ was to be first a light to the Gentiles, after that the glory of His people Israel. Was there another in Israel who believed that the Christ would first bless the Gentile nations before He would be glorified among His own ancient people? The Holy Spirit could make no mistake. The Messiah would be cut off, numbered with transgressors. But He will come again, not as a sin-offering, but as the King of Israel, with great power and glory. They shall mourn because of Him (having crucified Him), but the glory of the Lord will then have arisen upon them. Where the glorified One is there will be glory, for glory always dwells in Immanuel's land, whether in earth or in Heaven, in Time, or Eternity. Christ is our Salvation; Christ is our Light; Christ is our Glory. To Him be the praise.

CHRIST A SIGN SPOKEN AGAINST.

Luke 2:34-35.

"Voiceless, alone, and hunger-bitten,

Lo! where the scapegoat stands sun-smitten;

Or now among the sere sedge lying

Parched, and as by inches dying..

Thou, O my Saviour, for our sake,

The antitype Thyself didst make.

But, ah! on Thee a mightier load,

Thou God-forsaken Son of God." As soon as Simeon took the Lord in his arms he became a prophet, being taught of the Holy Ghost (Luke 2:25), he spake with all boldness. Each saying is full of deep and far-reaching significance. Receiving Christ is always a means of opening the eyes to behold the things which are unseen. Observe what he says about the- 1. Mission of Christ. "This Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel" (Luke 2:34). This-

1. Was true locally. In the day of His suffering and shame His disciples forsook Him and fled, they fell from Him, but they rose again into faith and favour after His resurrection.

2. Is true universally. All who come to Him must fall before Him ere they can be raised again in newness of life. Saul fell to the earth at His appearing to him on the way to Damascus, but he was raised again, a chosen vessel to bear His Name. Zacchaeus had to come down at His call before salvation came to his house (Luke 19:1-9). We must needs be planted in the likeness of His death before we can be raised in the likeness of His resurrection (Romans 6:5).

3. Will be true dispensationally. Israel as a nation has already fallen (Romans 9:12), and the Gentiles are being presently enriched thereby, but a rising again will yet take place, for all Israel shall be saved when the Deliverer shall come out of Zion and turn away ungodliness (Romans 9:26).

2. Character of Christ. "He shall be for a sign which shall be spoken against." "A sign may be offensive in two ways, either by its bewildering uncertainty or its alarming clearness. It was the unmistakable distinctness of Christ's life and teaching that made Him a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to many. In Him as a sign we see, as it were, the-

1. Red light of danger. Lifted up before the eyes of the doubting and the impenitent. If the green tree that stood in our place in the fires of God's judgment had to suffer so, what shall become of the dry?

2. Blue light of caution. To those who would rush past the Cross in their haste to be saved, going about to establish their own righteousness. O that men would consider. Take heed to thyself.

3. White light of safety. To the believing and the obedient. Christ the Sign declares that the way is clear to him that trusteth. Press on to the mark. If thy Master was spoken against, be thou not offended if many speak against thee (Acts 23:32).

3. Influence of Christ. "He shall be spoken against, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (Luke 2:35). These are solemn words. O my soul tread softly here. To come into contact with Jesus Christ is to have the thoughts of the heart revealed. He is the Living Word, who is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. The thoughts of our hearts, with regard to Him, are being revealed every day by our words and actions. Are they for Him or against Him? As a man is in Christ's sight, so is he. Our attitude toward Him determines whether we shall stand or fall in the judgment, and determines now whether our life is pleasing in His sight. The Lord looketh upon the heart. Has the sword of suffering that pierced through the soul of Mary, as she witnessed the agony and death of her Son and Saviour, pierced through our souls, because of our deep and

real sympathy with Him? And are the thoughts of many hearts being revealed through the suffering and rejected Saviour in us? May the sword of His Word pierce through our souls, and may the thoughts of His heart be revealed to us. A SORROWFUL SEARCH.

Luke 2:41-51.

" We've trod the maze of error round,

Long wand'ring in the winding glade;

And now the torch of light is found,

It only shows us where we strayed."

-GEORGE CRABBE.

It is extremely melancholy at the end of an anxious, busy life only to find light enough to show that it has been a life of error and failure and transgression against God. It is possible for the saving light of the Gospel to become at last, through wilful neglect, only the lurid glare that reveals but a ghastly future. Walk in the light while ye have the light. Seek the Lord while He may be found.

It was the first eventful day in the life of Jesus when He went to His first Passover at Jerusalem at the age of twelve. Even then, as the Great Teacher come from God, He could not be hid. Let us reflect on the seeking and the finding of Him by His reputed parents.

1. The discovery. "They went a day's journey, and when they found Him not they turned back." It is always a sad discovery to those who know and love Jesus to find that He is not with them. Like Samson, they may shake themselves, but it availeth nothing (Judges 16:20). How had this come about? We read that they-

1. Supposed Him to be in the company. Supposing Him to be with us is no evidence that He is with us. Many suppose Christ to be with them who are living Christless lives, supposing that all is right when all is wrong. Then again they-

2. Doubtless were taken up with other company. Not that they intended to go without Him, but between their suppositions and the pressure of their kinsfolk and acquaintances He was left behind. Is it not the old story, "While I was busy here and there, He was gone?" It is even possible to be busy with the Lord's work when the Lord Himself is not with us. A missionary going out to his work one morning very sad was caught at the door by his wife, who looked into his face and said, "O Willie, much work and little prayer makes a hard task." There was no visiting that morning, but a work was done in Willie's soul that proved a life-long blessing.

2. The search. One day's journey without Jesus incurred three days' sorrowful searching. But observe that they-

1. Sought Him at once. They did not attempt to go one step farther without Him. Their love forbade them. We will always make quicker progress by turning back to the place where we have parted company with Christ than by going on without His conscious presence with us. If His presence does not brighten your life, seek His face. Wait on the Lord. Turn back.

2. Sought Him sorrowing. At first they sought Him where they could not find Him, among their kinsfolk and acquaintances. Are we not all apt to run among our Christian friends, seeking the light and help that only Christ Himself can give? It is always a sorrowful search seeking the Lord. If we feel the need of His presence to satisfy our souls as much as His parents did, the terrible sense of loss will constrain us to seek Him in tears.

3. The finding. He that seeketh findeth (Jeremiah 29:13). They found Him-

1. Where? "In the temple." The temple was the "house of prayer." This fact may help to impress us with the thought that in the secret place of prayer we may surely expect to find Him whom our souls love, and whose presence with us we so much need in our journey homeward. Such blessed company makes the road short.

2. When? "After three days." We cannot resist the conviction that there is a profound truth here for every seeker after Jesus. The three days seem to remind us of the resurrection." Destroy this temple," He said, "and in three days I will raise it up again." It is not a dead Christ we seek, but the risen, living One, who sits in the midst, in the great temple above.

3. How? "Sitting in the midst of doctors about His Father's business." All who ever sought and found Christ have found Him doing His Father's business. It is the will of God both to save and sanctify. In our receiving Jesus Christ by faith, and abiding in Him, the great business of the Father with respect to our individual lives is being done. Thy will be done in us as in Heaven.

4. The following. Note also that He-

1. Went down with them. He had just said to them, Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business? Yet He went down with them. Down into the home, down into all the joys and sorrows and details of their everyday life, and this was also to Him the Father's business. Is it otherwise now? Does He not still go down with those who have sought Him sorrowing into the sphere of their daily toil, into their every circumstance, that all may be brightened and cheered with His presence?

2. Was subject to them. He adapted Himself to all their needs and requirements. He placed Himself, as it were, at their disposal, and virtually said, "What will ye that I should do unto you?" Reverently speaking, is it not so still? Has He not offered Himself to all who have sought Him? Does He not now adapt Himself as our Saviour to our every condition and requirement? Is He not still, on the ground of His own promise, subject to them that believe? He cannot deny Himself. THE CALL OF JOHN.

Luke 3:1-6.

"Pleasure-seeking only,

Though others be Lonely;

Dressing, drinking, eating,

The soul madly cheating;

Scorning the love unpriced,

So we shall not be missed." A life is poorly lived indeed that is not missed when gone. Those most anxious to obtrude themselves before their fellows seem to leave no gap behind them when they die. John the Baptist sought no place for himself, but God lifted him up as a trumpet, putting him, as it were, to His mouth, and, filling him with His own divine breath, made him the voice of God. Luke, as an historian, is very precise in giving us here, in a few words, the outward historical setting of John's life, but we tarry not to look at the framework, beautiful and wonderful as it is. We seek to point out-

I. When this Call Came. It came to John while "in the wilderness" (Luke 3:2). Into this desert or sparsely peopled part of the valley of Jordan John had evidently gone, that there alone he might learn more fully what the mind of the Lord was concerning him. To improve our time we have often to cease working and get alone with God, especially when we realise that some definite purpose of God concerning us is breaking in upon our minds and hearts. Take time to be holy. Wait on the Lord. Enter thy closet and shut to the door.

II. How this Call Came. "The Word of God came unto John" (Luke 3:2). How the Word of God came to him we are not told. He being filled with the Holy Ghost from his birth, and as his early longings and convictions ripened into settled purposes, the revelation was made to him that this was God's work within him, and God's Word to be uttered through him. How often has the Word of God come to us in this way! When old familiar truths have suddenly flashed up with a new glory and urgency, bringing a fresh message from the Lord to the soul.

III. The Effect Produced. "And he came preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Luke 3:3). He was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. When the Word of God burns within the bones the most unpopular methods may be adopted, but with sterling success. His mission was not to save, but to preach baptism as the outward sign of "a repentant heart, preparing the way of the Lord for their remission of sins. Those who had submitted to his baptism were afterwards pointed to the "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

IV. The Character of his Testimony. There was-

1. A Fulfilling of Prophecy. "As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet" (Luke 3:4). It is quite clear that John recognised and confessed that this Scripture was fulfilled in him before their eyes (John 1:23), just as his Master did with regard to Isaiah 61 (Luke 4:21). Every truly consecrated life is a fulfilling, or filling full, of the Word of God. It shall not return void or empty when our hearts and souls are in it.

2. An Abandonment of Self. "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness" (Luke 3:4). John said, "I am the voice of one crying," etc. (John 1:23). John was the Word made voice. Christ was the Word made flesh. The message that came through Isaiah over 700 years ago is now voiced through John by the power of the Holy Ghost. He who would be a herald of Christ must be content to be a voice, and that voice not his own. The polluting breath of self-assertiveness must not be in it if its tones are to be pure and heavenly. "Not I, but Christ in me." John's was not a voice singing, but a voice crying in the wilderness, as one in an agony for the will of God. Those who so sigh and cry will have the divine mark set upon them (Ezekiel 9:4).

3. A Glorification of Christ. "Prepare ye the way of the Lord," etc. (Luke 3:4). John is not concerned about his own way, but is intensely interested in "the way of the Lord." John honours Christ. 1. As

the pre-eminent One. The glory of Christ fills the broad horizon of his vision, and occupies both hemispheres of his soul. His way and His paths. 2. As the filling One. "Every valley shall be filled" (Luke 3:5). He fills up the valleys by exalting them (Isaiah 40:4). He feeds the hungry by lifting them up into His own fulness. No matter how deep and wide the chasm of our need may be He can fill up out of His own "unsearchable riches." 3. As the humbling One. "Every mountain and hill shall be brought low" (Luke 3:5). The lofty pride of Saul was suddenly brought low on the way to Damascus (Acts 9). He brings down that He might raise up. 4. As the upright One. "The crooked shall be made straight." Every son of God was once part of a crooked nation (Php_2:15). It takes an upright one to straighten out the crooks in others, and to the crooked this may be, and often is, a painful and shameful process. He suffered, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. 5. As the comforting One. "The rough ways shall be made smooth" (Luke 3:2). Rough ways have caused many to faint and be discouraged. Rough ways are very common, and many even of God's children go on sad and wearily. Do we know Christ as the Smoother of our ways? "They looked unto Him, and were lightened." He is the "Breaker up" of our way, and can make the rough places smooth for us. The Israelites had light in their dwellings, while the Egyptians sat in darkness. He does make a difference. 6. As the universal One. "All flesh shall see the salvation of God" (Luke 3:6). The good tidings of the Gospel was for all people (Luke 2:10). God is not a man that He should lie, and He hath said, "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Numbers 14:21). This curse-burdened earth is groaning on, waiting for the emancipating day, when the King Himself shall appear as the "blessed and only Potentate," and when all shall know Him, from the least unto the greatest. THE PREACHING OF JOHN.

Luke 3:7-18.

"Some angel guide my pencil while I draw

What nothing less than angel can exceed:

A man on earth devoted to the skies;

Like ships in seas, while in, above the world,

With aspect mild and elevated eye.

Behold Him seated on a mount serene,

Above the fogs of sense, and passion's storm;

He sees with other eyes than theirs. Where they

Behold a Sun, he spies a Deity.

They things terrestrial worship as divine!

His hopes, immortal, blow them by as dust."-Young.

There is nothing like the glare of Heaven's light for blinding our eyes to the deceitful things of earth. The eyes of John were on the Son of Righteousness, and his tongue a flame of fire. The pure in heart shall see God, and they that see God shall not fear the face of man. The character of John's preaching has many lessons.

I. A Burning Question. "He said, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Luke 3:7). There is wrath to come, but who hath warned you that ye have not fled from it through repentance. How can ye flee from the wrath to come if ye are not fleeing from your sins? The way of repentance is the way into the Father's bosom (Luke 15:20). From whom has your warning come?

II. An Urgent Demand. "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves," etc. (Luke 3:8). It is easier to say within ourselves than to show the fruits of repentance towards God in our lives. Any tree may shake with the wind, but by their fruits are they known. Bringing forth fruit unto God is the evidence that we have fled from the wrath to come. This pressing claim of the desert preacher has much need to be emphasised to-day. Faith, humility, brotherly love, and zeal for the kingdom of God are fruits worthy of repentance.

III. A Testing Crisis. "And now also the axe is laid at the root of the tree," etc. (Luke 3:9). The message of this forerunner of Christ was as an axe laid at the root of each tree, and by which each fruitless tree in due time would be hewn down. The words of John would judge them on the testing day. Every time we hear the Gospel of Christ in the power of God it is, as it were, an axe laid at the root of our life that will be used by the hand of the Judge in cutting down the fruitless impenitent. Hath Jesus not declared that "the Word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him on the last day?" (John 12:48). "Take heed therefore how ye hear" (Luke 8:18).

IV. A Practical Doctrine. "The people, the publicans, and the soldiers asked him, saying, What shall we do?" (Luke 3:10-14). The man whose eyes are on the coming Christ is the most practical man on earth. Here were three classes of anxious inquirers. To the first he preached brotherly love (Luke 3:11), to the second honesty in business (Luke 3:13), to the third forbearance and contentment (Luke 3:14). John's preaching of righteousness led to repentance, but culminated, as all such preaching ever should, on pointing to the "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). The repentance that does not lead to the Cross is a repentance that needs to be repented of.

V. A Self-Humbling Confession. "John answered, saying, One mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose" (Luke 3:16). John was mighty in righteousness, but Jesus was mightier in grace. The might of a servant of Christ lies in the mightiness of his Master. "One mightier than I cometh." The knowledge of the nearness of the mighty coming One filled the heart of John with courage and comfort. The great Spirit and Fire-baptiser was at hand, and the herald is already lost in the brightness of His coming. Present-day preachers crying like a voice in the wilderness of this Christ-rejecting and pleasure-loving world have much need, like John, to know the sustaining power of this heart-bracing truth. "The Lord is at hand." The Almighty King will soon appear. Behold He cometh.

VI. A Soul-Inspiring Proclamation. "He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire" (Luke 3:16). The marginal rendering of the Revised Version is "in" instead of "with." John baptised with water as an outward evidence of repentance. Jesus Christ baptises with the Holy Ghost as an inward assurance of forgiveness and acceptance (Romans 8:16). To be baptised with or in the Holy Ghost means the entering of the soul into a holy, heavenly, illuminating atmosphere, where the things of God and eternity are clearly seen. It is a passing from darkness into His marvellous light. To live in the Spirit is to live in the glowing fire of the divine presence. Here spiritual things

become more real than the visible things of earth; here all believers are made to drink into one Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13). This baptism cannot come through the works of the flesh; it is the gift of the Mighty Ascended One. "He shall baptise you." Are you so baptised?

VII. A Solemn and Timely Warning. "Whose fan is in His hand. He will gather the wheat; He will burn the chaff" (Luke 3:17). He who baptises with the Holy Ghost and fire carries the fan in His hand, He who unites and enriches with spiritual blessings also separates and judges. To come into contact with Christ is to come under the power of His fan. He carries it in His hand, and in a very real sense the purging process is going on now in the lives of those who have come into the baptism of the Holy Ghost. But the time will come when He will thoroughly purge the Church as "His floor," the sphere in which He has in grace been operating by the Holy Spirit, and where the lifeless chaff and the precious wheat meanwhile lie mingled in a confused heap. The fan is in His hand, so that He Himself must come before the final sifting can take place. He shall separate the precious from the vile (Malachi 3:3). The wheat and the tares are allowed to grow together until the harvest (Matthew 13:30). His wheat is gathered into "His garner," but the empty chaff He will not own, but appoints it to the "fire unquenchable" (Matthew 25:46). THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

Luke 4:1-13.

"We mourn, Lord, that our wav'ring will

So oft invites the tempter's skill;

We must confess that still we find

Some fleshy lusts war 'gainst the mind;

O break our chain, Lord, set us free.

Thou tempted once, us tempted see."

Jesus Christ was tempted on all points like as we are. How He met the tempter in the wilderness reveals to us some of those principles that lie at the root of every Christlike life, also teaching us something of what is meant by the "armour of God" (Ephesians 6:11). We shall look at these sayings of our Lord as a summary of the characteristics of a Christian life. It is-

I. A Life not of this World. "Man shall not live by bread alone" (Luke 4:4). "Bread alone" may stand for all that goes to satisfy the natural cravings of man. It is possible to possess all that this world can furnish, and yet be destitute of life in this deep and divine sense. That which is "born from above" must also be supplied from above. We must ever distinguish between soul and spirit. Material things will satisfy the soulish life, but not the spiritual. You hath He quickened, who were dead.

II. A Life of Faith. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. " The words of God are spirit and life, and so become food for the inner man (John 6:63). "Thy Word hath quickened me" (Psalms 119:50). "Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart" (Jeremiah 15:16). The Word of God is always sweet to the taste of faith. While we feed on the Word of God faith itself will be fed, for faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

III. A Life of Adoration. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God" (Luke 4:8). This was our Lord's answer to the devil when he offered Him the glory of "all the kingdoms of the world" on condition that He worshipped him. The glory of this Christ-rejecting world is only the mirage of the devil. Any one who worships him may easily have the promise of it. The glory of this world passeth away. Whoever or whatever has the worship of our hearts is by us crowned as Lord of all we are. "Thou shalt have no other god before Me."

IV. A Life of Service. "Him only shalt thou serve" (Luke 4:8). "One is your Master, even Christ" (Matthew 23:8). The will of God ought to be supreme in the life of every Christian. "Ye call Me Master and Lord, and ye say well: for so I am." He can take no other place than that of being "Head over all." In our daily work and calling are we conscious that we serve Him only? Doing all as for Him will lift the commonest drudgery into a work so holy that angels might covet. This is the cure for a grumbling spirit, and an unfailing remedy for the prevailing sin of discontent.

V. A Life of Humble Obedience. "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Luke 4:12). The Lord charged His people in the wilderness with tempting Him "ten times" by not hearkening unto His voice (Numbers 14:22). Our unbelief and disobedience sorely tempt the loving kindness of our God. What could try a true mother's heart like the doubting of her love? How would a faithful husband feel if treated by his wife like an untrustworthy stranger? Let us cease to tempt the Lord our God by hearkening unto other voices and walking in the light of our own eyes. Has He not declared, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased?" "Hear ye Him." Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God with thy discontent, thy doubtings, and thy unbelief.

VI. An Overcoming Life. "The devil departed from Him" (Luke 4:13). The victory was gained by the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, "It is written." The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit, not only because He uses it, but also because He is the Maker of it. "Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21). Jesus fearlessly used the written Word against the archenemy of souls. We may as confidently use it against all his modern little angels. "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (Romans 8:37). "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57). A POWERFUL SERMON.

Luke 4:14-30.

"Nazareth, O Nazareth!

Tho' a name of evil holding,

Here was brought 'The Undefiled,'

Like a dove a serpent folding,

Here grew up 'The Holy Child.'

Nazareth! Cross-like we see

Thy stained name from all stain free."

It was said, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" But ever since these words were uttered the name has become sacred because of its association with Jesus Christ. In fact, there is a

heaven-born principle here, viz., everything with which Jesus Christ identifies Himself becomes holy, no matter how small and disreputable it may be in the sight of men. Palestine is called the Holy Land just because the feet of the Holy One trod upon it. A sinner out of whom no good thing could ever come may become holy in the self-same way by coming into contact with Jesus. If Nazareth lost its stain of sin through the Name of Jesus, so may we.

"Take the Name of Jesus with you,

Child of sorrow and of woe;

It will joy and comfort give you,

Take it then where'er you go."

Anywhere and everywhere His Name is a saving Name. Let it be then as the "new cruse" of salt to sweeten every bitter spring in our lives (2 Kings 2:20-21). The picture before us is beautiful and impressive.

I. The Preacher. "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee" (Luke 4:14). Jesus had gone out of Galilee, as others had gone, to the baptism of John, but the coming of the Holy Spirit upon Him and the assault of the devil in the wilderness had wrought a marvellous change upon His public character. "There went out a fame of Him through all the region." He was an obscure man till He was baptised with the Holy Ghost. So was Peter and the rest of the apostles. The man or woman who returns to his or her work in the power of the Spirit will not be without manifest tokens of the blessing of God.

II. The Place. "He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up" (Luke 4:16). He began at home. "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee" (Mark 5:19). The first example of piety is to be shown at home (1 Timothy 5:4). The home field is often the most barren. "Neither did His brethren believe in Him." Nevertheless His faithful testimony led many to say, "Whence hath this Man this wisdom and these mighty works?" (Matthew 13:54). Wisdom and mighty works characterise all those who are filled with the Spirit.

III. The Text. "And when He had opened the book (roll) He found the place," the place where the lesson was for that day (Luke 4:17). The place was Isaiah 61:1. The text He found was the prophetic counterpart of His own experience. As preachers we may be assured of this, that it is not the will of God that we should preach from texts that have not had their fulfilment in our own experience. "We speak that we do know" was the testimony of Jesus (John 3:11). He had just received the anointing of the Spirit, now He declares it to them.

IV. The Sermon. He began with the application, saying, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21). The Scripture here referred to is a fountain of living waters (Luke 4:18). Streams of blessing from the Anointed One to the poor, the broken-hearted, the captives, the blind, and the bruised. It was a sermon suited for the needs of all. This is the Gospel of Christ, but it was also heart-searching and convincing. His reference to the Sidonian widow and the Syrian leper (Luke 4:25-27) magnified the grace of God, while it cut at the roots of their pharisaical pride. He did not plead for their favour or forbearance, but boldly declared that "No prophet is accepted in his own country." The man who has a message from God does not preach to please the people. One of the best things that could happen many Gospel hearers is that they should be tremendously

offended.

V. The Results. "That there will be definite results of some kind is a moral certainty when the preacher is anointed with the Holy Spirit." They-

1. Wondered. "They wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth" (Luke 4:22). Men are still more inclined to wonder at gracious words than mere philosophical words. The tongue of the divinely learned knows how to speak a word in season to him that is weary (Isaiah 50:4). The wisdom that cometh from above is always practical. Those filled with the Holy Ghost have grace poured into their lips (Psalms 45:2). Gracious words are seldom out of season.

2. Were Filled with Wrath (Luke 4:28). Their wonder was turned into hate when the searchlight of truth was turned in upon their own hearts. These synagogue members, like many modern Gospel hearers, were quite pleased to hear beautiful words of grace as long as their own personal sins were allowed to remain hidden and untouched. Christ is the Truth as well as the Way.

3. Cast Him Out (Luke 4:29). Those who have bad eyes are inclined to blame the sun. There is not much sometimes between man's admiration and disgust. Those who sacrifice the truth of God for the sake of their own proud and selfish ends show that they are animated by the grossest form of tyranny. Oh, the riches of His grace! He whom they cast out has said, "Them that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out."

4. Failed to Hinder Him. "But He passing through the midst of them went His way" (Luke 4:30). Oh, the peerless dignity of Christ the Truth! He went His way, not hindered by the wrath of man any more than the clouds of the sky could impede the progress of the sun in the heavens. Sin-blinded man may thrust the Christ of God out of his life, but His eternal purpose will still go on its way. Be not deceived, God is not mocked. A SCENE IN A SYNAGOGUE.

Luke 4:33-37.

"O ignorant poor man! what dost thou bear

Lock'd up within the casket of thy breast?

What jewels and what riches hast thou there?

What heavenly treasure in so weak a chest?

Think of her worth, and think that God did mean

This worthy mind should worthy things embrace;

Blot not her beauties with thy thoughts unclean,

Nor her dishonour with thy passion base."

-Sir John Davies.

They were not all saints who attended the synagogue; unclean devils are regular hearers. But when Jesus Christ speaks with power (Luke 4:32) the unclean spirits are sure to "cry out." There is never much real work done for God without the roaring of the adversary. The lion roars when robbed of its whelps. In examining this interesting scene we shall look at-

I. The Enemies of Jesus. There was, first,"the spirit of the unclean devil;" and, second, the man who was possessed of this spirit (Luke 4:33). This "unclean spirit" uses the will and the mouth of the man for his devilish purposes, and speaks of the man as one with himself. "Let us alone. What have we to do with Thee?" Those at enmity with the work and purposes of Jesus Christ are in league with the devil, and unless there is a divorce of will and interest the doom of the devil will be theirs. Listen to their language. They-

1. Acknowledge His True Character. "I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God" (Luke 4:34). The confession of this fallen and unclean spirit might put to shame all Unitarian infidels who deny the divinity of Christ. This demon from the pit, in acknowledging Him as "Jesus of Nazareth" and the "Holy One of God," made confession both of His humanity and divinity. Christ as the Son of God was given (John 3:16), but as the Son of humanity He was born (Isaiah 9:6).

2. Question His Mission. "Art Thou come to destroy us?" (Luke 4:34). Does this unclean devil judge Jesus Christ to be like himself, "coming only to steal and to kill?" How far the purposes of God's grace are above the thoughts of the unclean and the sinful! Although He had come to destroy us, devil-polluted ones, who could have charged Him with injustice? But, thank God, "He came to seek and to save" (Luke 19:10). Ponder this demon-possessed one's question in the light of Isaiah 53 and the glory of His Cross." "Sin is of the devil."

3. Shun His Presence. "What have we to do with Thee?" (Luke 4:34). There is certainly nothing in common between the "Holy One of God" and an "unclean devil." "What communion hath light with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:15). Satan and all who are his servants will for ever hate the light because it reproves their deeds (John 3:21). This question, "What have we to do with Thee?" might be profitably turned into "What hast Thou to do with us?" "He loved us, and gave Himself for us!" Better have to do with Him now in mercy than delay till we have to do with Him in judgment.

4. Seek Rest in their Sins. "Let us alone" (Luke 4:34). This is still the cry of those wedded to the devil and uncleanness. All the Heaven such desire is just to be allowed to lie peaceably on the bed of their carnal pleasures, and when the Gospel of salvation comes knocking at their door they cry, "Trouble me not, for I am in bed." If Jesus had come to give men peace in their sins the godless world would have gladly received Him.

II. The Word of Jesus. The Word of God is quick and powerful. It is-

1. A Convicting Word. "Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace" (Luke 4:35). The first work of Jesus Christ is to silence the sinner. Such foul mouths must be stopped (Romans 3:19). In the presence of this heart-searching One every clamorous devil must be speechless. The Word of Christ turns self-justification into self-condemnation. To see sinfulness in the light of His holiness is enough to shut us up to the cry of the leper, "Unclean! unclean!"

2. A Converting Word. Jesus said to the unclean spirit, "Come out of him." This is the Gospel of Christ, which is the power of God unto Salvation. There is no spirit too evil for the overcoming power of Jesus, no soul too unclean for His cleansing blood (1 John 1:7). No thought, however proud or polluted, that He cannot cast out. This Almighty Deliverer can make prisoners of every enemy that wars against the highest interests of the soul (2 Corinthians 10:5).

III. The Work of the Devil. "The devil threw him in the midst" (Luke 4:35). This helpless demon-possessed man got his last throw of the devil in the very presence of the Saviour. The prince of darkness will never let his subjects go without a desperate effort to render them useless by throwing them down. The hour and power of Satan is sure to be manifested when the Great Deliverer is at hand; even at the very feet of Jesus the devil will dare to throw a man down, but this proves his last throw. This bull of Bashan only threw the man at the feet of the Saviour.

IV. The Victory of Jesus. Jesus said, "Come out of him," and he came out of him, and hurt him not (Luke 4:35). If unclean spirits are not exorcised by the word of Jesus Christ, then for man Paradise is lost. Who but He can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? The unclean spirit came out, so that man's soul was rescued as a prey from the destroying power of the mighty. Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. When an unclean devil hears the word of Christ he must obey because he is under law. Shall we be less obedient because we are under grace? God forbid!

V. The Astonished Onlookers. "They were all amazed, saying, What a word is this" (Luke 4:36). It is possible to be amazed at the "authority and power" of Christ, and yet not be amended. Many are confounded at the manifest power of the Gospel of God who are not converted. Better is it to be a devil-driven soul at the feet of Jesus than a mere amazed self-righteous onlooker. To gape and wonder at the overcoming power of the grace of God in others who were worse than ourselves is no token of grace. There are many who devoutly talk about churches, ministers, and religious affairs who are in heart far from the Kingdom of God. "Marvel not that 1 say unto thee, Ye must be born again."

LAUNCH OUT INTO THE DEEP.

Luke 5:1-10.

"Thy love, O Christ, is boundless,

More boundless than the sky;

To deepest plummet soundless,

For Thou for me didst die.

Thy love is 'grace abounding,

With fulness like the sea;

Still, still it is forth-sounding.

Glad tidings unto me."

"That ye may know what is the breadth and depth of the love of Christ" (Ephesians 3:18). "Launch out into the deep."

Blessed light, to see the people pressing to hear the Word of God. Oh, that to-day we could witness this soul thirst for the message of life! Blessed anxiety that presses the people to Jesus. He knows how to speak a word to the weary. Grace and truth flow from His lips. Notice here-

I. Devoted Possession. "He entered into Simon's ship, and taught the people out of it" (Luke 5:3). His ship was ready for the Master's use. Oh, what an honour to be the means of helping Jesus to reach the pressing crowd! He did this through Simon's ship. How is this same Jesus to reach and teach the heathen millions? Much in the same way, through your possessions. But how few are willing to lend their all to the Lord. Simon's loan was abundantly rewarded, even inthis life, by the marvellous draught of fishes. Let us not talk boastingly nor think presumptuously about our possessions; if we are withholding them from the cause of Christ we are robbing God and our own soul, and what shall it profit? etc.

II. A Gracious Commission. "Launch out, and let down" (Luke 5:4). When Christ takes possession He also gives commission. If you have been sitting fretting over your own weakness, "Launch out into the deep" of divine strength. If you are despairing over your own unworthiness, launch out into the deep of God's infinite love (Ephesians 3:18-19), and let down the net of restful trust. If you are floundering in the shallows of your own feelings, launch out into the deep of God's faithfulness. The great fishes are in the deep, and those who launch out may hope to find them. God's footsteps are in the deep, and there His wonders are seen (Psalms 107:24). Are you a preacher? Then, like Paul, you will be all the better of being a "night and a day in the deep" before coming forth to the people. Come with a heart filled with the treasures of the deep, the deep things of God (1 Corinthians 2:10).

III. A Humbling Confession. "We have toiled all night, and taken nothing" (Luke 5:5). It is always very trying after honestly and earnestly toiling and struggling all the night to catch men to find you have taken nothing But this is not all loss, for even then we are in a better condition for giving God the glory when He gives the blessing. Are you ashamed to confess your failure in the past? Would you fain hide the fact that your labour has been fruitless? Surely not! Like Simon, confess it to Jesus, for this is necessary before the launching out on the tack of faith. Tell Him all that is in thine heart, keep nothing back. He has a remedy for your weakness and failure. He can turn your mourning into dancing (Psalms 30:11).

IV. A God-honouring Resolution. "Nevertheless at Thy word I will" (Luke 5:5). The way to victory is the pathway of faith. Simon's feelings said, "It's no use; I've toiled all night, the most likely season, and taken nothing;" but Simon's faith says, "Nevertheless." This was not a point to be reasoned, but simply believed. Christian toiler, let not the past hinder the present. Like Simon, make a fresh start on the authority of Jesus. Peter knows now where to find "launch out." He knows now how to find "At Thy word." Those who go out at His word will have good cause to praise Him. Unbeliever, your case is sad, toiling and struggling in the darkness of night, thinking by your own efforts to gain God's blessing and taking nothing. Here is the more excellent way, "At Thy word I will."

V. An Amazing Satisfaction. "They inclosed a great multitude" (Luke 5:6). This time they are more successful "out of season" than they were before "in season." The word of Christ believed made all the difference. They had the habit of fishing at night; but sometimes our old forms have to be broken through before we can see the power of Jesus manifested. If Simon had contended for the form he would have lost the haul. Ah, yes, soul-satisfying fulness through the power of Christ can only be enjoyed in the way of doing His will in His presence. Let not habits, forms, or customs, however good, stand in the way of doing what now plainly appears to be the will of your Lord. Follow Him, and He will satisfy the longing soul (Psalms 107:9).

VI. A Brotherly Co-operation. "They beckoned unto their partners, and they came and filled both ships" (Luke 5:7). Had they not invited their brothers to co-operate, how much would have been lost? Alas, how much is still being lost in Christian work for lack of union! What hinders it? Pride and selfishness. The blessing came to Simon's boat, through faith in Christ, but He did not mean it all to remain there. Others were needing as well as he, so he beckoned his brethren to come and help. Notice, it is the helpers that share the results. If pastors do not come to help in the times of blessings they need not wonder although they should not gather much of the fruit. When will churches, like these boats, come together, and gather the fruits of the promise of Christ?

VII. An Unfeigned Humiliation. "I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8). This is always the effect where His greatness and goodness are realised. The goodness of God leads to repentance. God forbid that success should ever lead to pride and self-sufficiency. And yet sometimes it does on the part of Christian workers. Has the goodness of God, as seen on the Cross, ever led you to cry "I am a sinful man?" If so, you need not say, like Simon, "Depart from me," when He says "Come unto Me." If you are a sinful man, Jesus is the sinful sinner's Saviour. In bidding Him depart you know not what ye do.

VIII. A Complete Consecration. "They forsook all, and followed Him" (Luke 5:11). You would have thought that they had as much here as would have satisfied them for a long while, but, no, they "forsook all." We are not to live on our experience, no matter how wonderfully gracious it may be. We must forget the things that are behind, and press on to follow and to know. We cannot feed on the souls we win for Jesus, however precious or numerous. We must learn to follow Jesus for our joy and strength; our life is in Him only. Friend, where art thou? Are you still sitting by your boat gloating over your good works and past accomplishments, loving these more than Christ; or are you sitting mending the meshes of broken resolutions after much fruitless effort? In either case, hear the Master's call, and arise and follow Jesus (Php_3:7-8). THE LEPER CLEANSED.

Luke 5:12-15.

"What though my harp and vial be

Both hung upon the willow tree?

What though my bed be now my grave,

And for my house I darkness have?

What though my healthful days are fled,

And I lie numbered with the dead?

Yet I have hope by Thy great power,

To spring-though now a withered flower."

-Herrick.

"I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth on Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." This is Heaven's jubilee note of hope for the inmates of this great, needy world. Man's withered hopes are resurrected at His touch, and the leprous breath of the unclean made sweet by

His grace. He can turn the dolorous cry "Unclean" into joyful songs of praise. He is as merciful and mighty on the lonely sea (Luke 5:8) as in the crowded city (Luke 5:12). Wherever the presence of Jesus Christ is there is "the power of God." Observe his-

I. Miserable Condition. "A man full of leprosy" (Luke 5:12). His terrible disease had reached its final stage; he was now full of leprosy. Like sin, this loathsome malady may work slowly, but its course is irresistible and deadly. It poisons the blood, and so the whole physical being becomes polluted. Sin affects the heart, out of which are the issues of life In the early ages the Church of Rome regarded lepers as dead, and had "the rites" said over them. There is a law in France that such shall be disinherited. A man living in sin is a man dead to God, and disinherited of Heaven's love and peace.

II. Inspiring Revelation. "Who seeing Jesus" (Luke 5:12). Seeing Jesus will never fail to awaken hope in the darkened, sin-crushed heart. He had doubtless heard of Christ's "mighty works" without ever uttering a prayer; but now those dull, despairing eyes suddenly brighten with a new light as they gaze upon the living Person of the merciful Wonder-worker. He believed the report, and faith has been turned into sight. What a contrast is here between the Man "full of compassion" and the man "full of leprosy;" between a seeking Saviour and a seeking sinner!

III. Humble Position. "He fell on his face" (Luke 5:12). Seeing the face of God always makes us hide our own. It is the outward expression of a deep inward conviction. It was so with Isaiah (chap. 6), with Job (chap. Job 42:5-6), with Peter (Luke 5:8), and with John (Revelation 1:17). They are only lip-professing Pharisees, who stand afar off. We have never seen ourselves as in His sight if we have not been overwhelmed in the dust through shame.

IV. Earnest Petition. "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean" (Luke 5:12). The prayer of this poor outcast was more to the point than that of Peter the disciple (see Luke 5:8). This prayer reveals-

1. A Knowledge of the Character of Christ. Out of this knowledge there springs up an intelligent faith in His power. "If Thou wilt Thou canst." "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" (Genesis 18:14). To doubt His divinity and almightiness is to knock at a locked door. He that cometh to God must believe that He is a rewarder of them who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6) This petition brings out also-

2. The One Burning Desire of the Leper. "To be made clean." He frankly confesses his need, and pleads for personal cleansing. It was the work of the High Priest of old to make atonement, that the people might be clean from all their sins before the Lord (Leviticus 16:30). If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us.

V. Instant and Perfect Salvation. "He put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him" (Luke 5:13). Every miracle is linked on to the "I will" of Jesus Christ. Before the critics can eliminate the miraculous from the Bible they must turn out the "I wills" of the Son of God. These few words of our Lord are weighted with precious meaning. There was the-

1. Atoning Touch. "He touched him." The holiness of God comes into contact with man in all his defilement. But the Holy One, like the light which shineth in darkness, is not in any way defiled by

the touch. He who bore our sins was no sinner. As never man spake like this Man, so never man touched like this Man. All the resources of the Godhead are in the touch of Christ.

2. Assuring Word. "I will: be thou clean." With His healing touch comes His word of assurance. We are saved by His blood, and assured by His word. His touch of love is accompanied with His word of power. He speaks, and it is done.

3. Complete Deliverance. "Immediately the leprosy departed from him." Where the leprosy went would not trouble him. The joy of salvation was now his. Our sins are said to be cast behind His back and buried in the depths of the sea. Where God's back is, or how deep the sea is, need not concern us, since they have departed from us through the almighty grace of God.

VI. Special Commission. "Go and show thyself unto the priest, and offer" (Luke 5:14). In showing himself unto the priest, and offering according as Moses commanded, he was bearing "a testimony unto them" that Jesus Christ came not to set aside the law, but to fulfil it. The work of Christ can stand the minutest inspection, not only of the law and the prophets, but also of the world and the devil. Go, show thyself, if so be that thyself hath experienced His perfect cleansing from the power of sin. Every saved soul should be a testimony unto Him.

STRANGE THINGS.

Luke 5:17-26.

"The Lord lacketh nothing; yet maketh-

Maketh power in weakness;

So that this fallen race of ours basketh-

Basketh in His meekness."

"We have seen strange things to-day," was the language of some of those who were eye-witnesses to the healing and forgiving of this poor palsied sinner. Christianity will always be a "strange thing" to a gaping, godless world. The saving, healing power of Christ will never cease to awaken amazement in the minds of men. Christ Himself is to many the most perplexing wonder of all. The mystery of the divine working in the soul of man is the mystery of the incarnation. It is as easy for Christ to create a world as to forgive a sinner. Each is equally strange. But what were some of the "strange things" that they saw that day?

I. An Unlettered Man Teaching. Those who heard Him in the synagogue said, "Whence hath this Man this wisdom?" (Matthew 13:54). While He taught in the Temple the Jews marvelled, saying, "How knoweth this Man letters, having never learned?" (John 7:15). Here we have Him teaching in the presence of "doctors of the law." Christ, who is the wisdom of God, said of Himself, "I am from above, ye are from beneath." A man may be "'lettered" and "scholarly," and yet blind to the wisdom that comes from above through the eyesalve of the Holy Ghost (Revelation 3:18). To be taught of God is the heritage of every soul that has been born from above.

II. A Sick Man let Down through a Roof (Luke 5:19). Those who really believe in Jesus will some way or other bring their burdens to His feet, as those four men brought the helpless paralytic. Whatever burdens us should lead to the breaking up of everything that stands between us and

Jesus. Such roof breaking is sure to appear as needless waste to those who stand unconcerned, with no burden of grief, no pressing request on behalf of a wasted life. If we have no burden of our own, let the need of others bring us into His presence.

III. A Man Forgiving Sins. "He said unto him, Thy sins are forgiven thee" (Luke 5:20). What? A Man forgiving sins! "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" This is a strange thing. Yes, it is. Had not Jehovah said, "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions, and will not remember thy sins?" (Isaiah 43:25). Who is this that forgiveth sins also? Let those who deny His divinity answer. The Man Christ Jesus forgiving sins is the crowning act of the matchless grace of God, and will be one of those "strange things" at which we shall marvel through all eternity.

IV. A Man Receiving Forgiveness Through Faith. "When He saw their faith He said" (Luke 5:20). The faith of the four men who carried, as well as the faith of the anxious man lying sick on the couch. To the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees a man receiving the forgiveness of all his sins through believing in Jesus was indeed a startling sight. By the works of the law shall no man be justified in the sight of God (Romans 3:28). It is of faith that it might be by grace. He saw their faith. The eyes of Jesus are always quick to discern the trust of the heart, and His hand is equally quick to help.

V. A Man who could Read their Thoughts. "Jesus perceived their thoughts" (Luke 5:22). While they were reasoning in their hearts the Lord was reading their thoughts. "All things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Hebrews 4:13). Thus saith the Lord, "I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them" (Ezekiel 11:5). In the workshop of men's minds there are many weapons forged secretly against the people and purposes of God, but they shall not prosper, for our Lord and Master perceives their thoughts. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked."

VI. A Man Perfectly Healed at Once. "And immediately he rose up before them, and departed to his own house glorifying God" (Luke 5:25). This was another "strange thing" seen that day. This is not after the fashion of men, but it is very God-like. His work is perfect. No man will ever be able to add a finishing touch to the saving work of Christ. The work of healing and forgiving was done suddenly and completely. It was such a blessed work wrought on him that he could rise up and go to his own house glorifying God. That man is well saved who can glorify God in his own house. Man's chief end is to glorify God, but until he is healed and forgiven through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ the chief end is lost.

VII. Scribes and Pharisees Filled with Fear. "They were all amazed, and filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to-day" (Luke 5:26). When the worldly-wise and those stuffed full of religious pride confess their amazement and fear at the sayings and doings of Jesus Christ it is in itself a "strange thing." Why should the exhibition of sovereign mercy fill religious men with fear? What has worldly-wiseman to say to this? Self-satisfied souls can never be the recipients of the saving grace of God. They that be whole need not a physician. " I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." It is possible to see these "strange things" performed on others, and to be for a time both amazed and fearful, yet never profit personally by the healing power of the Redeemer (Psalms 103:1-5). "He that believeth not shall not see life."

BLESSINGS AND WOES.

Luke 6:20-26.

"Methinks we do as fretful children do,

Leaning their faces on the window pane

To sigh the glass dim with their own breath's stain,

And shut the sky and landscape from their view;

And thus, alas! since God the maker drew

A mystic separation 'twixt those twain,

The life beyond us, and our souls in pain"-Browning

These words of our Lord, though in substance the same as those spoken by Him on the mount, were not delivered on the mount, but "on the plain" (Luke 6:17). They were spoken with "His eyes on His disciples" (Luke 6:20), as if the teaching was specially meant for them first of all, and through them by their lives and teaching to the generations that were to follow. The blessings and the woes are equal in number (four), as if every blessing had its corresponding woe. Every privilege neglected brings its woe of remorse. There is no via media between blessing and woe. All who are not in this marvellous light are in darkness.

I. Here are Four Conditions of Blessedness.

1. Poverty. "Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God" (Luke 6:20). Of course poverty in spirit must be meant (Matthew 5:3), for with respect to material things a man may be as poor as Lazarus and yet be as proud as the devil When a man is really sensible of his personal destitution before God he has entered into a blessed state, "for to this man, saith the Lord, will I look, that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My Word" (Isaiah 66:2). Such poor ones in this world God hath chosen rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom (Isaiah 2:5)

2. Hunger. "Blessed are ye that hunger now, for ye shall be filled" (Luke 6:21). This is the hunger that cannot be appeased with the things of earth and time. It is not goods, but goodness, that alone can fill the hungry soul (Psalms 107:9). "He filleth the hungry with good things" (Luke 1:53). Spirit hunger is the cry of real need, the silent language of a soul in distress; a feeling never felt by those who are dead in trespasses and sin.

3. Sorrow. "Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh" (Luke 6:21). The blessedness of being able to weep in the presence of Christ is utterly unknown to the world of frivolity and fashion. Such sorrow is not the result of disappointment through the blasting of selfish hopes or the upsetting of one's own personal interests. It is the sorrow of Christ begotten in the heart through sympathy and love. "Unto them that mourn in Zion He shall appoint beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning" (Isaiah 61:3). The sorrow of crucifixion shall be turned into the joy of resurrection (John 16:20). As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth in Christ (2 Corinthians 1:4-7; Revelation 21:4).

4. Persecution. "Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, separate you, reproach you, cast you out for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice, for your reward is great in Heaven" (Luke 6:22).

Persecution is part of the promised heritage of the Christian (Mark 10:29-30). It is blessed, because it lifts the sufferer into closer fellowship with the Saviour (John 17:14). The early disciples rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name (Acts 5:41).

II. Here are Four Conditions of Woefulness.

1. A Woe for the Rich. "Woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation" (Luke 6:24). There is no sin in having abundance of riches any more than in having abundance of health, but if not used for the glory of God, verily ye have your reward. The woe of laying up treasure for ourselves is poverty towards God (Luke 12:21). In the rush of life the pre-eminent object of many is to be rich in the sight of men, while they are utterly indifferent and insensible to their abject poverty in the sight of God. Like the inhabitants of Bashan, "God spake unto them in their prosperity; but they said, I will not hear" (Jeremiah 22:21). Here is a Heaven-sent epitaph for their tombstones: "Thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, now thou art tormented" (Luke 16:25).

2. A Woe for the Full. "Woe unto you that are full, for ye shall hunger" (Luke 6:25). A life stuffed full of worldly pleasures and possessions, but not satisfied. They are like drunken men craving for drink. The iniquity of Sodom was pride and fulness (Ezekiel 16:49). A heart filled with the love and enjoyment of earthly things has done its very best to shut out God, as every corner of the being has been already crammed with Christless interests. "Have you any room for Jesus?" The woe of graceless fulness is the gnawing of eternal hunger.

3. A Woe for the Merry. "Woe unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep" (Luke 6:25). This now implies the time of our Christ rejection. The Lord fills the mouths of His people with laughter when He turns their captivity. When the prodigal came home they "began to be merry," but the mirth of fools is folly (Ecclesiastes 7:6). The mirth of the ungodly shall die away into everlasting mourning. Frivolous worldly minds hunt after the latest joke, and when it is found they immediately gape after the next. Their mirth is like the crackling of thorns beneath a pot, there is more noise than heat. The woe of Christless mirth is the tears of eternal shame.

4. A Woe for the Applauded. "Woe unto you when all men speak well of you" (Luke 6:26). The maxim, Vox populi, vox Dei, is another failure here. The teaching of Scripture is tremendously emphatic on this point, and so contradictory to the wisdom of this world. "The friendship of this world is enmity with God." "Whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). The world loves its own; if it loves you, then you are of the world. If ye have been chosen out of the world the world will hate you (John 15:19). It is our highest wisdom to choose, like Mary, that good part that shall not be taken from us. The woe of the applauded, worldling is everlasting contempt. BE MERCIFUL AS YOUR FATHER.

Luke 6:27-38.

"Constant Faith and holy Hope shall die,

One lost in certainty and one in joy,

Whilst thou, more happy power, fair Charity,

Triumphant sister, greatest of all the three.

Thy office and thy nature still the same,

Lasting thy lamp and unconsumed thy flame

Shall stand before the host of Heaven confessed

For ever blessing and for ever blessed."

-Matt. Prior.

True charity is the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. Love is of God. God is love. He that loveth not knoweth not God. These words of our Lord, "Love your enemies," "Bless them that curse you," come with greater force as they do after the "blessings" and the "woes" that go before. This Great Teacher come from God rightly divides the Word of Truth. Let us look at-

I. The Precepts. These Heaven-made laws laid down here for us by Jesus Christ axe mirrors that reflect the merciful character of our Father in Heaven, and their purpose is to help us into His likeness. "Be ye therefore merciful as your Father also is merciful." These precepts touch us in a fourfold manner.

1. Concerning Loving. "Love your enemies" (Luke 6:27). Of course this does not imply that we should not love our friends, but that our love should be God-like, who, while we were yet sinners, gave His Son to save us (John 3:16). If thine enemy hunger give him bread to eat, for this thy Father did for thee in the time of thine enmity, and so heaped such coals of fire upon thy head as melted thy heart (Proverbs 25:21-22).

2. Concerning Blessing. "Bless them that curse you" (Luke 6:28). You will bless the reviler by reviling not again. This is after the divine example (1 Peter 2:23). The apostle Paul obeyed this command to the letter (1 Corinthians 4:12). "Not rendering evil for evil, but contrariwise blessing" (1 Peter 3:9), will evidence that we are possessed by the Spirit of the Father.

3. Concerning Prayer. "Pray for them that despite-fully use you." To be able to pray for our enemies in the Spirit of Christ is a notable triumph for the grace of God. Christ gained such a victory when He prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). This grace abounded also in Stephen (Acts 7:60). This love springs from the mercifulness of the Father.

4. Concerning Giving. "Give to every man that asketh of thee" (Luke 6:30). This does not teach that we are to give all that every man may ask of us, but to every petitioner we are to give. This is after the mercifulness of the Father. A drunkard may ask you for a sixpence, but instead of that you give him a word of warning. If giving to the poor is not an evidence of the love of God dwelling in us, withholding is a certain proof that it does not (1 John 3:17).

II. The Examples. The mercifulness of our Father in Heaven is here contrasted with the natural kindness of ungodly men. The world loves its own. This comes before us in a threefold negative aspect. Our mercifulness is not to be like the sinner's, but like the Father's. The one is like a muddy pool, the other like a river clear as crystal.

1. Let not your love be like the love of sinners. "If ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them" (Luke 6:32). The love of the unregenerate heart only goes out to those who love in return. The love of God embraces even those who hate Him without

a cause. "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful."

2. Let not your works be like the works of sinners. "If ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same" (Luke 6:33). The motives of the Christian worker must be infinitely higher than those who are mere time-servers. The ungodly will show kindness to those who are kind to them. But our Father is kind even to the unthankful. "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful."

3. Let not your grace be like the grace of sinners. "If ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners to receive as much again" (Luke 6:34). Unbelievers will show grace and lend to their sceptical brethren in the hope of receiving as much again. But our Father in Heaven gives to the evil and the unjust, "hoping for nothing again" (Matthew 5:45). " Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." Your righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, because it is not ye that act, but the Spirit of the Father which is in you (Matthew 10:20).

III. The Promises. If the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, so that we can love our enemies and do good to them, hoping for nothing from them, then your Father which seeth in secret will reward you openly.

1. Your Reward shall be Great (Luke 6:35). It will be great in this life in that the divine nature will be manifestly ruling in our being. It will be great in the life which is to come, because that in the midst of a wicked and perverse generation you have glorified your Father in Heaven by letting your light shine before men.

2. Ye Shall be the Children of the Highest (Luke 6:35). The God who ruleth over all shall claim you as His own children, and as the sons of the Highest your life shall be lifted up in Him who is "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (Ephesians 1:21-23). "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." THE TREE AND ITS FRUIT.

Luke 6:41-45.

"O gracious Lord, when Thou didst give

By Thy divine prerogative,

Warning that men bear fruit for Thee,

I bless Thee it was thro' a tree."-Grosart. This great Teacher come from God uses the simplest and most common illustrations in pressing upon the hearts of men the profoundest truths of revelation. In these verses He speaks of the "mote," the "beam," the "good tree and the bad tree," "thorns," the "bramble bush," "figs and grapes." All nature, like the burning bush, is ablaze with flaming thoughts of the divine. But, like Moses, we have to turn aside to see this great sight, and for this the beam had better first be taken out of our own eye. Christ here deals with the state of the eye (uncharitableness), and the condition of the heart (unfruitfulness). The corrupt heart has much to do with the marred eye. The clean in heart have always a merciful eye, for the pure in heart see God. When the beam of prejudice or envy is in our own eye then the motes of weakness and failure are easily seen in the eyes of others. Let us see that there is no beam marring our own

spiritual vision while we talk of the motes which hinder the eyesight of others. The only remedy for a beam or a mote in the eye is to pull it out. It is a great mercy and a very blessed ministry to be able to take a mote out of a brother's eye, but it must needs be done very gently, for the eye is a most tender and sensitive member. It takes the tenderness of Christ to deal with mote hindrances in the doctrine and life of a brother. This is no work for hypocrites. In this parable of the good and evil tree there is brought before us- I. Two Classes of Character.

1. The Good Tree or the Good Man. A good tree is one which serves the purposes for which it was made. It is a reflection of the goodness of God, and constrains to thankfulness and praise. So with a good man, he is the image of God whose name is Good. The goodness of a tree is the gift of God through nature; the goodness of a man is the gift of God through grace. "There is none good but God." The good man is in perfect harmony with the mind and will of God. The chief end for which he was made is fully achieved through His abounding grace.

2. The Corrupt Tree or the Evil Man. A rotten or bitter tree is the likeness to which the Holy One compares the evil man. The evil does not lie so much in appearance as in character. A tree whose root is bitter or whose heart is rotten and corrupt may still have a beautiful and attractive exterior. This rottenness of heart is the result of a hidden disease. The Lord looks upon the heart. The evil man in the sight of God is he whose heart is still in the gall of bitterness. A heart not right with Him who is both Creator and Redeemer. He is one in whose heart the corrupting power of sin has unbridled sway like rottenness in the bones. He may be learned, courteous, fashionable, and even religious, but if the heart is not right he is an evil man. Jesus Christ says nothing about that large class of people who are neither good nor bad, but just "middling." In these latter days we are called upon to try, not only the professions, but the spirits whether they be of God (1 John 4:1).

II. Two Classes of Fruit.

1. The Good Fruit or Good Treasure out of the Heart. Fruit is the visible outcome of the inward character. This is a universal and unalterable law. "The good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." The acts of a good or godly man come out of his heart, and so partake of his real character; they are called "good treasure," because they are precious and go to enrich others. "Poor, yet making many rich." If the heart is not sound and filled with the goodness of God good treasure will never come out of it. The fruit of the Spirit in us-as the unpolluted sap is in the good tree- is love, joy, peace, etc. (Galatians 5:22). The wisdom that is from above is pure, full of mercy, and good fruits (James 3:17). The good man bringeth forth the good treasures of his heart just as naturally as the tree brings forth fruit. There is no conscious effort, no thought of self-display, just that sweet constraining of love that makes giving a delightful necessity. We have this treasure in this earthen vessel because God hath shined in our hearts and given us the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6-7).

2. The Corrupt Fruit or the Evil Treasure of the Heart. The evil man bringeth forth the evil treasure out of his heart just in the same way that a rotten and polluted tree brings forth bad fruit. The poisoned fountain of the carnal mind will never send forth the refreshing waters of spiritual thought. It seems strangely paradoxical to speak of the evil treasure of an evil man. He heaps up wrath against the day of wrath, while imagining that he is the heir of precious things. The character of the fruit reveals the condition of the heart of a tree. "Out of the heart are the issues of life." The evil is not only in the eyes or the lips, but deep down in the core of the being. "As a man thinketh in his

heart, so is he." "Son, give Me thine heart."

DIGGING DEEP.

Luke 6:46-49.

"Methinks it Is good to be here,

If thou wilt let us build; but for whom?

Nor Elias nor Moses appear,

But the shadows of eve that encompass the gloom,

The abode of the dead and the place of the tomb,

Shall we build to ambition? Ah, no!"-Knowles.

There are three words here that characterise a wise man in the eyes of Jesus Christ. "Whosoever cometh to Me, and heareth My sayings, and doeth them" (Luke 6:47). To come to Him as a Saviour, to hear Him as a Teacher, and to obey Him as a Master is an evidence that we have been and are being taught of God and made wise in Christ. These two builders are representatives of two great classes or conditions of men-those who live by faith on the Son of God, and those who walk in the light of the sparks of their own kindling.

I. The Wisdom of the Obedient. Our Lord says, "He is like a (wise) man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock" (Luke 6:48). He is like such a man-

1. Because He Believed in the Rock. He had no faith in the sandy earth as a foundation, and because he believed in the rock he would do nothing in the way of building until he found it. Jesus Christ is the Rock. "Apart from Me," He says, "ye can do nothing." Dost thou believe on the Son of God?

2. Because He Spared no Trouble to get at the Rock. "He digged deep." These are most suggestive words. A life that is to be pleasing to God by resisting temptation and finally triumphing over all the assaults of the world, the flesh and the devil must not begin in any superficial fashion Its foundation will be deeply laid. There is much that may lie between the seeker and the Saviour Much pride, prejudice, and false teaching. It is no loss of time for a man to examine himself and to dig deep down through everything until the strong and mighty Christ stands revealed before him. Every builder knows that even dust will hinder the stones from being cemented together Let there be "nothing between."

3. Because He Built his House upon it after He did Find the Rock. He was not satisfied with merely finding a good foundation, he sought the rock for the purpose of building thereupon How many there are who seem perfectly satisfied in that they have found Christ as the Rock of Salvation, as their Atonement for sin, but who are utterly indifferent as to what they build thereon. They rest on the foundation, but they do not build on it They are saved, but their lives do not reveal the structure of faith (1 Cor 3 12). Peter tells us how this building is to be done. Add to faith virtue, etc (2 Peter 1:5-7). We are labourers together with God. Ye are God's building.

4. Because He was not Disappointed with the Results. "The flood arose, the stream beat upon that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded upon a rock." Christianity is no failure. The life that is built on Jesus Christ will be found as stable as the Eternal Throne. "He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." He is able also to keep us from falling The Church or soul that is built upon this Rock "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). "The foundation of God standeth sure" (2 Timothy 2:19).

II. The Foolishness of the Disobedient. "He that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth" (Luke 6:49). The foolishness of this man is seen in that-

1. He Disregarded the Rock. He no doubt believed about the rock, but he imagined that he could get on equally well without it. He is a type of those who have been spoiled through false philosophy and vain deceit (Colossians 2:6-8). "Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes" (Isaiah 5:21). The scribes and Pharisees went on with their building, although they had rejected "the Chief Corner Stone." If we wish to end with Christ we must begin with Him.

2. He Commenced Building too Soon. He began to plant the stones of hope before he had found the rock of safety. He would be saved by his works before he found rest on the Eternal Rock. What a picture of many modern religious builders! They set to the rearing of a strong and beautiful life before they have ever come into contact with the saving strength of Christ the Rock. They begin building when they should be digging, so anxious are they for something pleasing to the eyes of men.

3. He Built Without a Foundation. "He built an house upon the earth." The loose sandy earth beside the rolling river was treacherous ground. He felt the need of a house of refuge for his soul, but he did not realise his absolute need of an infallible rock for his house. We need salvation, but we need an Almighty Christ to save. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:11; Isaiah 28:16).

4. His Hopes were Suddenly Cut Off. "The stream did beat vehemently, and it fell, and the ruin of that house was great." "He that believeth shall not make haste." But this man made haste because he trusted not the rock, and his earnestness only hastened on his ruin. Earnestness in religious life availeth nothing where the foundation of atoning blood is awanting. He did not perish because he was lazy or indifferent to his need of a shelter. He did his very best, but it was His best without the "one thing needful." Your works may be many and beautiful, but if Jesus Christ is not at the foundation of all, "one thing thou lackest," and the lack of this "one thing" renders useless and fruitless every other thing It is too late to build another house when the flood has come (Malachi 4:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:8).

"My hope is built on nothing less

Than Jesus' blood and righteousness,

I dare not trust the sweetest frame,

But wholly lean on Jesus' Name,

On Christ the solid Rock I stand,

All other ground is sinking sand." A SOLDIER'S FAITH.

Luke 7:1-10.

"Dim as the borrow'd beams of moon and stars

To lonely, weary, wandering travellers

Is reason to the soul.

And as those nightly tapers disappear,

When day's bright lord ascends our hemisphere,

So pale grows reason at religion's sight,

So dies, and so dissolves in supernatural light."

-Dryden.

"Faith is a courier swift and sure who will carry us to the absent." All things are possible to him that believeth. In this Roman centurion we see a thoroughly practical man in ethical and spiritual warfare. His matter-of-fact manner in dealing with the Lord Jesus Christ is like a refreshing breeze from the mountains of Lebanon. Is his servant sick? He does not talk about his pity; he sends at once for the physician (Luke 7:3). Does he love the Jewish nation? Then it is not in word but in deed "he builds them a synagogue" (Luke 7:5). He does not speak of his faith, but he shows it in a way that makes the Lord Himself marvel at its simplicity and greatness (Luke 7:8-9). How beautifully simple is his holy logic! "Say the word, and my servant shall be healed, for I also am a man under authority, and I say, Go, and he goeth." Soldier-like he believes that the Great Commander has but to speak and it shall be done. Such a compliment from a Gentile army captain could not pass without special mention. He said, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Lord, increase our faith. This incident is full of Gospel to us. Observe- I. The Servant's Need. He was in a condition of-

1. Utter Helplessness. "He was sick" (Luke 7:2). Although a bondslave, he may have been surrounded with many mercies and favours, but he was unable to help himself. A picture of every one under the spirit-sickening power of sin. The helplessly sick have no thought of earning anything by their works. This hope has died away.

2. Great Misery. "He was grievously tormented" (Matthew 8:6). One may be helpless and yet unconscious of it, but this servant was in sore distress. When a man is deeply convicted of his guilt and utter inability to help himself he will be grievously tormented. But such timely torment is infinitely better than the fatal insensibility that will inevitably result in the eternal scourge of remorse. Fools make a mock of sin.

3. Immediate Danger. "He was ready to die" (Luke 7:2). He was just at the point of dying. His disease had brought him to the very brink of eternity, and all the wisdom and power of man were vain and impotent to deliver. The danger of perishing at any moment should add to the torments of every unsaved one.

II. The Centurion's Petition. He made intercession for his devoted servant "when he heard of Jesus," clearly implying that he had believed what he did hear. Faith cometh by hearing. The manner of those elders who came to Jesus with his request shows the character of the centurion's prayer. It was-

1. Earnest. "He sent unto Jesus, beseeching Him" (Luke 7:3). Real anxiety and heart-felt sympathy are the parents of earnestness. When Peter's wife's mother was sick they kept continually telling Jesus of her (Mark 1:30). His servant was dear unto him, so love warmed up his prayer. All coldness and formality in prayer means heartlessness on the part of the petitioner. Where there is love for those "ready to die" there will be earnest beseeching on their behalf.

2. Humble. "I am not worthy," said he, while the Lord was on the way to his house (Luke 7:6). The elders said, "He is worthy, for he loveth our nation, and hath built us a synagogue." But this good man did not believe that his good works could merit such worthiness as having the Son of God beneath his roof. Nothing we can do will make us worthy of having Christ dwelling in us. This humility of spirit, like the self-unconsciousness of a little child, is the very breath of Heaven, and is refreshing to the soul of Jesus. In the sight of God unworthiness felt is worthiness shown. When Saul was little in his own sight the Lord exalted him (1 Samuel 15:17).

3. Believing. "Say in a word, and my servant shall be healed" (Luke 7:7). Faith has always to do with the Word of God, and is satisfied with that, knowing that He is faithful who promises. His Word cannot fail. How many are serving the Lord in sorrowful bondage, looking for signs and feelings instead of acting confidently on His Word. The Lord has already spoken many words that exactly suit our case, and they are as valid for us now as they were of old. "The words that I speak unto you are spirit and life" (John 6:63). Come believing.

III. The Saviour's Response. It was-

1. Prompt. "Then Jesus went with them" (Luke 7:6). The grace and truth that comes with Jesus Christ never comes too late. The prayer made urgent through intense love will speedily find a response in the love of God. "In due time Christ died for the ungodly;" how will He not also in due time answer the cry of faith?

2. Encouraging. "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel" (Luke 7:9). These faith-honouring words were spoken to the people that followed Him. He marvels at his faith, but He does not rebuke him for expecting too much. He is marvellously pleased with great faith. Without faith it is impossible to please Him. "O ye of little faith, wherefore do ye doubt?" Why have we not the faith of God in His own Son? (Mark 11:22, margin).

3. Effectual. "His servant was healed in the selfsame hour" (Matthew 8:13). He sent His Word, and healed him (Psalms 107:20). "As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee." This "so be it done" is the Amen of Christ to the prayer of faith. Christ Himself is God's Amen to the agonising, trustful cry of humanity (Revelation 3:14). Little faith belittles the Christ of God and narrows up the channel of blessing. Doubting hearts may call Him great, but they trust Him little; they are like the soldiers who cried, "Hail, King!" then put on Him the mock robe. THE WIDOW'S SON.

Luke 7:11-16.

"The valley of dry bones,

Insensate as the stones,

Beneath Thy quickening breath

Rose up a living host.

O midst our sin and death

Come stir, Thou Holy Ghost."

-Grosart.

It is a hope-quickening thought that the Holy Spirit, that "other Comforter," who is the gift of the risen Saviour, possesses the resurrecting power of Jesus Christ. It is the Spirit that quickeneth. The raising of a dead body demonstrates His power to raise a soul dead in sin into a new life. Who has not seen a funeral? Who has not buried a friend? We can easily lift the hat off our head as the mournful cortege passes; but Jesus Christ alone can lift the load of grief from the aching heart of the bereaved. As D. L. Moody used to say, "Jesus spoiled every funeral that He went to." The darkest night of gloom He can turn into midday brightness. We have here- I. An Afflicted Woman. Her circumstances reveal a-

1. Sorrowful Past. "She was a widow" (Luke 7:12). The scene of her husband's death-bed, the heart-rending parting, the mournful funeral, and the dread loneliness that followed; these were bygone sorrows, but perhaps merciful time had somewhat rubbed off their keen edge. It may be that we have had deep convictions of sin in the past when the pleasures of the world partly lost their savour, and by and by that spirit-wound got healed.

2. Bitter Present. "Now her dead son is being carried out." Another season of trial has come; again the thick dark pall of sorrow has been spread over her sky. Once more she is face to face with death. Learn that if the Spirit awakens a second time the past will greatly aggravate the misery of the present.

3. Hopeless Future. This was the funeral of "the only son of his mother" (Luke 7:12). The alone source of her comfort and help has been cut off. She is now without hope, having no promise, utterly cast down, but to such Jesus draws nigh. It is only when we are "without strength" that the power of God is manifested on our behalf. They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. All her future prospects, like the centurion's servant, were "ready to die." But the Resurrection and the Life are at hand.

II. An Almighty Friend. "A friend in need is a friend indeed." The nearer she comes to the grave the nearer does she come to the life-giving Saviour. The darkest hour is the hour before daybreak. The sorrow that endures for a night shall be turned into joy in the morning when Jesus comes. Jesus meets the funeral, life and death come into contact, earthly weakness, sorrow, and disappointment in this woman are met by heavenly strength, consolation, and hope in Jesus Christ. Sin's ruin and God's remedy have come together. What are the results?

1. An Expression of Sympathy. "When the Lord saw her He had compassion on her" (Luke 7:12). As soon as the Lord saw her the love of His heart flowed out to her. Although as yet she is a stranger to His sympathy He is no stranger to her sorrow. Surely the sting of human suffering is

the unconsciousness of divine compassion.

2. An Unusual Word of Comfort. "He said unto her, Weep not" (Luke 7:12). Weep not? Does she think these words spoken in mockery? Does He not know that this is the "only son of a widow?" He knew Himself what He would do. We may dry our tears at His bidding, no matter how bitter they may be. But perhaps it is not your tears so much as your cares that He bids you put away, saying, "Take no thought for your life," etc. (Matthew 6:25), as He Himself knows what He will do.

3. A Timely Arrest. "He touched the bier, and they that bare him stood still" (Luke 7:14). This was the arresting touch of the mercy that saves. A little while longer and he would have been buried out of sight. Who shall arrest that soul which time, like a death-car, is carrying off to the grave of eternal doom if Jesus Christ is not met on the way?

4. A Strange Command. "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise" (Luke 7:14). Who is this that commands the dead to rise up? This is He who speaks as one having authority. As the coming of the light commands the darkness to vanish, so does the coming of His Word imply the power to overcome. Ignorance may cavil where faith is blessed. He is the mighty to save, who speaks and it is done.

5. A Wondrous Change. "He that was dead sat up, and began to speak" (Luke 7:15). An example of one begotten again by the Word of God. What a change His life-giving Word brings! He who was a minute ago cold, helpless, silent, and corrupting is now aglow with the warmth of a new life, and able to testify by speech to His resurrection power. He is now a new creature, old things have passed away, all things have become new.

6. A Happy Reunion. "He delivered him to his mother" (Luke 7:15). Oh, praise Him for His tenderness, He not only saved the son from death, but delivered him (gave him back as His own) to the comforting of the broken-hearted widow! She could truly say, "This my son was dead, and is alive again." A foretaste of Heaven's reunited fellowship and joy was hers. Death has been conquered, and loved ones meet each other again in the presence of the living Son of God.

7. A God-honouring Result. "There came a fear on all, and they glorified God" (Luke 7:16). Those who follow Jesus (Luke 7:11) will always have good cause for glorifying God, for they shall see great and mighty things done by Him. Yes, Jesus will be glorified in every word that He speaks. All His words and works shall praise Him. It will be for ever to the praise of His grace that "He saved others," but because of the might of His love for us "He could not save Himself" (Matthew 27:42). THE TWO DEBTORS.

Luke 7:41-43. This little pithy parable was spoken in Simon's house, who desired Jesus to eat with him, and Jesus did not refuse. He never does. Then Simon sat in judgment on Him in allowing this woman to touch Him.(Luke 7:39). Simon's cold heart was a stranger to the love of Christ. Like many a modern Pharisee his religion was an outward form. But Jesus had a meat to eat that Simon knew not of. The woman's love was more precious to Him than Simon's feast. It is the heart He seeks. Giving can only grieve Him when it is heartless. There are many Simons who show outward respect to religion, but who have no heart sympathy with Jesus Christ in His saving mission.

I. The Certain Creditor (Luke 7:41). The great Creditor, no doubt, represents God Himself. There is something graciously beautiful about this thought, because-

1. A creditor is one who is supposed to have a good reputation. Can God deceive? Is His character not trustworthy? He cannot lie.

2. A creditor is one who has sufficiency for others. Our sufficiency is of God. Human need can be fully met only in Him. "All my salvation and all my desire." The sinner's needs are deep and many, but the fulness of His mercy is enough. "Come unto Me."

3. A creditor is one who looks for some return for his outlay. He gives only on loan. God gives His best, and expects our best; but, alas, we have returned Him evil for good. Evil is poor payment for good; hatred is a miserable return for love. Could you reckon up the good He has given? How much owest thou my Lord?

II. The Different Debtors. "Two" (Luke 7:41). The 500 and the 50. Representing two classes of actual transgressors, the great and the little, and implying all the grades that lie between. The fifty pence debtor is the religious moralist who lacks "one thing." The five hundred pence debtor is the open profligate that lacks everything. But there is the hundred pence debtor, who has been somewhat indifferent to the goodness of God. The two hundred pence debtor who has been wholly indifferent to the gifts of God, and the three hundred pence debtor who questions His love and mocks at His people, and the four hundred pence debtor who denies God and despises His mercy, yet whose outward character is counted respectable. But all with whom the Great Creditor has been dealing in grace are His debtors. "All have sinned," "all have come short." He that offendeth in one point is guilty of all.

III. The Helpless Bankrupts. "They had nothing to pay" (Luke 7:42). The great and the little debtor were both alike in the same insolvent condition. "No difference." Just so with every sinner in God's sight. Our responsibilities to God may be different, but the hopelessness of our condition in His sight is the same. By nature all are alike, "without strength." Where there was no sprinkled blood Jehovah could make no difference (Exodus 12:13). All outside of the ark were treated alike in His judgment. They had nothing. Who but God only can create out of nothing? We can only make nothing out of nothing. Then payment is impossible. There is no other creditor from whom we can borrow. So one of two things must follow-a pardon or a prison.

IV. The Happy Deliverance. "He frankly forgave them both" (Luke 7:42). These few words reveal the heart of God as big with abounding grace. Notice-

1. What He Did. "He forgave." He did not compromise. How suited His way was to their sad circumstances! Forgiveness is God's gracious remedy for the sinner's debt. "I believe in the forgiveness, not the payment of sins" (Luther). Oh, that men would believe God's willingness and readiness to forgive!

2. Whom He Forgave. "Both." Both alike needed it. The self-righteous moralist and the respectable church-going fifty pence debtor need forgiveness just the same as the five hundred pence ne'er-do-weel. One can have no more claim than another, both are debtors.

3. How He Forgave. "Frankly." In a free, liberal, loving manner, not grudgingly, just as the father forgave the prodigal, with open arms and joyful heart. "He delighteth in mercy." He keepeth mercy

for thousands. When God pardons a sinner He does it as Joseph forgave his brethren, with a heart ready to burst with deep, unutterable compassion.

4. When He Forgave. "When they had nothing to pay." It was when the prodigal had spent all that he had that he came and was accepted. When Joseph's brethren had nothing to eat, then they were enriched by him whom they had despised. The young ruler came with a great price in his hand, and he went away sorrowful. The Laodicean Church "had need of nothing" while Christ stood outside. "Blessed are the poor in spirit." "Jesus paid it all." Accept His settlement. Buy without money. "Nothing to pay."

V. The Grateful Evidence. "Love." Which of them will love Him most? "He to whom He forgave most," says Simon. "Thou hast rightly judged," says Jesus. It is right judgment, then, to expect the forgiven to manifest in some way or other their love for Him who frankly forgives all. The poor woman had been forgiven much, and she loved much, and showed it.

1. Much love Weeps (Luke 7:44). Not only tears of regret for the past, but of deepest gratitude toward God, and of tenderest sympathy toward the perishing. The world needs such tears. Christ shed them, so did Paul (Php_3:18).

2. Much love Washes. "She hath washed My feet" (Luke 7:44). Many a dusty foot and life love has washed. "He loved me, and washed me." Love covereth a multitude of sins. Christ, as our Head, is in Heaven; we, as His feet, are on earth.

3. Much love Stoops. "She wipes His feet with her hair" (Luke 7:44). She puts her glory at His feet. If He is to increase, I must decrease. The heart must bow if Jesus is to be served.

4. Much love Kisses. Her lips of affection are pressed to His feet (Luke 7:45). The feet of the body of Christ, the dusty, naked members, are often neglected. Love seeks contact with them.

5. Much love Anoints. The Father anoints His head, but the forgiven one must anoint His feet (Luke 7:46). "Do as I have done unto you."

6. Much love Follows. She followed Him into Simon's house. She heeded not the reproach of others. Love constrained her (1 John 4:19).

7. Much love Gives. "She brought her box of ointment" (Luke 7:37). This was all her treasure, and she laid it at His feet, not only her ointment, but herself.

Lovest thou Me? How much? Let the life testify.

Contrast the three characters: (1) The proud-hearted Pharisee. (2) The broken-hearted sinner. (3) The loving-hearted Saviour. THE QUESTION OF JOHN.

Luke 7:17-35.

"Though vexing thoughts may seem to last,

Let not thy soul be quite o'ercast;

Soon will He show thee all His wounds, and say,

'Long have I known thy name, know thou My face alway.' "

-Keble. The raising of the widow's son had evidently produced a profound impression; the rumour went throughout "all the region round about," and was carried also to John while lying in his dismal prison. Every resurrected soul is a mighty testimony to the saving power of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:1). By reason of such many have believed on Him (John 12:10-11).

I. The Question. "Art Thou He that should come, or look we for another?" (Luke 7:19). It does seem strange that such a question should come from John Baptist; from him who saw the Spirit descend like a dove upon Him, and who bore record that this is the Son of God, and who said, "Behold the Lamb of God" (John 1:32-36). Yes! But why should this almighty Deliverer allow His forerunner to pine away in a dark and loathsome dungeon? It may be as easy for us as for John to say, "He must increase, I must decrease," but when the decreasing goes on and on till we almost question our relationship to Christ it is a trial of faith. But the trial of your faith is precious.

II. The Answer. Christ's reply shows no displeasure at the question of John. Our Lord is very gracious, and knows the frailty of our frame. "Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard" (Luke 7:21-23). Those who would speak for Jesus and comfort the tempted must speak what they have seen and heard. Christ never sends any one to tell what they think. "We speak that we do know" (1 John 1:1-3). And what a story they had to tell: "The blind see, the lame walk," etc. Such a Gospel is enough to drive away all doubts and fears.

III. The Testimony. As soon as the messengers are gone Jesus bears witness to the true character and divine mission of John (Luke 7:24-30). He was no silly reed shaken with every wind of doctrine that may blow; he was no city dandy in soft raiment seeking to make a display of himself; he was more than a prophet, in that he prepared the way of the Lord Christ. Even John's martyrdom prepared the way for the Crucifixion. If John's faith had not been tested we would not have had this beautiful testimony to his noble nature. "All things work for good," etc. (Romans 8:28). To reject the testimony of His servant is to reject the testimony of God (Luke 7:30).

IV. The Application. "Whereunto shall I liken the men of this generation?" etc. (Luke 7:31-35). The children in the market place often played at funerals and marriages; at the one they mourned, and at the other they piped and danced. "This generation" had been called upon by the austere life of John to mourning and repentance, and by the gracious, winsome life of Jesus to joy and gladness; but they charged John as being possessed with a devil, and Jesus as being a "gluttonous man, a friend of publicans and sinners." The testimony of both was rejected. If the warnings of the law and the wooings of the Gospel fail to bring us to God, how shall we escape? "But the wisdom of God is always justified in the children of such wisdom" (Proverbs 8:35).

SAVED BY FAITH.

Luke 7:36-50.

"Triumphant Faith!

Hers is a conquering path to Heaven,

With feet fire-shod, because her hand is placed

Immovably in God's; her eye doth rest

Unchangeably on His."-Miss Tatham. This Pharisee desired Jesus that He would eat with him, but he did not desire this woman, branded with the name "sinner," to come into his house. Her faith in the pity and compassion of Christ must have been strong when it constrained her to follow Him into such a house and at such a time. Such sorrowful sinners are never found weeping at a Pharisee's feet. There is a holy, winsome magnetism in the love of God, as manifested in the Person of Jesus Christ; the vilest may draw nigh and find the blessing of "eternal redemption."

I. The Character of this Woman. "She was a sinner" (Luke 7:37). Evidently a great sinner, for the Lord speaks of "her sins which are many" (Luke 7:47). The Pharisee called her a sinner with emphasis (Luke 7:39). Such a sinner as should not be touched; but Christ had to designate the Pharisees themselves as hypocrites (chap. Luke 11:44). She was a sinner, so was Simon, but she had this advantage, that she knew it, while he was proudly unconscious of it. The one owed five hundred pence, the other fifty, but in their relation to God they were both alike, "having nothing to pay." "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. There is none righteous, no, not one."

II. The Workings of Her Faith. "Even in a spark there is fire." Little faith may cling to an almighty Saviour. Faith is an operative energy of the soul that will not rest till the object desired has been grasped and enjoyed. Observe how it wrought in this woman. It constrained her to-

1. Come to Jesus (Luke 7:37). Perhaps the sneer of the self-righteous Pharisees had awakened hope in her heart. "Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners" (Luke 7:34). Her faith constrained her to draw near to Him without any personal invitation. Does such an act not put to shame the many who are still refusing the call of God? (John 5:40).

2. Repent of Her Sins. "She stood at His feet behind Him weeping" (Luke 7:38). When one stands at His feet and contrasts his own life with His the bitter tears of contrition are sure to fall. Seeing ourselves in His light is always a humbling revelation. Such tears are precious jewels in the sight of God; they tell of mountains of guilt flowing down at His presence (Isaiah 64:1). What effect has your faith had in this direction?

3. Show the Tokens of Her Love. "She kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment" (Luke 7:38). Hers was the faith that worked by love. The kiss spoke of the affection of her heart, while the precious ointment poured out told of a willingness to consecrate her all to Him. The faith that does not work in this fashion is a dead faith (James 2:26). The lips of love must come into contact with Christ as well as the hands of faith. With the heart man believeth unto salvation.

III. The Blessed Results. She was-

1. Approved. "Seest thou this woman?" (Luke 7:44-46). These words spoken to Simon would fall on the poor, sin-smitten soul of the woman as the music of Heaven. Jesus Himself knew the joy of being "a man approved of God" (Acts 2:22). Study to show thyself approved unto God (2 Timothy 2:15). Her manner of approach had His most gracious welcome, although she had no promise to plead. But what a solace to her heart that He commended her!

2. Forgiven. "Thy sins are forgiven" (Luke 7:48). She was forgiven much, for she loved much. There was a great difference between the cold, calculating belief of Simon and the simple, loving, heartful faith of the woman. She came, and with her tears and kisses she reasoned together with her Lord, and her sins, which were as scarlet, were made white as snow (Isaiah 1:18). What

encouragement for the wicked to forsake their ways is found in His abundant pardon! (Isaiah 55:7).

3. Assured. "Thy faith hath saved thee" (Luke 7:50). Faith in Christ not only saved her from the guilt of sin, but also from the tyranny of its power. She was now freed from the very love of sin. His grace saved her, His Word assured her. It was not the tears of her eyes nor the kisses of her lips that saved her, but the faith of her heart. By grace are ye saved through faith, and by the record given are we assured (1 John 5:11-13).

4. Commissioned. "Go in peace" (Luke 7:50). Go in peace with God, because justified by faith (Romans 5:1). Go in the peace of God, because now a child of God and an heir to the kingdom. Go and publish the Gospel of peace, as an ambassador for Him, who is the Prince of Peace, and who has made peace by the blood of His Cross. Go in peace back to your home and to your associates in sin as a messenger of mercy, telling them what great things He hath done for thy soul. Thy faith hath saved thee, go! THE MAN WHOSE NAME WAS "LEGION."

Luke 8:26-39.

"Love it was that first created light,

Moved in the waters, chased away the night

From the rude chaos, and bestow'd new grace

On things disposed of to their proper place."

-Edmund Waller.

Love is the mightiest moral force in Heaven, Earth, or Hell. It was love that constrained God to give up His Son (John 3:16). It was love that constrained His Son to speak such words of grace, to perform such miracles of mercy, and to give His life a ransom for many. "God is love." Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, in that through His Son He hath delivered us from the power of the devil and from this present evil world. In the salvation of this demoniac we have a grand exhibition of that divine power which worketh by love.

I. His Dreadful Condition. He was-

1. Shameless. "He ware no clothes" (Luke 8:27). Naked, and he knew it not. He was so completely possessed and occupied by evil spirits that he was utterly unconscious of his own nakedness. When Adam and Eve sinned they knew that they were naked, and sought to cover themselves. To be insensible of our nakedness before God is an evidence of satanic possession and delusion.

2. Friendless. "Neither abode he in any house, but in the tombs" (Luke 8:27). Being in league with the devil, he was cut off from all his relatives and friends; he could have no fellowship with the inhabitants of the tombs, although the abodes of the dead are always more congenial to such than the houses of the living. No man could help him. While we are the slaves of sin vain is the help of man.

3. Helpless. "He was driven of the devil" (Luke 8:29). He could in no wise help himself. He was driven like a beast by the powerful impulses wrought in him by the wicked spirits. Led captive by the devil at his will because his mind was blinded by that god of this world. Christ was driven by

the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:12). Which is your master?

II. His Attitude Towards Christ. It was one of-

1. Fear. "He cried, and fell down before Him" (Luke 8:28). When a soul comes face to face with the Son of God the inner thoughts and intents of the heart are sure to be revealed. Those who live under the dominion of sin, while they may know that they cannot escape the presence of Christ, yet they dread Him, although He is the most merciful of all. They fear a separation from their sins.

2. Opposition. "He said, What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God Most High?" (Luke 8:28). It is quite true that devil-possessed have nothing in common With the Holy Son of the Most High, any more than the darkness of the pit of hell has to do with the glory of Heaven. Where is the link of connection between the sin-driven sinner and the sin-hating Saviour? It is only found in the love of God in Christ. There is absolutely nothing in us but what is opposed to His holy will. "What have I to do with Thee?" I am animated by a spirit that is at enmity with Thine. You are from above, I am from beneath.

3. Entreaty. "I beseech thee torment me not" (Luke 8:28). In this prayer there is the confession of an inner conviction that the final judgment is in the hands of Jesus the Son of God, and that the last end of a sin-governed life is torment (Jude 1:6). The way to be saved from the eternal torment of sin is to be washed in the blood of the Lamb. "He hath loved us, and loosed us from our sins by His blood" (Revelation 1:5, R.V.);

III. His Perfect Deliverance. Let us note the process. There was-

1. Confession. "Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion" (Luke 8:30). Some think that a legion was a company of 6666. It was a confession at any rate that many demons had influence over him. In making such a statement he was simply declaring the truth. No good can come through seeking to hide our true state from the saving Son of the Highest. If our sins and our iniquities have carried us away like a legion of devils, let us say so in the ears of Him with whom we have to do.

2. Emancipation. "They found the man out of whom the devils were departed sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind" (Luke 8:35). The devils departed out of him. The salvation of Jesus Christ implies the deliverance of the man from the grip and tyranny of evil. It is a loosing from the dominion of sin, a translating of the soul out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. It is a homeless, restless soul finding a refuge in the loving heart of Jesus, and rest at His conquering feet. The driving of the devil has now given place to the leading of Jesus.

3. Witness-Bearing. "He went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him" (Luke 8:39). The Lord had indeed done great things for him. He had lifted him out of a horrible pit, and put a new song in his mouth. To be the slave of sin and the devil is to be in a horrible plight. Let the redeemed declare what the Lord hath done for their souls (Psalms 66:16). The tongue of testimony will surely be loosened when the bands of iniquity are broken. "Lazarus, come forth. Loose him, and let him go." Deliverance, then liberty. THE VIRTUE OF CHRIST.

Luke 8:43-48.

"In having all things and not Thee, what have I?

Not having Thee, what have my labours got?

Let me enjoy but Thee, what further crave I?

And having Thee alone, what have I not?"

-Quarles.

The riches of the glory of Christ are like the riches of the glory of the sun. Just as every flower finds its beauty and variety of colours in the sunshine, so may each soul find in Christ that very blessing and adorning that becomes them. He met the need of the one who came for Him to heal another (Luke 8:41) as well as this woman who touched Him for herself. In the sunshine of His grace there is all-sufficiency for all. It does not matter much how we come into the fresh air of His healing presence if we are only there; the health of His countenance will revive and strengthen. Let us learn here that-

I. There is Healing Virtue in Christ. The soul-healing power can be found nowhere else. Why? All the virtue of the Eternal God is in Christ for the purpose of healing the sin sores and woes of the world. This virtue is threefold. There is: (1) The virtue of a holy, blameless, God-pleasing life. (2) The virtue of an all-atoning substitutionary death. (3) The virtue of an all-conquering resurrection. There is none other name under Heaven that has such virtue. Through sin man has lost the virtue of holiness. If this virtue is to be restored it must be wholly through another than himself. This virtue or saving health is in Christ as the fragrance is in the flower, as the light is in the sun, or as the electricity is in the cloud; and He can shed it forth just as easily.

II. This Virtue is Sufficient for the Most Desperate Case. This woman's disease had lasted for "twelve years," and she had "spent all her living; neither could be healed of any" (Luke 8:43). Her disease, like the workings of sin, was a secret life-wasting malady. But even for such there is hope in Christ, for God is in Christ. While she was spending her all she met with many a disappointment. "Nothing bettered, but rather grew worse." In the anguish of her soul, as she stood on the border of despair, her faith looked to Jesus, muttering, "If I could but touch His garment I would be made whole."

III. This Virtue goes out at the Touch of Faith. "She came and touched the border of His garment" (Luke 8:44). Sin, with all its consequences of impurity, and misery, came by coming into contact with the forbidden thing through unbelief. "Eve took of the fruit thereof, and did eat" (Genesis 3:6). To touch the dead made a man ceremonially unclean (Leviticus 5:2). The fringe of blue on the border of the garment spoke of obedience (Numbers 15:38-40). In touching the border of Christ's garment was she thinking of His obedience unto death for her sake? This thought must be uppermost if our touch is to bring the healing life of Christ into our diseased and wasted souls. Her needs were fully met by the incoming of His strength and power, so that the life she now lived was the life of Christ in her (Galatians 2:20)

IV. This Virtue is Consciously Given and Consciously Received. Christ said, "I perceive that virtue is gone out of Me" (Luke 8:46). As for the woman, "she felt in her body that she was healed" (Mark 5:29). Her thirsty soul had received a cup of cold water out of the ocean fulness of His saving grace. She did not steal the cure. The virtue was deliberately given by Jesus Christ in answer to

her practical faith. She believed, and therefore she touched, and her touch was rewarded with the assurance of perfect deliverance. Is it not always so? (Matthew 15:28). The virtue of Christ, imparted at the touch of faith, vaccinates the soul against the plague of sin and the contaminations of this present evil world. The law of the "survival of the fittest" does not hold good here, for the virtue of Christ makes the most helpless and hopeless to survive. This battle is not to the strong. Christ's life is always an overcoming life (Acts 14:8-10).

V. The Thronging Multitude need not Hinder from such a Healing Touch. "Master, the multitude throng Thee and press Thee, and sayest Thou, Who touched Me?" (Luke 8:45). The throng and the press of earthly cares and duties are often made the excuse for not seeking personal contact with the Saviour of men. The "more convenient season" is tarried for, which seldom comes. "The kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." If this poor, bloodless, dying woman had waited till the throng and the press were over she would have waited till Jesus the Saviour had passed beyond her reach. Behold, now!

VI. This Virtue when Received should be Publicly Acknowledged. "Who touched Me?" The woman came and declared before all for what cause she had touched Him, and how she was healed immediately (Luke 8:47). Before them all she testified of two things: (1) For what cause she had touched Him. She had touched Him because every other physician had failed, and because she wanted to be healed at once. (2) How she was healed immediately. Blessed testimony to the infinite grace of God. Healed perfectly, and in a moment of time. Her open testimony brought to her His additional word of assurance. "Daughter, be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole" (Luke 8:48). Tradition says that she declared Christ's innocence before Peter, and wiped His face while He was on the way to Golgotha. At anyrate, such faithful testimony and loving service surely become those who have been saved with so great salvation. Made partakers of the divine nature. THE TESTING PRESENCE.

Luke 9:18-27.

"Ye scorners in your wild unrest,

O would that ye would turn to Him,

Far, far above the seraphim;

And of His mercy make request;

(Christ is)-

Most hidden, 'yet most manifest." In gathering up the most salient features of this portion we observe that they all centre on the Lord Himself. We have here-

I. Christ and Private Prayer. "He was alone praying" (Luke 9:18). Many there be who don't like to be alone, because they have no delight in prayer. Jesus often sought for solitude that He might be alone with His Father whom He loved so much. If the holy and sinless Jesus found it needful and blessed to pray in secret, how much more do we need it? Those who pray in secret will have their open reward (Matthew 6:6).

II. Christ and Public Opinion. "Whom say the people that I am?" etc. (Luke 9:18-19). Common reports are not always to be trusted. "The voice of the people" is not always "the voice of God." In this case it was the voice of wilful ignorance and unbelief, for had He not been publicly declared to be "The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), and had not His Word and works declared Him to be the Son of God with power? It is always more easy for us to say what others think of Christ than to say honestly what we ourselves think of Him.

III. Christ and Personal Conviction. "But whom say ye that I am?" (Luke 9:20). It will not satisfy the Saviour to tell Him what our fathers, and mothers, and teachers said about Him. This question is one that we have all to answer individually for ourselves. "What think ye of Christ?" Peter's answer, "Thou art the Christ (anointed, of God," reveals more than natural wisdom (Matthew 16:16-17). "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart, thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9).

IV. Christ and Substitution. "The Son of Man must suffer," etc. (Luke 9:22). As the Captain of our Salvation Christ was made perfect through suffering. He was "rejected by the elders and chief scribes," showing that the carnal mind, even though religious, is enmity against God. With wicked hands they put Him to death, but by the authority of the Father He laid down His life and took it again (John 10:18). It was according to the Scriptures that He died for our sins, and rose again for our justification.

V. Christ and Discipleship. "If any will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily" (Luke 9:23). Our sinful self ever plays the part of the elders and chief priests in rejecting Christ. Self must be denied if we would follow the steps of Him who "pleased not Himself." The Cross of Christ will ever be a shameful thing in the eyes of the world, but God forbid that we should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which we are crucified unto the world. This cross of discipleship is not thrust upon us, we are to take it up daily. It is absolutely necessary to a life of fellowship with Him (2 Timothy 2:11-12).

VI. Christ and Service. "Whosoever shall lose His life for My sake shall save it" (Luke 9:24). This losing our life by saving it, and saving our life by losing it, is very paradoxical to all who are strangers to the Power of Christ's Cross. The life that is spent in the service of Christ is a saved life; the life that is spent for self is a lost life. We may have a saved soul by trusting the Cross of Christ, and yet have a lost life through not living for Christ (1 Corinthians 3:15) All the riches of this world will bring us nothing worth calling an advantage unless we ourselves are saved (Luke 9:25).

VII. Christ and His Coming Glory. "Whosoever is ashamed of Me and My words," etc. (Luke 9:26-27). Christ and His Word stand or fall together. We cannot trifle with His words without trifling with Him. He who emptied Himself that He might become obedient unto death for us shall yet come in His own glory to reward all who have been faithful to Him in the days of His rejection (2 Corinthians 5:10). Are we able to say with Paul, the bond-servant of Christ, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ?"

FEATURES OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

Luke 9:27-36.

"Courage! though the skies are clouded,

Blackest clouds will pass away;

Courage! though the future's shrouded,

All is clear to Him as day;

And 'His purpose' shall endure,

Ever faithful, ever sure."-Grosart.

What did Jesus Christ mean when He said, "There are some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the kingdom of God?" (Luke 9:27). This question is not easily answered. Some think that the kingdom of God came, in judgment, at the destruction of Jerusalem, although we fail to see the kingdom then or there. Others, that this prediction was fulfilled at Pentecost by the coming of the Holy Spirit, when that kingdom, which is not of this world, was set up in the hearts of those who believed in Jesus. Perhaps so; but how did Jesus speak of some seeing it instead of knowing it experimentally? Looking carefully at what happened eight days after on the Mount, when some of them that stood by were with Him, do we not see visible characteristics of that invisible kingdom of God which is now within us? There was-

I. A Changed Countenance. "As He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered" (Luke 9:29). If we take the countenance as the outward expression of the inward condition of the soul, then we cannot be in the kingdom of God without having an altered countenance. Those in the kingdom of God have passed out of darkness into His marvellous light. The outward effect of this inward change must be "as the shining light." "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 18:3).

II. Glistering Raiment. "His raiment was white and glistering" (Luke 9:29). White (bright, margin) raiment is emblematical of the righteousness of the saints (Revelation 19:8). This is a whiteness that no fuller on earth can produce (Mark 9:3). All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. In the eyes of God the Father the raiment of Christ's righteousness was always white and glistering (Matthew 3:17), but now the glory of His hidden life is made manifest, and they were "eye-witnesses of His majesty" (2 Peter 1:16). The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Such will be Christ's appearance when He shall come the second time without sin unto salvation (Hebrews 9:28).

III. Heavenly Fellowship. "There talked with Him two men, Moses and Elias" (Luke 9:30). Communion with the unseen (Father and Son) is a marked characteristic of the kingdom of God. Those in the kingdom are in perfect harmony with the law and the prophets, as represented by Moses and Elias, and will be fellow-partakers of the resurrection and the translation which they both represent. Spiritually we have already been resurrected from the dead (Colossians 2:13), and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Colossians 1:13), and made to sit together in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6). At the coming of Christ in that glory which was revealed on the Mount there will be with Him those who, like Moses, have been raised from the dead (1 Thessalonians 4:14), and also those who, after the manner of Elijah, have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17). The kingdom of God is the kingdom of His saving glory.

IV. A Particular Interest in the Death of Christ. "They spake of His decease" (Luke 9:31). Another special feature of the kingdom of God is that the death of Christ is the centre of profound and unfailing interest. All those in the kingdom should ever realise that they are there by virtue of His Cross and Blood. Let us learn from the talk of the glorified on this Mount that the atoning death of the Lamb of God should be uppermost in our hearts and minds in the midst of our greatest privileges and blessings. The Cross is the key to the glory; it is the foundation of the kingdom of grace.

V. A Glorious Overshadowing. "There came a cloud and overshadowed them" (Luke 9:34). This cloud, called "the excellent glory" (2 Peter 1:7), was the visible symbol of the all-enveloping presence of God, in which the children of the kingdom live, and move, and have their being. Abiding in Him is another distinguishing feature of those who are in the kingdom of God (1 John 2:28). As they entered into the cloud, by the cloud overshadowing them, so may we by faith enter into "His marvellous light" by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost. The surrounding, all-enveloping glory of His presence may be ours now through that other advocate who dwells in us, and of whom Jesus said, "He shall glorify Me" (Romans 8:28).

VI. A Christ-Honouring Voice. "There came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is My beloved Son: hear Him" (Luke 9:35). That clear, "still small voice" that acknowledges Jesus as the eternal Son of God is another well-defined characteristic of the kingdom. This voice from Heaven still speaks in the hearts of all those who have through grace come under the blessed rule of the Lord as King. It was first heard when Jesus took the place of a sinner, and yielded Himself to the perfect fulfillment of the will of God (Matthew 3:17). Jesus sought the honour that comes from God Only, and He got it. Are we seeking only the honour that comes from one another? (John 5:44).

VII. A Joyful Experience. "Peter said, Master, it is good for us to be here" (Luke 9:33). When Peter said "Let us make three tabernacles" he was speaking foolishly and in ignorance, for the glorified cannot abide in temples made with hands; but when he said "It is good for us to be here" he was uttering the deep and happy feelings of his soul. It is good for us to be in such company as this, to hear such a voice, and to be surrounded with such a glory. Blessed are such, for theirs is the kingdom of God. "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

GRACE AND GRUDGE.

Luke 9:51-56.

"I would not angered be but grieved

When I do find myself deceived;

I would be kind to ignorance,

Rememb'ring Thy long sufferance;

I would Thy gentleness approach.

On Thy Name never bring reproach." A straw may indicate which way the wind blows or in what direction the river runs; a trifling event may have a tremendous significance. One had been casting out devils in the Name of Jesus, and some of His disciples forbade him (Luke 9:49-50) "because

he followeth not with us." Observe the grace of the Master in allowing a stranger so to use His Name and the grudge of the disciples in forbidding him. The marked contrast between the spirit of the Master and that of His followers will become more apparent as we consider further the-

I. Saviour's Devotion. "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51). Now that it has become the fixed purpose of His heart no power on earth or hell can hinder. "The time was come that. He should be received up." He will go to Jerusalem that He might suffer and die in obedience to the Father's will, and that He might overcome him that had the power of death, that is the devil (Hebrews 2:14). Blessed be His Name, His heart was in His great self-sacrificing work. He went on steadfastly, like a warrior to the battle, confident of victory. He knew that the time was at hand when He would be received up (Luke 9:51).

II. Samaritan's Bigotry. "They did not receive Him, because His face was as though He would go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:53). The Samaritans had their temple on Mount Gerizim, but because He was making for the city of His Father's House they would honour Him not. This Christ-rejecting bigotry manifests itself in many ways. There are still those who will not receive Christ.

1. Because He does not Honour their Works. They have, like these Samaritans, built a temple of their own, fashioned after their own thoughts and opinions, and unless the Lord Jesus Christ compliments them in some way for their good works they will receive Him not (Romans 10:2-3; Luke 18:9).

2. Because He will not go with Them in their Ways. They had made up their minds to do their worship at Gerizim, and unless Jesus Christ would condescend to meet with them there they would have nothing to do with Him. The self-righteous devise their own plans, determine their own ways, and if Christ does no acknowledge such they simply receive Him not, and go on with their Christless work and worship.

3. Because He seems to Favour Those whom They Despise. "His face was as though He would go to Jerusalem." The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. They were like some High Churchmen who will have nothing to do with the Christ that blesses Dissenters. In setting His face toward Jerusalem He was setting His face to the Cross which still makes Him an offence to many.

III. Disciples' Intolerance. "When His disciples saw this they said, Lord, wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from Heaven and consume them?" (Luke 9:54). Perhaps James and John remembered that it was hereabout where Elias had wrought such a miracle of judgment (2 Kings 1:10). The sudden outburst of this ungracious and odious spirit reveals at least three things: Their-

1. Faith. They believed that the Heavens would answer their call, and that fire would come down at their bidding. Such faith is not to be lightly esteemed. Men of like passions with ourselves have wrought by faith such mighty works (James 5:17).

2. Zeal. Their indignation was hot at the insulting attitude of these Samaritans toward their Master. They could not stand by, as perhaps some of us can, and see the Lord being despised and rejected without any moving of the soul, either with divine pity or selfish rage.

3. Ignorance. They knew not what manner of spirit they were of, neither did they know the manner of their Master's spirit, nor the great deep purpose of His mission. "I am not come to judge the world, but to save the world" (John 12:47). The devotion of which ignorance is the mother is both

blind and merciless.

IV. Master's Rebuke. "He turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of" (Luke 9:55). Zeal without knowledge is bigotry. It was this manner of spirit that kindled the fires of Smithfield and soaked the Scottish heather with the blood of Covenanters. It is this "mariner of spirit" that still reveals itself in such prayers as this: "Lord bless me, and ray wife, my son John and his wife; bless us four, and no more, Amen." It is this same manner of spirit that does not, and cannot, rejoice and praise God for the good work done by others. In this connection study James 3:16, James 3:17.

V. Gracious Explanation. "The Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (Luke 9:56). While in the days of His humiliation He made Himself of no reputation, being reviled He reviled not again. He remained true to His divine character and mission, to love, to suffer, and to die (John 3:17). Behold now, not the judgment time, but the accepted time; hence the long suffering patience of God. If any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of His, "As He is so are we in this world." Our mission, then, like His, is not to destroy men's lives, but to save them.

SENT ONES.

Luke 10:1-20.

"Man hath his daily work of body or mind

Appointed, which declares his dignity,

And the regard of Heaven on all his ways,

While other animals inactive range,

And of their doings God takes no account."

-Milton.

These seventy were appointed by the Lord, and sent forth, two and two, and surely it was a great comfort for them to know that they were going "before His face," and into the very places "whither He Himself would come" (Luke 10:1). May not every sent one now rest in this same assurance, that wherever they go, at His will and in His Name, there shall He manifest His presence. But there is to be no selfish monopolising of this work on the part of the sent ones, for it was to them the Lord said, "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that He may send forth labourers" (Luke 10:2). In this spirit of prayer, begotten by real love for the Lord and His work, we do become "co-workers together with Him." There are precious lessons here for all who seek to do the will of God.

I. A Great Commission. "Go your ways; behold, I send you forth" (Luke 10:3). They went as-

1. Lambs. "Behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves" (Luke 10:3). They were not sent as rams to fight their way by the power of their heads, but as lambs, entirely under the protection of the ever-watchful Shepherd, and as such they represent heart life more than head life. The influence of love is always more powerful than that of reason. The wolves represent those who live the grossly selfish life-men of the world.

2. Forerunners. "They went whither He Himself would come" (Luke 10:1). As such they were to "salute no man by the way." Their coming into any city or place was a testimony that the King Himself was coming. Have we, as sent ones (chap. Luke 20:17-18), been animated by a like faith in the promise and power of Christ? Do we expect Him to follow up our word and work in His Name with His own convincing presence?

3. Heralds. Saying, "The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you" (Luke 10:9). From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:19). The kingdom itself was brought near by the very presence of the heralds of it. If the kingdom of God is within you (Luke 17:21; Romans 14:17), then when you come into contact with those who know not God, nor His Christ, does not the kingdom come near to them in you?

4. Ambassadors. Jesus said of them, "He that heareth you heareth Me, and he that despiseth you despiseth Me" (Luke 10:16). "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20).

II. A Joyful Testimony. "They returned with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Thy Name" (Luke 10:17). Those who go at His bidding and in His Name will always have a joyful testimony to bear. They will be more than conquerors. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12). Our foe is not in the form of "flesh and blood" (human), but in the character of wicked spirits which rule the kingdom of darkness-invisible demons-that possess the hearts of men, and that can only be cast out through the power of the Name of Jesus (Ephesians 2:2). The works of the devil are still being destroyed in those to whom the Son of God is being manifested (1 John 3:8). Thus, the lifting up of the Son of God is still the power to bring the devils of doubt and uncleanness into subjection (John 12:13).

III. A Suggestive Comment. "Jesus said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from Heaven" (Luke 10:18). What a strange and startling statement, coming as a reply to their exultant account of "devils being subject to them." It appears that Satan shot down from the heavenlies with lightning speed when he saw that his angel demons were being routed and overcome by those seventy messengers of the Son of God. The more we triumph in the Name of Jesus, the more intensely will we be tried and opposed by the powers of darkness. The wrestling mentioned in Ephesians 6:12 implies a real and desperate struggle in very close quarters-wrestlers grip each other.

IV. An Assuring Promise. "Behold, I give you power to tread on... all the power of the enemy" (Luke 10:19). Although Satan hath come down like lightning in all his power to oppose the mission of Christ through you, I give you power to tread all his power beneath your feet. The sphere of Satan's work is now on the earth. Let us treat all "criticisms" and "teachings" that are opposed to the mind and purposes of Jesus Christ as the "doctrines of devils" (1 Timothy 4:1). Take courage from His promise, "I give unto you power" (Acts 1:8). The time has come when the God of peace can bruise Satan under your feet (Romans 16:20). One of the signs of faith in His Name is the casting out of devils (Mark 16:17).

V. A Source of Joy. "Rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven" (Luke 10:20). To have our names written there is a guarantee

of deliverance (Daniel 12:1). Overcoming devils is, in the mind of Christ, a comparatively small matter, but to have our names written in the Lamb's Book of Life (Revelation 21:27), and to belong to the General Assembly and Church of the Firstborn, which are written in Heaven, is something to rejoice over, as it is a privilege that will be fruitful of joy and honour through all eternity, for a man may cast out devils and yet himself be a castaway (Matthew 7:22-23). THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

Luke 10:30-37.

"He is bound to me, For human love makes aliens near of kin."

-Ingelow.

This lawyer, being "willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?" (Luke 10:29). The world has never seen anyone better fitted to answer such a question than Jesus. "He knew what was in man." There are but few who are not willing to justify themselves in their neglect of that mercy (Luke 10:37) which constitutes true neighbourliness. This is a parable, beloved, for the Samaritan's sake. A beautiful reflection of the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, unexpectedly coming into contact with a destitute and alien heart. Observe here- I. A Threefold Misery. He was-

1. Stripped of his raiment (Luke 10:30). This certain man in going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, a distance of about eighteen miles, fell among thieves and was stripped. Ever since the fall of Adam this world has been a den of thieves. Every man's business, more or less, is just to get out of others all he possibly can. Only those taught of God can look, not at their own, but at the good of others. All who fall into the clutches of sin and iniquity are sure to be stripped of their raiment of righteousness and of their "garment of praise." The devil is still seeking whom he may devour.

2. Wounded (Luke 10:30). He in all likelihood received His wounds in His desperate attempts to withstand the robbers. Our own strength and wits are a poor defence against the sudden onslaughts of evil. The morally wounded and disabled in the battles of life are found lying everywhere along the highways of human concourse. Their name is legion who have sunk into the ditch of a city slum through being stripped of their reputation and having their hopes and prospects wounded to the death (Isaiah 1:6).

3. Half Dead (Luke 10:30). In this wretched condition he could do nothing but wait and pray. Waiting for the compassion of some loving heart and the kindly touch of some neighbourly hand. To be half-hearted about anything is to be half-dead to the matter. With regard to the things eternal, how many are half-dead and quite unconscious of it. Backsliders in heart (Revelation 3:16). But let us not in our pride condemn this poor outcast, for if we had gone the same way we might have been in the same plight. If we had gone the way of those who are born and reared in the city slum, or in dark heathendom, what better would we be than they are?

II. A Threefold Attitude. In the Priest, the Levite, and the Samaritan we see three different attitudes toward the helpless and unfortunate. That of-

1. Perfect Indifference. "The priest passed by on the other side" (Luke 10:31). This priest was doubtless on his way home from the Temple service. In the discharge of his ceremonial duties he is very punctilious, and would pass by nothing, but a needy, dying brother by the wayside is unworthy of his notice. "Weighed in the balance and found wanting." No hope can on the Law be built.

2. Interested Curiosity. "The Levite came and looked, and passed by on the other side" (Luke 10:32). This man is a type of those who are not a little inquisitive, but who are not even a little compassionate. They want to know, but they don't want to help. This Levite could tell a story about this poor man when he went home, and justify his heartless conduct by saying that the place was too dangerous for him to tarry and lift the fallen. He also by his act is "weighed in the balance and found wanting" (1 John 3:17).

3. Practical Sympathy. "The Samaritan came where he was, and had compassion on him," etc. (Luke 10:33-35). Although the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans, this Samaritan in mercy would have dealings with the half-dead Jew. This is the point in the parable. A despised one, compassionates, shows mercy, and saves one who was living at enmity with him, thus manifesting that love of God in Christ Jesus which stoops to show mercy with a self-sacrifice that slays the enmity (Ephesians 2:16). The Good Samaritan bears the features of the despised Nazarene, who comes to seek and save the lost.

(1). "He came where he was." Christ comes to us right where we are. In our stripped and wounded condition we could do nothing for ourselves (Romans 5:6).

(2). "He had compassion on him" (Luke 10:33). His heart was moved toward him. The Salvation of Christ was heart work. "He loved us, and gave Himself for us."

(3). "He bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine."

Although we are full of wounds and bruises (Isa. 1), Christ can bind up and heal (Luke 4:18). This He does by the oil of His Spirit and the wine of His Word.

(4). "He set him on his own beast." Those whom the Lord lifts up are also set in His own place. "Now are we the Sons of God."

(5). "He brought him to an inn." The saved of the Lord also find shelter and new friendships.

(6). "He took care of him." In the Salvation of Christ there is not only a great deliverance, but also a special providence (Romans 8:28). He careth for you.

(7). He left a promise concerning him (Luke 10:35). Our Great Shepherd has also left enough for our need during His absence in "the exceeding great and precious promises." "And inasmuch as ye did it unto these, ye did it unto Me." "When I come again I will repay thee." The Great Lesson.

Christ has suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps. "Go thou and do likewise" (Luke 10:37).

"MARTHA, MARTHA."

Luke 10:38-42.

"Nor can the vain toil cease, Till in the shadowy maze of life we meet One who can guide our aching, wayward feet, To find Himself our Way, our Life, our Peace; In Him the long unrest is soothed and stilled; Our hearts are filled."-F. R. Havergal. The heart that is only half-conquered by Christ's peace will be easily tossed about when assaulted with the "cares of this world." Martha comes before us here as one cumbered and troubled about her work. A weary, burdened servant,

just at the point of breaking down. What to her was duty has become drudgery. There is wholesome food for thought here for every servant of Christ. Martha-

I. Received Jesus. "Martha received Him into her house." Being perhaps the oldest in the home the right of receiving guests into the house would be hers. Her receiving Him was the proof of her faith in Him. It is vain and presumptuous for us to talk about our faith in Christ if we have not actually received Him into the house of the heart (see John 1:12).

II. Sat at His Feet. "She had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His words." This word also surely proves that Martha had sat and listened to His words as well as Mary. The faith that received Christ will certainly desire to know His will. This is the second step in the Christian life-learning. "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest. Learn of Me, and ye shall find rest" (Matthew 11:28-29).

III. Was an Active Worker. She busied herself with "much serving." She was none of those spongy Christians who can do nothing but drink in. There are many whose sole conception of the Christian life is to hear. Martha was not only a hearer, but a doer. She had listened to His words, and she would minister to Him. Her service, too, was no ordinary service. She had planned to do much. The honest, earnest design of her generous heart was to accomplish much for the honour of Jesus.

IV. Became Worried over her Work. "Martha was cumbered about much serving." Tersteegen has said: "We are not always to be seeking, we must sometimes have found Him. The seeker works actively; the finder enjoys quietly." Whenever work for the Lord brings upon us the worry of "carefulness and trouble," we may be assured that we have somehow got out of Christ's yoke, for He says, "My yoke is easy, and My burden is light. Take My yoke upon you, and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

V. Began to Complain. "Lord, dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me." The worried and cumbered worker will soon be found in the ranks of the grumblers. Martha's big task of "much serving" was self-imposed, and she, like all those in similar circumstances, soon got burdened and wearied. God-given work will never be cumbersome when done in His strength. But let it be noted to Martha's credit that she made her complaint, not to her sister, but to her Lord. Those cumbered and grumbling workers who are continually pouring their grievances into the ears of their fellow-servants ought to be shamed out of their cowardliness by the straightforward heroism of Martha. Dare to be honest, and say as she did, "Lord, dost Thou not care?" Have the question of worry settled with your Master. Find out in His presence whether your harassing anxiety about His service is pleasing to Him, or whether there is not some one that He might bid come and help you, or whether you are not "careful and troubled" about things which the Lord has no interest in.

VI. Was Rebuked by the Lord. "Jesus said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful." It is no honour to the Prince of Peace that His servants' hearts should be filled with restless solicitude about His business. "My peace I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). "I would have you without carefulness" (1 Corinthians 7:32). "Take no thought (anxious concern) for your life." Your Father knoweth (Matthew 6:25; see also Matthew 6:8). If the Lord had bidden Mary go and help Martha

He would have partly justified her in her complaint, but, no, He said in substance, "You take too much upon you. The one thing you need is not a helping hand, but a restful heart."

Mary had chosen that good part, and He will not take it from her. There are many Matthews as well as Marthas, whose countenances bear the traces of a worried and troubled heart, even while they are seeking to serve Jesus. "Cumbered about much serving." Cast all your care upon Him, for He careth for you. Rest in the Lord.

PRAYER: ITS PRIVILEGE AND POWER.

Luke 11:1-13.

"Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1).

"The prayers I make will then be sweet indeed,

If Thou the spirit give by which I pray;

My unassisted heart is barren clay,

That of its native self can nothing feed."-M. Angelo.

It would appear that while the Lord was praying in a "certain place" His disciples heard Him, and were deeply moved, as never man prayed like this Man. What calmness of spirit, what assurance of faith, what holy familiarity with the unseen Father of Spirits, what an overawing reality and power there was in these simple utterances of their Master! No wonder that when He ceased they came with tear-filled eyes, saying, "Lord, teach us to pray." The power of prayer lies more in what we are than in what we say. They pray well who have "holiness unto the Lord" written across their lives. Prayer, wrote a deaf and dumb girl, is "the wish of the heart." If the heart is right with God, then the desires of the heart will be granted (1 John 5:14-15). Desires are plentiful in human hearts, but how few are confidently breathed into the ear of God. Notice here-

I. Need of Prayer. "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1). All men pray in the way of wishing, or earnestly desiring, but not to the living God. "Before I was converted," said one, "I said my prayers to nobody, now I pray to God." We have never learned to pray if we have not learned to speak personally to a personal God, and to know that He hears us. Intercourse with God is a crying need of the soul of man. We need more than human sympathy. We need a greater than human help. Divine power and compassion are the counterparts of human weakness and need. "Lord, teach us to pray."

II. Teacher of Prayer. "Lord, teach us." Surely this "Teacher come from God" is well able to instruct us in the way to God. His whole life was lived in the atmosphere of prayer. He constantly breathed the breath of Heaven. In His every act we hear the voice of His pleading on our behalf. His incarnation, His holy life, His agony in the garden, His atoning death, and His rising again from the dead were all mighty voices of supplication unto God. He who spent whole nights in prayer had too much to do to be in a hurry or to neglect secret communion with His Father. "Lord, teach us." He teaches us to pray by giving us a deep insight into the poverty of our own natures that we may hunger after righteousness (Romans 8:26). He teaches us to pray by revealing to us, through His Spirit, of His own unsearchable riches that we may covet earnestly the best gifts (Hebrews 4:16).

III. Spirit of Prayer. In answer to their requests the great Prayer Teacher said, "When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in Heaven," etc. In putting this prayer into their mouths our Lord was not only teaching the order in which our prayers should be formed, but, we think, the very spirit and condition of heart necessary to true prayer. Looked at in its subjective aspect this prayer implies a condition of-

1. Sonship. "Our Father." Before we can say "Our Father" in any real sense we must have received the Spirit of adoption (Romans 8:15). We must be made sons through receiving His Son ere we can honestly say Father (John 1:12).

2. Sanctification. "Hallowed be Thy Name." His Name stands for all that He is in His holiness, righteousness, love, and almightiness. How can an unsanctified soul hallow, set apart as holy, the great Name, of God in the daily life? What communion hath light with darkness? If His Name is to be hallowed in us we ourselves must be hallowed to His Name.

3. Subjection. "Thy kingdom come." How can we utter this petition if we are not willing that our own hearts and thoughts should be subject to His rule? So, to be able to pray, there must be entire submission to the will of God (Romans 14:17).

4. Consecration. "Thy will be done." To pray "Thy will be done" there must needs be a willingness to do His will.

5. Brotherly Love. "And forgive us as we forgive every one," etc. Our prayers may often be hindered for lack of tender-heartedness toward those who may be indebted to us (Ephesians 4:32). Does this reveal the spirit in which we pray?

IV. Manner of Prayer. "Because of his importunity he will give him as many as he needeth" (Luke 11:5-8). The word importunity here stands for "shamelessness," and this is the only time it is used in the New Testament and employed by our Lord in connection with prayer; it is exceedingly expressive. It means that in offering our requests to God for things needful we should take no denial; turn not aside through any seeming providential rebuff, being utterly shameless in our persistent, confident waiting (Exodus 17:11).

V. Simplicity of Prayer. "Ask, and it shall be given you," etc. (Luke 11:9-12). The child in its own way begins to ask as soon as it is born, and the mother has no difficulty in interpreting its cry. As long as we maintain the childlike spirit prayer will be a simple, delightful, and soul-strengthening exercise. The more we get conformed to the image of Christ the nearer do we come to the very presence of God. And the nearer we approach to Him in our real soul likeness to Him the more simple and childlike will our prayers be. "Ask, and ye shall receive."

VI. Efficacy of Prayer. "If ye, . . . how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" (Luke 11:13). The Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him, and in giving the Spirit He is putting within the reach of each child of His every spiritual blessing (Ephesians 3:14-19). Many of us have yet to learn what our gracious Father is willing to do for us, and through us, by His gift of the Holy Ghost. As workers together with Him we beseech you that ye receive not this grace of God in vain. "If ye ask anything in My Name I will do it" (John 14:12-14). THE STRONG AND THE STRONGER.

Luke 11:16-22.

"If we were not weak, Should we be less in deed than in desire."-Shelley.

How strange that they should seek "a sign from Heaven" (Luke 11:16) when they see devils being cast out. But men will yet try to ignore the divine character of Christ while there are infallible proofs of it before their eyes in the changed lives and hearts of men. They are like owls sitting in the dark, and crying, "Where is the sun?" Every evil overcome is a proof of the existence of a holier power. Evil cannot expel evil. This principle leads to God. "There is none good but God." If sin has been conquered and hated, and the heart changed and filled with love to God, then this is not of man. This is the finger of God. In these verses we have two great princes representing two great kingdoms. To one or other all belong, and peace and safety can only be enjoyed by the subjects of the greatest, as the one is most bitterly antagonistic to the other. Here we see the warriors described, the battle fought, the victory won, and the spoil divided. Consider then-

I. The Great Enemy. "Satan," the chief of the devils (Luke 11:15), and his chief end is to deceive and destroy. His deadly campaign commenced in Eden, and goes on still (Genesis 3:1). Notice-

1. His Character. "A strong man" (Luke 11:21). The strength of the devil is in his cunning and deceit. In the garden we have a revelation of the wisdom of this serpent. He is strong because he knows exactly where human weakness lies. He enters the citadel of man's soul as a pledged friend when he comes as an angel of light; how few can discern him in his real malignant form. He is strong to overcome the righteous scruples of the young, and also to deceive the Godward longings of the old. Too late, too late, he whispers, or, you are too great a sinner. But although he is strong he is but a strong man; his is limited strength, not almighty. Yet his "wiles" are innumerable and his darts are fiery.

2. His Condition. "Armed" (Luke 11:21). His is the armour of darkness; he loves the darkness rather than the light. "While men slept he sowed tares, and went his way" (Matthew 13:25). He is the prince of darkness, and those who are in darkness are under his power (Ephesians 2:2). His armour is just the opposite of God's. 1. His girdle is the girdle of falsehood-a liar from the beginning, and so his children go speaking lies from the womb. 2. His breastplate is that of wickedness, for wickedness is in his heart. 3. His feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of enmity. 4. His shield is the shield of doubt. 5. On his head is the helmet of damnation. 6. His sword is the imaginations of the evil heart, and with this he slays the word of truth that darkness and death might reign (compare Ephesians 6:11-18).

3. His Occupation. "Keepeth his palace" (Luke 11:21). His palace is the dungeon of the unrenewed heart, where every window is glazed with perverting glass, so that things can never be seen as they really are. Here the occupant is a prisoner of darkness and ignorance. He may boast of what he knows of the world of light, truth, and liberty outside, but he knows nothing as he ought to know. Did he but know the truth he could abide no longer in bondage. This his vigilant keeper knows right well, so he keepeth his palace that his goods may have peace. This is the "peace, peace, when there is no peace." The more anxious the soul is to escape the more closely is he kept. If fair promises will not do, the iron fetters of despair will be applied. Notice some of the ways in which he keepeth his palace. "I can read my Bible at home." "You can tell me nothing new." "I go regularly to Church." "I do as well as I can." "You make too much ado," etc.

4. His Possession. "Goods" (Luke 11:21). He who occupies the palace of the heart also possesses the powers and faculties of the whole being. These powers and faculties are valuable "goods," their intrinsic worth, who can calculate? The precious blood of Christ speaks volumes as to the value of these "goods." These "goods," generally speaking, may represent all who are under Satan's keeping.

Let us look at the character of an individual article, the qualities of a single soul. There is- (1). Reason, the Governor. (2). Understanding, the Receiver. (3). Memory, the Recorder. (4). Conscience, the Discerner. (5). Will, the Decider. (6). Affection, the Distributer.

All these are prisoners to Satan under his power, used for his dark, devilish purposes. "His goods," not even your own free will! Ah, "strange liberty."

II. The Great Deliverer. "Christ."

1. His Character. "Stronger than he" (Luke 11:22). Not merely a stronger man, but one whose strength is almighty. "If I speak of strength, lo, He is strong." The strength of hills is His. "I will send you a Deliverer and a strong One." "Help has been laid upon One that is mighty." How mighty is the sun to overcome darkness; how strong are the hills to bear the crushing tempest. So man's deliverer must be strong both to bear and to overcome. His arm is strong; it upholds the universe and guides the helm of providence. His Word is strong, none can gainsay it, none can hinder it from working. His work is strong, His foundation stands sure. Neither time nor eternity, nor the powers thereof can ever displace one single stone of His building. Hallelujah! One has come to seek and to save, with whom nothing is impossible. No enemy too strong for His power, no difficulty too monstrous for His strength. "The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace" (Exod. 14).

2. His Encounter. "He shall come upon him" (Luke 11:22). The Prince of Life and the prince of darkness must come into close combat according to Genesis 3:15. David must go out to Goliath, come upon him, strip him, and overcome in behalf of Israel, for he fought not for himself, but them, and love constrained him, although, like Christ, his brethren despised and rejected him. Yet he had the King's favour, and in overcoming the enemy he secured for himself a bride (1 Samuel 17:25). Beautiful picture of our Deliverer who came forth from the Father, like David, to conquer the great enemy and purchase the Church as His bride. He "came upon the wiles of the devil" in the wilderness, upon his enmity and hate in the Pharisees, upon his works in the demon-possessed, upon himself on the Cross. Then was the hour and power of darkness; dreadful conflict!

3. His Victory. "Overcome him, and taketh from him all his armour" (Luke 11:22). Goliath is slain with his own sword. "Through death Christ destroyed him that had the power of death." His helmet was broken and his head bruised; his whole armour of darkness wherein he trusted has been destroyed, and the "true light now shineth." None need now be under his power as He came to set the prisoners free. But, alas, men love darkness rather than the light, and the bondage of Satan rather than the liberty of Christ, saying, "I love my master, and I will not go free." And so become a slave for ever. Jesus Christ is the rightful owner of the soul. "Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive: Thou hast received gifts in the man" (Psalms 68:18, marg.).

"The number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying... worthy is the Lamb that was slain" (Revelation 5:11-12).

4. His Grace. He divideth His spoils as the fruit of His warfare. He possesses pardon, peace, power, and paradise. These He willingly divides with the mighty many (Isa. 53). All who believe shall share in His victory. All is yours, for ye are Christ's (1 Corinthians 3:22). This great battle was substitutionary. Man had been spoiled of his goods by the devil, but Christ overcomes and recaptures the possession, as Abraham overcame the kings and brought back all the goods, and also his brother Lot (Genesis 14:16). Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee. None can pluck them out of His hand. Will you share Christ's victory or the devil's overthrow? If the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed (John 8:36). The spoils of Calvary's Cross hath made many rich.

SINGLENESS OF EYE AND FULNESS OF LIGHT.

Luke 11:33-36.

"Earth's crammed with Heaven,

And every common bush afire with God;

But only he who sees takes off his shoes,

The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries,

And daub their natural faces unaware,

More and more from the first similitude!"

-Browning.

"Light is sweet, and it is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the sun." So is it also with the light of truth that beams from the Son of Righteousness. It is in His light that we see light clearly. Blessed are such eyes that see. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is here teaching us the blessedness of the single eye, bad in Himself in a pre-eminent degree the single eye; so His whole body was full of light. His light was not put in a "secret place" nor "under a bushel" (Luke 11:33), but was "lifted up" on the lampstand of the Cross that all in the house of this world may see it. "There was the true Light which lighteth every man coming into the world" (John 1:9, R.V.). Ye are the light of the world; let your light so shine. In examining this portion we would note- I. The Medium. "The light (lamp) of the body is the eye" (Luke 11:34, R.V.). The eye is-

1. Passive. It does not, and cannot, create the light, neither can it form or transform any object. It is simply a receiver and a reflector of outward objects to the inner consciousness of man, a channel through which visible things are revealed to the invisible spirit.

2. Very Sensitive. A little thing mars the vision of the eye. It is very easily offended. So with a tender conscience. They are blessed indeed who are as careful about their conscience as they are about the apple of the eye (Acts 24:16). Oh, that our spirits were as sensitive to the things of the Spirit of God!

II. The Means. "Light." The light was made for the eye, and the eye for the light. The successive waves of light that lash with infinite tenderness upon the eye prove the divine adaptation of the one to the other. But light is not more suitable to the eye than Christ is to the soul of man. There is a

deep meaning in the words of Goethe, "Were thine eye not sunny, how could it ever see the sun?" So were thy soul not God-like, how could it ever enjoy God? No one would be foolish enough to say "I have an eye of my own, I don't need the light." The eye is utterly useless without the light, so the spirit of man is utterly helpless and powerless to discern the things of God apart from the revelation of the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:14). The true Light now shineth. Oh, that the eyes of the understanding might be opened (Luke 24:31-32).

III. The Manner. Christ is the Light of the World, but there are two ways of looking at or dealing with this Light. These are represented by the "single eye" and the "evil eye," the pure and the impure, the honest and the deceitful, the new heart and the old.

1. The Single Eye and its effects. The single eye is one that has been anointed with the heavenly eyesalve (Revelation 3:18). The blood-washed spirit that looks through this eye has been reconciled to God, and seeks to know the truth as it is in Jesus. There is now no mixed motives in the life, no mingling of self-interest with the kingdom of God. The whole forces of the soul are now concentrated in "this one thing I do, forgetting the things that are behind, I press on toward the mark." Such an eye fills the whole body with light, because the Spirit of God takes the things which are Christ's, and reveals them to those who have the pure eye for the glory of His Name. If our motives are single, one with Christ's, then we shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of His life within us. To be filled with the Holy Spirit of Truth is to be filled with light. The spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened" (Ephesians 1:17-18).

2. The Evil Eye and its effects. The evil eye is the coloured lens of an unclean heart. The eye of prejudice can only see objects in a contorted fashion. The unrenewed heart of man can no more appreciate the light of revelation than the blinking owl of the night can enjoy the sunshine. The "evil eye" is like the eye of the hawk, always staring downward when flying upward. Remember Lot's wife. "If thine eye be evil, thy whole body is full of darkness." The darkness within is an evidence of an evil and doubting heart. We look to Christ with an evil eye if we look to Him only that self may be honoured and gratified; as Keble put it:

"We flee far in holy ground

If duly purged our mental view."

IV. The Message. "Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness" (Luke 11:35). If the light that is in us is not a revelation from God it is but the flickering "spark of our own kindling," a light that is certain to deceive. The light that was in the Church of Laodicea was darkness, for although they said that they had need of nothing, yet was Christ, the Light, outside (Revelation 3:17-20). There is no darkness so great as the darkness that is mistaken for light (Matthew 6:23; Proverbs 16:25). Woe unto them that put darkness for light (Isaiah 5:20). "When the pilot is drowned, the light quenched, and the captain taken prisoner, what hope is left for the crew?" While ye have the light, believe in the Light (John 1:9). THE HYPOCRITE.

Luke 11:37-44.

"A lie which is half a truth is ever the blackest of lies!

A lie which is all a lie may be met and fought outright,

But a lie which is part of a truth is a harder matter to fight!"

-Tennyson.

This mongrel lie which is part of a truth finds its incarnation in the hypocrite. The one is as difficult to deal with as the other. The names scribe and Pharisee as used by our Lord here are synonymous of hypocrite. Their characteristics as detailed before us in these verses are the outstanding features of the hypocrite.

I. He is more concerned about the traditions of men than the truth of God. "The Pharisee marvelled that He had not first Washed before dinner" (Luke 11:38). The Pharisee of Christ's day not only held the traditions of the elders about hand-washing, but in their superstitious zeal bathed their bodies before meat (Mark 7:4, R.V.). Jesus Christ in the heavenly truthful dignity of His character simply ignores it, so that the hypocritical marvel at His liberty. The sons of God are not to be in bondage to the opinions of men. Whom the Son of God makes free are free indeed. Although Christ Himself, the embodiment of truth and holiness, stood before this Pharisee, yet would he despise Him because He did not conform to his petty theory of hand-washing. The popular tradition about the way of salvation is, "Do as well as you can," to the denial of the truth of God's saving grace. There are other traditions concerning the Lord's coming and Church worship that are equally subvertive of the truth as it is in Jesus.

II. He is more careful about outward than inward purity. "They make clean the outside of the cup, but the inward is full of ravening and wickedness" (Luke 11:39). The only good side of a hypocrite is the outside, for they do "make clean the outside." They live as in the eyes of their fellow-creatures, seeking not the honour that comes from God only. They are men pleasers. They will make their hands clean, although their hearts should be full of wickedness. They look upon the things which are seen. They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him (Titus 1:16). They practically deny that "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts," etc., and that these are the things which defile a man (Matthew 15:19-20). He is utterly indifferent about the righteousness of God if he can only get his own established (Romans 10:3), and when he prays it is with himself (Luke 18:11). He flatters men with his outward manners, while the inward manner of the heart is an abomination to God (James 4:8).

III. He stickles for trifles, and neglects the things which are indispensable. "Ye tithe all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God" (Luke 11:42). God demanded that the fruit of the land should be tithed (Leviticus 27:30), but they would tithe even the fragrant plant, and pass over justice and the love of God as if these were unworthy of notice. Such would not rob a child of a pin, but they would unblushingly rob God of their whole life. "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Samuel 15:22). By their fruits ye shall know them; they stand up stoutly for orders and forms of worship, while they pass over the promises of God and the power of the Holy Ghost. They will argue vehemently for the rules of the Church, and pass over the law of the spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus. He is very particular in adapting certain tunes to certain psalms, but it concerns him nothing as to whether he himself is reconciled to God and adapted to the kingdom of Heaven. He could not pass the plate at the Church door without putting something into it, but he can pass through a whole service without giving to God one grateful feeling for the gift of His Son. They pass over the Love of God.

IV. He seeks self-glorification through his religious profession. "Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues," etc. (Luke 11:43). The hypocrite is religious, but only so far as it will help to honour himself and minister to his vanity. He has no thought of adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour, but he seeks to be adorned by the doctrine. If he holds office in the Church it is that it may add to his dignity. He would appropriate all the privileges purchased by the agony and death of the Son of God for the exaltation of his own deceitful self. He is seldom out of his place in the house of prayer, but his god is himself. It is not the synagogue or church that he loves so much as those "uppermost seats" that help to lift him up. He will be very zealous in religion if he can thereby gain the flattery of others. He is one who sits in the place of God, and who robs Him of His honour and glory. A hypocrite, it has been said, is "like a glow-worm, it seems to have both light and heat, but when you touch it it has neither."

V. His real character is loathsome, although it appears not in the sight of men. "Woe unto you, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them" (Luke 11:44). Those who walked over or passed by those whited sepulchres little thought of the foulness and rottenness that were inside. "Within, full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness" (Matthew 23:27). A sow that is washed is only a washed sow. A hypocrite may manage by his white-washing to give no offence to his fellow-man, but God looketh upon the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). Be not deceived, God is not mocked; the hidden man of the heart is naked and bare before the eyes of the Lord, and that is the man that must give his account unto God (Psalms 7:9). The hypocrite lives for that which is "highly esteemed among men," but this is "an abomination in the sight of God" (Luke 16:15). Your woe, O hypocrite, is coming, for hath not the Lord Jesus Christ said, "I am He which searcheth the hearts?" (Revelation 2:23). What wilt thou do on that solemn day? A GREAT FAILURE.

Luke 12:13-21.

"Give us Thy grace to rise above

The glare of this world's smelting fires;

Let God's great love put out the love

Of gold, and gain, and low desires.

Still sweetly rings the Gospel strain

Of golden store that knows no rust;

The love of Christ is more than gain,

And heavenly crowns than yellow dust."

-Alexander.

This parable of the rich and prosperous fool was given to rebuke the covetousness of the man who said to the Master, "Speak to my brother that he divide the inheritance with me." But the Lord could see that under the mask of justice there gleamed the greedy eye. Who made Me a judge or divider over you? Take heed and beware of covetousness, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. This socialistic brother, who wanted the inheritance

divided, misunderstood the mission of Christ, who came to save us from our sins. But the time is coming when He will be made both Judge and Divider over all the earth, for He shall judge His people and divide to every man according to his works. In turning our attention to the "certain man" referred to in the parables we would note his-

I. Prosperous Condition. "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully" (Luke 12:16). He was on the highway to worldly honour and applause. "For men will praise thee when thou dost well thyself" (Psalms 49:18). He was evidently a land proprietor, the ground seemingly belonged to himself. He could pull down his barns at will, without consulting any one. The day of prosperity is perhaps a greater test to a man's character than the day of adversity. The Rev. Mr. Jay once had this request handed to him: "The prayers of this congregation are asked for a man who is prospering in trade." He needed them.

II. Present Dilemma. "He thought within himself, saying, What shall I do?" (Luke 12:17). Ah! this thought within himself was not hid from Him who is a discerner of the hearts of men. He had probably just gone for his night's rest, after having surveyed those fields so heavily laden with a plentiful harvest. The vision of lavish abundance is before his eyes, the tide of good fortune is coming in like a flood. "What shall I do?" He is quite unconscious of the tremendous importance of this crisis. What he does now will fix and determine his eternal character. Let us also take heed.

III. Settled Purpose. "He said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns and build greater" (Luke 12:18). The die is cast. He is weighed in the balance and found wanting. There is no recognition of God in all his plans, no acknowledgment of His goodness. God is not in all his thoughts. He has made the greatest miscalculation that any scheming mortal can make in allowing the Giver of all no place in his reckoning. We may deliberately vote God out of our lives by our "This will I do," but every "I will" of self has to do with the "Thou wilt" of God (Acts 9:6).

IV. Self-Congratulation. "And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods; . . . take thine ease," etc. (Luke 12:19). This rich pauper's life was entirely absorbed in his own selfish ease and gratification. A self-centred life is for ever a lost life. "Much goods." O, soul, be these thy gods? They will certainly be deaf and dumb to thy cry in a famishing eternity (Luke 16:19-25). The writer once received a one-pound note with these words written on the back of it, "This is the best friend I ever had." So that poor unknown soul had to part with his best friend. Not so with those who have the living unchanging Christ as their Friend.

V. Terrible Awakening. "But God said unto him, Fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee" (Luke 12:20). This sudden handwriting of God on the wall of his self-satisfied soul was a fearful interruption to his godless plans. This night "they require thy soul" (R.V., margin). They! Who? They by whose spirit he had been ruled (Ephesians 2:2), and to whom he had yielded himself a willing servant (Romans 6:16). God does not require such world-sodden souls in the kingdom of Heaven. "Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches" (Psalms 52:7). Covetousness is a kind of lunacy that makes men fools in the sight of God. Blessed are they who are fools for Christ. Then notice lastly-

VI. The Lord's Application. "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:21). To make it our life's business to live only for self-interest is pure unadulterated madness. Not to be rich toward God when He hath brought within our reach the "unsearchable

riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:8); riches of His grace and glory is to play the fool. Sell not your soul's birthright to heavenly and eternal treasure for the "much goods" of this world, which, if you set your heart on them, will only be to you as Esau's mess of pottage. There is a poverty that maketh rich (2 Corinthians 6:10). "Covet earnestly the best gifts" (1 Corinthians 12:31).

LESSONS FROM A BANKRUPT.

Luke 12:22-34.

"Heart-buried in the rubbish of the world-

The world, that gulph of souls, immortal souls."

-Young.

Our Lord never lost an opportunity of letting the light of truth shine into dark sin-beclouded souls. He had just spoken the parable of "a certain rich man" to expose the sin and folly of covetousness. Then, in these verses quoted above, He presses home upon the hearts of "His disciples" the needlessness of harassing anxiety about worldly and material things. The "rich man" who suddenly died a spiritual pauper should teach us to lay up treasures in Heaven. The Great Teacher come from God bases his application on a sevenfold argument-

I. The Value of Life. We should not be troubled with anxious thoughts about our life, for "the life is more than meat" (Luke 12:22-23). We do not live to eat, but eat to live, and life is the gift of God. This thought is specially precious to the children of God by faith. They have been made partakers of the divine nature, a new creation, through the incoming of this new and eternal life. This life is surely more than the meat that supplies it with fresh energy. Your life, as the followers and servants of Christ, is of more value to Him than the food and raiment needed to sustain that life. Therefore take no thought for your life. He who gives the greater will not fail in the less. "Cast all your care upon Him" (1 Peter 5:7).

II. The Manner of the Ravens. "Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, . . . and God feedeth them; . . . ye are better than fowls" (Luke 12:24). The second reason Christ gives us why we should rest ourselves in God, concerning the things of this present life, is, "God feedeth the ravens, and ye are better than they." They were not redeemed by the Blood of His Son, nor called with an holy calling. The ravens, with neither "storehouse nor barn," were happily unconscious of their poverty; the rich man who would "pull down his barns and build greater" (Luke 12:18) was equally unconscious of his spiritual bankruptcy. The raven's ignorance is its bliss; the rich man's ignorance was his curse. Christ's next argument is drawn from-

III. The Growth of the Lilies. "Consider the lilies how they grow. ... If God so clothe the grass, . . . how much more you?" (Luke 12:27-28). If God clothes and adorns the grass that may go to the oven to-morrow with the lilies, how much more carefully will He clothe you who are going into the Father's house above? The lily-glory of the grass was greater than Solomon's; the righteousness which is unto all, and upon all who believe is the righteousness of God. Therefore, with regard to supply and adorning, the disciples of Christ must rest in the Lord. This rest does not mean idleness (1 Timothy 5:8). Neither can it mean failure (Php_4:19).

IV. The Knowledge of the Father. "Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things" (Luke 12:30). Oh, the sweetness of these words to the care-burdened heart! "Your Father knoweth." Coming as they do from the lips of Him who is the eternal Son, they are unspeakably precious, for He does know the deep, real love and faithfulness of the Father's heart toward those who are His blood-bought children. Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. Then why harass your hearts with anxious thoughts about them, as if your Father neither knew nor cared about your need? If you can say, "The Lord is my Shepherd," you may confidently add, "I shall not want." Be content, for He hath said, "I will never leave thee" (Hebrews 13:5).

V. The Promise of Christ. "Seek ye the Kingdom of God, and all these things will be added unto you" (Luke 12:31). Those who seek first the Kingdom of God as the object of the soul's life will have all those things which "the nations of the world seek after" added as a matter of course and of necessity. It is a small matter to give the clothing when we have parted with the child. Those things which the restless worldling seek after are to be added to the servants of God as things that are as needful for the life as the sunshine of Heaven or the air we breathe. Solomon asked that he might have understanding, for the Kingdom of God's sake, and there was added both riches and honour (1 Kings 3:11-13). Godliness has the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come (1 Timothy 4:8).

VI. The Littleness of the Flock. "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom" (Luke 12:32). The more weak and helpless the child is the more love and care will the mother lavish upon it. Our felt and confessed weakness is the secret of our spiritual strength (2 Corinthians 12:10). It is not to those wise in their own eyes, but "unto babes," to whom the Father reveals His great and precious secrets, and for this Jesus was thankful (Matthew 11:25-26). It is the poor of this world that are most frequently the rich in faith (James 2:5). The flock may be very little, as the word means, but the pleasure of the Father-Shepherd towards them is very good. Therefore, take no anxious thought about your life.

VII. The Character of the Heart. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Luke 12:34). It is not so much what the treasure is as where it is that determines the nature of it. The human heart has always a something that is dearly coveted as treasure. So the affections of the heart and that real or imaginary treasure will always be wedded together. Seeing, then, that the things needful for this present life are freely promised us, we are thereby relieved from any anxious thought about them, that we might be entirely free to set our whole hearts' affections on things above (John 8:36). "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it" (John 2:5).

HE IS COMING.

Luke 12:35-48.

"Thou art coming, O my Saviour!

Thou art coming, O my King!

In Thy beauty all resplendent,

In Thy glory all transcendent,

Well may we rejoice and sing.

Coming in the opening east,

Herald brightness slowly swells;

Coming! O my glorious Priest,

Hear we not Thy golden bells."-Havergal. In this portion there are several lessons which are of tremendous importance in these latter days in which we live. We learn that-

I. The Lord is Coming. "He will return from the wedding" (Luke 12:36). This is not the coming of death-at death we go to Him-but the coming of the "Lord Himself," who said, "I will come again" (John 14:3). Were the disciples not told by the heavenly messenger that "this same Jesus shall in like manner come again?" (Acts 1:11).

II. He will Come like a Thief (Luke 12:39). He will come suddenly, like lightning (Matthew 24:27), and like a thief, unexpectedly to the many. A thief would never think of telling the day and the hour when he was coming to break through and steal. The day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night. This terrible Christ-dishonouring night is fast settling down upon us. "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief" (1 Thessalonians 5:2-6).

III. We should be Looking for Him. "Blessed are those whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching" (Luke 12:37). We are not to look for death, but for the "glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us" (Titus 2:13). It is said to the credit of the Thessalonian converts that they "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from Heaven." Do we not always watch and long for the return of loved ones when they go away from us for a season? If Christ is precious to us we cannot but look and long for His personal appearing.

IV. We should be Ready to Meet Him. "Be ye therefore ready" (Luke 12:40). This readiness consists in having our "loins girded and our lamps burning" (Luke 12:35). The "girding" and the "burning" speaks of teaching and testimony, the twofold need of these latter days, when many are turning away from the faith and giving heed to fables and the traditions of men which make the Word of God of none effect (Mark 7:13). The loins of the mind are to be "girt about with Truth," the speculations of critics will never do this. The lamp of life is to be trimmed and brightly burning through the oil of the Holy Spirit.

V. The Faithful shall be Rewarded when He Comes (Luke 12:41-44). All the servants of Christ are "stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Corinthians 4:1), and as such are expected to give to the household of faith "their portion of meat in due season." We, as servants, "must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive according to that he hath done" (2 Corinthians 5:10). His "Well done," will never be spoken to those who have lived only for themselves. A selfish life is a cowardly God-dishonouring existence. Such verily have their reward.

VI. The Unfaithful shall Suffer Loss at His Coming.

He will be cut asunder, separated from the faithful ones, and appointed the portion of the unbelieving (Luke 12:46). The portion of the unfaithful is shameful disappointment (1 John 2:28). Looking for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ has a powerful effect upon the daily life. It was the man who said, "My lord delayeth his coming," that began to smite his fellow-servants (Luke 12:45).

Children in school will be on their good behaviour when they know that the master is just at the door, coming in. It is possible to be saved and yet to suffer the loss of every reward by having our works burned up in the fire of His testing judgment (1 Corinthians 3:12-15). But there will be degrees of punishment, because there are degrees of privilege. To whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required (Luke 12:47-48). Whether the stripes be many or few, the Judge of all the earth shall do right. Let us praise His Name, "that with His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).
THE BARREN FIG-TREE.

Luke 13:6-9.

"Praise, O Lord, for grace bestowed,

If fair graces in me have showed;

Praise for growth as of leaf or flower

By Thy Spirit's quickening power;

But fruit, 'much fruit,' O Lord, I ask

As 'neath Thy sweet shining I bask;

Enrich me as I urge my suit,

With nothing less than plenteous fruit." The Jews as a nation were more highly favoured than any other. Taken out of barren Egypt and planted by the hand of God in fertile Canaan, with all the care and protection that divine wisdom and power could bestow, much fruit was naturally expected. But the heart of Him who planted was grieved and disappointed. For three years God in Christ sought fruit and found none. Yet the compassionate Saviour interceded, crying, "Father, forgive them" (Luke 23:34). And though spared for a season to get the "digging" of His teaching and proofs of His resurrection, yet remaining in unbelief they were cut off (Romans 11:20). Cumberers will not always be permitted in His vineyard. This parable contains solemn and searching lessons for every Christian.

I. The Tree Mentioned. Observe its-

1. Hopeful Character. "A fig-tree" (Luke 13:6). It is the right kind of a tree for a garden. It was a fruit tree. It belonged without doubt to a valuable class of trees. None could dispute its good connection. This fig-tree represents one who has been born from above, who has received a new nature, and who is a new creature, one who belongs to the family of God. He is perfectly assured of his honourable connection. Once he had another name and a more disreputable character, but now he is classed as a Christian.

2. Great Privilege. "Planted in the vineyard" (Luke 13:6). This fig-tree did not grow by the wayside. It was more highly favoured. It was chosen by the Lord of the vineyard and carefully planted in the most favourable place, under the immediate eye and hand of the skilful dresser, and within the enclosure of the separating walls. In short, it was chosen, planted, supplied, and protected. Such is the privilege of every chosen one. "I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should bring forth fruit" (John 15:16). Ye are the Lord's planting, and in the place of blessing has He put you "by the rivers of water" (Psalms 1:3).

3. Barren Condition. "Fruitless" (Luke 13:7). Fruit sought and none found. Is it possible? A fruit tree in a vineyard and yet no fruit? Quite possible, and, alas, far too common. Then who is to blame? Neither the dresser nor the ground, but the tree, which refuses or neglects to rise up to its great privilege. It was planted there not for an ornament, not merely to be fed, but to bear fruit, failing this all is failure. It might boast of its life, leaves, and opportunities, but there is nothing to satisfy the Lord. Many are fruitless Christians just for the same reason. Failing to prove their nature by their fruits they fail to rise to their high calling. The Lord seeks fruit, and has a right to expect it from every fruit-tree in His vineyard. Your presence in the vineyard proves His claim.

II. The Master's Complaint. "Behold these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree" (Luke 13:7). From His own language we have suggested three thoughts. His-

1. Long suffering Grace. "These three years." (Luke 13:7). "He is long suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish" (2 Peter 3:9). The three years suggest something like a threefold failure. Yet hitherto no judgment was passed. It stands by grace alone. How his heart must have been grieved at seeing such great grace bestowed in vain, or worse, only used for self-aggrandisement. How is it with you? What about all your privileges? Has the Master found fruit in your life? He, no doubt, has been seeking fruit. How long is it since you was converted, or planted in the vineyard? Have you only been a receiver, drinking up the sap and the sunshine of His gifts, while he, the Master, receives nothing? Oh, ungrateful heart!

2. Wearied Patience. "Cut it down" (Luke 13:9). "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick" (Isaiah 7:13). The trees in the vineyard are judged by their works, those outside by their nature. By our works are we justified or condemned. Fruit-bearing constitutes the only title we have to our continuance in the vineyard (Isaiah 15:2). "My Spirit will not always strive with men." Privileges abused will be privileges lost. He that hid his lord's money lost it, and suffered besides. Shall we sin that grace may abound? God forbid! for the grace of God teacheth us to deny ungodliness and to live soberly and righteously in this present world. Mere lip profession will not save us from becoming a castaway as a servant (1 Corinthians 9:27).

3. Solemn Question. "Why cumbereth it the ground?" Every fruitless tree is a cumberer. Why should it be a hindrance? Who can reply against this? Who can defend the fruitless? Every unfruitful professor is a burden and a hindrance. Their roots, or motives, get intertwined with those of the fruit-bearing, and drink up that which should have gone to the fruit-making. And how often we spread forth our barren branches over others, hindering the bright sunshine, and so affect their fruit-bearing. The inconsistencies of professing Christians have been the destruction of much fruit; they act as a biting frost upon the tender bud.

III. The Dresser's Intercession. He-

1. Pleads for More Grace. "This year also" (Luke 13:8). How interesting that he who had been at all the labour and watchfulness, without receiving any credit or honour through it, should yet advocate its cause and plead in its name. Here Jesus is seen, and His voice is heard. He maketh continual intercession for us. "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world" (John 17:15). That some Christians are still in the place of fruit-bearing, but in a barren condition, living only for self, how much is this owing to the priestly work of Jesus? "This year also." This may be your last.

2. Promises More Work. "I shall dig about it, and dung it" (Luke 13:8). This speaks of grace more abundantly. If fruit is found at all it must be the result of grace alone. Other trees are not to be impoverished for the sake of this, hence the extra digging, etc. The unfruitful Christian has often been perplexed and amazed at the unusual digging about the roots of his being, which looked very much like a removal at the time. Such times of affliction and trial are solemn warnings. They seem to whisper, "More fruit," or less privilege. The shaking of the roots indicate the presence of the Gardener. After the digging comes the additional supply.

3. Agrees that the Results should be Final. "After that" (Luke 13:9). Oh, how very solemn is this "after that!" This is known only to themselves, the owner and the dresser. The last effort grace may expend in order to fruitbearing may be a season of affliction, a searching sermon, or some providential incident. In the case of many this may have already taken place. The present may be the brief season of His waiting. Waiting on God, and God waiting on us, are widely different thoughts. The fruit of a fig-tree is figs, the fruit of a Christian is Christ.

MADE STRAIGHT.

Luke 13:10-16.

"I would not champ the hard cold bit As thou-of what the world thinks fit, But take God's freedom, using it."

-E. B. Browning.

Coleridge's definition of freedom is, "The unfettered use of all the powers which God for use hath given." Before all the powers that God hath given us can be used for Him the fetters of sin and the power of Satan must be broken. The woman before us here, "whom Satan had bound," and whom Christ set at liberty, is a perfect example of how a sin-bound soul may enter into the freedom of God. She was-

I. Crooked. "Bowed together" (Luke 13:11). She had been bound by Satan for eighteen years (Luke 13:16). Completely deformed by the power of the Devil. It is always Satan's business, wherever he can, to bow down the souls of men to the earth. Sin never fails to make a crook in the will and thoughts of those under its dominion. Their name is legion, who are so bound together by the love of the world that they cannot lift their faces to Heaven. Crooked through the constant use of the muck-rake.

II. Helpless. "She could in no wise lift up herself" (Luke 13:11). It was utterly impossible for her to break the cords that bound her face to the earth. She had been so long bowed down that her deformity had become fixed, like a crooked tree of eighteen years old. She was perfectly conscious of her outward disfigurement, and had often tried to straighten herself up, but "she could not." How like this is to those who are morally "bowed together" through drink, lust, or temper, and who again and again have attempted to lift themselves up, but they cannot, back they go to their natural deformity.

III. Anxious. She was in the synagogue on the Sabbath day, when Jesus was there (Luke 13:10-11). Perhaps it was because He was there that she was there; at anyrate she was putting herself in the way of getting blessing. It does not matter where we take our sin-crooked souls, there is no deliverance for them so long as we avoid the presence of the Son of God and refuse to

hear His Word. If Bartimeus had bolted over the fence when he heard that Jesus was passing by, instead of praying, he would have certainly remained in his blindness.

IV. Invited. "Jesus called her to Him" (Luke 13:12). He saw many in the synagogue, but He called her, for He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. The Spirit of the Lord was upon Him to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound (Isaiah 61:1). True to His mission, He searches out this helpless one "whom Satan had bound, lo, these eighteen years." Jesus Christ alone hath the keys of all the prison houses of Satan (Revelation 1:18). When He opens no man can shut.

V. Touched. "He laid His hands on her" (Luke 13:13). Jesus Christ comes into personal contact with every soul whom He saves. He cannot delegate this great work to another. He is ready to lay His healing and fetter-breaking hand upon all who accept His invitation, as this poor woman did. The woman mentioned in Luke 8:44 came without any special invitation, and touched His garment, and was instantly delivered. The results are the same, whether He condescends to touch us, or suffers us to touch Him, it is all of grace on His part. His hands are the hands of infinite love and power, they are never exercised in vain.

VI. Delivered. Notice the terms used, "Loosed from thine infirmity,... made straight,... loosed from this bond" (Luke 13:12). It was to her a full salvation. It consisted of a deliverance from her own weakness, a freedom from the binding power of Satan, and a being made straight for future life and work. She was now a monument of His gracious wonder-working power. Such is His salvation. A loosing of the soul from the bondage of Satan and moral infirmity, and a making of the heart straight for an upright life and loving service. Therefore the song of the saved is, "Unto Him who loved us, and... loosed us from our sin by His own blood" (Revelation 1:5, R.V.).

VII. Thankful. "Immediately she glorified God" (Luke 13:13). A new song was put into her mouth as soon as her feet had been taken out of the horrible pit of her eighteen years' bondage through Satan (Psalms 40:2-3). The snare was broken by the power of Him who came "to heal all that were oppressed by the Devil" (Acts 10:38), and now her soul had escaped like a bird, and was singing her song of praise high up in the wide, pure Heaven of God's redeeming love. THE GREAT SUPPER.

Luke 14:16-24.

"My need, and all ray need, Thou wilt supply;

I take Thee at Thy Word, and ask not why."

-Grosart.

The supper time is this present dispensation. The supper refers to the blessings and privileges provided for men in the sacrifice of God's Son. The many bidden (Luke 14:16) are the Jews who received the first invitation, and who had been advised a long time beforehand. The excuses are the silly objections brought by them against Jesus and His claims. The poor and maimed are the publicans and sinners among both Jew and Gentile who accepted the invitation. Those compelled to come in from the highways and hedges are the strangers afar off who had no hope. Those who shall never taste of this supper are the unbelieving Jewish nation, who have been "cut off" (Acts 13:46; Romans 11:20). Such may be the dispensational teaching of the parable, but let us look at

some practical thoughts. A- I. Threefold Reason for Coming.

1. "Come, for all things are now ready." "All things." Every spiritual and temporal blessing for time and eternity is now ready in Christ Jesus. We often see a notice about some new book being in the press or now ready. Here is an advertisement that all things pertaining to a sinner's salvation is "now ready." Do you need a substitute? Then behold the Lamb of God. Do you need forgiveness? Then this is ready (Acts 13:38). Do you need peace? Then "Peace is made," etc. Do you need power? Then "Power is offered" (Acts 1:8).

2. "Come, for all classes are invited." Surely these four classes include all sorts. First, the poor-those who feed on stale scraps, and who have never known what it is to have a thoroughly satisfying feast. Those who go from door to door of the world's pleasure-haunts, begging for something to satisfy and getting nothing. Second, the maimed-those who have been deprived of some of their limbs, and have become hopelessly mutilated. Morally, this class represents those whose conscience has been seared, and whose will-power may have been cut off. What a helpless object! Yet come, for all things are ready. Third, the halt-those who have all their limbs, but in a crooked and deformed condition, whose manner of walk is neither straight nor steady. They do their best to appear all right, but they cannot possibly conceal their deformity. Fourth, the blind-those who can walk pretty straight, but are in the blackness of darkness all the time. Their outward life may be all right in the eyes of men, but they know not where they are going and are unconscious of their danger. You may explain the truth to them, but their answer is, "I cannot see it."

3. "Come, for yet there is room." The house is being rapidly filled, but yet there is room. How much room still remains none can tell. We know not the hour when the Master may rise up and shut to the door. Yet there is room -room in the Father's love, in the Saviour's atoning death, in the ministry of the Spirit, and in the offer of the Gospel.

II. Threefold Excuse for not Coming. To put them briefly, they may stand thus-

1. "I have something else to see." "I have bought a piece of ground, and must needs go and see it" (Luke 14:18). Why is it that men must needs go and see after their earthly possessions, and have no time to look at the provision God hath made for their eternal safety and inheritance? There are certainly many interesting things in the world to be seen, but what can be compared to the saving glory of the Cross of Christ?

2. "I have something else to do." "I must go to prove them" (Luke 14:19). He was more anxious to prove the oxen than to prove the riches of the kingly offer. Some people seem to think that the time to obey the call of God will be when they have nothing else to do. There are those who will persist in going on proving their own worldly interests until they finally prove themselves to be fools. While they are "busy here and there" their chance for eternal life is gone.

3. "I have something else to enjoy." "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come" (Luke 14:20). All new relationships, whether they be business or matrimonial, are sure to have a powerful influence in one way or another. There may be no sin in marrying a wife, in buying a house, in forming a new companionship, or looking forward to some coming event; but if the affections of the heart are so centred on these that the Gospel of God's grace must take a secondary place, then the life becomes a positive insult to the Son of God. God will not be

mocked, He has emphatically declared that those who treat lightly His gracious invitation "Shall not taste of My supper." They who prefer to make their own suppers in time will in the end feel the pinch of that poverty which is eternal. No man has ever yet been able to form a God-satisfying excuse for not accepting His Son as their Saviour. It is you God invites, not your excuses; these can never stand for you. THE LOST SHEEP.

Luke 15:1-7.

"Blame not thy thought, that it cannot reach,

That which the Infinite must teach;

Bless thy God, that the Word came nigh,

To guide thee home to thy native sky."-MacDonald. The murmuring of self-righteous scribes and Pharisees drew from our Lord those three pet parables that have brought healing under their wings to many a sin-laden soul. They said sneeringly, "This man receiveth sinners," and with merciless feet they sought to trample on the grace of Christ. But all the more did this "plant of renown" send forth its heavenly fragrance. The obvious meaning of this parable is to reveal Christ's personal interest in the salvation of sinners. It brings before us-

I. A Painful Discovery. "One is lost" (Luke 15:4). Whether this one represents a world, a nation, or an individual, the underlying thought is that the Shepherd's restfulness of heart has been disturbed by the discovery that He has lost one. The lost one immediately draws out the sympathy and longing desires of His soul. When this discovery on Christ's part was first made it may be difficult to say (Ephesians 1:4), but it has been made.

II. An Altered Purpose. "He leaves the ninety and nine, and goes after that which was lost" (Luke 15:4). He counted ninety and nine, but He did not count the lost one. To be out of His count is to be lost. The ninety and nine left in the wilderness may represent the Jewish nation, who are in the wilderness still, being without a Shepherd and without a home-a separated people, having neither king nor country, and priding themselves in their righteousness. But the Shepherd of Israel goes forth in humiliation, agony, and death to seek and save that which was lost. He does not seek the lost sheep merely because of its value, but because of His love. Fallen angels might have been of more value than fallen man, but God so loved the world.

III. A Patient Search. "He goes after the lost until He finds" (Luke 15:4). There is no turning back with Him until His purposes are fully accomplished. "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." Christ's determination is to find the lost ones, and every lost one He will yet find, if not in His saving mercy certainly in His righteous judgment. Has He not said, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me" (John 12:32). If sinful men are not drawn to Him by the grace of His Cross they will be drawn by the power of His throne. Every human soul the atoning Son of God must find, either as Saviour or as Judge. Don't you hear the gentle footfall of His blessed presence in His Word even now?

IV. A Joyful Finding. "When He hath found it He laveth it on His shoulders rejoicing" (Luke 15:5). To find the lost, while He is a seeking Saviour, brings gladness to His gracious heart. Oh, the infinite tenderness of this self-sacrificing Shepherd! there is no word of reproach or of blame uttered. What a wonderful moment this is when the weary sin-worn sinner finds himself alone with

the gentle Shepherd, and feels His tender yet mighty hands raising him up into the great bosom of love! At this blessed crisis the sheep is everything to the Shepherd and the Shepherd is everything to the sheep. Each rejoicing in each, and having nothing else besides. What a picture of the great salvation! Until the lost ones meet the Saviour they are living solitary, selfish, hopeless lives.

V. A Restful Journey. "He layeth it on His shoulders" (Luke 15:5). The weary, aimless wanderer has now found a resting-place on the shoulders of Him who came to seek and to save. The Lord neither drives nor drags those whom He saves, but undertakes to carry them every step of the way to the home beyond. The way of salvation for this lost one was very simple-just "abiding." The sheep did absolutely nothing but rest on Him who was able and willing to save. His shoulders is the place of strength and safety; the government of the universe rests upon them, then surely they are strong and broad enough for thy weary soul.

VI. A Happy Home. "When He cometh home, He calleth His friends,... saying, Rejoice with me" (Luke 15:6). As surely as the Shepherd goes home, so surely will He take His trustful sheep with Him. "Where I am, there shall ye be also" (John 14:3). While in the wilderness, seeking to save the lost, the Son of Man was away from home. But He comes back rejoicing, bringing. His sheaves with Him. The "friends and the neighbours" may represent the redeemed; and the angels in glory, who must be everlastingly interested in all that glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ as the Saviour of men. Are we sharing Heaven's joy just now by rejoicing with Him over sinners repenting? THE LOST SILVER.

Luke 15:8-10.

"I would be missed when gone;

I would not-my life done-

Have no eyes wet for me,

No hearts touched tenderly

No good of me confessed;

Dead-and yet not missed."

There is no exaggeration or false colouring in the word-picture of this heavenly artist. Every touch bears the impress of what is absolutely true. The pictures of ordinary mortals look best in the shade, but Christ's always improve in loveliness as the light increases. This little gem of a parable has been lightly esteemed, because its true meaning and value have not been generally understood. In the first parable we have the Love of the Son in seeking the lost; in the third the love of the Father in seeking the lost; in this second we surely have the love of the Spirit in seeking the lost. The woman is a fit emblem of the Holy Spirit in search of a lost but precious thing that might be put to some honourable use. The small silver coin referred to here was a drachma, about the value of a shilling. As representing a human soul, we would point out that it was-

I. Precious. To a poor woman, whose fortune consisted of ten shillings, it was a great privation to lose one. It was a loss that was keenly felt. It also bore the image of the king, and so was good current coin. Such are souls redeemed by Christ in the estimation of the Holy Spirit. They are

precious to Him, and fit for circulation in the interests of the Kingdom of God.

II. Lost. It had slipped out of her hand, so that now she had no control over it. It is a sad, sad thing for any one who has known what it is to be in the hand of the Spirit to slip out of touch with Him through pride or unbelief. To be out of His hand is to be lost to Him. The fall may have been in a moment, but the grief created was intense. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit, whereby ye are sealed until the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30).

III. Lost in the House. It was not like the sheep, lost far away from home. It was in the house, but as utterly useless as if it had been in the depths of the sea. It is possible to be in the house of God's salvation, in the place of safety and privilege, and yet to be lost to the management of the Holy Ghost. It is one thing to be justified by faith before God; it is quite another to be ready for service in the hand of God. We may be in the home of the Spirit for salvation, and yet not be in the hand of the Spirit for service.

IV. Lost to Usefulness. As long as this silver coin was not in the hand and at the disposal of this woman it was lost to all the good it might do. If you throw a sovereign into the sea it would not be only so much gold that would be lost, but all the good that gold might do is lost. So is it with our lives after we have been brought into the household of God. If we are not in the hands of the Holy Spirit, that He might use us by spending us for the glory of God, then our lives are lost. Christ seeks to save, but the Holy Spirit seeks to find that He might use. No one is able to get so much out of our lives as He. Be assured He will spend you to the best advantage, whether it be at home or abroad.

V. Lost in the Dust and Darkness. In seeking to find she had to "light a candle and sweep the house." The candle of God's Word and the besom of providence are needed before He can get a hold of His lost treasure. The dust of sin and the darkness of unbelief always hinder the Spirit of God from rejoicing over us as a means in His hands for bringing glory to the Lord Jesus Christ. Though the sweeping process may be attended with much that is painfully unpleasant, as the dust of our unconfessed sin gets stirred up and the covering of our guilty darkness is being taken away, there must be a disturbance in the house if the Lord the Spirit is to get possession of His lost treasure.

VI. The Cause of Great Joy in the Finding. "Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost" (Luke 15:9). As Jesus, the Shepherd, rejoices over the saving of the sinner, so the Holy Spirit, like this woman, rejoices over the recovery of a precious soul that had been lost to communion and service. It is worthy of notice that the woman does not say, "My piece which was lost." The very omission of the my (see Luke 15:6, Luke 15:24) is strong evidence that the work of the Holy Spirit is here indicated. Believers are the property of Christ, but are to be used by the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). THE LOST SON.

Luke 15:11-24.

"Alas! how have I served the Devil,

Still lusting after all things evil;

For, O my God, I saw the light,

Yet plunged into the foulest night." In studying the three parables (so-called) in this chapter we should not overlook the fact that they were spoken by our Lord as one parable (Luke 15:3) to show how God, as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost "receives sinners" and companies with them. The Son, like the shepherd, seeks the lost that He might save them; the Spirit, like the woman, seeks the lost that He might use them; God, like the father, seeks the lost that He might have fellowship with them. This is the threefold aspect of this great and perfect salvation. This parable of the prodigal has been called "the prince of parables." It has been the door of hope to many a weary wanderer. Let us consider his-

I. Selfish Demand. "Give me the portion of goods" (Luke 15:12). Like many in our own day, he wanted to have all the goods and blessings that the father could give him, that they might minister to his own personal gratification, utterly regardless of the father's wisdom or feelings. It is dishonouring to God that we should seek to manage our own lives with His gifts.

II. Wayward Journey. "Into a far country" (Luke 15:13). The "far country" represents that condition or sphere of living where God the Father is unknown. A son must have got into an awful sad and sinful state of soul when he feels that he must leave a rich and gracious father in search of pleasure. The self-will is a rebel against God.

III. Reckless Living. "And there wasted his substance" (Luke 15:13). The sweet fellowship of the father was exchanged for the "riotous living" of the ungodly, and the result was, as it ever is with a backslider from God, a wasting of His precious gifts. We cannot keep the substance of God's forgiveness-peace and joy-when we wilfully forsake Him for the pleasures of sin. All will be wasted; the enjoyment of them will speedily die away.

IV. Miserable Plight. "When he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine" (Luke 15:14). A "mighty famine" is sure to overtake all who have wandered away from God. Hunger of soul will certainly come upon those who spend their gifts for that which is not bread. He found out by bitter experience that "the rebellious dwell in a dry land."

V. Despairing Effort. "He went and joined himself to a citizen" (Luke 15:15). He had willingly given away his substance, now he is compelled to give himself. Such is the course of sin. If we waste our gifts and privileges we ourselves will finally become bond-slaves. Lot took the same foolish and fruitless step when he became a ruler in Sodom.

VI. Friendless Condition. "No man gave unto him" (Luke 15:16). He had sold himself for naught. Wretched and self-ruined, he longs for even the satisfaction enjoyed by the beast, envying the swine. "No man gave him." No man ever will give a sin-wasted sinner what he needs. You might as well expect heat from an iceberg.

VII. Noble Resolve. "I will arise and go to my father" (Luke 15:18). This is the language of one whose pride had driven him to acts of madness, but is now "come to himself." He remembers the "father's house" and the provision there, and the fire of hope springs up from the smouldering embers of his wasted life.

"While the lamp holds on to burn.

The greatest sinner may return."

He not only said "I will arise," but he did it. Herein was the evidence of his sanity.

VIII. Gracious Reception. "He fell on his neck and kissed him" (Luke 15:20). The father's love at once cast out the prodigal's fears. He began to confess, but his coming home was to the father the best confession. What value is there in confession if there is no turning away from sin? (Isaiah 55:7). No one gave him in the far country, but now all that the father hath is at his disposal. By taking his portion he had forfeited all right to further blessing, but he is saved by grace, and the father is happy. "By grace are ye saved through faith" (Ephesians 2:8). His grace is sufficient for all who come.

LOST SYMPATHY.

Luke 15:25-32.

"I ask Thee for a thoughtful love,

Through constant watching wise,

To meet the glad with joyful smiles,

And wipe the weeping eyes;

And a heart at leisure from itself,

To soothe and sympathise."-A. L. Waring. In its wider scope we think this part of the parable (the elder brother) is brought in to illustrate the attitude of the Jewish nation towards that manifested grace of God which hath brought salvation to all men. The Gentile prodigal is being saved by grace, while the self-righteous Jew is angry and will not go in. Yet all the while, whether he will or not, this religious elder is the prodigal's brother- both alike in need of the Father's forgiveness. There are some things about this elder brother, so often neglected, that are worthy of special attention. He stands before us here as one-

I. Who was Willing to Work. "Now his elder son was in the field" (Luke 15:25). Whatever else he was, he was not lazy, he had a mind to work. While others were feasting and dancing he was busy looking after the flocks or the crops. He is a type of those who like to be doing, and whose hands are constantly filled with some kind of good and useful work. So active are they that they would much rather be in the field of service than in the closet of prayer.

II. Faithful to Duty. He could say, "Neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment" (Luke 15:29), and he was quick to say it. As regularly as the clock, does he go the round of his daily task. His motto is, "I must do my duty." This type of Christian is as straight as an arrow, as regular as the post, and equally as formal. He speaks and acts from a sense of duty and prides himself on doing the right thing, although it may be done with a heart as cold as an icicle. The other brother was the sinner, but this one is the Pharisee (Luke 18:11). It is not duty but love that constrains the true servant of Christ.

III. Who had never Received a Mirth-making Gift from the Father. "Thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends" (Luke 15:29). The reason why he had never received even a kid was doubtless because that in his self-complacency he had never asked it nor even felt the need of it. He was working away without ever seeking any definite token of the father's grace

and love, serving without receiving his mirth-making gift. What about those who week by week go the round of religious performances, but have never at any time received the soul-gladdening gift of God (John 1:12). It was not the father's fault that his son's service had been so joyless. "Ask and ye shall receive" (John 16:24). It is honouring to the Lord Jesus Christ when others are constrained to say, like the Queen of Sheba, "Happy are these thy servants" (1 Kings 10:8).

IV. Grievously Offended. "He was angry, and would not go in" (Luke 15:26). His pride was wounded to think that one whose life had been a public scandal should now receive more honour than himself who had never done anything very bad. He would not go in with this way of doing things, so he gets entirely out of sympathy-

1. With his Father. The father's heart was brimful of joy at the finding of the lost one, but it brought no gleam of gladness into the selfish soul of the elder brother. The conversion of sinners brings no mirth into the heart of those who are out of fellowship with God.

2. He got out of Sympathy with his Brother. If he had had any love for his wandering brother he would have rejoiced over his home-coming. To get out of sympathy with God is to get out of sympathy with sinners. How can a man say that he loves God if he love not his brother also?

3. He got out of Sympathy with the Servants. The servants were evidently sharing the joys of the feast, for this one that he questioned had to be called (Luke 15:26). The true servant of God must and will rejoice in all that brings gladness to His heart and glory to His Name. To be out of sympathy with the Lord's happy servants, and to refuse to go in and share their joys in the saving work of God is a sign of haughtiness of heart and grievous backsliding.

V. Graciously Intreated. "Therefore came his father out and intreated him" (Luke 15:28). The love and longsuffering patience of the father in his willingness to receive the prodigal has always been recognised and confessed, but his love in plying with melting intreaty this prodigal in heart has not been generally acknowledged. It is often more easy to pity the profligate sinner than the self-righteous one. The pleading of the father with the offended son was that he might enter into real hearty sympathy with him in his desire after and joy in the salvation of the lost. Are we, as His servants, in full sympathy with the Lord in His desire to seek and to save?

VI. Greatly Encouraged. Could the father have given him any greater inducement to cast aside all coldness and indifference to his highest interests than this, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine" (Luke 15:31). The return of prodigals unto God is not going to lessen your inheritance in Him any more than the opening of a blind man's eyes can hinder your enjoyment of the sunshine. Christian workers, are you offended because the grace of God lavishes such blessings upon the really unworthy? Are you out of sympathy with soul-saving work? Out of sympathy with God? Be intreated, come in, all the fullness of God is awaiting you.

LESSONS FROM A LOST SOUL.

Luke 16:19-31.

"Sin, not till it is left, will duly sinful seem;

A man must waken first, ere he can tell his dream."

-Trench.

This "rich man" had to waken up in eternity before he could tell the dream of a wasted life. "No man can serve two masters" (Matthew 6:24), especially when the masters differ in character as much as "God and Mammon." Mammon stands for the "love of riches" and the "pleasures of sin." Both God and Mammon demand the mastery of our beings. If the love of God does not master us the love of the world will. If we hold to the one, we must of necessity despise the other. The covetous, in the pride of their heart, are always ready to "justify themselves in the sight of men," forgetful that they may esteem things very highly which are an abomination in the sight of God (Luke 16:14-15). The words which follow about "a certain rich man" and "a certain beggar" are heavy laden with solemn and weighty meaning. The Lord does not call this a parable. His meaning is clear and unmistakable. Then what are the lessons we may learn from this portion?

I. That a man may have a beautiful appearance in the sight of men, and yet be utterly corrupt in the sight of God (Luke 16:19). The "purple and fine linen"of man's righteousness will never beautify in the eyes of God. There are those who think that they have need of nothing, and know not that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked (Revelation 3:17).

II. That a man may be poor and loathsome in the eyes of his neighbour, and yet be rich and beautiful in the sight of God (Luke 16:20-21). The poor beggar may have been an object of disgust to many, but the Lord looketh not upon the outward appearance. It is no uncommon thing for the character of a poor afflicted child of God to stink in the nostrils of the covetous and wealthy man of the world. But the soul of Lazarus was a precious jewel to God, although the casket was in a broken condition.

III. That a man may have but the burial of a dog, and yet be attended by the angels of God (Luke 16:22). No poorhouse inmate ever got a more unceremonial funeral than Lazarus.

"They rattle his bones over the stones,

He is only a pauper whom nobody owns!"

Yes, God owns him, and white-robed angels bear his emancipated spirit to the Father's bosom.

IV. That a man may have a pompous funeral, and at the same time be a miserable soul (Luke 16:22-23). There would be more real mourners at some funerals if only they could see within the veil. Men eulogise the past of the world's departed great ones, but what about their present? The wail of the "Dead March in Saul" is mockery compared with the wail of a lost soul in eternity.

V. That a man may have abundance of this world's goods, and yet, in the world to come, be utterly destitute of the commonest mercy (Luke 16:24). This worshipper of Mammon on earth has found out in eternity that a "smiling providence" is no evidence that the soul is right with God. This everlasting thirst for a drop of water is an awful experience to a man who never knew what want meant, and who only lived for the gratification of his own desires.

VI. That if a man neglect his opportunities in this life, in the life to come he will have good cause to remember his folly (Luke 16:25). "Son, remember thy lifetime." The remembrance of a wasted lifetime, in the midst of many "good things," will be, in the world to come, the undying worm of remorse.

VII. That though saints and sinners may meet together now, the time is coming when they must be eternally separated (Luke 16:26). Earthly relationships will avail us nothing when the "great gulf is fixed." Everything depends on our relationship to God and His Christ. All the prayers and penance of the Papacy or of purgatory will never bridge this gulf, for it is fixed (Matthew 13:30).

VIII. That the prayers of the lost can avail nothing, neither for themselves nor others (Luke 16:24, Luke 16:27-28). Those who set no value on prayers in this life will have no value set on them in the life which is to come. It is not enough to be in earnest when the day of grace is past. "Behold, now is the accepted time."

IX. That those who will not hear and believe the Word of God shall perish without remedy (Luke 16:29-31). Signs and wonders would profit us nothing if we will not hear Him whom God hath sent to bless us (Luke 9:35). The Israelites saw His wonders, and murmured against Him. Many saw the miracles of Christ, and yet hated Him; even Lazarus "rose from the dead," and they sought to kill Him (John 12:10-11). "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31).

TEN LEPERS CLEANSED.

Luke 17:11-19.

"Sin is established subtly in the heart

As a disease, like a magician foul,

Ruleth the better thoughts against their will.

Only the rays of God can cure the heart,

Purge it of evil, there's no other way,

Except to turn with the whole heart to God."

-Allingham.

Wherever Jesus went He always found occasion for the exercise of His infinite compassion and power; and what is better, He was constantly on the look out for the distressed and the despairing, supremely conscious that in Himself He was all-sufficient to meet the need of all. In Jesus Christ all the fullness of the Godhead tabernacled among men, and when He laid down His life for us on the atoning Cross, it was the paying down of His unsearchable riches as the redemption price of our souls. His miracle of healing in this nameless village while on the way to Jerusalem (Luke 17:11-12) has for us heart-search ing thoughts. Let us see the-

I. Pitiful Sight. "There met Him ten men that were lepers" (Luke 17:12). Ten men bound together by a common misery, and utterly unable to save themselves. Although there were ten of them, that did not lessen the sufferings and dangers of each. Although we may have many companions in sin, that does not in any way detract from the guilt of each. In Scripture leprosy is the outstanding type of sin.

1. Like sin, it brings uncleanness. The true cry of the leper, with his shame-covered lip, was to be "Unclean, unclean" (Leviticus 13:45). We are only taught, like the leper, to speak the truth when we are asked to make confession of our sins.

2. Like sin, it leads to separation. "They stood afar off" (Luke 17:12). The place appointed for them by the law of God was "without the camp" (Leviticus 13:46). "Far off" is the position of all those who have not been made nigh by the blood of Christ (Ephesians 2:13). Their very character alienates them from the life and fellowship of God.

3. Like sin, it is humanly incurable. Man has no remedy for leprosy; he can only attempt to alleviate their sufferings while the dreadful plague runs its death-working course.

II. Earnest Prayer. "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us" (Luke 17:13). This may have been a hoarse cry through throats diseased with leprosy, but there was music in it to the ear of Jesus, for it came from the heart, and was for the one thing needful. "Mercy"-that mercy which in Jesus Christ was wedded to Omnipotence, and that had its abode in the tenderest and purest of men.

III. Simple Remedy. "Go, show yourselves unto the priests" (Luke 17:14). This seems a strange command, but the meaning is clearly this: "The priests have condemned you as lepers; then, if you believe that I can heal you, and am healing you, go and show yourselves, that they may see that you are healed" (Leviticus 14:2-4). "And as they went they were cleansed." Two things were absolutely needed:

1. Faith in the Word of Christ (Luke 17:19).

2. Obedience to the will of Christ.

If they had waited till they felt better before they went, they never would have gone. It is while we believe and obey that we enter into life.

IV. Grateful Recipient. "And one, when he saw that he was healed, turned back and glorified God" (Luke 17:15). Personal healing is something we can only see by experience, and a something for which we should be instantly and profoundly thankful. It was a moral impossibility for this man to glorify God while in the terrible bondage of leprosy. It is only when we are made free from sin that we can give glory to God. The healing mercy of Christ not only made this Samaritan very thankful, it also made him humble. "He fell on his face at His feet." Humility and thankfulness are characteristic of those saved by the grace of God.

V. Searching Inquiry. "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?" (Luke 17:17-19). He who counted the stars will not fail to number those who have been cleansed by His Word. He knows them every one. "Where are the nine?" Surely our Lord expects that those who have been saved by Him should glorify God by making a public acknowledgment of His cleansing power. It is quite possible for us, like those nine, to be very anxious to get salvation merely for our own comfort and happiness, and to be utterly indifferent about honouring the Saviour with our new life. Such secret believers-we cannot call them disciples-are ungrateful cowards. This despised "stranger" who turned back to give God the glory got something that the thankless nine did not get. He got the Lord's assurance that the work wrought in him was perfect (Luke 17:19). The belief of the heart should always be accompanied with the confession of the mouth (Romans 10:9). Where are the nine? Are you one of them?

CHRIST'S SECOND ADVENT.

Luke 17:20-37.

"Surely the time is short, Endless the task and art,

To brighten for the ethereal court, A soil'd earth-drudging heart.

But He, the great Proclaimer of that hour,

Is pledged to thee in love, as to thy foes in power."

-Keble. The Lord Jesus Christ did in no way rebuke those Pharisees who demanded of Him "when the Kingdom of God should come" (Luke 17:20). It has been clearly revealed that the Messiah would redeem His people, and establish the throne of David. So powerfully did this truth lay hold on the people that at one time they were about to take Jesus by force and make Him King (John 6:15). But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, knowing what was in man. Even after His resurrection the disciples asked Him, "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). But even then it was not fit for them to know when. We are here taught something of the-

I. Nature of the Kingdom. "The Kingdom of God is among you" (Luke 17:20-21, margin). They asked when it should come. The Kingdom, as the Rule of God, was already among them in the Person of His Son. There can be no kingdom without a king (see Matthew 12:28). But as to its outward visible glory, it was still hidden, because He was not yet glorified as Prince and Saviour.

1. It will come suddenly. "As the lightning" (Luke 17:24). The lightning does not "come with observation," that is, men do not see the lightning before it becomes a present reality. "So shall also the Son of Man be in His day."

2. It will be unmistakable when it does come. When we pray, "Thy Kingdom come, "we pray for the coming of the King. When He comes there will be no need for saying, "Lo, here," or "Lo, there," for the shining of His influence will be like lightning from one part under Heaven unto the other, that is, from one hemisphere to the other (Luke 17:21, Luke 17:24).

II. State of the World at His Coming. "As it was In the days of Noah, so shall it be" (Luke 17:26-30). Most certainly the world was not converted in the days of Noah. Neither will it be converted at the coming of the Lord (Luke 18:8). The days of Noah were characteristic of backsliding and unbelief (Genesis 6:1-7). They ate, and drank, and married, and rejected the testimony of Noah until the flood came. God had said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man for ever" (R.V.), indicating that in the days of Noah the voice and pleadings of His Spirit were resisted. "So shall it be in the days of the Son of Man." "In the last days perilous times will come, for men shall be lovers of themselves, . . . heady, highminded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:1-4), And our rationalistic lower critics are doing what they can to complete this dark picture, striving against the Spirit of God (see 2 Timothy 4:3-4), and "turning the truth into fables." From such turn away. Whatever teaching does not exalt the Lord Jesus Christ and honour the Holy Ghost is not of God.

III. Results of His Coming. The results will be very many, but there are two definite effects brought before us here.

1. Separation. When Noah, who had been condemning the world by his righteous works (Hebrews 11:7), was taken into the Ark and shut up then the flood came. When Lot was taken out of Sodom, then the fire and brimstone fell from Heaven. "One shall be taken, and the other left" (Luke

17:34-36). So shall it be when the Son of Man cometh. There shall be a taking away of those who are the Lord's. "Caught up to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

2. Judgment. The taking away of the righteous prepares the way for the judgments of God upon the unbelieving. The Lord declared that He could "do nothing" till Lot was brought out of Sodom. When the "salt of the earth" has been removed, then there is no hindrance to the process of death and corruption. When the Church of God has been taken out of this Christ-rejecting world, then the Lord shall take "vengeance on them that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10). Wheresoever the lifeless and corrupt body is, thither will the eagles of God's judgments be gathered together (Luke 17:37).

SUCCESSFUL PRAYER.

Luke 18:1-14.

"Pray, though the gift you ask for

May never comfort your fears,

May never repay your pleading,

Yet pray, and with hopeful tears!

An answer-not that you long for,

But diviner-will come some day;

Your eyes are too dim to see it.

Yet trust, and wait, and pray."-A. Procter.

There is as much difference between the mere form of prayer and the spirit of prayer as there is between a dead body and a living one. The one is but the breathless skeleton of the other.

I. Prayer is a Great Privilege. How black the heavens would be if there were no opening to the cry of human need; how hopeless our lives, in the day of distress, if we had no access to the ear of God. Even this sin-blotched world may become to us the audience chamber of the King of kings; thy closet may be gilded with the glory of God. Let your requests be made known unto Him.

II. Prayer is a Necessity. "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1). It is "impossible to believe in God and not feel the need of prayer." It is the Christian's "vital breath." It is absolutely needed to spiritual life and health. We ought always to pray, because we are always dependent upon Him in whom we live and move. If we had more delight in prayer we would have less inclination to grumble; if we loved the presence of the Lord more we would quarrel with our neighbours less.

III. Prayer must be Urgent. "Because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her" (Luke 18:3-5). Her "continual coming," which prevailed over the indifference of this "unjust judge," is used by our gracious Lord as an argument for persistent prayer. If your desire is for things needful, or for the glory of God, do not be afraid to "trouble the Master" about them. His silence for a time may be but the testing of your faith. If you can possibly be satisfied without this definite answer to your prayer,

the likelihood is that no answer will be given. Be importunate, and you will certainly get all you need (chap. Luke 11:8).

IV. Prayer must be Void of Self-confidence. The parable of the two men that went up into the temple to pray was spoken to those that "trusted in themselves" (Luke 18:9-12). Prayer is a solemn mockery on the lips of the self-righteous. It was quite true that he was not "as other men," for he was neither a saint in the sight of God nor a sinner in his own. The man who would be justified by his works has whereof he might glory, but not before God. The fact is, the spirit of pride and self-sufficiency is at enmity with the spirit of prayer. This Pharisee said his prayers, but he did not pray. The spirit of prayer is the most humble spirit on the face of the earth; compared with other earthly spirits, it is as a lily among thorns.

V. Prayer must be Honest. The publican smote upon his breast saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13). Out of the heart are the issues of life. The Pharisee compares himself with others, and justifies himself; the publican compares himself with God, and makes confession of his sin. No prayer can be perfectly honest before God which does not express the true conscious condition of the heart. The Lord has an open ear for our cry, but he has also an open eye for our heart. Those are God-pleasing prayers that smite our own breasts; but there are others that smite the breast of God.

VI. Prayer will be Answered. "I tell you that He will" (Luke 18:8). "I tell you that he went down justified" (Luke 18:14). True prayer will never be sent empty away. The prayer of the poor, friendless, but importunate widow, and the prayer of the honest, sin-conscious publican were prevailing prayers, while that of the self-righteous Pharisee only insulted God and ministered to his own pride and self-deception. Our own righteousness will neither save ourselves nor our prayers any more than counterfeit jewels would save a drowning man. The way to get up in the estimation of God is to get down in our own. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18:14), and he that is so exalted shall ask what he will, and it shall be given him. THE PHARISEE AND PUBLICAN AT WORSHIP.

Luke 18:9-14.

"Even as Elias mounting to the sky,

Did cast his mantle to the earth behind,

So when the heart presents the prayer on high,

Exclude the world from traffic with the mind."

-Southwell. This parable was spoken as a rebuke to all those who "trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others." In the preceding parable He taught that "men ought always to pray, and not to faint," but here He shows clearly that while all men ought to pray, everything depends on the spirit and motives which constrain us to pray if we are to have the answer of God to our petitions. These two men represent two classes of worshippers.

I. A Self-satisfied Professor. Here are some of the general characteristics of such-

1. He Believes in being Religious. This Pharisee goes up to the temple to pray. Like his modern descendants, he goes regularly to his place of worship, and keeps up a kind of bowing acquaintanceship with all the ordinances of God's house. He has a great respect for religion, and thinks that everybody should say prayers. As for himself, he can always pray like an unfallen angel, for he is not like "other men."

2. He Has Great Faith in Himself. "He trusts in himself" (Luke 18:9). If ever there was a righteous man on the earth, he is that man. His brown penny is worth anybody's shilling. He glories in what he is, "not as other men," in what he does. "I fast twice a week." In what he gives, "I give tithes." His every sentence begins with a capital "I." He trusts in himself, not in God. He attends the Church because he likes to patronise things that are honourable. He believes that as long as he is able to trust in himself there will be no cause for His faith getting shaken. He has made himself what he is, so he worships a god of his own making.

3. He has no Sense of Personal Need before God. "He trusts in himself that he is righteous" (Luke 18:9). He is rich in religious works, and increased with the goods of personal qualifications, and has need of nothing (Revelation 3:17-18). He belongs to that famous generation "that are pure in their own eyes" (Proverbs 30:12). The Cross of Christ makes no appeal to him. He is quite independent of any such provision. He would not bemean himself by classing himself with sinners. His eyes are so very innocent that they cannot see anything very bad in anything that he has ever done.

4. He has no Love for Others. "Despised others" (Luke 18:9). This is quite consistent with his hypocritical profession. Others have so many faults and imperfections that his self-righteous soul cannot esteem them. There is no true religious uprightness but in his own pride-puffed bosom. Others may, through weakness, fall, and be caught in a whirlpool of disaster, or may be slowly drifting toward the precipice of eternal rain, but what is that to him. Such drift-souls are unworthy of his notice. His creed is, Let every man care for himself.

II. A Self-abased Confessor.

1. He Believes in Prayer. He may have gone up with the Pharisee, but not like him. The one went up to perform a work, the other to enjoy a privilege. Custom constrained the one, while a deep-felt need moved the other.

2. He is Sensible of God's Holiness. "He stands afar off" (Luke 18:13). He realises that there is a great moral distance between God's character and his own. "Afar off" describes our true position as sinners before God (Ephesians 2:13). But while the prodigal was yet "a great way off" the father ran and met him. He came not merely to pray, but to have a personal dealing with a personal God. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is."

3. He is Conscious of his own Sinfulness. "He smote upon his breast" (Luke 18:13). He is convinced that the source of his guilt lies deeper down than mere words or acts, that his heart was "deceitful, and desperately wicked." He stands before God a self-condemned man, so overwhelmed with shame that he could not "lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven." He takes his true place as one "condemned already" (John 3:18).

4. He Pleads the Atoning Sacrifice. We infer from the word used, "God be merciful"-be propitiated for me the sinner-that this sin-smitten one had his eyes on the sacrifice smoking on the altar when he uttered this prayer (Luke 18:13, R.V., margin). When a man is thoroughly convinced of his guilt before God he has no difficulty about the doctrine of substitution. He feels that this is his only hope, and thanks God for the Cross of Christ.

III. An Infallible Judge. This "I tell you" of Jesus is the final pronouncement of God upon the attitudes of these two classes as before Him (Luke 18:14).

1. The Self-exalted shall be Abased. No man can lift himself up into the favour of God by his own works. "God resisteth the proud" (James 4:6). As long as a man covers his own sin he shall never prosper in the sight of the heart-searching God (Proverbs 28:13).

2. The Self-abased shall be Exalted. "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up" (James 4:10). The story of Haman and Mordecai is a perfect illustration of this truth. In Luke, chapter sixteen, we see a proud rich man abased to hell, while the humble beggar is exalted to Heaven. This word is settled in Heaven, that if you save your life you will lose it, and if you lose it for Christ you will save it.

ONE THING LACKING.

Luke 18:15-30.

"Lord, by Thy grace I have made my choice,

In Thy Salvation Irejoice,

Iempty was, I'm empty still,

Thy full Salvation doth me fill,

Transient are all things that move,

But Thine is everlasting love."-Grosart.

Jesus is equal to the need of all, from the ruler of the Synagogue down to the infant in the mother's arms (Luke 18:15). Blessed are those mothers who seek for their children the touch of the life-giving Christ, and who will not be discouraged in this good work by the forbidding or mocking looks of ignorant and cold-hearted disciples. The Kingdom of God must be received in the simple, unquestioning spirit of "a little child" (Luke 18:17). This fact is clearly brought out in the following story of the young ruler. In this short suggestive narrative we note-

I. An Important Question. "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 18:18). There is no question more becoming a thoughtful young man than this. It is beautiful to see a man, while basking in the sunshine of worldly prosperity (Luke 18:23), anxiously inquiring into the eternal sureties of the unseen. Why should the glory of earthly riches blind the eyes to the greater glory of the heavenly? This ruler came to the right person with this most momentous of all questions when he came to Jesus. He only has the words of eternal life. It was also a very personal question. "What shall I do." Salvation is a matter between Jesus Christ alone and our own individual souls.

II. A Searching Inquiry. "Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou Me good?" (Luke 18:19). Our Lord would have him understand that He deals not only with the language of the lip, but with the deeper motives of the heart. "There is none good but God" (Luke 18:19). Do you believe that I am God? When we come to Jesus about the matter of "eternal life" we must come with full purpose of heart, believing that He is divine, and that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Believest thou this?

III. An Honest Confession. "All these have I kept from my youth up" (Luke 18:21). Doubtless this anxious ruler was perfectly sincere in saying this. He knew nothing against himself. There is a peace of conscience that is not the "peace of God." There is a justness of character in the sight of the law that does not justify in the sight of God, for the just shall live by faith (Galatians 3:10-11). "Without faith it is impossible to please Him" (Hebrews 11:6). The Pharisee who "went up to pray" had many good works, but he was destitute of faith in the atoning sacrifice (Luke 18:11-14).

IV. A Testing Command. "Yet lackest thou one thing; sell all that thou hast,... and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven" (Luke 18:22). Those who would have the "eternal life" that is in Christ must be prepared to let everything else go at His bidding. "Treasure in Heaven" is the coveted portion of all those whose heart is right with God. They look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are unseen and eternal. We may possess many good things, and yet lack the one thing needful. One crack in the lantern will leave the pilgrim in darkness; one faulty link will make the chain worthless; one leak in the ship will sink it. If we offend in one point we are guilty of all. The one needful thing is a whole-hearted, unstaggering faith in the Lord Himself.

V. A Sorrowful Result. "When he heard this he was very sorrowful,... and Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful" (Luke 18:23-24). To part with his all, even for the all of Christ was to him a sorrowful bargain, proving that he had more faith in his riches than in the Son of God. No man can serve two masters. Christ gave him the Word of life, but the deceitfulness of riches choked it (Matthew 13:22). "He that trusteth in his riches shall fall" (Proverbs 11:28). One thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part.

VI. A Forcible Application. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God" (Luke 18:24-30). It is easier for a camel to get unburdened and to crawl through the narrow side gate into the city, and that was no light task. No camel, of itself, could untie the obstructive bundles from its back. No more can the rich free themselves from the burden and love of their riches, but "the things which are impossible with men are possible with God" (Luke 18:27). To sacrifice self-interest for the interests of Christ is to "receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting."

BARTIMEUS.

Luke 18:31-43.

"I longed for light, but all the light I found was second-hand-

Reflected thought that had been tossed about for ages past."

-W. Smith.

God, who made the heavens and the earth, through His Son, and who by Him divided the light from the darkness of old, is both able and willing now, through Christ, to open the blinded eyes

and minds of men, and to illumine them with the glorious light of Heaven. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men" (John 1:3-4). About this blind man, observe his-

I. Wretched Condition. He was "blind" and "begging" (Luke 18:35). His eyes were darkened, and his circumstances impoverished; he was utterly destitute. No fellow-mortals could restore to him the joy of saving light. What a picture of us all by nature, with our sin-blinded eyes and impoverished hearts! Satan hath blinded the minds of them that believe not.

II. Anxious Inquiry. "Hearing the multitude pass by he asked what it meant" (Luke 18:36). Although he had lost his eyesight, he had his hearing and his tongue left, and he used them both. If we only put to a proper use the faculties we have, we would find ourselves, perhaps, richer than we imagined. All men have not faith in God, but all men have faith in some one or some thing. There are multitudes still following Christ, and who are willing and ready to lay down their lives for His sake. Have you ever seriously "asked what it means?"

III. Urgent Petition. "He cried, Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me" (Luke 18:39). And when those in front of him sought to block his way, "he cried so much the more." The more he was rebuked the louder he cried. This is the holy logic of a man conscious of his need, and of a God-sent remedy within his reach. "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by." If the voice of his need doth not reach the ear of His mercy now it may never. To Bartimeus this was his "accepted time," and he took full advantage of it. They are un-Christlike followers of Christ who would seek to drown the voice of the prayer of the needy.

IV. Blessed Privilege. "Jesus asked him, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" (Luke 18:40-41). His importunity has prevailed. The Lord Himself invites him to his presence, and with these words, "What wilt thou?" He lays, as it were, all His divine treasures of wealth and power at the feet of this poor blind supplicant. He is now within the reach of all that his heart could wish. This is what every poor, destitute soul finds when they find the favour of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Seek, and ye shall find."

V. Definite Request. "Lord, that I may receive my sight" (Luke 18:41). When we are as conscious of our sinfulness as this man was of his blindness we shall not fail to plead for the one thing needful. He was poor, but he did not plead for wealth; there is something which Christ can give us that is infinitely more precious than silver or gold, and that is eyes to see the Lord Himself as our own personal Saviour and Friend. This is what the blind man saw when his eyes were opened.

VI. Instant Cure. "Immediately he received his sight" (Luke 18:42-43). The Son of God has but to speak and it is done. His word of power is always spoken in answer to faith. Jesus said, "Thy faith hath saved thee." Instant faith brings instant blessing. In receiving his sight, he received it, of course, from the Lord as the gift of His love and the evidence of His almighty power. "Believe, and thou shalt see." Worldly wisdom will never make the blind to see. Jesus is mighty to save.

VII. Practical Gratitude. "He followed Jesus, glorifying God" (Luke 18:43). He did not go back to his miserable "begging." Having received his sight, he lost his right and title as a professional pauper, and become a willing disciple of his Saviour. How are others to believe that we have been healed by Christ if our lives are not glorifying God by following Him in the way? Those who have been delivered from the enemy of sin and blindness are to serve Him without fear, in holiness all the days of their life (Luke 1:74-75). Has your faith saved you?

ZACCHAEUS.

Luke 19:1-10.

"Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are disquieted until they can find rest in Thee."-St. Augustine.

There is a striking contrast between the case of Bartimeus and that of Zacchaeus. While they were both near Jericho, yet they were found at the extreme ends of the city; the one was sitting on the lowly wayside, the other was perched on a tree; the one was poor, the other was rich; the one sought Jesus for mercy, the other sought to see Jesus; the one had to get up to be saved, the other had to get down. Jesus Christ is able to save to the uttermost heights of society, as well as to the uttermost depths of it. Let us look at his-

I. Social Position. "He was chief among the publicans, and he was rich" (Luke 19:2). He was, perhaps, a contractor, with many tax-gatherers under him, and so had ample opportunity of enriching himself. These Jewish toll-keepers were severely hated by their brethren, because that through this business the Roman government, under whose galling yoke they groaned, being burdened, was strengthened and upheld.

II. Earnest Desire. "He sought to see Jesus, who He was" (Luke 19:3). He not only wished to see Him, he evidently desired to know Him. He was undoubtedly moved by deeper feelings than mere curiosity. The Son of God never gratifies the professional sight-seer. Had there been no longing in his heart for a personal acquaintance with the Christ, the Lord would in all likelihood have passed him by. He who looketh upon the heart hath said, "Thou shalt find Me when thou shalt seek Me with all thine heart" (Deuteronomy 4:29).

III. Twofold Difficulty. "He could not for the press, because he was of little stature" (Luke 19:3). A great crowd and a pair of short legs are really formidable obstacles in the way of seeing. The hindrance was both personal and circumstantial-in himself and in others. Who ever sought the Lord without being confronted with these two classes of difficulties? Our own shortcomings and the callous indifference of others to our spiritual interests are sure to test the sincerity of our desires after Christ.

IV. Fixed Determination. "He ran before, and climbed up into a tree to see Him" (Luke 19:4). The chief of the tax-gathering clan running and climbing a tree like a schoolboy! Who would have thought of it? Ah, when there is real anxiety to know Jesus Christ and the power of His salvation there will be no concern about the "fear of man"-no feeling of shame in such a desperate search. Those who are ashamed to show any excitement over Christ and His cause are utterly unworthy of Him.

V. Unexpected Call. "Jesus looked up and saw him, and said, Make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house" (Luke 19:5). Zacchaeus sought to see Jesus and to know Him, unaware of the fact that to see Jesus as He ought to be seen implies being seen and known by Him. "Make haste," the Lord is always ready to meet the need of an anxious soul. "To-day I must abide." Why this must? Does not the real heart anxiety of a sinner after Christ always lay a gracious necessity upon Him who came to seek and save that which was lost? (Luke 19:10).

VI. Ready Obedience. "He made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully" (Luke 19:6). His prompt response to the Master's call and his joyful reception of Him surely prove that the publican was both eager and honest in his new search. False professors have always an excuse to make when the personal call of Christ is pressed upon them (Luke 14:18). A hungry man does not need much pressing to eat when suitable and savoury food is set before him. Those who are really anxious to be saved are never very far from the Kingdom.

VII. Instant Salvation. The whole crowd murmured when they saw that He had gone in as the guest of a publican. Perhaps it was to hush their murmurings and justify himself and also the Lord in coming into his house that Zacchaeus "stood up and said, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor," etc. (Luke 19:7-8). But Jesus did not come into his house because "he gave to the poor," etc., but because he was an anxious sinner seeking fellowship with Himself-a lost one needing a Saviour. We are saved, not by our good works, but by the grace of God (Ephesians 2:8). The day that salvation came to his house was the day that Jesus Christ the Son of Man came. "He that hath the Son hath life." "There is none other Name given, whereby we can be saved." Salvation is certain to "as many as receive Him" (John 1:12). THE PARABLE OF THE POUNDS.

Luke 19:11-27.

Luke has hung up the keys of this parable outside the door for us. He gives us two reasons why it was given-"because He was nigh Jerusalem, and because they thought that the Kingdom of God should immediately appear." So the parable has reference to the inhabitants of Jerusalem (Jews), and the coming of the King. We shall have a little word about-

I. The King. He is called here "a certain nobleman" (Luke 19:12). This nobleman is the Lord Jesus Christ, and surely He is a Noble-man. He is of high birth, for He was born from above (Luke 1:35). As the Son of Man He is indeed the noblest of men. Was it not David Livingstone who called him "a perfect gentleman?" All his words and works have the nobility of God about them.

II. The Journey. "He went into a far country to receive for Himself a kingdom" (Luke 19:12). Jesus went into the far country when He ascended to the Father, and, as the Son of Man, He is now receiving "for Himself" a kingdom (Daniel 7:13-14). All who now believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are being received by Him, and are being made unto Him a kingdom (Revelation 1:6, R.V.).

III. The Servants (Luke 19:13). These ten servants had delivered to them one pound each, and their commission was plain-"Occupy till I come." They were to occupy His place, and trade with His gift, till He would come again. This part of the parable found its perfect fulfilment in Pentecost, when His servants, gathered together in the upper room, had delivered to them the gift of the Holy Ghost by the Master Himself. This gift was not divided among them, for "it sat upon each of them" (Acts 2:3-4), Each one received his or her pound, with which they were to do business for Him till He came. It is impossible for us to occupy in Christ's Name unless we trade with Christ's gift, living and acting in the power of the Holy Spirit.

IV. The Citizens. "They hated Him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke 19:14). They are called "His citizens" because that Jesus Christ was the rightful heir to the throne of David, established in Jerusalem. These citizens are typical of all those who hate Him without a cause, and who, through unbelief and pride of heart, will not submit to His rule, but cry, "Away with

Him!"

V. The Return. "When He was returned...He commanded the servants to be called unto Him" (Luke 19:15). The first thing our Lord will do, when He comes again, will be to call His servants together to give an account of how they have used or neglected His gift of the Holy Spirit. This is the judgment-seat before which all we, as His servants, must appear (2 Corinthians 5:10). Through grace we are accepted in Him, but we must labour in the power of the Spirit if we would be "accepted of Him."

VI. The Reward of the Faithful. Salvation is by faith, but the rewards of the coming King will be acccording to our works. There are three classes of servants represented here (Luke 19:16-24). They all had the same gift; the same possibilities were within the reach of each. The first had great faith in his pound, and gained with it other ten. The second had little faith, and gained but five. The third had no faith in it, and gained only the reproach of his Master. The application is plain and heart-searching. Every believer in Christ has the gift of the Holy Ghost brought within his reach, and in the strength and power of this divine money he is to do business for God in the place and Name of his Lord. He does not send us a warfare on our own charges. In this "pound" there was all-sufficient, whereby each receiver may accomplish all the will and work of their absent Master. Those who trade with their own gifts instead of this gift of God will certainly-like this man (Luke 19:23)-be found fruitless at the coming of Christ. If we are working for Christ in our own strength and wisdom we are hiding our Lord's money, and can never be rewarded with His "Well done" (Matthew 25:21).

VII. The Doom of the Unbelieving. Those who "would not that He should reign over them" were to be slain before Him (Luke 19:27). All hatred and unbelief will be judged when He appears. Those who in their hearts and lives have said, "Not this Man," shall one day hear these awful words from the most merciful of lips, "Depart from Me, ye cursed." "For He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet" (1 Corinthians 15:25).

CHRIST WEEPING OVER JERUSALEM.

Luke 19:28-48.

"The Son of God was seen Most glorious: in Him all His Father shone Substantially expressed, and in His face Divine compassion visibly appeared."-Milton. In every single ray of white light we are told there are all the colours of the rainbow. In this portion we have a sevenfold revelation of the character of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. His Wisdom. If the eyes of our Lord had not more light in them than that of ordinary mortals, how could He assure the disciples that they would find a young colt tied at a certain place named (Luke 19:30)? Through faith He spake as one endued with Omniscience. Distance is as nothing in the eyes of God.

II. His Power. All the apology they were to offer on taking away the man's ass was, "The Lord hath need of him " (Luke 19:31-34). With this simple declaration there went forth such an influence from the presence of the absent Christ that no resistance could be offered. He will have a willing people in the day of His power. All who go forth, like these disciples, in His Name, to do His will, cannot fail to have the authority of their Master with them (Matthew 28:18-19).

III. His Humility. "They set Jesus thereon." The King of Glory sitting upon a borrowed ass, and with "their garments upon the colt" (Luke 19:35-36). There was nothing too humiliating for the Son of God, if only the Scriptures might be fulfilled (Zechariah 9:9). He that so humbleth himself will surely be exalted (Php_2:8-9). The pride of man is for ever opposed to the revealed will of God.

IV. His Royal Dignity. "Blessed be the King that cometh in the Name of Jehovah" (Hebrews 5:38). Jesus was a King, although His face was more marred than any man's! He was bedless and penniless; yet His every word and act was stamped with the sovereign majesty of Heaven (Luke 19:37). The glory of His kingly character manifested itself on the holy mount when it burst with overwhelming power through the concealing veil of His flesh, revealing "peace in Heaven, and glory in the highest."

V. His Compassion. "When He beheld the city He wept over it" (Luke 19:41). If we had the eyes and the compassion of Jesus Christ we would be constrained many a time to weep over what others are rejoicing in. Christ as the Son of God and the Redeemer of men can only look upon places and persons in their relationship to Himself. The temple stones may be large and beautiful, but what of that if there be no welcome for Him in His "Father's house" (Luke 19:45). To Him the heart of the city was the heart of the citizen; if this was false and cruel, all else was desolation. "He wept over it." "Greater love hath no man than this." What about that city within our own hearts? What does the sympathetic Saviour see there?

VI. His Faithfulness. It must have been with a very heavy heart that our Lord uttered these solemn words recorded in Luke 19:42-46, for He willeth not the death of any, but rather that they would come to Him and live. But even His tearful compassion does not hinder Him from speaking out these awful words of warning and of doom It is a fearful thing to fall, as an unbeliever, into the hands of the living God. Neither the city, the nation, nor the individual can finally prosper who reject the claims and resist the pleadings of the Lord Jesus Christ. "While ye have the light, believe in the light," for this same Jesus who wept and died shall yet judge the quick and the dead.

VII. His Influence. The chief priests... sought to destroy Him, for all the people were attentive to hear Him" (Luke 19:47-48). To some He was a savour of death, to others of life. The sun which melts the wax will harden the clay. Everything depends on the attitude of our heart to Christ as to whether His influence will melt us unto salvation or harden us for judgment. The preaching of the Cross is either foolishness to us or it is the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:23-24).

PARABLE OF THE HUSBANDMEN.

Luke 20:9-19.

"Dare I trust my heart and voice against the voice of the whole? Yet should the roar of the crowd ever drown the true voice of the soul?"-W. Smith.

It is not only Scotch-like, but it may at times be Christlike, to answer one question by asking another. The chief priests and scribes asked, "Who gave Thee this authority?" Jesus answered by asking, "The baptism of John, was it from Heaven or of men?" They "could not tell," or rather, they would not say, lest they should commit themselves. Neither would He tell them. It is so still. Those who refuse to accept the testimony of His servants shall not know the secret of Christ's authority and power. There must be faith in His Word if we would have revelations of Himself. This parable,

like that of the "pounds," has a decided dispensational character.

I. The Vineyard. "A certain man planted a vineyard" (Luke 20:9). This nameless man is intended to represent Jehovah, the Eternal One; the vineyard is the whole house of Israel, whom He hath redeemed for Himself (Jeremiah 2:21); the planting refers to their settlement in the land of promise, where they were carefully nurtured and guarded by the presence of God.

II. The Faithless Husbandmen. These were the proud rulers of the people, who "entreated shamefully" those sent by God to assert His claims upon them as His professing people. They persecuted and slew those servants of God who testified against them (Nehemiah 9:26). Did not the Spirit-filled Stephen fling the same charge in their teeth when he said, "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?" These wicked husbandmen, like many in our own day, were willing to take all they could get from God that would enrich themselves, but refused to give Him anything in return.

III. The Divine Dilemma. "What shall I do?" (Luke 20:13). His thankless people have transgressed and rebelled; His warnings and entreaties, through His servants, have been neglected and despised. "What shall I do?" Something new must be done if the Lord of the vineyard is to maintain His rights to the fruits thereof. Shall it be vengeance or mercy? Shall it be instant judgment or a further manifestation of His infinite grace? Shall it be the sacrifice of man for his sins, or a sacrifice from God for the sins of man? "Deliver from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom."

IV. The Gracious Purpose. "I will send My beloved Son" (Luke 20:13). It may be that when they see Him they will turn away their faces from shame, and confess their sins (Luke 20:13). Instead of opening the flood-gates of wrath against those offenders, He opens the treasures of His heart, and sends forth His only Son. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us" (1 John 4:10).

V. The Fond Expectation. "It may be they will reverence Him when they see Him" (Luke 20:13). What did they see when they saw Him? They saw the invisible yet frequently insulted God, manifest in mortal flesh, as a loving, sin-forgiving Saviour, the wisdom and the power of God. Surely when they behold such an exhibition of His condescension and forbearance they will feel rebuked for their pride and arrogance. It would seem as if the Lord of the vineyard hoped to kill their enmity with His kindness. The mission of the Son of the Highest was to save us from our sins, and to reconcile us to God. "He that honoureth the Son honoureth the Father." To refuse Him reverence is to dishonour the Father who sent Him.

VI. The Deliberate Refusal. "They cast Him out of the vineyard and killed Him" (Luke 20:14-15). They would not have this Man to reign over them. Although they knew him to be "the Heir," yet, in the pride of their hearts, they refused to submit to Him. What better are we than they, in" acknowledging Christ to be the Son of God, if we have not yielded ourselves unto Him? Is our guilt not greater in that we are casting Him out of our hearts and homes; out of our businesses and pleasures daily. To cast Him out of our lives is to cast our lives into eternal bankruptcy and ruin (Luke 20:18).

VII. The Terrible Results. The husbandmen shall be destroyed, and the vineyard given to others (Luke 20:16). Neglected opportunities will bring corresponding judgments. The Word of God was first spoken to the Jews as His people, but they put it far from them, and now the vineyard is given

to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46). The blessed privileges offered us now will soon have gone to others. Are we laying hold of them for our eternal profit, or shall they pass, leaving us in the deeper condemnation through our pride and unbelief? "When they heard it they said, "God forbid." But all such "God forbids" from the lips of self-righteous rebels will never in any degree avert the just judgments of an insulted God.

CHRIST AND THE SCEPTICS.

Luke 20:20-40.

"I have a life in Christ to live,

I have a death in Christ to die-

And must I wait till science give

All doubts a full reply?

Nay, rather while the sea of doubt

Is raging wildly round about.

Questioning of life and death and sin,

Let me but creep within

Thy fold, O Christ, and at Thy feet,

Take but the lowest seat."-Sharp. The man is a fool who would suffer himself to be lifted up or cast down according to the length of his own shadow; but not more so than those who would set themselves, in the pride of their heart, against Christ, who is the wisdom of God. The chief priests and the scribes sought to lay hands on Him because He had spoken a parable against them. The light will always be against those who love the darkness (Luke 20:19). We have here two different attempts to ensnare the Lord through His words; but in vain is the snare spread before Him. There is what we might call- I. The Tribute Trap. Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar or no? It was-

1. Cunningly Set. All the craft of hypocrisy and wickedness was employed to catch Him in His words. Other men were easily caught in this fashion. These deceivers "feign themselves just men" that they might more easily accomplish their diabolical business. Notice their buttery words: "Master, we know... that Thou teachest the way of God truly" (Luke 20:21). The truth was in their lips, but hypocrisy was in their hearts. As no honey was to be put in the meat-offering, so no flattery could move Him who is the Truth and the Life. They expected a "Yes" or "No" to their pressing question. If he said "Yes," then they would rouse the people against Him. If He said "No," then they would speedily report Him to the Roman officials. It was-

2. Quickly Detected. But He perceived their craftiness, and said, "Why tempt ye Me?" There is no mask thick enough to hide our motives from His all-searching eye. It is a fearful thing to fall as hypocrites into the hands of the Living God. "Show Me a penny," said the penniless Saviour, and as He turned it on His fingers He made that "image and superscription" to bring their wisdom to naught, and to humble their haughty pride. Learn how mighty little things become in His hands. Only a penny, but used of Christ It becomes a witness for Him that all the wisdom of men cannot

gainsay. We sometimes say "a penny for your thought," but let us give earnest heed to the thought connected with this penny. "Give to man the things that are man's," and "to God the things that are God's!" If ye are Christ's, then ye are not your own. Ye are bought with a price, therefore give to God the things that are His. Then came- II. The Resurrection Trap (Luke 20:27-40). It was-

1. Set by the Sadducees. This sect denies that there could be any resurrection, because to them it was contrary to reason. These Sadducees are the forefathers of our modern rationalists, who would limit the workings of God to the understanding of sin-blinded mortals. In referring to this woman who had been married seven times, they were presenting their cause in the strongest possible Sight, but their light was only the blackness of darkness of ignorance.

2. Broken by Christ. The truth of God will always escape (like a bird) out of the snare of the fowler. In the world to come the children of God are equal to angels- they don't need marriage to increase their happiness and bliss; they never enter into one another's possessions there, because they "die no more." And as touching the certainty of the resurrection, it is as sure as that the Lord is the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. They are living now, for Jehovah is not the God of the dead, but of the living? He who is our life beyond the grave can easily lift our bodies from the tomb and turn the corruptible into incorruption, and this mortal into immortality. "Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Have faith in God.

CHRIST'S LAST PASSOVER.

Luke 22:1-23.

"With all His sufferings full in view,

And woes to us unknown,

Forth to the task His Spirit flew,

'Twas love that urged Him on."

-Cowper.

Lammenais says: "All that Christ asked of mankind, wherewith to save them, was a Cross whereon to die." He got it without a grudge. The word "passover" is derived from a verb meaning "to pass by," or "to spare." It was instituted in Egypt in the most solemn and suggestive circumstances (Exod. 12). Not a bone of the paschal lamb was to be broken. See how literally this was fulfilled in "Christ our passover" (John 19:33). This last passover was the final fulfilment of the first. Associated with it here we see-

I. Unreasonable Hate (Luke 22:1-2). In seeking how they might "kill Him," these chief priests and scribes manifested the diabolical enmity of their own hearts against the true character of Jehovah, whom they professed to worship. Little did they think that they were planning how to kill God's "passover Lamb." They hated Him without a cause.

II. Cruel Betrayal (Luke 22:3-6). Satan always finds a suitable instrument for his wicked work in a hypocritical professor. Satan entered Judas because the door of his heart stood open wide to every evil suggestion. The Devil's bait for him was money, because he knew that he loved it, and that at heart he was a thief.

III. Special Provision (Luke 22:7-13). The guest-chamber was appointed by Christ, "a large upper room furnished," to be noted for ever afterwards as a place connected with His death, resurrection, and with Pentecost. The place was there furnished for them, where Christ, God's paschal Lamb, was "made ready" as a sacrifice for the sin of the world.

IV. Sacred Fellowship (Luke 22:14-18). There is intense longing in this desire of Christ to eat the passover with them before He would suffer. The awful shadow of the Cross, falling over His Spirit, seems but to intensify His love for His own. His love was stronger than death; many waters could not quench it. It was a hallowed time when He took the cup, saying, "Divide it among yourselves." The cup of salvation, and also of the "fellowship of His sufferings." Have we taken it?

V. Merciful Substitution (Luke 22:19-20). The language is infinitely tender and unmistakable, "My body given for you," "My blood shed for you." If God is to pass over us in judgment, it must be because the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Exodus 12:13). The atonement of Christ is the only covering for sin that can enable God righteously to "pass by," justifying the believer in Jesus.

VI. Infallible Prophecy (Luke 22:21-23). "The Son of Man goeth as it was determined" (Luke 22:22). While with wicked hands they slew Him, yet His going was according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God (Acts 2:23). In the purpose of God, Christ was the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8). The unbelief and wickedness of men shall never make void the eternal counsel of Jehovah. "Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world."

GETHSEMANE.

Luke 22:39-54.

"So, as thou wert the seed and not the flower,

Having no form or comeliness in chief,

Sharing thy thought with thy acquaintance grief,

Thou wert despised, rejected in Thine hour

Of loneliness and God triumphant power."-MacDonald.

There is a deep, soul-moving pathos in these words: "He went, as He was wont, to the Mount of Olives." This was Christ's prayer-closet, and this was His last, and for ever memorable visit. The saving interests of a dying world, and the eternal honour of His Holy Name are now to be cast into the crucible. The issues of this night's awful work will affect Heaven, earth, and hell, and stretch out to the uttermost ages of eternity. In a garden the first Adam fell through sin; in a garden the second Adam triumphed through suffering. Gethsemane was to Christ a place of-

I. Solemn Loneliness. "He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast" (Luke 22:41). Far enough to be beyond their reach of help. He trod the wine-press of atoning suffering alone. On the great day of atonement the High Priest alone had to do the work (Leviticus 16:29-30). "Jesus paid it all." "Nothing in my hand I bring."

II. Prayerful Resignation (Luke 22:42). This woeful cup was enough to crush into nothing an ordinary mortal. Christ knew its terrible contents, for He well knew the holiness of God and the heinousness of sin. The only way this cup could pass from us was through the "nevertheless, not My will," of Jesus Christ.

III. Heavenly Succour. "There appeared an angel strengthening Him" (Luke 22:43). This angel was highly honoured in having a hand in such needful and glorious work. Doubtless he would be remembered for it after the Ascension. Will we not feel like thanking Him when we go to Heaven for strengthening the Redeemer in His way to make atonement for our sins?

IV. Awful Suffering. The agonising prayer and the "drops of blood" tell of a tender, sensitive heart, crushed and bruised in the mortar of love by the weight of hated sin-not His own (2 Corinthians 5:21). But this prayer, with strong crying and tears, was heard (Hebrews 5:7). If sin imputed to Him brought such agony of soul, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

V. Cruel Betrayal (Luke 22:47-48). The kiss of Judas was to the "Man of Sorrows" as the bite of a serpent. This was the first salutation Christ received from man after taking the cup of the curse on his behalf. "Man's inhumanity to man" is as nothing compared with his inhumanity to God. We but give Jesus the Judas kiss when we give Him the lips of profession and deny him a heart of love.

VI. Merciful Miracle (Luke 22:50-51). Even Christ's own unparalleled sufferings did not check His sympathy for the misfortunes of an enemy. "He touched his ear," undoing the revenge of Peter's sword. What self-forgetting love was His! The power that healed the ear could have hurled the whole band of mockers into perdition.

VII. Satanic Power. "This is your hour, and the power of darkness" (Luke 22:52-53). All who oppose Jesus Christ are acting as the agents of the Devil. The triumph of the wicked is short (Job 20:5). Creatures that live in the dark are usually fierce and furious. Walk in the light (John 3:19-21).

PETER'S DENIAL.

Luke 22:54-62.

"Sirs, the significance of this your doubt

Lies in the reason of it; ye do grudge

That those, your lands, should have another Lord.

Ye are not loyal, therefore ye would fain

Your King should bide afar."-Inglelow.

"To be forewarned is to be forearmed." But Peter did not seem to profit anything from the Lord's forewarning that "Satan desired to have him that he might sift him as wheat." It was more than Job got. Christ uses a fan to blow away the chaff, and cleanse the wheat; the Devil uses a sieve to save the chaff and cast out the wheat. Next to the power of Christ dying for us is the power of His praying for us. "I have prayed for thee" (Luke 22:32; John 17:15). Let us note the steps in Peter's downfall.

I. Self Confidence. He said, "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee into prison and to death" (Luke 22:33). Peter thought he was ready now, but the testing time had not yet come; he should have believed the Lord's Word, that his prayer for Him was greatly needed. Peter had not yet learned that "without Him he could do nothing" but faint and fail. "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool" (Proverbs 28:26).

II. The Fear of Man. "Peter followed afar off" (Luke 22:54). Now was Peter's time to "go with Him into prison," but his feet were caught in that snare that is always made by the "fear of man." Acts speak louder than words. Let us beware of imitating Peter's cowardly conduct by refusing to identify ourselves with Christ's cause when others are ruthlessly treating His Word and His work. "Following afar off" is nothing but a half-hearted denial.

III. Companying with the Scornful. "Peter sat down with them" (Luke 22:55). Through the influence of John, Peter was allowed into the open court, but he joined the scoffers and warmed himself at the enemies' fire (John 18:15-18). John doubtless followed Christ into the judgment hall. Following afar off will surely lead to mingling with the ungodly, and joining with them in their unholy mirth. After the prodigal went into the far country he was soon found joining himself to a citizen (Luke 15:15).

IV. Denial. "He denied Him, saying, I know Him not" (Luke 22:56-60), and that three times over, as the Lord had said. The fruit of self-confidence is Christ-denial. Christ is always being condemned when pride sits in the throne of our heart. Let us take care that we don't throw stones at Peter for doing in one day what we ourselves may be doing every day we live-refusing to confess Christ our Lord. Then came his-

V. Repentance. "He went out and wept bitterly" (Luke 22:62). The Lord Jesus Christ, while being led from the judgment hall across the open court to the guard-room, cast such a searching, pitiful, heart-melting look on Peter that wakened his sin-drugged memory, and filled his eyes with the bitter tears of sorrow and penitence. One look of Christ is enough to make the deep sea of the past to yield up its dead. "Peter remembered." An awakened memory will be a blessing or curse, according to our relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive" (1 John 1:9).

PILATE AND CHRIST.

Luke 23:1-25.

"Why should I quit my place and go and ask

If other men are working at their task?

And turn away from Thee, O Thou most Holy Light,

To look if other orbs their orbits keep aright

Around their proper sun,

Deserting Thee, and being undone?"-Clough.

Christ was accused of "perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar." A double charge, which was a double-dyed lie (Matthew 22:21). They are for ever found liars who would seek a cause for condemning the Christ. Let us note-

I. Pilate's Privilege. "They led Him unto Pilate" (Luke 23:1). No man can ever be the same after being brought face to face with the saving Son of God. It is a high and merciful honour to have Jesus brought before us, but what will be the issues of our case?

II. Pilate's Question. "Art Thou the King of the Jews?" (Luke 23:3). To this straight question Jesus gives a plain and emphatic answer that Pilate might, if he cared, feel the great responsibility of his present position. "To this end have I been born, and for this cause came I into the world," said the princely "Man of Sorrows" (John 18:36). "What think ye of Christ?" Are we in any doubt as to His kingly character?

III. Pilate's Confession. "I find no fault in this Man" (Luke 23:4). The challenge which Christ threw out in the early part of His ministry still stands unanswered in its holy defiance, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" (John 8:46). No guile will ever be found in His mouth. There is no rock like our Rock, even enemies, like Pilate, themselves being witnesses. Infidels in every age have been compelled to make the same confession. Christ could not be an acceptable sacrifice for our sins if there had been any blemish in Him.

IV. Pilate's Evasion. "He sent Him to Herod" (Luke 23:5-12). He would have been glad if Herod could relieve him from giving a final decision on Jesus Christ; but no man was able to save him from this; so the Lord was brought back to him gorgeously robed in mockery! No more can we evade this great question: "What shall I do with Jesus?" He still stands before us as the "despised and rejected," waiting the decision of our hearts. No one can make this decision for us.

V. Pilate's Proposal. "I will chastise Him and release Him" (Luke 23:12-17). What a cowardly suggestion! He will chastise Him, as if He were guilty, to please the people, and release Him to accommodate his own conscience. Surely such conduct betrays "the contradiction of sinners!" Pilate was willing to substitute Jesus for Barabbas, but they would not have this; neither will they have it yet, for the world "loves its own." "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon" (Luke 16:13).

VI. Pilate's Decision. "He gave sentence that it should be as they required: and delivered Jesus to their will" (Luke 23:23-25). They willed His death, although "God willeth not the death of any. " It were better for Pilate and for us that we had never been born than give such a sentence as this. Has not God, through the offer of His Gospel, delivered up Jesus to your will? What is your sentence? Is it that you will reject Him or receive Him? (John 1:12).

CALVARY.

Luke 23:24-48.

"From pain to pain, from woe to woe,

With loving hearts and footsteps slow,

To Calvary with Christ we go...

Was ever grief like His? Was ever sin like ours?"

-Faber.

Who would not rather be Simon the Cyrenian, who was compelled to bear the Cross of Jesus, than the purple-robed Pilate, who, through fear, was compelled to deliver Jesus up to the will of the people? (Luke 23:24-26). But apart from Pilate's dastardly weakness, God has delivered up His Son to the will of the people. And every time we hear the Gospel of Christ we are in our hearts honouring Him or dishonouring Him (John 1:12). The deep and solemn thoughts of this portion may be easily focused at "the place which is called Calvary" (Luke 23:33). It was a-

I. Place of Guilt. "There were two malefactors with Him" (Luke 23:32). Christ was crucified between the thieves, as if He were the greater criminal. The passer-by counted the malefactors as one, two, three. Truly He was "numbered with the transgressors." Yes; He bare the sins of many.

II. Place of Compassion. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). What a prayer from a thorn-crowned sufferer! What a revelation of the love and mercy of God, welling up through the breaking heart of Christ, His Son, from the proud, guilty sons of men! He loved His enemies, and blessed them that cursed Him (Acts 7:59).

III. Place of Derision. "The rulers derided Him,.... the soldiers mocked Him" (Luke 23:35-37). The fact that he did "save others" did not in any way lessen their enmity or modify their wrath, but rather intensified their diabolical rage. He could not "save Himself" because He came for the very purpose of giving Himself a ransom for many.

IV. Place of Testimony. "In Greek, Latin, and Hebrew" (Luke 23:38) these words were written over Him, This is the King of the Jews. Although written and read in mockery and disdain, these words were absolutely true; although attributed to the irony of Pilate, they were in very truth the testimony of the Spirit of God. They had crucified their King, their Messiah, the Son of the Highest. Calvary reveals the natural enmity of the human heart against the image of God.

V. Place of Salvation. "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise" (Luke 23:40-43). This penitent thief was the first to enter paradise through the blood of the Lamb. The sum of Christ's redemption work is found in these two little words, "with Me." This dying malefactor was reconciled to God through the death of His Son. Those who are with Him now in Spirit and in life will be with Him hereafter in transforming power (1 John 3:2).

VI. Place of Miracle. "The sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst" (Luke 23:44-45). The rending of the veil and the obscuring of the sun were outstanding symbols of the goodness and the severity of God as embodied in the Cross of Christ. The darkness declares His severity against sin, the torn veil indicates a God-made way, through the sufferings of Christ, into His own presence (Hebrews 10:20).

VII. Place of Death. "He gave up the ghost" (Luke 23:46). He became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. A death that has brought life and immortality to light; that has made peace with God, and that still makes sinful men "smite their breasts" in the beholding of it (Luke 23:48); a death that puts our sins away, and is the death of death.

"Calvary! O Calvary! All Thy agony for me!"

RESURRECTION WONDERS.

Luke 24:1-27.

"What is left for us, save in growth of soul to rise....

From the gift, looking to the Giver,

And from the cistern to the river,

And from the finite to the Infinity,

And from man's dust to God's Divinity."-Browning. The soldiers made His grave with the graves of the wicked who were crucified with Him, but He was "with the rich in His death," that the Scripture might be fulfilled (Isaiah 53:9), for Joseph, a rich counsellor, begged the body, and buried it in his own new tomb. Christ offered Himself a sacrifice unto God, so His body was precious to Him, and like the ashes of the burnt-offering of old, must be "carried forth into a clean place" (Leviticus 6:11). It is said that there are seven wonders in the world, but we have seven wonders in this chapter. A-

I. Wonderful Stone. "They found the stone rolled away" (Luke 24:2). This stone, which was sealed with Pilate's seal, and had Roman soldiers set apart to watch it, yet it is rolled away (Matthew 27:27-66). The great block-stones rolled in the way of Christ and His cause by the enemies of God are easily removed when the hands of the "Angel of the Lord" are laid upon them (Matthew 28:2). Who shall be able to stand when He appeareth?

II. Wonderful Grave. "They found not the body of the Lord Jesus" (Luke 24:3). Here Jesus was buried; now the tomb is empty. There lies the linen that wrapped Him, in the same place and in the same form as when the body was within it; but He is gone. It was quite clear from the position of the clothes that no one had stolen Him away. "O grave, where is thy victory?"

III. Wonderful Vision. "Behold two men stood by them in shining garments" (Luke 24:4). In following Jesus into the tomb, they were privileged to see the glorified ones. Every place, even the dark and lonesome grave, is hallowed and illumined when Jesus has been there. The glory of the resurrection life is first seen in the grave of Jesus. To be buried with Christ is to be raised with Him in newness of life (Romans 6:4).

IV. Wonderful Message. "He is not here; He is risen" (Luke 24:5-8). "He is not here"-all the powers of earth and hell have failed to keep Him. "He is risen"- all the authority of Heaven has been given Him. These angels remembered the words that Jesus had spoken, while the disciples had forgotten them (Luke 24:6). It is easy to forget what we do not believe.

V. Wonderful Incredulity. "They believed them not" (Luke 24:10-11). The Lord Jesus Himself had told them that He would be raised again on the third day (Matthew 17:23). Now the two women declare to them that the grave was empty, yet they "believed not." The truth about the resurrection of Christ is soul-resurrecting truth; men are always slow to believe it.

VI. Wonderful Conversation. "They talked together" (Luke 24:13-17). As they "communed, Jesus Himself drew near," for the Lord delights to hearken and hear when they that fear the Lord speak one to another (Malachi 3:16). No scientists were ever more interested in any discovery than these two men were in the report that "Jesus is risen." How could it be otherwise, when, so to speak, the

whole of their capital for time and eternity was sunk in this business.

VII. Wonderful Stranger. "Art Thou only a Stranger?" (Luke 24:15-27). "Only a Stranger!" How suggestive these words must have been to Him who had been "wounded in the house of His friends," but how comforting to hear Himself spoken of as "a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people." Yet this "Stranger" rebuked them for their foolishness in not believing "all that the prophets had spoken;" and beginning at Moses-where the "higher critics" make shipwreck-He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. He who was the Truth could never sanction a falsehood. He delights to reveal Himself to the seeking ones. "Seek, and ye shall find." THE ASCENDED LORD

Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:4-11

"He led them out as far as to Bethany." From Bethany He started on His journey to the Cross of shame; from there also He starts on His journey to the Crown of glory. Here the disciples witnessed their Lord slowly rising up before their eyes. While His body was gradually ascending into the Heavens, He "lifted His hands and blessed them," and as He blessed He slowly vanished into the cloud that carried Him into Heaven. Do we wonder that after He was gone they still stood "gazing up into Heaven?" They had scarcely awakened to the fact of His resurrection when they beheld another wonder equally momentous and glorious. "Truly, this was the Son of God." If our worldly hopes are crucified with Christ, we shall have new and brighter hopes in His resurrection and translation to the Father's throne. Associated with the Ascension, we have brought before us some of the "things which accompany salvation" (Hebrews 6:9). Let us give earnest heed to them.

I. The Baptism of the Holy Ghost. "Ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 1:5-8). Jesus died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, and ascended for our enduement with the power of the Holy Ghost. The power of the Holy Spirit upon His disciples was the witness that Christ, the Crucified One, was now in the presence of the Father (John 16:7). These early and true-hearted followers did not believe, as the great majority of modern Christians do, that the fruit of Christ's death was the sum of salvation; they waited, and received the fruit of His Ascension-the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4). "Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?" (Acts 19:2, R.V.).

II. Witnessing for Christ. "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me," etc. (Acts 1:8). So faithful were these Spirit-filled disciples that in a short time they had "filled Jerusalem with the doctrine" (Acts 5:28). The power of the Spirit was with them, so we read that "with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" (chap. Luke 4:33). We are unauthorised witnesses for Christ unless we have been "endued with power from on high." Our teaching and preaching will be but "sounding brass" unless we are "filled with the Holy Ghost"-just a sounding trumpet; no divine articulating voice. That we may be true witnesses for Him, let us receive the "promise of the Father" as well as the promise of the Son.

III. The Hope of His Coming Again. "This same Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go" (Luke 24:11). To say, as some do, that the coming of the Holy Spirit was the coming of "this same Jesus" is not only a denial of the personality of the Spirit, and an insult to common sense, but also a wilful perversion of the Word of God. It looks, says the author of "The Coming Kingdom of God," as if some men so hated the thought of a returning personal Christ that they are

prepared to believe any absurdity rather than accept it.. "The Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout" (1 Thessalonians 4:16). This is the hope of the Church of God, which is being presently called out (ekklesia) as a witness to His Name. This is the Bride for which Christ has promised to come and "receive unto Himself" (John 14). As soon as the Lord was out of sight the disciples were taught to believe in and to look for His coming again. This is the hope that cheers in service and purifies the life (1 John 3:3).

John

CHRIST, THE LIFE AND LIGHT OF MEN.

John 1:1-5.

"He who from the Father forth was sent,

Came the true Light, light to our hearts to bring,

The Word of God-the telling of His thoughts;

The Light of God-the making visible;

The far-transcending glory brought

In human form with man to dwell."-Macdonald. The Gospel of John has been well called "the Gospel of Eternity," for it is the Gospel of God, John was a specially prepared vessel for this very honourable ministry. He had been from his youth a beloved apostle. "His head had rested on the Lord's breast, he had stood beside the Cross, had witnessed the Ascension, had cherished till her death the Mother of the Lord, had seen the Jewish dispensation closed and the Holy City overthrown, and to him the beatific visions of the Apocalypse had been granted." The great purpose of this Gospel is very fittingly expressed in chapter John 20:31. "These have been written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye may have life in His Name." All the keywords of his Gospel are found in this verse. The opening words of this chapter are among the most profound ever penned by the hand of man. They reveal a three-fold relationship of the Lord Jesus Christ in His-

I. Relationship to God. He is called the Word, the "Logos." Christ Himself is the uttered speech and thought of God. He is the visible expression of the invisible God. "For the life which was with the Father was manifested unto us" (1 John 1:2). This Word was in the beginning. "The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His ways...I was daily His delight" (Proverbs 8:22-30). The Word was with God. Yea, more, the Word was God. Man's finite mind cannot grasp the mystery of the Trinity, but the devout believer can bow and adore. That He who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, should make Himself of no reputation, taking upon Him the form of a servant, and dying on a Cross for the sin of the world, is a mystery of grace that can only be fathomed by the mystery of the Trinity.

II. Relationship to Creation. "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:3). Paul taught the same doctrine, "God... created all things by Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 3:9) It pleased God to bring the old creation into being through the instrumentality of His Son; it has also pleased Him that the new creation should be "in Christ Jesus." By Him He made the worlds (Hebrews 1:2), and by Him He seeks also to redeem this world lost in sin. He by whom God made all things has also made peace by the Blood of His Cross. The Lord Jesus Christ as the Word of God holds the same position towards the new

creation as He did to the old. "Without Him was not any thing made." Without Him God did nothing, so without Him we can do nothing. All things were created by Him and for Him, and by Him all things consist or hold together. He is the centre and support of all, as well as the Maker. "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created" (Revelation 4:11). If all things were created for His pleasure, surely He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

III. Relationship to Men. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." Why is the Life spoken of as the light of men, and not of creation? He has made the Light of the material universe, but He is the Light of men. Man is something distinct from and superior to other created things. He is a personality that needs the Divine Personality to meet his every want. "In Him was life." The source of life was in Him, and God, in giving us His Son hath given to us eternal life (1 John 5:11). The life manifested in Christ Jesus is the true light which should lighten every man coming into the world. I am come that they might have life. Christ as the Word of God is that living bread which came down from Heaven, that a man may eat and not die. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. Then observe- 1. What this light is-"The life was the light."

2. Where this light shines-"The light shineth in darkness." Christ as the Light did not shine on the darkness of the world, but in the darkness. He was made flesh, and dwelt among us. His own words are, "I am come a light into the world" (John 12:46). The purpose of the light is to overcome the darkness. The centre of this darkness is the human heart. The God who commanded light to shine out of darkness is He who hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of God (2 Corinthians 4:6).

3. The effect of its shining-"The darkness comprehended it not." Two words are used in the Revised Version-one in the text and the other in the margin- which if taken separately bring out the twofold result of this shining of the true light.

(1) The darkness apprehended it not. The darkness of wilful unbelief remained unconscious of the dawning of this new day-"they knew not the time of their visitation" (Luke 19:42-44).

(2) The darkness overcame it not (R.V., margin). Thank God, that in the case of many the darkness of sin and fear was not able to overcome or resist the bright shining of His truth. No matter how dense the darkness is, it cannot in any way overcome the purity or purpose of the light. The light shines on, but men may condemn themselves by loving the darkness rather than the light (John 3:19).

HOW TO BECOME CHILDREN.

John 1:6-13.

"Thou would'st like wretched man be made

In everything but sin,

That we like Thee might become,

As we unlike have been."-Stennet.

"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John: the same came for a witness." The "True Light" was heralded by a special messenger from Heaven. "Sent from God... for a witness." That is a perfect life which fulfils the purpose of God, although it may be both solitary and brief. It is not necessary that a man should live long, but if his life is not to be a failure it is necessary that he should live to the glory of God. As soon as we become "children of God" by being born anew from above, we enter into that relationship with Him that makes it possible for us to become like John, "a man sent from God... for a witness." Then, how can we become children of God? The answer here is short and simple, "As many as receive Him, to them gives He the right to become children of God" (John 1:12, R.V.). No man has the right to be called a child of God who has not received Him. "God hath made of one blood all nations," but the blood of nations is not the same as the Blood of Christ. Great emphasis is here put upon the Him whom we are to receive. The act of receiving avails only because it brings us into contact with the One.

I. Who Made the World (John 1:10). The world was made by Him. He who made the world can easily remake a human soul. His creative power was manifested, while in the world, by His miraculous works, such as feeding the thousands with a few loaves, and stilling the tempest and the raging waves.

II. Who was in the World (John 1:10). Him who made the world, and who humbled Himself to be born into the world in the likeness of sinful flesh, that He might get into personal touch with man's sins and sorrows. In the world but not of it, among sinners but entirely separated from them, in the world as the visible representative of the invisible God.

III. Who is the True Light (John 1:9). This is the only light that can possibly "lighten every man coming into the world," because this true light is the life of men. Him who is eternally perfect, with all the perfections of eternity. He is the "true Light," the "true Vine," the "true Bread." He is "the Truth." To receive Him is to receive the light of life.

IV. Who was Rejected by His Own. "The world knew Him not, and His own received Him not" (John 1:10-11). They knew Him as the Son of Joseph, but as the Son of God they refused to acknowledge Him Although they lived and moved and had their being in Him, yet they knew Him not. They received with eager ness His daily bounties, but Him they received not. No one could convince Him of sin. No one could find a fault in Him. Yet His own received Him not. The fact that He was first rejected, then accepted by His own kinsfolk is another proof of the divinity of His character. He did the works that none other man could do, and so attested His claims. As many as receive Him must be prepared to suffer reproach with Him.

V. Who has Authority to Make us Children of God. "As many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God" (John 1:12, R.V.). This prerogative is His alone. No church privilege or laying on of hands can give any one the right to become a son of God. The Spirit of adoption is the gift of God (Romans 8:15). There is no other way whereby we can become the children of God but through "faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26). Christ came as the sent one of God, to redeem us, that we might receive the adoption of sons (Galatians 4:4-5). He has the right to adopt because He had the power to redeem. As many as receive Him receive redemption from sin and guilt.

VI. Who has Power to Regenerate the Soul. "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13). To become a son of God implies regeneration by the Spirit of God. It is not a natural birth-"not of blood." It cannot be produced by any amount of fleshly energy-"nor of the will of the flesh." Neither can it come by the force of intellectual effort-"nor of the will of man." It is of God, and is God's immediate answer to our faith in His Son Jesus Christ. As many as receive Him are born of God. How shall I put thee among the children? "Receive Him." THE WORD MADE FLESH.

John 1:14-18.

"Who did leave His Father's throne

To assume thy flesh and bone-

Had He life or had He none?

If He had not lived for thee

Thou hadst died most wretchedly,

And two deaths had been thy fee."-Herbert.

"The life of man," says Westcott, "is the knowledge of God. But this knowledge lives and moves. It is not a dead thing, embalmed once for all in phrases." The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. This is holy ground. Let us approach as Moses did the burning bush. Here we see a-

I. Mysterious Incarnation. "The Word was made flesh." He who was "with God," and who "was God," has suddenly appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh. How would Elijah have felt if that "still small voice" that spoke so clearly to his heart had mysteriously appeared in the form of flesh and bone? Christ as the Word could not be seen, and the flesh as such could not be heard, but the "Word made flesh" could be both seen and heard. The flesh without the living Word has no message or virtue in it for the sins and sores of this needy world. The union of the Word and the flesh is as much a mystery as the unity of the Trinity. Great is the mystery of godliness: God manifest in the flesh. It was all of grace that Christ took on Him the seed of Abraham instead of the nature of angels. The mystery of the Incarnation is the mystery of grace.

II. Profound Humiliation. "And dwelt among us." It was not a hurried greeting, like an angel's visit. It was the voluntary adoption of Himself into the family of humanity. God, who dwelt in the miraculous "pillar of cloud," and tabernacled with Israel in the wilderness, has now humbled Himself to take the common form of sinful men, and dwell among them. What a stoop, the image of God taking the likeness of sinful flesh.

III. Divine Manifestation. "No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, ... He hath declared Him" (John 1:18). He who was "in the bosom of the Father" was well fitted to make such an declaration. In the life of Jesus Christ the character of the "King eternal, immortal, and invisible, . . . whom no man hath seen or can see," hath been graciously manifested. As "no one knoweth the Son save the Father, so neither doth any one know the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him" (Matthew 11:27). It takes God the Father to fully apprehend the greatness of the character of God the Son. It takes God the Son to give a perfect

declaration of God the Father, and it takes God the Holy Ghost to make man capable of receiving and enjoying such a manifestation. What a revelation is this? "I have manifested Thy Name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world" (John 17:6).

IV. Provided Salvation. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us... full of Grace and Truth" (John 1:14). "Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). The grace of Jesus Christ is the winsomeness and kindness of God, and He is "full" of it. The grace of God which bringeth salvation to all men, hath appeared in the person of His Son. But this grace has not come at the sacrifice of truth, for it is "grace and truth" that here meet together. It is in Him that righteousness and peace kiss each other, like two pure minded lovers (Psalms 85:10). Although salvation comes to us as a ministry of grace, it is at the same time "the ministration of righteousness," through Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 3:9). In Him God is just in justifying the unjust who believe in Jesus Christ His Son. We should ever remember that it is the grace of the infinite and eternal God that has come to us by Jesus Christ.

V. Blessed Testimony. "We beheld His glory, . . . and of His fullness we all received" (John 1:14-16, R.V.) A wonderful vision-"His glory." A wonderful possession -"Of His fullness." They saw His glory on the mount of transformation. But this outward manifestation was only the visible expression of the inward glory of His grace, in coming forth to suffer at Jerusalem for the sin of the world. It is a great sight to behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, the glory of the only begotten of the Father. Those whose eyes are opened thus to see His glory have hearts prepared to receive of His fullness. His fullness is the fullness of Divine riches, which axe unsearchable. It was after that Joseph's brethren beheld his glory that they were privileged to receive of His fullness. It was after the disciples had seen the glory of His resurrection that they received of the fullness of the Pentecostal gift. It is when we have seen the glory of His grace that we seek after the fullness of His salvation. The glory of Christ is the glory of grace. Who can fathom it? Who has ever yet seen the horizon of its glory? This is a glory that can yet be seen. This is a fullness of which we may yet receive. Have you seen His glory? Are you being satisfied with His fullness?

JOHN'S TESTIMONY OF CHRIST.

John 1:29-34.

"Who follows in His train?

Who best can drink His cup of woe

Triumphant over pain;

Who patient bears His cross below,

He follows in His train."-Heber.

"Coming events cast their shadows before them." The coming of the solitary and suffering Christ was foreshadowed by the appearing of the solitary and suffering Baptist. John's confession of himself prepared the way for his testimony of his Lord: "I am not the Christ;" "I am not Elias." "I am the voice of Him who is the Word of God," crying, "Make straight the way of the Lord" (John 1:19-23). It is needful that we should know ourselves if we would bear a true testimony for Christ. He who said, "I can do all things through Christ, which strengthened me," also said, "In me, that is,

in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." In these verses John tells us seven things about the Lord Jesus Christ, unto which we may well give heed. Observe that-

I. He is the Lamb of God (John 1:29). God's chosen Lamb to bear away the sin of the world, to which all the sacrifices of the old dispensation pointed. It was then "a lamb for an house," it is now a Lamb for a world (1 John 2:2). The Lamb of God was God's manifestation of his own meekness and submissiveness to the awful necessity of Divine suffering for the atonement of sin. This is the Lamb who, in the purpose of God, was "slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8). If it was needful that "your lamb shall be without blemish," it is certainly so of His. The Blood of Christ shed upon the Cross is a token to the whole world of God's willingness to "pass over," in forgiving grace, all who believe in Him (Exod. 12; 1 John 4:10).

II. He was Before Me (John 1:30). Yes, a long time before John, for He is "before all things." Although John was conscious that he was the forerunner of Christ, he was conscious also of the deeper truth that Christ was before him, as a father is before his son. John's ministry was of God's appointment, but only because of the greater ministry of His Son. It is easy for us to believe that Christ was before us, but how easy it also is for us to forget that we are called to be His servants, by virtue of this fact.

III. He is Preferred Before Me (John 1:30). "A man which is become before me (R.V.). In all things He must have the pre-eminence. The Lamb of God must ever stand in the front of all our purposes, as He does in the forefront of all God's plans and purposes. When a servant of Christ becomes more anxious to get himself than his Master into the place of eminence before the people, he has begun to play the traitor. God prefers His Son above all His servants, therefore let not the servant insult Him by preferring himself.

IV. He would be Made Manifest to Israel (John 1:31). The Paschal lamb was laid up on the tenth day of the month, and manifested on the fourteenth (Exod. 12). There were three stages in the manifestation of the Lamb of God: (1) His Baptism; (2) His Transfiguration; (3) His Crucifixion. In the first we have the proof of His Divine mission; in the second we have a revelation of His blameless character as a Lamb; in the third we have the accomplishment of His substitutionary work as a sinoffering.

V. He is the Anointed One. "I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him" (John 1:32). The dove-like Spirit came from an "opened Heaven," and was accompanied with the assuring voice: "Thou art My beloved Son" (Matt. 3; Luke 3). Him did God the Father seal unto that day of redemption, accomplished on Calvary's Cross. With the Holy Spirit there came the Divine attesting voice. Whenever the holy anointing comes, the voice of God must be distinctly heard. With Pentecost came the tongues of fire. Every baptism of the Holy Spirit will be followed with the testimony of God. "Ye shall be witnesses unto me when the power of the Holy Ghost is come upon you" (Acts 1:8).

VI. He is the Baptiser with the Holy Ghost. "Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending... the same is He which baptiseth with the Holy Ghost" (John 1:33). John bears emphatic witness to the two great aspects of Christ's work: (1) He shall take away sin; (2) He shall baptise with the Holy Ghost. The one is the correlative of the other. We have the same ground for expecting Christ to baptise us with the Holy Ghost as that He should take away our sins. Surely these are two distinct

experiences, and ought to be definitely enjoyed by each believer in Jesus. Pentecost is the counterpart of Calvary.

VII. He is the Son of God. "I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God" (John 1:34, R.V.). As the Lamb, He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; as the Son, He is almighty to save. John was a man sent from God, that He might bear witness that He is the Son of God, so that Israel, as a nation, may recognise Him as the promised Messiah. It was as "the Son of God" that Satan tempted Him in the wilderness. Because He is the Son of God, with power, He is well able to fulfil every promise He has made. "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). THE FIRST DISCIPLES.

John 1:35-42. The perfect way is hard to flesh,

It is not hard to love:

If thou wert sick for want of God,

How swiftly wouldst thou move.

Be docile to thine unseen Guide;

Love Him as He loves thee;

Faith and obedience are enough,

And thou a saint shalt be."-Faber.

"It is safer to obey than to govern," although our own foolish hearts would rather lead than follow. There is something like a halo of glory about these two men, who first ventured to "follow Jesus." It is easy to follow Jesus in a crowd, but in almost every company or family there is need for some one with courage enough to take the initiative, and step out for Christ, and as an example to others. These early disciples became followers of Jesus in much the same way in which disciples are made now. How was that? There was-

I. A Simple Testimony. "John stood and, looking upon Jesus as He walked, he said, Behold the Lamb of God" (John 1:35-36). The preacher was "John." His attitude was, "looking upon Jesus." His subject was "The Lamb of God." His manner was earnest-he "stood," concentrating his whole soul upon the message. He was also practical-"Behold." See him now. It was a short message, but it was a word spoken in season, full of power, and was immediately fruitful.

II. An Act of Faith. "The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus" (John 1:37). Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. They heard and they followed. They had been following John, but now, on the testimony of John himself, they leave the servant of Christ and follow his Master. John's desire should be the desire of every herald of the Lord Jesus Christ. "He must increase, I must decrease" (John 3:30). He preached not himself, but Christ the Lamb of God, and so they believed. Their faith was evidenced by their following. It may have cost them much to turn their backs upon their late beloved master, but the sacrifice is readily made for the fellowship of Him who can put away sin. There was no time to delay. The choice had to be made at once, for Jesus "walked," and would soon be out of sight.

III. A Heart-Searching Question. "Jesus turned and said unto them, What seek ye?" (John 1:38). Jesus will test the motives of those who follow Him before He commits Himself to them. What seek ye? Do you expect worldly honour and preference by following Me? Is it some earthly gift from Me, or is it Me ye seek? I am the way, the Truth, and the Life. In following me are you seeking the Way to God, the Truth of God, and the Life of God? What seek ye? Let this question search our own hearts. As professed disciples of Christ, what are the secret motives that animate our Christian life? Are we more anxious to be honoured by Christ than to honour Him? "If any man would follow Me, let him deny himself " (Matthew 16:24).

IV. An Anxious Inquiry. "They said unto Him, Master, where dwellest Thou?" (John 1:38). Perhaps they feel that the Master's question is difficult to answer in full, and if they knew where He abode they might go and have a lengthened interview with Him, so that they could calmly unburden their whole hearts unto Him. This answer reveals the deep sincerity of their souls. They wish to know Him as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. Where dwellest thou? He dwells (spiritually) in the bosom of the Father (John 1:18). and those who would abide with Him will also dwell in God.

V. A Gracious Invitation. "He saith unto them, Come and see." They gladly accepted His invitation, and "came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him" (John 1:39). This was a blessed and memorable experience, and so John mentions the very hour of the day-"the tenth hour." "Come and see." What grace and privilege those sweet words convey to their anxious souls. It is the opening of a wide and effectual door into fullness of blessing. How sad for them if they had failed to enter in. Is not this same privilege ours, in a deeper sense? "Come unto Me, all ye who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Believe, and thou shalt see.

VI. A Willing Service. "Andrew findeth his own brother Simon, . . . and he brought him to Jesus" (John 1:40-42). That quiet time of close fellowship with Jesus results in immediate fruit-bearing. "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength." Company ing with Christ leads to clearness of views and boldness of action. He could say, "We have found the Messias." They had sought and found, so their testimony is clear and persuasive. Their work for Him began after they had been with Him. "This is My beloved Son, hear Him" (Matthew 17:5.), then serve Him. Quiet Andrew did a great work when he brought the boisterous Peter to Jesus. Can we be truly following Christ if our lives are not constraining others to follow Him? Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit: so shall ye be My disciples" (John 15:8).

NATHANAEL'S CONVERSION.

John 1:43-51.

"My Master, they have wronged Thee and Thy love!

They only told me I should find the path

A via Dolorosa all the way!

Narrow indeed it is....Oh, why

Should they misrepresent Thy words, and make

'Narrow' synonymous with 'very hard?'

For Thou divinest wisdom, Thou hast said

Thy ways are ways of pleasantness, and all

Thy paths are peace."-F. R. Havergal.

There was a great difference between the manner of the conversion of Nathanael and that of Saul, but the inward change was much the same. See how it came about, for he

I. Heard. "Philip saith unto him, We have found Him of whom Moses and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth" (John 1:45). He heard the joyful tidings from one who had himself been found of the Christ, and satisfied with Him. Philip's Gospel was not an it, but a Him-Him in whom the hope of Israel lay; Him who answers all the predictions of Moses and the prophets, and meets all the needs of a human soul and a perishing world. He heard- but how shall men hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent. All who have found Him are surely able to witness for Him.

II. Questioned. "Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46). Although Jesus was born in Bethlehem, He was brought up in Nazareth, that He might be called a Nazarene (Matthew 2:23) Nazareth was an insignificant and, perhaps, an infamous town. How could the greatest of all prophets come from such an unlikely place? Like Nicodemus, he was disposed to ask, "How can these things be?" Philip was not inclined to dispute the matter with his thoughtful inquirer, but simply answered, "Come and see." It is wonderful how difficulties melt away when the troubled one gets face to face with the Son of God. The misty clouds of doubt cannot stand when He appeareth, for His words are soul-healing and enlightening beams. It is truly heavenly logic to meet the "How's" of an inquirer after Christ with the "Comes" of the Gospel. How can a man know that Christ is able and willing to save? Come and see.

III. Proved. Nathanael came to Jesus, and when Jesus saw him coming He said of Him, "Behold an Israelite indeed;" and Nathanael said unto Him, "Whence knowest Thou me?" (John 1:47-48). Jesus at once manifested Himself to this honest seeker as the gracious and merciful heart-searcher. "Before Philip called thee, I saw thee." Nathanael has found that "good thing" which did not come out of Nazareth, but out of Heaven. He came and saw for Himself the wisdom and power of God manifested in Jesus the Christ. This guileless seeker very quickly became a joyful finder. It is when the seed falls into an honest heart that it brings forth fruit.

IV. Believed. "Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou?" (John 1:50). The inference is clear that he did believe. What else could he do? The evidence of His Messiahship had been overwhelmingly convicting, as the demonstration made had been entirely with himself. Christ's Divinity was proven by His operating upon His own heart and conscience-not by any outward display of miracle. Moral miracles are the monuments which still attest His Divine power and Godhead. The best way to prove the Divinity and saving power of Jesus Christ is to submit yourself to Him, then you will get a witness within that cannot be silenced.

V. Confessed. "He answered and said, Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel" (John 1:49). He believed with his heart, now he makes confession with his mouth. The confession was fearless and full. As the "Son of God" He was mighty to save; as the "King of

Israel" entire submission was His due. If we acknowledge Him as Saviour we should also submit to Him as King, for He is both Saviour and Lord. The confession Thomas made was: "My Lord and my God!" Many in those days, as now, believed on Him, who were afraid to confess Him (John 12:42-43). Remember that it is those who confess Him before men that He will confess before His Father in Heaven (Matthew 10:32).

VI. Was Encouraged. "Thou shalt see greater things than these,... ye shall see Heaven open," etc. (John 1:50-51). There is always an "open Heaven" and a blessed "hereafter" for those who so confess Him. It is a glorious and soul-satisfying vision to see an "open Heaven and the messengers of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." This is the ladder which Jacob saw. There is no other way of communication between a sin-cursed earth and an "open Heaven" but by Him. "I am the Way, no one can come unto the Father but by Me." He is the Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus. Only "angels of God" can do business in this way; the unclean shall not walk therein. Only those whose delight it is to fulfil the purposes of His will can ascend and descend upon this holy way. Have we seen this vision, and are we being encouraged and strengthened in our daily life by it? THE FIRST SIGN.

John 2:1-11.

"In holy books we read how God hath spoken

To holy men in many different ways;

But hath the present world no sign or token?

Is God quite silent in these latter days?

The Word were but a blank, a hollow sound,

If He that spake it were not speaking still,

If all the light and all the shade around

Were aught but issues of the Almighty will."-Coleridge.

"This beginning of His signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory" (John 2:11, R.V.). Perhaps this was one of the "greater things" which Jesus promised that Nathanael should see (chap. John 1:50). The "glory" of Jesus, the carpenter, had not yet been seen. There may be some significance in the fact that the first manifestation of "His glory" was on the "third day" of His appearing unto Israel, as the "third day" was to be the day of His greatest sign of all-the resurrection. We shall note the-

I. Occasion of this Sign. "A marriage in Cana." Marriage is, or at least ought to be, a united effort to perfect mutual happiness. But this marriage party did not seek this great blessing without the presence of the Lord, so "Jesus was called and His disciples;" and Jesus went, for He does desire to give His blessing to every lawful attempt after holiness and happiness. Every occasion is holy when Jesus Christ is there, and every holy season is a happy one. Jesus being there, there soon arose that need which He alone could meet: "there was no wine." Something awanting; yes, something for Jesus to do. Wherever He is there must needs be something done that will "manifest His glory." No efforts of men after true happiness can be successful without His gift of

infinite grace. His wine is needed to fully satisfy the heart of man. "Thou hast kept the good wine until now." Those who drink of His "wine" are fully conscious that it is the very best that can be got on earth (Isaiah 55:1-2). Christless pleasures are lifeless, and soon wither.

II. Meaning of this Sign. It was the manifestation of the-

1. Glory of His All-sufficient Grace. The first word uttered by Jesus on this great occasion was significant: "Fill." Oh! how characteristic this is of the liberality of His gracious heart. "Fill the water pots." He who is "full of grace" (chap. John 1:14) delights to give fullness of blessing. Less than 130 gallons might have sufficed, but this was to be a manifestation of His grace, so He gives "exceeding abundantly" above all their expectations. Every water jar was filled. He gives as much as we have room for. Open the mouth of thy expectation wide, and He will fill it.

2. Glory of His Transforming Power. "The water was made wine." The first miracle of Moses, by whom the law was given, was to turn water into blood; the first miracle of Him, by whom grace and truth came, was to turn water into wine. The blood speaks of judgment, the wine of fullness of joy. The commonest mercy in life can, by Him, be changed into the richest of blessings. Not only common mercies, but common men, like Peter and John, can He transform by His wonder-working power into vessels made meet for the Master's use. Every soul converted to God has been as definitely and as successfully operated upon by the Lord Jesus Christ as when He turned the water into wine. The performing of this sign was the evidencing of His ability to make all things new. Believe ye that I am able to do this? Present yourselves unto God, that ye may be "transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:1-2).

3. Glory of His Superlative Character. "Thou hast kept the good wine until now" (John 2:10). The last state is better than the first. The converted life is better than the purest of unconverted lives, as wine is richer than water. Christ could do nothing else but give "the best," as His words and works are true manifestations of His real character. Christ alone is the Maker of that wine which brings gladness without sorrow. All other wines manufactured by others to cheer the heart of man are but deceptive imitations. Christ gives the best, the best joy, the best peace, the best hope, the best promises, the best friendship, the best reward. Godliness is profitable for the life that now is, as well as that which is to come. If your life has not been changed by the power of Jesus Christ, the best is yet in store for you. O taste and see that the Lord is good. Good as His wine is now, there is yet something better kept for us, when we shall gather at the "marriage of the Lamb" (Revelation 19:7). Thou hast kept the best until now.

CLEANSING THE TEMPLE.

John 2:13-19.

"Are we not holy? Do not start!

It is God's sacred will

To call us temples set apart

His Holy Ghost may fill."-A. Procter.

There is a striking contrast between the scene at the marriage in Cana of Galilee (John 2:1) and that at the passover in the temple of Jerusalem. At the one Christ was an invited guest, at the other He was an unwelcomed stranger, although the temple was His "Father's house." In the one He wrought a miracle of grace, in the other a miracle of judgment. To honour Him is to be blessed, to dishonour Him is to be condemned. The temple is a figure both of the Lord's body and of ours (John 2:21 and 1 Corinthians 6:19). In the light of this we shall examine this miracle of cleansing.

I. The True Character of the Temple. The Lord calls it "My Father's house" (John 2:16). It was identified with the Name of God, and was to be a witness for Him. In it God revealed Himself, and man communed and worshipped. It was the earthly house of the heavenly and eternal King. But now, "know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you." Ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, "I will dwell in them" (2 Corinthians 6:16). After the temple at Jerusalem was "left desolate" by the rejection of Christ, the Holy Ghost came down at Pentecost and took possession of one hundred and twenty temples, so that they became witnesses for the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8).

II. How the Temple was Defiled. It was defiled by those who professed to be the friends of the temple, who used their religion as a cloak, that they might secure worldly gain for themselves. They had a zeal for the House of God, because this brought them personal profit, but they had no zeal for God Himself, or the honour of His Name. It is possible to have a zeal for the House of God (the Church) and yet be defiling the temple of the Holy Ghost all the time. If any man defile this temple, him (as a witness) shall God destroy. There is a religious zeal that is unholy and polluting in the sight of God; it is a zeal kindled on the vain altar of self-love, and fed with the fuel of selfish and worldly ambitions. That Christian life is utterly defiled that is governed by such sordid and debasing motives. To be more concerned about the body, or the forms and ordinances of the Church, than the purpose of the Holy Ghost in the body or Church, is to introduce a kind of traffic into the holy courts that pollutes and brings dishonour upon the House and Name of God. All worldly-mindedness and self-seeking brings moral defilement into that body which is the temple of the Holy Ghost.

III. How Christ is Treated in a Defiled Temple. "The zeal of thine House hath eaten Me up." They were so zealous about the things of the House that the Lord of the House Himself was to them as One who had been devoured and put out of sight. He had not place in all their appointments, no say in anything they did. He was treated as if He had absolutely no claim neither on them nor on the affairs of the House. This is the place the Almighty Redeemer gets in the lives of those who, for gain and honour among men, have allowed the love of the world to eat up their Christlikeness, or those who are so zealous for the things of religion that they have neither time nor desire for real fellowship with Christ Himself. They have a form of godliness, but they deny Him who is the power. O ye zealots for the externals of the Church, what are you doing with Christ?

IV. How the Temple was Cleansed. It was cleansed by the incoming of the Master Himself. It would have been a very long while before these sellers and moneychangers moved in this direction. His presence means purity. The intruders, with their defiling traffic, were "driven out." There is no other remedy for those Christ-dishonouring thoughts and motives, which have been ruling Him out of His own House, and setting up a business in His Name for the honour and glory of self. Who of these wretched usurpers shall be able to stand when He appeareth for He is like a

refiner's fire, He shall sit upon the throne of the heart as a refiner and purifier of silver (Malachi 3:1-3). The scourge may be needed, but in the hands of this merciful Purifier it is a scourge of "small cords." It must be a great grief to His heart to see a soul redeemed by His own Blood, that it might become a temple of God, turned into a mere "house of merchandise." Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and your spirit which are His. Give Christ His rightful place in the temple of the heart, and those selfish and defiling motives, which are like so many unholy traffickers, will quickly be driven out of the life.

V. The Sign of His Authority as a Cleanser. After this "Vanity Fair" had been cleared out of the temple courts, the Jews asked Him, "What sign shewest Thou unto us, seeing that Thou doest these things" (John 2:18). The fact that He was able to drive them all out by the power of His own word and will-for it was not by mere physical force-might have been proof enough of His Divine authority, but He answered, "Destroy this temple (body), and in three days I will raise it up, not build it up (John 2:19-22). His power to rise from the dead is then the evidence of His power to cleanse the temple for the glory of the Father. Is He able now to purge the heart and cleanse the life from every polluting thing? His resurrection is the answer, the sign. This evil generation, or this dispensation of evil, shall have no other sign given to it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet (Matthew 12:39-40). THE NEW BIRTH.

John 3:1-9.

"Open thy bosom, set thy meshes wide,

And let in manhood-let in happiness

Amid the boundless theatre of thought-

From nothing up to God-which makes a man.

-Young. From nothing but darkness and death, up to the light and life of God, is the experience of all who have been born from above. In seeking to understand this most searching truth, as brought before us in these verses, we would endeavour to point out that it is-

I. Taught by the Wisest of Men. The signs which Jesus wrought proved Him to be "a teacher come from God." Right through all His public life we see Him as "a man approved of God, by miracles and wonders." "Never man spake like this man," was the testimony even of His enemies. It was He who is the Wisdom of God that said, "Ye must be born again!" There is no escape from this. Christ said it, and Christ means it.

II. A Necessity to the Kingdom of God. "Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (R.V.), "cannot enter into" (John 3:5). By nature we are born spiritually blind, and so cannot see into that sphere where God alone is King; and Satan has so blinded the mind that it is morally impossible for such to enter into it. Any birth or life that is after the will of the flesh is unfit for the Kingdom of God (John 1:13). Everything that sinful man touches is defiled, and nothing that defileth shall enter into this heavenly kingdom. This new kingdom in Christ Jesus can only be peopled by a new creation after His own likeness (2 Corinthians 5:17). The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, it does not consist of mere carnal pleasures, which any unrenewed man can enjoy, but it is righteousness of heart, peace with God, and joy in the Holy Ghost, which no unregenerated one can possibly enjoy. He must be born from above before he can enter into the

possessions of those things which are above. The pure in heart shall see God.

III. A Mystery to the Natural Man. How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus, being still a mere natural man, was not able to receive this great spiritual truth; it was foolishness unto him, because he had not that faculty by which he could discern spiritual things (1 Corinthians 2:14). But he was not condemned for the lack of an understanding of it. It is those who love the darkness rather than the light that bring themselves into the condemnation (John 3:19). Nicodemus loved the light of truth, and was an earnest seeker after it. It is the darkness of unbelief that does not comprehend the true light that now shineth (John 1:5). Although a man cannot reason out the mysteries of the new birth, that does not make it any the less needful. He is not asked to explain it, but he is asked to acknowledge his personal need of it. If it were possible for a man to be born again after the flesh fifty times over, that would in no way alter the case; he still needs to be born from above if he is to enter into the kingdom of God.

IV. The Work of the Holy Spirit. "The wind bloweth where it listeth... so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing in the work of regeneration (John 6:63). "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? That which is born of the Spirit is spirit, or is spiritual. By no law of evolution or effort of man can that which is flesh bring forth that which is spirit. Only that which is begotten by the Holy Spirit of God is fit to enter into the Kingdom of God. The second birth, like the second Adam, is from Heaven (1 Corinthians 15:47), and is conceived in the heart by the Holy Ghost. The works of the flesh are in fearful contrast with the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:16-25). He that soweth to the flesh can only reap corruption. The Spirit is sovereign, and, like the wind, moves where He willeth; thou nearest the voice thereof but canst not tell, etc. (R.V.). There is much about the Spirit's manner of working that we cannot tell, but to hear His voice, and to obey His will, is to pass from death into life; for to be spiritually-minded is life and peace (Romans 8:6). The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God, the incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever, and by which we are born again, as soon as that Word is received by faith. Of His own will begat He us with that Word of Truth which brings new life and hope to the believing heart by creating a vital and eternal union with the Son of God. THE WAY INTO LIFE.

John 3:14-21.

"Art builds on sand: the works of pride

And human passion change and fall;

But that which shares the life of God,

With Him surviveth all."-Whittier.

"How can these things be?" said Nicodemus, in answer to Christ's most searching statements regarding the "new birth." The verses indicated above may be taken as our Lord's full and perfect explanation of how a man can be "born again" even when he is old. As such they are of vital significance to every man. They contain the-

I. Revelation of a Great Need. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up" (John 3:14). There was great need for Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness, because it was God's remedy for a serpent-poisoned people. So must the Son of Man

be lifted up for a sin-poisoned world. The lifting up of the serpent was to attract the eye of the perishing, that they might look and live. There was none other Name under Heaven given among men whereby they could be saved (Acts 4:12).

II. Revelation of Great Love. "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son" (John 3:16). If ye love them that love you, what thanks have ye, do not even the Gentiles the same? This is not like the love of God, for, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Ephesians 2:4). The depth and intensity of God's love can only be measured by the unworthiness of the objects, and the greatness of the Gift. He might have so loved the world as to speak through His Son, but He so loved as to give His Son, and in giving Him-as the "only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth"-He gave to the world a perfect remedy for all its sins and sorrows (Romans 8:32). Herein is love, love in the perfection of its nature, and in the greatest possible manifestation of its power.

III. Revelation of Great Suffering. Intense suffering is surely implied in the fact of God giving up His Son unto the death for us all, and in that the Son yielded Himself to be lifted up upon the Cross for the sins of the world (John 8:28). The way of life for fallen man is through the soul agony both of the Father and of the Son. Sin is such a fearful thing that even God Himself cannot deal with it but at the expense of terrible personal suffering. When Nicodemus, puzzled with the doctrine of the "new birth," asked the Lord Jesus Christ, "How can these things be?" his question reached further and deeper than he could possibly conceive of. How can a sinner be transformed into a saint? Through the sufferings of God, through the giving up of His Son, and the shedding of His Blood (Acts 20:28).

IV. Revelation of a Great Purpose. "That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish." "That the world through Him might be saved" (John 3:16-17). This purpose of salvation is first individual, then world-wide, when the kingdoms of this world shall become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. The "lifting up" of the Son of Man was the unlocking of the door of hope for a guilty world; it was the breaking forth of the sin-cleansing stream from the opened fountain of almighty grace (Zechariah 13:1). The saving purpose of God is the crowning purpose of the Bible, it towers high above all others, and casts its hallowing shadow over them all. Only "through Him" can salvation come.

V. Revelation of a Great Privilege. Salvation, through being made a new creature, is the greatest possible blessing that the God of infinite love can bestow upon sinful men, and yet He offers it upon the easiest possible terms- "Whosoever believeth in Him." This great salvation is threefold:

1. Deliverance from present condemnation (John 3:18).

2. Deliverance from future destruction (John 3:16).

3. Assurance of present and eternal life (John 3:15-16). Note that it is "he that believeth on Him" that is not condemned. There is no justification before God through believing in our works or our ways, nor in the Church or the Creed. It is our God-given privilege to trust Him whom He hath sent. Behold, now is the accepted time.

VI. The Revelation of a Great Responsibility. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light" (John 3:19-21). The Son of God has come as the Light and Life of men. Those who love the darkness of spiritual death, rather than the light of

spiritual life, will not come to the light, lest their foolish and sinful deeds should be reproved; but he that loves and desires the truth will come to the light as Nicodemus did, even if he should come in the darkness, that his life and deeds may be adjusted with God. He had an honest heart. It is the attitude of the heart toward Christ, as the Light of life, that leads to justification or condemnation. To love the darkness of an unregenerate state, is to prove ourselves unfit for the Kingdom of God. To love the light, as revealed in Christ, is to be more anxious to be right with God than with the opinions of men, or with the thoughts of our own deceitful hearts (Psalms 139:23-24). The true Light now shineth! Are we hating it, or coming to it? This hating, and this coming, is a continual process.

JOHN'S LAST TESTIMONY.

John 3:25-36.

"My son forsake thyself, and thou shalt find Me!

Lord, how often shall I resign myself, and

Wherein shall I forsake myself? Always, yea.

Every hour: as well in small things as in great."

-Thos. a Kempis.

John's disciples were evidently grieved at the growing popularity of Jesus (John 3:26). They were, like some modern disciples, more the followers of a man than witnesses for God. Sectarianism, which is just another form of selfishness, always blinds the eyes to the greatness of Christ's mission, and to the real relationship of His servants to Himself. But the Spirit-taught man of the desert knew better than be offended. "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). These last words of the Baptist, spoken in justification of the growing power of Jesus Christ, are full of deep significance. They teach us-that

I. All Christian Success comes from God. "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven" (John 3:27). John is, of course, referring here to the preeminence given to Christ as the Son of Man. "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." The secret of all success in Christian, that is, in spiritual work, lies in the favour of God. Every good gift and perfect boon is from above (James 1:17, R.V.). The lifting-up that is not of God, is doomed to a terrible disappointment.

II. The True Friends of Christ Rejoice in His Exaltation. "The friends of the bridegroom rejoice greatly... this my joy therefore is fulfilled" (John 3:29-30). He that hath the bride (the Church) is the bridegroom (Christ). She is chosen through His grace and redeemed by His blood. John, as the friend of the bridegroom, finds his joy fulfilled in that which honours Him, and brings gladness to his heart. This indeed is true friendship. Did not our Lord say of His disciples, "I have called you friends?" (John 15:15). Have we John's mark of friendship? Do we rejoice because of His voice? Is the cup of our joy filled full because Christ is being honoured, even when we ourselves are being more and more dishonoured in the eyes of men? If our hearts are right with Him, there will be fullness of joy at the increase of Christ and the decrease of self.

III. He that Cometh from Above is Above All (John 3:31). This is emphatically true of Jesus Christ. The source of His existence and the character of His life is from above, and is above all. But this is also true of every one that is born from above-born of God. They are in character and destiny "above all" that is of the world, the flesh, and the Devil. Their affections are set on things above, and they live above the doubts, the darkness, and the uncertainties of the world, and the Christ-dishonouring ways of ungodly men. We must come from above before we can attack successfully all the forces of evil that are from beneath (Ephesians 6:12-13).

IV. To Receive Christ's Testimony is to Honour God. "He that receiveth His testimony hath set to His seal that God is true" (John 3:33-34). "He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God." Not to believe Him and the record given of Him is to make God a liar (1 John 5:10). What was the testimony of Jesus Christ? He declared that "He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). He came as a servant to reveal the words and will of God, and as a Redeemer to give Himself a sacrifice for sin. To receive His testimony by believing it, and acting on the authority of it, is to set the seal of the whole life upon the truth of God. We have never accepted the word of His salvation until we have really set the sea! of bur personal trust upon it. Let God be true.

V. The Father hath Honoured the Son in Everything. "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand" (John 3:35). To think of the Saviour of sinners being so loved and honoured by the eternal God and Father is enough to fill every believing heart with unutterable praise and everlasting adoration. "The Father hath shewed Him all things that Himself doeth, and hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (John 5:20-22). "Jesus knew that the Father had given all things into His hands" (John 13:3). "Thou hast given Him power over all flesh" (John 17:2). "Thou hast put all things under His feet...He left nothing that is not put under Him" (Hebrews 2:8). "All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). "Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end" (Isaiah 9:7). "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9).

VI. To Believe on the Son is to have Everlasting Life (John 3:36). This mighty, God-honoured, all-embracing Name is the only name "given among men whereby we must be saved." There cannot be another such a One that has "power over all flesh to give eternal life" (John 17:2). Eternal life is the gift of Him who has "power over all." Did He not say, "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins?" (John 8:24). That He gives eternal life and peace to all who believe in Him is to us the proof of His eternal power and Godhead.

VII. To Disbelieve the Son is to Abide under the Wrath of God. "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." At the Cross of Christ the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18). Those who know the Gospel, but have not submitted to the Son, are guilty of holding the truth in unrighteousness. God can by no means clear those who are guilty of rejecting the atoning Blood of His Lamb. Outside this Ark of Refuge is to be still beneath the dark cloud of judgment. Jesus only can deliver from the wrath to come (1 Timothy 1:10). Hear ye Him. THE LIVING WATER.

John 4:7-14.

These words of Jesus Christ about the "Living Water, spoken as they were to the sinful Samaritan, are deeper and more lasting than the well of Jacob. This well is unfathomable! This Water is everlasting!

I. The Nature of It. Our Lord calls it "Living Water" (John 4:10). It is living in the sense that it is life-giving. That which Christ gives is not something to keep us alive, but something to make us alive. This water of "grace and truth," which came by Jesus Christ (John 4:1-17), is the water which saves and satisfies (Ephesians 2:8). It is not given merely to refresh, but to regenerate. The elements of eternal light and life are in it.

II. The Source of It. "Thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee." He Himself is the disposer of this living water. Unto Him has been "given power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life" (John 17:2). "This is the pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb" (Revelation 22:1). The original source of this grace and truth is the gracious heart of the eternal God, and has been manifested to us in the life and sufferings of the Lamb.

III. The Efficacy of It.

1. It Quenches Thirst. "Whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst" (John 4:14). They never thirst for the muddy waters of sin who have drank, and keep drinking, of the water that Christ gives. They shall never thirst for any other drink, neither in this life not in the life which is to come. "They shall not thirst for ever" (Newberry).

2. It Becomes a Spring Within. "The water that I shall give him shall become in him a spring of water" (John 4:14, Newberry). The idea here is that, when any one drinks this water, or, in other words, receives this grace and truth offered in Christ, there is opened up within that one a fountain of new life and blessedness-a secondary source, within the heart, of perennial joy and satisfaction. Every saved soul is a citadel of God, and although constantly besieged by the sins and sorrows of earth, they have an unfailing source of supply within. This fountain flows on for ever, springing up into the ocean of eternal life and praise, in the presence of God and the Lamb.

IV. The Conditions of It. "If thou knewest the gift of God, thou wouldest have asked of Him" (John 4:10). The conditions are knowing and asking. As soon as we know what the Christ has to give us, this knowledge should surely lead to asking and receiving. How will sinners ask of Him the greatest of all gifts, if they do not know that the gift of God is eternal life? They were blessed who knew the joyful sound of the jubilee trumpet, because they believed and received their liberty through it. If thou knewest the gift of God thou wouldest not frequent those streams which have their source in this sin-poisoned world, and which can never reach down to the thirst of a human spirit. This is eternal life to know Him. Ask and ye shall receive.

V. The Freeness of It. "Whosoever drinketh of this water" (John 4:14). "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17). Christ Himself, as the Fountain of Living Water; is the Gift of God to a world perishing with a thirst that is unquenchable apart from Him. Whosoever, is the choice word of the infinite grace of God. It was among the first and the last words" used in connection with the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (John 3:15-16; Revelation 22:17). Does your soul thirst for these waters as the hart panteth after the water brooks? Then here is your hope: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye" (Isaiah 55:1). It was on the last and greatest day of the

feast that Jesus stood and cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. " THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.

John 4:1-30.

"A love that gives and takes-that seeth faults,

Not with flaw-seeking eyes like needle-points,

But loving, kindly, ever looks them down

With the overcoming faith of meek forgiveness."-Lowell.

"He must needs go through Samaria." There was a must needs for every word Christ spoke, and for every act that He did. Those Jews, which had "no dealings with the Samaritans," usually avoided going through Samaria when journeying from Judea to Galilee; but Christ's love for sinners constrained Him to go that way. He lived not to please Himself, but to seek and to save the lost. In this He has left us an example that we should follow His steps. Meanwhile let us centre our thoughts on the woman. See her as-

I. A Flagrant Sinner. It is quite clear from John 4:18 that this woman lived in a condition of shameless immorality. She seems to have been the chief among this class of sinners. But Jesus knew when and where to find her. It is no mere chance-work to come into contact with the Son of God. He knoweth the way that we take.

II. An Awakened Questioner. "How is it that Thou... askest of me?" etc. (John 4:9). As soon as she comes into His presence her curiosity is aroused. Whoever could come into touch with Christ without being moved in one way or another. Yet some dare to pronounce Him nothing more than human. This Samaritan knew that He was a Jew, although the Jews, in their hate, declared that He was a Samaritan (John 8:48). It is interesting to note that it was the un-Jewish largeheartedness of Christ that first awakened her interest in Him. This is His chief characteristic as the Saviour of sinners.

III. A Carnal Reasoner. Jesus answered the woman's inquiry with a revelation of Himself, as the Giver of "living water." He sought to make her conscious of her need of the "Gift of God" (John 4:10). Her answer shows that she was in total darkness as to spiritual things. "Sir," she said, "Thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep" (John 4:11). As if this life-giving water was to come out of Jacob's well. But she was not more blind than Nicodemus was when he said, "How can a man be born when he is old?" Through sin, the descent of man from God is so great that, without a miracle of grace he cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:14). Carnal reason has never yet understood the Word of God.

IV. A Bewildered Trifler. "Sir, give me this water that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw" (John 4:15), She has now got a faint glimmering that He is not speaking of the water in the well of Jacob; but she has the idea that the water He gives isbut a substitute for that which was in Sychar's Well. So her quick, flippant answer is: Oh, that would be very convenient; just give it me that I may be saved the pain of thirst, and the trouble of carrying it from the well. Her curiosity seems now turned into a sort of half-puzzled spirit of ridicule. As yet she is unfit to receive the Kingdom of God by faith. The deep things of God are never revealed to a frivolous soul. The plough of conviction must

be driven deeper down. The seed of the Word must have an honest heart.

V. A Religious Inquirer. The Lord met her flippant reply with these stinging words: "Go, call your husband" (John 4:16-20). This led up to the confession: "Sir, I perceive that Thou art a prophet." All lightness and frivolousness seems now to vanish, and in downright earnestness she asks Him to settle for her that vexed question as to "where men ought to worship." The mental and moral process through which this woman passed is in beautiful harmony with the teaching of all the New Testament, and with present-day Christian experience. The question now with this anxious soul is: Where should I worship? How am I to be put right with God? What must I do to be saved?

VI. An Earnest Listener. Now that the conversation had so wonderfully turned upon the most vital point for a sin-smitten seeking soul, with what eagerness would she drink in the message of light and life from her Saviour's lips. What a message this is (John 4:21-24). "Woman, believe Me... worship the Father in spirit and in truth...God is a Spirit." This was a new revelation to her, and was the death-blow to all her prejudice, self-righteousness, and sectarianism. It was also the opening of a new door of hope for her, in bringing salvation within her reach there and then. "I know that Messias cometh," she said. "When He is come, He will tell us all things." Jesus saith unto her, "I that speak unto thee am He." What a transforming revelation this was 1

VII. A Fearless Testifier. She went and said to the men of the city, "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" (John 4:28-30). Yes, this is the Christ, who tells us plainly what we are, and what we need, and who offers to supply that need without money or price (John 4:10). She was not ashamed to own Him, as the revealer of her sins, and the Anointed One of God; and her earnest, faithful testimony was blessed to the salvation of many (John 4:39). She had no commission, but the expulsive power of a new revelation became in her irresistible. We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen. The love of Christ constraineth us.

FAITH: ITS NATURE AND REWARD.

John 4:46-54.

"He, bounteous of thy faith, for not misspent

Is confidence unto the Father lent;

Thy need is sown and rooted for His rain...

Trust on! One day, beyond all thought of praise,

A sunny joy will crown thee with its rays:

Nor other than thy need, thy recompense."-MacDonald.

Some of God's brightest blessings come to us clothed in the dark weeds of mourning. If this nobleman's heart had not been moved through the sickness of his son, he never would have known the healing power of Jesus Christ through faith. Blessed is that sorrow which constrains us to go believingly to the Son of God.

I. An Earnest Request. "When he heard that Jesus was come... he went and besought Him that He would come down and heal his son" (John 4:47). He heard, he went, he besought. This is the

workings of an honest heart. His request that Christ would "come down" shows faith in the power of His presence, but perhaps a lack of faith in His promise. The Lord would teach the nobleman and us that His Word is as good as Himself. "The words that I speak unto you are spirit and life." They have the same character as Himself.

II. A Gentle Rebuke. "Jesus said unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe" (John 4:48). "The Jews require a sign" (1 Corinthians 1:22). In this reply, Christ was saying to the nobleman, as it were, Are you not prepared to believe Me just now without seeing signs and wonders wrought by Me? You are prepared to believe that I am the Messiah if I come down and heal your son, who is at the point of death. "Ye will not believe except ye see." There is a faith that is more noble than this. "Believe and thou shalt see." What better are they of our own day, who will not believe except they feel. A lame faith is always on the look out for the crutches of "signs and wonders."

III. A Definite Promise. When the nobleman had said, in effect: Signs or no signs, in Thy mercy, "come down ere my child die," then the Lord offered to his faith the word of healing, "Go thy way, thy son liveth" (John 4:49-50). In giving him His Word He was giving him the "bread of life" both for himself and his son. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

IV. A Believing Act. "The man believed the Word... and went his way" (John 4:50). Now that he is prepared to believe Christ, without seeing signs, he is satisfied with His Word of promise, and so went his way, asking for nothing else. He had the blessedness of the man who had not seen, and yet had believed (John 20:29). This is the faith that crowns the Christ with glory and honour. The faith that saves is a faith that acts confidently. To have faith in Christ for anything promised, that is yet unseen, is to have the evidence that that thing is in reality for you (Hebrews 11:1). "He that believeth on the Son hath." We walk by faith, not by sight. What vital importance our Lord always associates with His words. They are "spirit and life." A man is either blessed or doomed, according to his attitude toward them. To believe His testimony is to set to our seal that God is true (John 3:33 . To disbelieve this record is to make God a liar (1 John 5:10)

V. A Confirming Evidence. "As he was going down, his servants met him, saying. Thy son liveth... when?... yesterday at the seventh hour. So the father knew that it was at the self same hour in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth" (John 4:51-53). Is such faith not always confirmed by the providence of God? Had Joshua not to confess, at the end of his eventful life, that "not one thing had failed of all that the Lord had promised?" (Joshua 23:14). Believe and thou shalt see, for in the "self same hour" in which the almighty Redeemer says that expected thing shall be done, it will be done. Those who go in faith, and at His bidding, as this nobleman did, will surely find that He is faithful who hath promised. The assurance of salvation must as certainly follow the act of faith. THE IMPOTENT MAN.

John 5:1-15.

"The Blessed One- He read the tear-stained book of poor men's souls."

-Kingsley. This pool called Bethesda, "House of Mercy," seems to have been the Jerusalem hospital. The fourth verse is left out of the text in the Revised Version. The water was evidently subject to intermittent bubbling, and perhaps possessed many healing virtues. But it is not with

those who went into the pool that we have to do, but with the man who did not get in, and yet was healed. Observe his-

I. Sorrowful Condition. "He had an infirmity thirty and eight years" (John 5:5). This infirmity was probably the result of his sin (John 5:14). Like sin itself, it was an old-standing disease. As far as his own ability, or any mere human power was concerned, he was past hope. This house of mercy was bis last shift. The mercy of God is the sinners' only hope.

II. Humble Position. This "certain man was there." "Where? There-among the "blind, halt, withered, waiting." He was not ashamed to take his place among the helpless and the needy. If he had refused to take this self-humbling step he never would have been healed. Pride and shame keep many a one away from the saving touch of Christ. To many God is still saying, "How long will ye refuse to humble yourselves?" It was when the wretched publican took his place as a sinner that he was justified (Luke 18:13).

III. Fruitless Effort. "While I am coming, another steppeth down before me" (John 5:7). He had taken his place among the "impotent folk." Now he is doing the best he can; but his best only ends in failure and disappointment. There are a great many "others," seen and unseen, within and without, that are ready to step down before a soul seeking salvation. This the broken law of God is sure to do. Salvation is not of works, lest any man should boast. His repeated failure makes him more prepared for the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

IV. Merciful Deliverer. "When Jesus saw him lie, and knew... He saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?" (John 5:6). He knoweth the path of those whose spirits have become overwhelmed (Psalms 142:3). This poor man was waiting for a more convenient season, but that was not what he needed. He needed one to save him where he was, and as he was, and that Christ offered to do. Wilt thou be made whole, where you are, just now? When he answered, "Sir, I have no man," etc., it was clear that he did not know to whom he was speaking, for those who are saved by Christ need no other man. Wilt thou that I should make thee whole?

V. Personal Call. "Rise, take up thy bed and walk" (John 5:8). This call must surely have come to him with startling suddenness. He had not walked for "thirty and eight years." But there is always that inexplicable something about the Person and Word of the Lord Jesus Christ that awakens the confident expectation of the diseased and the downcast. It was utterly useless for any other man to say, "Rise and walk." It would only be solemn mockery, but coming from His lips the words were "spirit and life."

VI. Sudden Change. "And immediately the man was made whole" (John 5:9). He believed the word of the Lord, acted on the authority of it, and found in his happy experience that he had received the blessing for which he so much longed. He got it, not by working, striving,' or struggling, but by simply believing. The change wrought in him was both sudden and complete: "immediately... made whole." The cure itself was a mystery, but the fact of it was a certainty-perfect and God-like.

VII. Fearless Testimony. "The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus which had made him whole" (John 5:15). Having met the Lord in the temple (John 5:14), he now confesses Him before men, and before such men as were bitterly opposed to Him. "With the heart man believeth, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10). By grace are we saved

through faith, but faith is manifested before men by works (James 2:18). Some refuse to confess Christ because they love the praise of men more than the praise of God (John 12:42-43). To deny Him before men is to be denied by Him before the Father in Heaven (Matthew 10:32-33).

I AND MY FATHER.

John 5:17-43. The Gospel of John is the "Holy of Holies" in the tabernacle of the New Testament. John could no more invent the things taught in this book than he could make a ladder that would reach unto Heaven. John's Gospel is the Gospel of "the Father and the Son," or the Son's relationship to the Father. With the exception of Matthew 11:27, this great theme is almost never touched by the other evangelists. This is "holy ground." Let us approach it, as it were, with humble and unshod feet. From Christ's own lips we learn that-

I. He was Loved by the Father. "The Father loveth the Son, and sheweth Him all things that Himself doeth" (John 5:20). One of the proofs of this love is that He "sheweth Him all things that Himself doeth." The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand (John 3:35). It is the manner of our gracious God to manifest His love by giving (John 3:16).

II. He was Sent by the Father. "The Father Himself hath sent Me" (John 5:37). Christ, as the Son, "proceeded forth, and came from God," but not of Himself, as independent of the Father's desire and purpose (chap. John 8:42). "When the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son" (Galatians 4:4, R. V.). What a comfort this thought must have been to Him "in sorrow's lone hour." All Christ's servants are so sent (John 17:18).

III. He Game in His Father's Name. "I am come in My Father's Name" (John 5:43). He came as the Father's representative among men, and because of this "they received Him not." Men whose lives are opposed to God are always ready to receive those who come in their own name (Acts 5:36-37). To come in His Father's Name implied that He also came in His Father's nature (chap. John 14:10).

IV. He Seeks to do the Will of His Father. "I can of myself do nothing...I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me" (John 5:30). His own will was so entirely submitted to the will of His Father that He could, or would, do nothing in the strength of it. His whole delight was to do the will of God, because His law was within His heart (Psalms 40:7-8). His meat, the strength of His life, was to do the will of Him that sent Him (chap. John 4:34). With Him it was, "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt," at any cost (Matthew 26:39).

V. He Followeth His Father's Example. "My Father worketh even until now, and I work. The Son can do... what He seeth the Father doing" (John 5:17-19, R.V.). The Father knows no Sabbath in seeking the salvation of the lost, neither does the Son (John 5:16). The eyes of the Son, as a servant, were continually towards the Father, as His Master. The Father was Christ's example, even as Christ is ours.

VI. He Possesses the Father's Prerogative of Life. "As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself" (John 5:26). The Father, who hath the life in Himself that is entirely independent of all circumstances, hath bequeathed the like inheritance to the Son, so the Son could say, "As I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me" (chap. John 6:57). Christ, our Life.

VII. He Quickeneth whom the Father Will. "As the Father raiseth up the dead... even so the Son quickeneth whom He will" (John 5:21). Christ is "the resurrection and the life." All that the Father hath given Him, through faith in His Name, are made alive from the dead. Neither the Father nor the Son will be disappointed with the final results of the great redemption.

VIII. He Judgeth in the Father's Stead. "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (John 5:22). He hath given Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man (John 5:27) Because Christ condescended to take upon Him "the likeness of man," God hath appointed Him the Judge of all mankind (Acts 10:42). Either in grace or in judgment every knee shall bow in the Name of Jesus (Php_2:10). All the affairs of the kingdom of grace have been delegated to Him who gave Himself a ransom for all (1 Timothy 2:6; Acts 17:30).

IX. He Claims Equality with the Father. "All may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father (John 5:23, R.V.). He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father. He that hateth Me, hateth My Father also (John 15:23). I and My Father are one. "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father (1 John 2:23). The life, the character, and work of Jesus Christ were so vitally connected with the life, the character, and work of the Father that, in the estimation of both, they were one. Kiss the Son, and you will find your soul's refuge in the bosom of the Father.

CHRIST AND THE HUNGRY MULTITUDE.

John 6:1-14.

"Wouldst thou go forth to bless? Be sure of thine own ground!

Fix well thy centre first, then draw thy circles round."-Trench. A life centred in God as the basis of operation must be a success, for no enemy will ever be able to break through and cut off this connection. Christ's attitude toward the multitude, as before us here, furnishes us with the principles of all true missionary enterprise. Thousands had followed Him to the other side of the lake, because "they saw the miracles which He did." But Christ's anxiety was to satisfy their need, not to entertain them with wonder-working. He knew that they were hungry, just as He still knows that there are multitudes whose chief necessity is for the Bread of Life. Observe how this is done: He

I. Desires that they should be Fed. "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" (John 6:5). His will is that they should be satisfied, and He so wills because He has compassion on the multitude (Matthew 14:14). The infinite tenderness of His heart towards the needy constrains Him to seek their good. He willeth not the death of any. The deepest yearning of His soul is that the hungry crowd should have the Bread of Life offered them, and that "these may eat."

II. Knows where the supply is to come from. "He Himself knew what He would do" (John 6:6). No one is needed to advise Him who is the "Wisdom of God." He knew what He would do, not what He would try to do. He never makes a demand without being prepared to supply all that is requisite for the carrying out of His will. The Lord's purposes are not mere experiments, they are accomplished facts in His mind. He knew what He would do when He set His face like a flint to go up to Jerusalem. He also knew what He would do when He said, "All power is given unto Me, . . . go ye therefore." His servants may be often tried and proven, but, looking to Him, there can be no defeat.

III. Seeks the Thoughtful Interest of His Followers. "Whence shall we buy bread" (John 6:5). He knew Himself what He would do, but He desires that the minds and hearts of His disciples should be exercised about this great and needful business of feeding the hungry multitude. In using this form of the pronoun, we, He was declaring a community of interests between Him and His followers. The true missionary spirit has its source and the secret of its abiding freshness in the constant realisation of this great fact. Is Christ not saying to His Church to-day, "Whence shall we find bread, money, men, that the hungry millions in heathendom may eat and live?" What is the answer? "Lord, Thou knowest." Pray ye the Lord of the harvest.

IV. Makes use of Little Gifts. "There is a lad here with five barley loaves and two small fishes; but what are they among so many?" (John 6:9). "Jesus took the loaves" (John 6:11). They were not too small for Him. He who created the Heavens and the earth knows the true worth of a little thing, when put into His hand. God hath chosen weak things... and things which are despised... that no flesh should glory in His presence (1 Corinthians 1:27-29). "Follow Me," He says, "and I will make you fishers of men." These little things have their value increased immensely by being at His disposal; so is it with every life committed to Him.

V. Himself is all-sufficient for this Emergency. "He gave thanks and distributed... to them... as much as they would" (John 6:11). The source of supply was in Himself, not in what was merely given to Him. It is because of His infinite power and fullness that He is able to use weak things in the manifestation of His riches and glory. He puts the treasure in an earthen vessel that the excellency of the power may be seen to be of God. "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass" (Psalms 37:5).

VI. Feeds the Hungry through His own Disciples. "He distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down" (John 6:11). Of themselves they could do nothing to meet the necessity of the eager crowd, but, through Him, they could do all that was needed. Our sufficiency is of the Lord. We, like the disciples of old, are greatly privileged in having this heavenly bread committed to us, but, like them, we would be verily guilty if we stored it up, instead of delivering it to the starving multitude for whom it is intended. Freely ye have received, freely give: and give it to those in the back row of heathenism as freely as ye give to those in the front row of the homeland. The manna that was "laid up" instead of used, bred worms and stank. Those given to self-seeking will surely be visited with the worms of pride, discontent, and envy; their Christian character will have an unsavoury breath about it. Give, and it shall be given unto you, good measure, pressed down, and running over.

VII. Provides Enough for All. "As much as they would" (John 6:11). "They gathered and filled twelve baskets (or wallets) with the fragments" (John 6:13). There was abundance in the provision of Christ for every one of them. If any lacked or went away without being perfectly satisfied, the blame was their own. Christ Himself, who is "the Bread of Life," is all-sufficient to satisfy the hunger of all who come to Him (John 6:35). In Himself there is bread enough and to spare for the unfed millions who are still spending their money for that which is not bread (see 1 John 2:2). This standing order of the Lord Jesus Christ, "Give ye them to eat," is being but very partially and timidly obeyed. There is no danger of His resources failing, therefore, as His disciples, let us show our faith in Him by the diligent use of those "goods" which He hath committed unto us for the furtherance of His kingdom and the glory of His Name (Matthew 25:14).

JESUS IN THE SHIP; Or, INSTANT SALVATION.

John 6:16-21.

"Immanuel! God with us in His meekness;

Immanuel? God with us in His might

To bind our wounds, to gift with strength our weakness,

To bring us, redeemed, to the home of light."-Morgan. When Jesus had given the multitude this sign, that He was the "Bread of Life," by feeding them, He had to withdraw to the "mountain Himself alone," as He perceived that their intention was to take Him by force and make Him a king. His crowning day had not yet come. He well knew that they would yet take Him by force and crown Him with the thorns of derision. The disciples waited till even, but as Jesus did not come, and as it was getting late, they entered their boat and made for the other side. The whole scene is full of suggestive meaning. We note-

I. A Conscious Need. Their condition was most painful. "It was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them, and the sea arose by reason of a great wind" (John 6:17-18). A threefold sorrow was theirs: darkness, danger, desertion. Neither the darkness nor the tempest need trouble us if only that wonderful all-comforting Presence is with us. Their sorrowful state resembles that of many now: in darkness, in danger, and Christless, but, worst of all, quite unconscious of their sad condition.

II. A Great Discovery. "They see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship" (John 6:19). This is the greatest discovery the sinful, sorrowful soul of man can make. Jesus, the merciful, in the midst of the darkness: Jesus, the mighty, treading the threatening waves of death beneath His feet; Jesus, the divine, "drawing nigh" unto the distressed. The Christ will surely find His way to those who feel their helplessness, and who long for Him. He knows where the troubled seeking heart is, and how best to reveal Himself to such. He comes to seek and to save the lost.

III. A Comforting Message. "It is I, be not afraid" (John 6:20). It is the prerogative of the Lord Jesus Christ to save from fear. No other creature under Heaven could utter these words without incurring ridicule. This is the language of a conqueror. It is I, be not afraid of the darkness, for I am the Light; be not afraid of death, for I am the Life; be not afraid of your sins, for I am thy Salvation; be not afraid of hell, or of judgment, for I am He who was dead and is alive again for evermore, and have the keys of death and hades. "It is I, be not afraid;" cast all your care upon Me, for I am thy Creator, thy Redeemer and Friend. Into these few words you may read the "Gospel of the grace of God."

IV. A Willing Reception. "Then they willingly received Him into the ship" (John 6:21). They gladly accepted His offer of Himself. What an opportunity this was at such a time! We cannot imagine them refusing the salvation that was offered them in Himself. Yet this is what multitudes are doing every day. It was Him they received, they could not receive His Word and reject Him. Christ and His Word will stand or fall together. They took Him into their ship in distress, and, blessed be His Name, He was quite ready to go. O heart, distressed with doubt and fear, take the Saviour in!

V. An Immediate Result. "Immediately the ship was at the land whither they went" (John 6:21). This language clearly indicates that a miracle of grace was wrought. They were instantaneously saved from their dangerous position, and had the desire of their hearts fully met, by suddenly arriving at their longed-for haven. The receiving of Christ into the heart is always accompanied with deliverance and rest. There is nothing too hard for Him. The saving of His people is the great purpose of His mission. When the disciples got to about the middle of the lake they seemed to be dead beat, but what they could not do Jesus immediately did when He got an entrance into their ship. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us. Instant salvation is the gift of Him who alone can save to the uttermost. THE IMPERISHABLE MEAT.

John 6:26-29.

"Knowledge is a barren tree, and bare bereft of God."-Morris.

"Though I have all knowledge, and have not love, I am nothing."-Paul.

Many had been following the Lord, but He who looketh upon the heart rebuked them for their mean and selfish motives in doing so. "Ye seek Me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled." To look upon Christ as merely a loaf-providing Saviour was to dishonour Him, and deceive their own souls. Christ did not come to feed men, but to save men. It is not always necessary that a man should live, but it is necessary that he should be saved. He gave them loaves, but He is the Bread of Life. The words of our Lord here are very searching. They reveal a-

I. Disappointing Work. "Labour not for the meat which perisheth." This does not mean that a man should not work for his daily bread, for "he that will not work should not eat." The meat that is worth working for should fulfil the true characteristics and purposes of food, it should meet and satisfy the cravings of hunger. Therefore, do not spend the whole energy of your being labouring for a perishable meat that will never satisfy an imperishable soul. "Wherefore spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" (Isaiah 55:2). Give up the disappointing business of attempting to satisfy your soul with earthly goods (Luke 12:19).

II. A Satisfying Work. "Labour... for that meat which abideth unto eternal life" (R.V.). You cannot too earnestly seek this meat, for it is-

1. Suitable. Suitable to your eternal spirit, because the elements of eternity are in it. Christ Himself is that meat: seek Him. "I am the Living Bread: if any man eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever" (John 6:51). The teaching and the work of Jesus Christ are sufficient to meet the whole need of man for time and eternity. Bread is not more suitable to the hungry, or water to the thirsty, than Christ is to the real deep needs of men.

2. Seasonable. This imperishable meat never grows stale. Time can work no change on this. It is the incorruptible provision of the incorruptible God for the incorruptible soul of man. It is as fresh to-day as when it was baken on Calvary, and taken out of the oven of the grave on the resurrection morning. It is seasonable in the early morning of life, at midday, and in the twilight of old age. It is in season every day of the week and every month of the year. In church or in market, in palace or in cot, in prosperity or adversity this heaven-sent food is always fit for use.

3. Satisfying. It is "that meat which endureth." "He that cometh to Me shall never hunger" (John 6:35). Those who eat of this Bread will not seek satisfaction from any other source. Those who are walking in the sunshine have little regard for candles. The pilgrim, who has a fountain of water springing up within his own soul, will not be strongly tempted to stoop at the muddy pools by the dusty highway. This bread is guaranteed to satisfy every eater, for "Him hath God the Father scaled" (John 6:27). God will never put His "hall-mark" upon a counterfeit. That life must be absolutely pure before it can receive His stamp. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." There is none like Christ to satisfy.

III. How this Work is to be Done. The question is asked, "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" The answer is plain and striking: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent" (John 6:29). Then, to labour for this meat is the labour of faith, for this meat is the gift of God (John 6:27). Faith must work its way to the Person of Christ. Men's faces are usually turned to the world in their search for the bread of satisfaction, but with what fruitless labour? The work of God is not merely that ye believe, but that ye believe "on Him whom He hath sent." The object of your faith must be Him, as the Sent One of God: sent to seek and save the lost. "This is His commandment, that ye should believe on the Name of His Son, Jesus Christ" (1 John 3:23). The work and will of God has not yet been done in you, unless you have "believed on Him." THE TRUE BREAD.

John 6:30-40.

"Unlike philosophy, the Gospel has an ideal life to offer, and not to a few only, but to all."-Jowett. The Jews, in the blindness of their hearts, still clamoured for a sign from Christ, that He was that "meat which endureth unto everlasting life," after He had already fed them with miraculous bread. None are so ill to convince as those who have made up their minds that they will not be convinced. Moses, they said, "gave our fathers bread from Heaven to eat: what dost Thou work?" It is one of the glories of the Gospel that such questionings often lead to fuller revelations of the mysteries of Christ's character. It was so here. Jesus now shows Himself as that Bread from Heaven, of which the manna was a type. Observe the-

I. Source of this Bread. "My Father giveth you the true Bread from Heaven" (John 6:32). It was not Moses who gave you that bread from Heaven, but My Father who now sends Me as His provision for your sinful souls. "I am from above," He said. Every aspect of Christ's character, every act and word all prove that He was from Heaven. This world could not possibly produce such a unique Personality. His parents, His surroundings, or, in fact, anything outside of Himself was utterly powerless to manufacture such Bread as this. "I came down from Heaven" (John 6:38).

II. Form of this Bread. "I am." Christ does not give this Bread, but He is the Bread. "I am the Bread of Life" (John 6:35). "This is the Bread which the Lord hath given you to eat," was said of the manna (Exodus 16:15), and is absolutely true of Him who is the gift of God. Surely the form in which this bread is served to a perishing world is very attractive. What could be more inviting to a weary, hungry soul? He is altogether lovely, and to the hungry heart He is always and everywhere precious. "My flesh is meat indeed" (see Hebrews 10:19-20).

III. Nature of this Bread. It is called (1) the true Bread (John 6:32). The true Bread is that which fully meets and perfectly satisfies all the needs of man. The vain philosophies of worldly wisdom

can never do this. None but Christ can satisfy. None other Name has the virtues in it needed for the healing of the sores and sorrows of a sin-smitten soul. He is the true Bread because He satisfies every part of the deep and complex character of man. (2) The Bread of God (John 6:33). Not only does Jesus Christ meet all the hunger of man's heart after God, but He meets all the hunger of God's heart after man. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Let us adore Him who can both satisfy the heart of God and man (Proverbs 8:22-30). He is also called (3) The Bread of Life (John 6:35). He is the living and the life-giving Bread, so, to come into personal contact with Him by faith is to receive the life eternal.

IV. Purpose of this Bread. To give "life unto the world." The world of unspiritual humanity has many things attractive and useful without Christ, but it has not life. The world needs the Light and Life of Christ before it can become pleasing unto God. The world is hungry at heart for the true Light and the true Bread of satisfaction, but, in unbelief, it will not look beyond itself for these infinite blessings. Whatever men may think or say, God deals with this world as a blind and dead thing, and so in mercy sent His Son as its Light and Life.

V. Way this Bread is to be Taken. Two simple words are here used to express this act of appropriation. "He that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst." To come to Christ, or to believe on Him, is that definite exercise of soul toward Him which makes Jesus Christ and all that He is our own (John 6:35). Then after the soul has received Him by faith it must go on day by day appropriating Him as its daily food. Living by faith in the Son of God. They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. Eat, O friends and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, ye have no life in you. THE PROHIBITED AND THE INVITED.

John 7:32-39.

"God, being so great, great gifts most willingly imparts;

But we continue poor that have such narrow hearts."-Trench. At this great temple feast Jesus twice cried. The first was the cry of rebuke (John 7:28), the second was the cry of pity and compassion (John 7:37). To them, as to many now, Jesus Christ was a great mystery. They knew Him, yet they knew Him not. They could not reconcile the "carpenter's son" with the Son of God. But, nevertheless, Jesus fearlessly declares His unique relationship to the Father, and the purpose of His coming into the world (John 7:29). It was to those "officers" sent by the Pharisees and chief priests to take Him, that this hard, searching statement was made, which we might call-

I. The Prohibition. "Ye shall seek Me, and shall not find Me, and where I am ye cannot come" (John 7:34). He did not say here, "Where I go, ye cannot come," but "Where I am ye cannot come." This could not refer to His bodily presence, for they were now standing together within the precincts of the temple, but to His moral and spiritual attitude toward the Father. Two questions arise here: (1) Where was Jesus that they could not come; and (2) How could they not come where He was.

1. Where they could not come. "Where I am ye cannot come." Then where was He? He was living in the presence of God. He was filled with the love of God. He was rejoicing in the will of God. He was guided by the Spirit of God. He was kept by the power of God. In Spirit this was where He was, and this is where they could not come.

2. Why they could not come. Because of their ignorance. They knew not the Father (John 7:28). Because of their pride. They were self-satisfied. Because of their unbelief. They believed not Him as the true witness from God. So that, in their present condition of mind and heart it was morally impossible for them to come where He was. The lesson for us is very obvious, for the principle at work here is eternal and unchangeable. We cannot come to where Christ is, without possessing the Christ-like nature. Into His holiness, peace, and power, we cannot come, unless we forsake our own thoughts and ways, and yield ourselves entirely in obedience to His Word and will. "Where I am ye cannot come," unless ye come the way that I came, by being "born of God" and baptised of the Holy Spirit.

II. The Invitation. "If any man thirst let him come unto Me" (John 7:37). In your pride and unbelief "ye cannot come," but if you are thirsting for a deeper, truer, holier life, then here is your great opportunity. "Come unto Me and drink." To drink of His truth and Spirit is to come where He is. The self-satisfied cannot come, the thirsty may.

1. The Invited. It is the thirsty who are invited to drink. The invitation is to Himself: "Come unto Me." It is not, "Come to the temple, or to the Church, or to any particular form of worship." Apart from Him, every other source is polluted, every other cistern broken. It is not the gifts of Christ thirsty souls need, so much as Christ Himself. To drink of Him is to receive of His fullness, which alone can quench and satisfy the thirst of a soul after righteousness and God. A thirst for the living God is capacity for Him. Jesus Christ is the only One who ever could honestly challenge the thirsty souls of men to prove Him as all-sufficient to meet their every need.

2. The Promise. "He who believes in Me, from within him, as the Scriptures has said, rivers of living water shall flow" (John 7:37, Weymouth's translation). When we have come into this place of fullness of blessing, then we have come to "where He is." When we believe on Him, as He believed on His Father, then from within us, as from within Him, there will flow rivers of living water, because the Holy Spirit will have free access into the inner life, and full control of the whole being. As good food received into a healthy stomach will manifest itself in vigorous, useful action by sending fresh rivers of life through the entire system, so will it be when the Spirit of Truth is received by an obedient heart. The fountains of the old life will be dried up, and another fountain opened within, which has its source in the Living God, and whose streams are for the healing and salvation of others. "Ye shall not find Me" (John 7:34), said Christ to His fault-finders, for fault-finders shall never find Him in all the true riches of His glorious character. But "he that believeth on Him" shall enter into the blessed fullness of that wondrous life. Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely (Revelation 22:17).

LAW AND GRACE.

John 8:1-11.

"Love seeketh not itself to please,

Nor for itself bath any care;

But for another gives its ease,

And builds a Heaven in hell's despair."-Blake. The law commands us that such should be stoned; but what sayest Thou?" Such was the problem thrust upon Jesus Christ by those Scribes and

Pharisees who sought to tempt Him. The law of Moses was certainly more severe than the law of the Romans. Knowing, as they did, the gentleness and graciousness of our Lord, they perhaps thought to compel Him to condemn Himself by opposing the "command of Moses." This incident is intensely critical and instructive, as it brings the claims of the law and the workings of the grace of God face to face in concrete form. We have here then-

I. A Sinner under the Law. That she was a sinner, there was no denying of it, "taken in the very act." That the law condemned her to be stoned to death was another terrible fact that could not be denied (Leviticus 20:10). As far as the law was concerned she was without hope. Where there is guilt the law can do nothing else but condemn. The wages of sin is death. Her accusers were also clamouring for her death. But what about the adulterer? According to the law the adulterer and the adulteress were both to be put to death. Why were they so anxious to get Jesus to condemn her, while her companion in sin, or perhaps the seducer himself, had escaped? Man's guilty prejudice and wilful ignorance totally unfits him, not only from keeping God's law, but from administering bare justice to a fellow-creature with right motives. The accusers of a guilty sinner under the law are a terrible lot- the world, the flesh, and the devil.

II. A Sinner under Grace. The law and truth came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. The law commands that she should be stoned; "but what sayest Thou?" Note the contrast-the law and Thou. The law is "holy, just, and good," and the law says "condemn;" but what sayest Thou? Canst Thou say "live" when the law says "die?" Christ's manner of treating this question throbs with vital interest to us, as it, in a measure, reveals His own character, in His attitude to the law, to the accusers and to the poor, guilty sinner. There was-

1. Mystery. In answer to this question, "What sayest Thou?" "He stooped down and wrote with His finger on the ground" (John 8:6). He at first said nothing, but He did something. What He wrote no one can tell, but there must be some significance in the fact that at that moment He did stoop down and write. It was a unique position Christ was in. As He came to seek and save the lost, this question, although put so flippantly, would stir His holy soul to its deepest depths. "What sayest Thou?" He could not answer this question fully by saying; He could only do it by dying. His stooping down to write on the ground may be significant of His deep consciousness that spoken words alone could not suffice to convey His answer. He must stoop down to the grave, bearing the sinner's sins, before the guilty could be freely justified in the sight of God. He came... to give His life.

2. Revelation. "So when they continued asking Him, He said, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (John 8:7). They saw the ugly mote of uncleanness in the woman's eye, but not the beam of hypocrisy in their own. They were looking only at the woman's sin, but Jesus lifted Himself up and looked at theirs. Their secret sins of unbelief and deceit are as vile in His sight as the woman's sin. Thus the great New Testament principle is introduced here. Jesus came to deal with sin, not this or that sin, but sin as seen by the heart searching eye of God. There are transgressors in thought as well as in deed. Christ came not to set aside the law, but to fulfil it. He Himself, who was "without sin," was put to death by "wicked hands." The words of the Lord Jesus here reveal something of the sinfulness of not having love, even for a sinner caught in sin. With that grace which has come to us in Christ Jesus, there has come also that truth which is in God.

3. Conviction. "And they which heard, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one" (John 8:9). Instead of judging the woman, they find that, in His presence they themselves are being judged. "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." "Judge not that ye be not judged." They knew that Christ was full of grace, but they overlooked the fact that this grace was yoked with heart-searching truth. He could not cover up the sin of hypocrisy. They "went out" because they had not the courage or manliness enough to face their own sins, even in the presence of the Saviour.

4. Confidence. "Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst" (John 8:9). The convicted accusers fled, but the penitent woman stood her ground. They could not condemn the woman when their own conscience began to condemn themselves. If this woman's heart had not been reached by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, she, too, would have taken this opportunity of going out after all her accusers had fled, but she willingly lingers in His presence. The love of Christ does not compel, but it constrains.

5. Confession. "Jesus said unto her, Hath no man condemned thee?" She said, "No man, Lord" (John 8:10-11). There was something more in this reply than mere courtesy: "No man, Sir." There was surely adoration: "Lord!" Had she not seen and heard enough to convince her that He was the searcher of hearts, and the Saviour of sinners. "No man, Lord." Where is the man that dare condemn in the Presence of our sin-forgiving Lord. Thank God, the Sinless One, is more approachable than self-righteous sinners.

6. Salvation. "Neither do I condemn thee. Go thy way; from henceforth sin no more" (John 8:11, R.V.). Christ came not to condemn, but to save (John 3:17). She was saved from the condemnation of the law, from the accusations of men, and from the power of sin. She could do nothing to save herself but trust in Him who could save her to the uttermost. Who is He that condemneth? It is Christ that died. "Sin no more." A holy life is to be the evidence of sin forgiven.

CHRIST'S TESTIMONY CONCERNING HIMSELF.

John 8:12-30.

"God hath now sent His living Oracle

Into the world to teach Mis final will."-Milton. The questionings of those sceptical Pharisees constrained our Lord to say many things about Himself which otherwise might have been left unspoken. The Gospel of John would not have been so rich in Christology had these seemingly involuntary gleams of His personal glory not been given. Those unbelieving Jews meant it to damage His character, but God meant it for the fuller revelation of His glorious nature. In these verses the Lord Jesus Christ tells us seven things about Himself that are each full of infinite meaning.

I. He was Not of this World. "I am from above; I am not of this world" (John 8:23). The wisdom, the character, and the motives of Christ could not be the product of "this world." The world by wisdom knew not God. The parentage and all the environments of Christ's upbringing can in no wise explain Him. The only reasonable explanation of His profoundly unique character and mission is that given by Himself: "I am from above;" ye are from beneath. The distance between Christ and ordinary men is that which exists between Heaven and earth, between this world and the presence

of God's glory. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

II. He is the Light of the World. "I am the Light of the world, he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). There is a very close affinity between life and light. The plant that struggles for existence in a dark place will turn to the faintest ray of light for life. So the soul that seeks its life in the light of Jesus Christ will not abide in darkness, but will possess the light of life. The affinity between light and life is not more close and vital than that between faith and salvation. To receive the light of His truth is to enter into the power of His life. The light that the world needs is not in science, or art, or philosophy, but in Christ. "I am the Light of the world." Alas, that men should love the darkness of human reasonings better than the light of divine life! (John 3:19). Christ is the Light of the world, all other lights are but the unsteady sparks of man's kindling that cannot lead to God.

III. The Father was with Him. "I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent Me" (John 8:16). The indomitable courage of the Man, Christ Jesus, may be partly accounted for by this fact-the conscious presence of the Father. "I am not alone." The only time He was alone was that brief, but awful, season when He cried on the Cross, "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" This is the joyful testimony of the Son to the honour of the Father. "Not alone." The Man of Sorrows had a meat to eat that others knew not of. So may we if we follow in His steps. "Lo, I am with you alway" (Matthew 28:20).

IV. He Spoke the Things which He had Learned from the Father. "I speak to the world those things which I have heard of Him" (John 8:26). "As My Father hath taught Me, I speak these things" (John 8:28). Christ came, not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. This is the Prophet whom God promised to raise up, and to put His words in His mouth (Deuteronomy 18:18). As the Servant of Jehovah, He was faithful unto death. For just before He went to the Cross He said, "All things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you" (John 15:15). To reject the testimony of the Son, is to reject the Word of God the Father. To believe the Son is to believe the Father also. "I and My Father are One."

V. He Always Pleased the Father. "I do always those things that please Him" (John 8:29). The Father Himself testifies to the truth of this. "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." This is one reason why our wayward souls can find repose in Jesus Christ. He who lived and died for us was always pleasing unto God. In Him was no sin, and we who believe are in Him, and accepted in God's Beloved. It is infinitely pleasing to us that our Substitute was infinitely pleasing to God. Thanks be unto Him for this heart-cheering testimony.

VI. To Know Him is to Know the Father. "If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also" (John 8:19). The voice and compassion of the invisible God found audible and visible expression in the teaching and sufferings of Jesus Christ His Son (John 1:18). No one can know the Lord Jesus Christ who does not see in Him the image of the Eternal Father. He was sent by Him, that through His suffering for us He might "bring us to God." He brings us into the knowledge of God, into the love and favour of God, and into the very likeness of God.

VII. To Disbelieve Him is to Die in Sin. "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). This is a heart-searching ray of light from the Son of Righteousness. We dare not trifle with this clear unequivocal testimony of the Son of God. As He came to put away sin by the

sacrifice of Himself, there is no escape from it, but by faith in Him. "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life" (John 3:3). "If ye believe not that I am He." The emphasis here is not so much on what He says, as what He is. He is the sent One of the Father, speaking His words and doing His works, and, as such, He is the "Light of the world." To believe Him not is to live in darkness and to die in sin. By those words of the Father, spoken by Christ, shall the Christ rejecter be judged at last (John 12:48). See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh from Heaven, for the Lord Jesus Christ has uttered God's last word in this great theme of eternal salvation (Hebrews 12:25).

CHRIST'S HEART-SEARCHING "IFS."

John 8:31-54.

"Life is only bright when it proceedeth

Towards a truer, deeper life above.

Human love is sweetest when it leadeth

To a more Divine and perfect love."-A. Proctor. The word "so" in John 3:16 is a little one, but who has ever yet been able to sound the depth of its meaning? It is like some of our Lord's "ifs" in this chapter, which are brimfulof eternal significance. These are as hinges on which the life of the soul may swing in or out of fellowship with God. Let us examine them. There is-

I. The "If" of Discipleship. "If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed" (John 8:31). True discipleship is the result of abiding in the truth, as revealed to us in Jesus Christ. Persecution is sure to arise because of this word, and many do get offended, and forsake it in theory or in practice (Matthew 13:20-21). To continue not in His Word is to become false-witnesses, and so to forfeit our fellowship with Him, for the soul of Jesus Christ can have no pleasure in the man that draws back from the clear light of His Word (Hebrews 10:38). Peter was a disciple indeed when he boldly preached the Christ whom he once denied.

II. The "If" of Freedom. "If the Son therefore make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). The freedom which the Son of God gives is a freedom that can come from "none other Name under Heaven." It is freedom from the curse of the law (Galatians 3:10); from the guilt of sin (Romans 8:33); from the power of sin (Romans 6:14); from the fear of death (Hebrews 2:15); and the fear of man (Acts 4:18-20). It is the freedom of sons who have liberty of access into the Father's presence. It is possible to use a freedom that does not belong to us, but whom the Son makes free are free indeed.

III. The "If" of Service. "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham" (John 8:39). "They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham" (Galatians 3:7). The spiritual children of Abraham show their faith by their works, as he did. Abraham believed God, and his faith was evidenced by his works when he "went out not knowing whither he went," and when he offered up his son Isaac. Those who are the true children of the "Father of the faithful" will do works worthy of their Father. Works of faith are the infallible proofs of a true spiritual descent.

IV. The "If" of Sonship. "If God were your Father ye would love Me" (John 8:42). There is no way to the Father but by the Son (John 14:6). To know the Father, as He is revealed to us in the Son, surely implies that we will sincerely love the Son for so bringing us into such a gracious knowledge

of the Father. To call God Father, and ignore the Son is to insult both Father and Son. The evidence of our sonship with God is love to His Son. If God is our Father in a true, practical sense, we will not only supremely love the Lord Jesus Christ, but we will also love every child of God, for "Every one that loveth Him that begat, loveth Him also that is begotten of Him" (1 John 5:1).

V. The "If" of Responsibility. "If I say the truth, why do ye not believe Me" (John 8:46). He did speak the truth, and live it, for no one was able to "convince Him of sin." He spoke the truth about Himself, about His Father, and about the needs and responsibilities of the people (John 8:12-24). They could not deny the truthfulness of His character, or the mercifulness of His mission, yet they did not believe in Him, they did not commit themselves to Him. "Why do ye not believe Me?" Who shall ever be able to justify themselves in their unbelief? Oh, the infinite madness of refusing to believe Him who is the living embodiment of the Eternal Truth! The "why" will have an awfully solemn ring about it, when the unbeliever meets Him at the judgment throne.

VI. The "If" of Assurance. "If a man keep My Word he shall never see death" (John 8:51, R.V.). Eternal life and salvation is in that Word. To keep it is to keep in the antipodes of darkness and death. Death can have no power over that man whose life is hid with Christ in God. To keep His Word is to keep the message Christ brings, and to appropriate its offers to our own personal needs; it is to wrap ourselves in it as a garment, and to abide in it, and so keeping it, are kept by the power of God through faith. The promise is, "He shall never see death." He shall not only "never die" (John 11:26), but never see death. Death is always a painful if not agonising sight. Of course, it does not mean the death of the body that we often see, but that awful death, the eternal penalty of sin and guilt (Romans 6:23), for which we are thankful that we shall never see. If it is such a blessing not to see it, what a horror it must be to be in it. FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT.

John 9.

"The Light everlasting

Unto the blind is not, but is born of the eye that has vision."

-Longfellow.

It is worthy of note that it was immediately after Jesus was about to be stoned out of His Father's house that He manifested His power as the "Light of the World," by giving a man sight who had been born blind (chap. John 8:59). The leading features of this chapter can be easily gathered up as we consider the story of this blind man. There was-

I. Blindness. "A man blind from his birth" (John 9:1). But this blindness has all the mystery of the origin of sin hanging about it. It was not because he or his parents had sinned in any particularly grievous form that he was born blind, as some of the Jews seemed to teach (Luke 13:2) but "that the works of God should be manifest in him." This man was born blind that the Son of God might have the opportunity of showing forth His divine power and mercy, and also that the wickedness of their own hearts might be revealed. Was not sin originally permitted to enter the world for the same reason-that the wonderful works of God's love and grace should be manifest in the incarnation and crucifixion of His Son? In the same way Lazarus was permitted to die, that the glory of God might be seen in raising him from the dead (John 11:4). It is not so much with the mystery of sin and blindness that we have to do as with the fact.

II. Deliverance. The method of this man's salvation was about as strange and mysterious as was the cause and origin of the disease. His eyes were anointed with clay made by a spittle, and then he was told to "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (vv. John 6:7). There was no virtue in the dust, nor in the spittle, nor in the clay formed, nor in the pool, nor in the washing to unseal the eyes of a man born blind, and to beget in him the gift of vision. All these were in themselves "weak things," but the eye-opening power lay in his obedience to the Word of Him who spoke as the "Light of the World." "He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing." The man was not responsible for being born blind, but he was responsible for accepting or rejecting the message of grace and salvation that had come to him by Jesus Christ. If he had despised the means, he would not have been obedient to the Word, and so would have remained in his darkness. The preaching of the Gospel may be like the dust, and the spittle, and the clay to some, but it is not with the preaching, as such, that men have to do, but with Christ's Word of command, that always accompanies such weak things: "Go, wash!" It is when we believe and obey Him, putting His Word to the test by an actual definite committal, that we "come seeing." There is now no excuse for spiritual blindness. "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (chap. John 8:12).

III. Confession. When the neighbours asked him, "How were thine eyes opened?" (for they were thoroughly convinced that they were opened) his answer was simple and honest: "A man called Jesus made clay, anointed mine eyes, and said, Go wash; and I went, I washed, I received" (John 9:8-12). The blind man took no credit to himself in the matter, and is not ashamed to tell out all he knows about it, and that was not much. Like a new-born soul into the Kingdom of God's dear Son, he is so filled with joyous wonder that he is a mystery to himself. How these eyes must have sparkled with delight as he uttered these most significant words: "I went, and I washed, and I received sight." He could only tell of the means used; he could not explain how the miracle was wrought. That part belongs to Him who is the Light of the World. The change produced by the brightness of those once blind eyes was so great that they hardly knew him (John 9:9).

IV. Assurance. "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see" (John 9:25). He could not, as yet, explain the character of Him who opened his eyes; he knew not whether he was a man who had sinned like others or not (John 9:25); neither could he defend himself by argument against those philosophical, unbelieving Pharisees; but one thing he certainly did know, that a man called Jesus had opened his eyes. There are always those that are so perverse in their minds as to suppose that it must have been some other Jesus, and not Jesus Christ, who performed the wonder. There is no gainsaying the fact when a man's inner eyes have been opened, and when the old things of darkness are passed away, and all things are become new. This is the evidence that a man is in the light of Christ, and that he is a new creature (2 Corinthians 2:17). In this new power of vision he has the witness in himself. There is a joyful ring about this "I know." It is the confidence bom of a blessed experience.

V. Testimony. Although he knew little about the Man who opened his eyes, his faith in Him was very great. When asked what he thought about Him, he at once answered, "He is a prophet" (John 9:17). The man that could work such a miracle on a poor man, without seeking any personal honour or recompense, must have been sent by God. Again, after he had told them how he had been healed, in the warmth of his enthusiasm he added, "Will ye also be His disciples?" (John 9:27). Meanwhile there was to him but one Man in all the world, and that was the Man who opened his eyes. He was determined to know nothing among them but Jesus who opened his eyes. His

creed was: "If this man were not of God, He could not have done this great thing" (John 9:33). It is a sure sign that Jesus Christ has become a blessed Master to that one who is most anxious that others should also become His disciples. The Name of Jesus has little power in our lives if it does not inspire us, fearlessly, to plead with others to trust and follow Him.

VI. Persecution. "They reviled him" (John 9:28). "They cast him out" (John 9:34). They could not bear his testimony, so they reproached and mocked him. They could not bear his company, so they cast him out of the synagogue. He speedily gained the marks of a "blessed man" in being "hated" and "separated." For our Lord Himself hath said, "Blessed are ye when men shall hate you... and separate you from their company... for the Son of Man's sake" (Luke 6:22). It is easier for the enemies of the truth to revile than to refute. In casting out the humble believer in Jesus, they cast away their own credit as honest men. Any one of them would have been as devoted to Jesus as he was if they had been born blind, and in the same way received sight. But it seems almost impossible for an ungodly man to think himself into the Christian position and experience for a moment, so that he might modify his judgment. As long as the veil of unbelief is over the heart, evidences are of little value.

VII. Satisfaction. After they had cast out the man, Jesus found him and talked with him, and revealed Himself to him, so that the man was constrained to acknowledge Him as Lord, and to "worship Him" (John 9:35-38). His being cast out brought him into closer contact with the Son of God, his Saviour. It was much better for Him to be outside with Christ than inside without Him. The Lord never fails to compensate, in some way or other, those who suffer for His sake (Isaiah 66:5). We infer that he was perfectly satisfied from the fact that he worshipped Him. He felt that the Lord had done so much for him that he could only fall down and adore Him for His mighty and matchless grace. This is something more than mere thanksgiving, something deeper than prayer; it is the most God-honouring act of which any creature in Heaven or in earth is capable. We cannot live without offering our desires unto God in prayer; but why are we so seldom overwhelmed with such a sense of His greatness and goodness that we can do nothing but bow and adore? Our service in Heaven will be that of adoration; why not practise it more now?

VIII. Judgment. "Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind" (John 9:39-41). Christ came not to condemn the world by an act of judgment, but, by His coming as the "Light of the World," could not avoid passing the sentence of death upon darkness and sin. Those words spoken by the Lord contain His own application of the spiritual meaning of the miracle, for all His miracles are typical of spiritual things. There are none so blind as those who don't wish to see. These Pharisees said, "We see," yet they saw not Jesus Christ as the "Light of the World," although He opened this blind man's eyes. They said, "We know that this man is a sinner" (John 9:24), although that Man said, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin" (chap. John 8:46). Therefore, they were condemning themselves by preferring the darkness of ignorance and death to the light of knowledge and life. Those who are blind and know it (spiritually) shall soon have "no sin," for they will speedily turn to Him who has come to save sinners. But those who say, "We see," and abide in the light of those sparks of their own kindling, will find out their blindness when cast into the outer darkness of eternal doom. "Your sin remaineth" as long as you walk in your fancied light (John 9:41). The opening of the blind man's eyes is a witness to Christ's power to impart that spiritual vision that saves from sin, and a warning to those who trust to the light of their own eyes, which lead into the

ditch of everlasting darkness (1 Corinthians 3:18).

"All that proceeds not from spiritual regeneration, be it never so pure and brilliant in its glitter, is nothing towards salvation.-Zeisius.

"The grace of the Holy Ghost is free, not bound either to means, persons, or times."-Majus.

"Christianity consists not in secluding oneself and locking the room, and sitting with the prayer book behind the stove, else the Lord would not have talked with the Samaritan woman. "-Quesnel.

"If God rested as the Jews would have men rest on the Sabbath, no sun would rise, no flower would blossom."-Broune.

"The Lord feeds and nourishes those who truly gather around Him. "-Schleiermachu.

"The earthly mind always miscalculates. "-Schultz.

"The power to draw men is greater than the power to punish."-Heubner. THE SHEPHERD

John 10:1-10

"Now, the training strange and lowly,

Unexplained and tedious now:

Afterward-the service holy

And the Master's "Enter thou."

-F. R. Havergal

These "Verily, verily's" of our Lord, which might be rendered, "In most solemn truth," never seem to be used at the beginning of a discourse, but always to illustrate, or emphasise some preceding statement; so that the last part of chapter 9 is closely connected with the opening verses of chapter 10. Those hirelings, who cast the man out because he said that Christ opened his eyes, are here contrasted with the true shepherd, who cares for the sheep. The allegory of this chapter, like the parable in the fifteenth of Luke, is given to us in three different sections. We have (1) the sheepfold and the (under) shepherd (John 10:1-10); (2) the Good Shepherd giving His life for the sheep (John 10:11-18); (3) the safety of the sheep (John 10:25-30).

I. The Sheepfold. This was an enclosure, into which the sheep were put for safety during the night (John 10:1). This may have reference to the old theocracy, that position of privilege, which belonged to the Jews as God's chosen and protected people, and into which no man could honourably enter, but by the door of birth-the seed of Abraham; or it may represent that new provision of security which Christ Himself was about to establish for His sheep, through the giving of His life for them. It is a sheepfold, there is no mention of goats here.

II. The Entrance. There is an entrance, but only one. "I am the Door of the sheep" (John 10:7). It is through Him who died for them that they enter into the safety and quiet of this spiritual and heavenly fold. "He that entereth in by the door is a shepherd of the sheep." The sheep and the true shepherds all enter in by the same door. There is none other Name whereby we can be saved (Acts 4:12). He is no shepherd of the sheep who has not, first of all, appropriated Christ for

himself, as the Way, the Truth, and the Life. If he enters not by this door into the sheepfold ministry, "the same is a thief and a robber," and those sheep which have entered by the door will not follow him. Christ is the only open door into the salvation of God, and, praise Him, it is open for all "I am the Door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved" (John 10:9).

III. The Porter. "He that entereth by the door... to him the porter openeth" (John 10:3). It is a marvel to us how commentators should ignore or belittle the porter, lest they should press the allegory too far. In point of fact, the porter is second in importance to Him who is the Door, and undoubtedly represents the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Who abode with the sheep, and was their only comforter during the weary hours of night? The porter. Who could take the Door (Christ) and open it and close it at His will? The porter. Who alone had the power to admit a shepherd into the fold? The porter (Acts 13:2). All who would enter in by the door shall have the porter's help and encouragement. It is the Spirit who takes the things of Christ and shows them to the seeking soul.

IV. The Shepherd. "He that entereth in by the door is a shepherd of the sheep" (John 10:2, R.v., margin). The reference here is to the under shepherd, who has the liberty of the porter (Spirit) to go in and out, and to lead, and feed the sheep. The hirelings in chapter John 9:34, cast out the true sheep of Christ's flock. They know not the voice of strangers. It is important to note the nature of the shepherd's work and influence as stated here. It is-

1. PERSONAL. "He calleth his own sheep by name." There is no mistaking the purpose of a true shepherd when he comes into the sheepfold. He has not thought of thrashing or amusing the sheep, his chief object is to call them out into a larger place of blessing. To this end he deals with them definitely and personally. All the faithful under-shepherds of Christ's flock rightly divide the Word: they call the sheep by their proper names, and seek their individual good.

2. PROGRESSIVE. "He leadeth them out." It is not enough that the sheep are safe and at rest in the fold, they have to be lead out into fresh healthy pastures. The fields at the disposal of the shepherds are as broad, far reaching, and as rich as the whole Revelation of God. But those who have not examined those rich pasture lands will not be likely to lead the sheep into them.

3. EXEMPLARY. "He goeth before them." The true shepherd leads by example, as well as by precept. He does not say, "Go," but "Come." He goeth before them in doctrine and in practice (Titus 2:7). Not as lords over God's heritage, but as examples of the flock (1 Peter 5:3). Paul wrote to Timothy: "Be thou an example of the believers in Word, in conversation, in chanty, in spirit, in faith, in purity." To the Corinthians he said: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." The shepherd leads into green pastures, and by the still waters, not into the howling wilderness of that "higher criticism," which offers only doubt and perplexity to a hungry soul.

4. PROTECTIVE. "A stranger will they not follow..for they know not the voice of strangers" (John 10:5). The true sheep know the voice of a true shepherd, and will not be led away by the call of a stranger, who has climbed up by some other way. Some religious teachers have the form of godliness, but deny the power thereof (Holy Spirit); from such turn away. The sheep that have a faithful shepherd are too well taught to become the followers of any hireling, or thief, who may don the shepherd's attire.

V. The Intruders. "He that entereth not by the door, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." It does not matter much what that "other way" is, so long as it is another way, it

is an ignoring and a denial of Him who is the Door-and of Him who is the Porter-a denial of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit. Those who will not enter by the door of grace into this Kingdom will have some climbing to do, and in the end rewarded only as thieves and robbers. The "other way" that some prefer is the way of legalism, or learning, human works, or human wisdom. They will climb away for years to get into the fold, rather than submit to enter by the door. But all such climbers are, in their hearts, at enmity with the Shepherd and the sheep, and seek only their own base and selfish ends. "The same is a thief." There is no other way for a sheep, or a shepherd, for salvation or service, but by the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Door. "I am the Door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." THE GOOD SHEPHERD

John 10:11-18

The Lord Jesus Christ is the good or perfect Shepherd. All that ever came before Him-in His stead-or that shall yet so come, are thieves and robbers. There is only one Good Shepherd who can lay down His life for the sheep and take it again (John 10:18). There is perhaps no image of Christ that has so powerfully appealed to the imaginations of men in all ages as the "Good Shepherd." Let not the familiarity of the term rob us of the great sweetness and depth of precious teaching that it reveals.

1. "He Giveth His Life for the Sheep" (John 10:11). This is the outstanding characteristic of the Good Shepherd. He is not only ready to sacrifice His life in defence of the sheep, but has a command from the Father to lay down His life for the sheep (John 10:18), that the sheep might have life through Him in abundance (John 10:10). The scope of the teaching cannot be limited to the mere metaphor. The metaphor is used to help us to grasp the fullness of the truth. That Christ taught redemption here is surely beyond doubt, when He said, "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life that I might take it again" (John 10:17; Hebrews 13:20). The Father loved the Son because He willingly obeyed this command to lay down His life for the salvation of all who would enter in at this door into the sheepfold (1 Peter 2:25).

II. His Sheep Hear His Voice. "They shall hear My voice" (John 10:16). Every soul who would follow Christ must individually hear His voice. That voice may be heard through the written Word, or in the preaching of the Gospel, but it will be recognised as His voice and His call to a new and separate life. Christ's first message was to the Jewish flock, but He had other sheep-multitudes of them-which were not of that flock, but which belonged to every kindred and tongue, and people, and nation, "them also," He said, "I must bring," for the death that He was about to die was to be "the propitiation, not only for our sins (Jews), but also for the whole world" (1 John 2:2). This present dispensation is the time of the bringing in of the "other sheep" which He has, as the gift of the Father, and they are hearing His voice, through the preaching of the Word, and following Him. To Him is the gathering of the people to be

III. He Knows His Sheep. "I know My sheep" (John 10:14). As to the extent or limit of this knowledge, it is impossible, except by sheer presumption, to define. He knows their name, their nature, and their need. The Lord does not judge as man judgeth, by outward appearance; He judgeth the heart. He discerns the hidden spirits of men, whether they are merely carnal or Christ-like. All His sheep have a love for, and a disposition like the Shepherd Himself. "If any man love God, the same is known of Him" (1 Corinthians 8:3). The Good Shepherd does not judge His sheep by their cry, for many will say on that day, "Lord, Lord," to whom He will say, "I never knew

you."

IV. His Sheep Know Him. "And am known of Mine" (John 10:14). This knowledge is akin to that which exists between the Father and the Son (John 10:15). This affinity is the deepest and most sacred of all relationships. We may know Him as we know the sun that shines in the Heavens, and yet know but little of Him. The sheep know the Shepherd because He has manifested Himself to them, so we "know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true" (1 John 5:20). "I know whom I have believed" (2 Timothy 1:12). This is eternal life, to know Him and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent.

V. His Sheep are Owned by Him. "He who is an hireling, whose own the sheep are not" (John 10:12), is here contrasted with Him who laid down His life for the sheep, as an evidence that they are His own. The flock of God hath been purchased by His own blood (Acts 20:28). Jesus was speaking as the Good Shepherd when He said to Peter, "Feed My lambs...Feed My sheep" (John 21). "Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price."

VI. He Cares for His Sheep. "The hireling fleeth because he careth not for the sheep," but the true Shepherd is very careful over His sheep (John 10:13). The wolf-like Satan finds his greatest enemy in the Shepherd of our souls. It is the privilege of the sheep to be without carefulness, for "He careth for you," therefore cast all your care upon Him (1 Peter 1:7). The Shepherd is most careful about the safety and supply of the sheep-about their defence and their food. His wisdom and His power are being continually exercised on their behalf. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the close of the age."

VII. His Sheep shall all be Gathered into one Flock. "There shall be one flock and one Shepherd" (John 10:16). Meanwhile, His sheep are in every clime and country, speaking almost every language under Heaven, and divided by many sectarian folds, but all have heard His voice, and know Him, and are known by Him, having by one Spirit been baptised into one body. But when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, those who are still living on the earth shall be caught up with those who have gone to sleep, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18). In the evergreen pastures of the Heavenly Kingdom He shall lead His flock, and they shall follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. "The Lord is my Shepherd...and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever" (Psalms 23:1 and Psalms 23:6).
THE SAFETY OF THE SHEEP

John 10:22-30

It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the porch of the temple called "Solomon's," when the Jews, who were bewildered about the character and doings of Jesus, came about Him, saying, "How long do you mean to keep us in suspense? If Thou be the Christ tell us plainly" (John 10:24). He had been telling them all along by His words and works, but they believed not (John 10:25). Never man spoke more plain than He, but to those who are wilfully or judicially blind, such evidence is of little value. "Ye believe not," said Jesus, "because ye are not of My sheep" (John 10:26). By their persistent unbelief they proved themselves unfit to enter the sheepfold of His chosen ones. "They could not enter in because of their unbelief" (Hebrews 3:19). This question of the Jews gives Him an opportunity of explaining more fully the relationship and privilege of His sheep.

I. Their Relationship. They are His by-

1. SOVEREIGN GRACE. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them" (John 10:27). "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." The Lord might have passed us by in our waywardness and misery, but in love and in mercy He spoke. If He did not speak, the sheep would never hear His voice, and never follow Him. "My voice!" There is no other voice like His. To hear it is to turn and live, or die in sin. "By grace are ye saved through faith."

2. DELIBERATE CHOICE. "They follow Me." They hear Him, believe Him, and follow Him. They choose to obey His voice, rather than the voices of the world, or the whisperings of their own heart. To follow Christ is to renounce self and forsake all that would hinder the soul from abiding in His presence and obeying His Word.

II. Their Security. They are perfectly safe, because-

1. THEY HAVE ETERNAL LIFE. "I give unto them eternal life" (John 10:28). The verb is in the present, and might be read, "I am giving them the life of the ages." This life is the gift of Him who laid down His life for the sheep-a gift that is continuous, running on into the endless ages of futurity. Who but the Eternal One could make such a promise and bestow such a blessing? "The gift of God is eternal life" (Romans 6:23).

2. THEY ARE THE GIFT OF THE FATHER. "My Father... gave them Me" (John 10:29). The sheep of Christ are the "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (1 Peter 1:2). "All that the Father hath given Me shall come to Me" (John 6:37). They are secure because they are possessed with a life suited for the ages of eternity, and because they are the chosen ones of the Father "before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before Him in love..to the praise of the glory of His grace" (Ephesians 1:3-6). It was for such Christ prayed when He said, "Holy Father, keep through Thine own Name those whom Thou hast given Me."

3. THEY ARE IN CHRIST'S HAND. "Neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." Of them which Thou hast given Me have I lost none (John 18:9). His hand stands here for the almightiness of His power-a power as gentle as a mother's touch, as strong as the eternal God. No foe is able to wrest us from His hand. The sheep are saved by the gift of Divine life, and by the grip of Divine power. They are made partakers of a new nature and the subject of a new environment. They are in His heart of grace and in His hand of safety.

4. THEY ARE IN THE FATHER'S HAND. "None is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand" (John 10:29). "My Father is greater than all...I and My Father are one." The sheep are in the all-embracing power of the Son, as the Son is in the all-embracing power of the Father. "The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them, that they may be one, even as We are" (John 17:22). The security of the Son is virtually the security of the sheep. As He is in the hand of the Father, so are we in the hand of the Son. Accepted and kept in the Beloved, the oneness of the Son with the Father is a powerful guarantee (John 10:30).

5. THEY HAVE HIS PROMISE. "They shall never perish." The negative here is doubly strong, and might be rendered, "They shall never, never perish" (John 10:28). The infallible Word of the eternal Son stands like an adamantine wall between the helpless sheep of His fold and perdition. The breaking of that Word would be the breaking down of His own character. One "jot or tittle" of His

Word cannot possibly fail. Thus we have strong consolations who have fled to Him as the Refuge and Shepherd of our souls.

LAZARUS

John 11

The Hebrew form of the name Lazarus is Eliezer-God my Helper. Surely a fitting name for one who was so mightily helped by God. The history of Lazarus is, in a spiritual sense, the history of all who have passed from death unto life. Note the various stages in his remarkable experience. There was-

I. Sickness. "A certain man was sick" (John 11:1). "He whom Thou lovest is sick" (John 11:3). Loved by the Lord, yet smitten with sickness. Through some cause or other, soul-sickness is almost invariably the prelude to enlarged and deeper spiritual blessing. When Jesus heard of it, He said, "This sickness...is for the glory of God" (John 11:4). Yes, blessed be His Name, for that sickness which brings us down to the place of death, that the Son of Man might be glorified in doing a marvellous work in us and for us. The Holy Spirit must convince of sin before He quickens into newness of life.

II. Death. "Jesus said unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead" (John 11:14). This sickness was not unto eternal death, but unto that death which in a very singular way made Lazarus a fit subject for the resurrecting power of the Son of God. Real sin-sickness is only unto the death of self-love and self-will, that the power of Christ might be manifested. Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. When the Spirit convinces of sin, of righteousness and of judgment, it is the passing of the sentence of death upon the sinner. All hope of salvation from any other source had to be abandoned. "Sin revived, and I died" (Romans 7:9).

III. Life. "He that was dead came forth" (John 11:44). The life-giving power of Jesus Christ could only be manifested in the case of a dead man. If Lazarus had only been in a swoon, or in a sleep, there would have been no glory to God in his awakening. Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners. It would bring no glory to Him to give life or salvation to those who did not need it. Before the Apostle Paul could say, "Now I live," he had to say, "I am crucified." Resurrection life can only come where there has been death. We must die to self if we would live unto God. To share with Christ His resurrection power, we must needs go to the Cross and the grave with Him. If we refuse to die, we refuse to enter into the new and fruitful life. "Except a corn of wheat die, it abideth alone" (John 12:24).

IV. Liberty. "Jesus said, Loose him and let him go" (John 11:44). It ill becomes one who has been raised from the dead by the power of God, to be in bondage to any man, or the customs and habits of men, especially those manners and customs that belong to the dead. As in nature, so in grace, where there is a fullness of life there will be the bursting open and a breaking forth from the old dead forms and habits. All that we can do for our dead is to bind them and bury them, but how different when, with a loud voice, the Son of God speaks to them. The man that has been liberated from death and the grave, must not be hindered by any fashion of grave clothes. Whom the Son of God makes free are free indeed. The relatives of those saved by Christ may do much to bind or loose their lives for His service. The Lord's command to the friends of Lazarus was, "Loose him and let him go" (John 11:44). What a crime in His sight if they had refused to obey. See that ye

refuse not.

V. Communion. "Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him" (chap. John 12:2) What a blessed privilege to company with Him who has given us to know in our own experience that He is the "Resurrection and the Life." To those who have passed from death unto life there is no fellowship to be compared with His. As like draws to like, so must the resurrected spirit draw to Him who is the Resurrection. Every time we sit down prayerfully to study His Word, we are sitting at the table with Him, listening to His voice, and receiving food for our souls. Are you one of those who sit at this table with Him?

VI. Testimony. "By reason of him, many of the Jews went away and believed on Jesus" (chap. John 12:11) The power of his testimony lay, not so much in what he was able to say, as in what he was. The fact that he had been raised from death and corruption by the word of Jesus Christ, was in itself a most convincing witness to His Divinity and Messiahship. The greater the work of grace wrought in us by God's mighty power, the greater will be the force of our testimony for Him. The influence of Christ's risen life in us should be the leading of others to "believe on Jesus."

VII. Suffering. Because of the converting power of this new life in Lazarus "the chief priests consulted that they might put him to death" (chap. John 12:10). His old life brought no persecution, but now he has the happiness of those who are reproached for the Name of Christ (1 Peter 4:14). It is beyond the power of the enemy to kill or destroy the resurrection life. Your life is hid with Christ in God. "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf" (1 Peter 4:16).

JESUS

John 11.

The Gospel of John is like the rending of the veil, it opens up the way for us into the Holiest of all. Much of the personal glory of the Son of God will be unseen by us, if we fail to discern what His sayings and doings reveal concerning Himself. In this chapter we have several bright glimpses of this inner glory, glimpses such as we have everywhere throughout the Gospels.

I. His Divinity. When Jesus heard of the sickness of Lazarus, He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby" (John 11:4). This prophetic language is full of meaningless mystery if Jesus Christ was nothing more than the "best of men. " Although He emptied Himself as the Divine One, that He might live and die for us. He was still Himself, the eternal Son, in the bosom of the Father. He knew that this sickness had come that He, as the Son of God, might be glorified thereby.

II. His Love. "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus" (John 11:5). While Jesus Christ was Divine, He was also perfectly and purely human. He loved all with that love of God which is the love of pity and compassion, for even those who are His bitterest enemies, but the Marthas, the Marys, and the Lazaruses are the special objects of His affection and delight. He can only delight with His whole heart in those whose hearts are opened with delight toward Him. It is not possible for such love as His to rejoice in iniquity.

III. His Faith. "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" etc. (John 11:7-9). These very suggestive words were spoken to His disciples, in answer to their alarm at His proposal to cross over from

Peraea, where the Jews of late had sought to stone Him. There were to be twelve hours in His working day, and but eleven had passed. He must work the works of Him that sent Him while it is day (John 9:4). He did believe that His life was "immortal till His work was done, " and so He would walk in the day that He might stumble not. Faith in God never leads to laziness or fatalism. He that believeth shall not make the haste of flurried excitement, but they shall make steady progress, despite all the oppositions of the forces of Hell. "Are there not twelve hours in the day?"

IV. His Joy. "I am glad" (John 11:15). The conjunction here is most remarkable. "Lazarus is dead, and I am glad; glad for your sakes to the intent that ye might believe. " He was glad that He was not there to save Lazarus from dying, that He might have the opportunity of raising him from the dead, that they might see His glory and believe in Him. Mark the secret of Christ's gladness-glad to have the chance of manifesting His power that others may believe in Him, so that they might be blessed by Him. This was the joy that was set before Him when He endured the Cross. The nature of Christ's gladness is totally different from that which is sought for by the sinful sons of men.

V. His Indignation. "When Jesus saw her wailing, and the Jews also wailing, He was moved with indignation in the Spirit" (John 11:33, R.. v., margin). Why all this wailing now that He had said, "Thy brother shall rise again, " and that "I am the Resurrection and the Life?" In the face of His words and in His presence, this wailing was surely to Him the wailing of unbelief. He groaned in Spirit with a holy anger because of their slowness of heart to believe all that He had said unto them.

VI. His Compassion. "Jesus wept" (John 11:35). Those tears were as "drops of grief" from the loving heart of our Great High Priest, who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities (Hebrews 4:15). What a contrast between the hypocritical tears of those would-be mourners and the tears of the pure-hearted Son of God. The voice of these tears seems to have spoken louder than His words, for, "Then said the Jews, Behold how He loved Him. " If these teardrops were pearls of love, what shall we say of those blood-drops wept in the Garden of Gethsemane? "Greater love hath no man than this. " There is a way through Christ's tears, as well as through His words, to the heart of God the Father.

VII. His Power. "He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus come forth, and he that was dead came forth" (John 11:43-44). This was the cry of Him who is "the Resurrection and the Life. " "Resurrection, " one has said, "is not an impersonal fate, but a personal effect. " It is not the natural result of any known law, but the supernatural outcome of a Divine personal act. In Christ was life, and the life was the light of men. He speaks and it is done. As when Christ, who was the Life, appeared at the grave of Lazarus, Lazarus also appeared with Him, through the power of His Word; so "when Christ, who is our Life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory" (Colossians 3:4). While on earth our Lord had to do with death in three different stages: the child on the death-bed, the young man on the bier, and the man in the grave. It was only in this last stage that He spoke with a loud voice. The raising of Lazarus was a manifestation of that power that shall one day with the voice of a trumpet awaken the dead, and as the vile body of Lazarus was changed (John 11:30), so shall it be in the resurrection (Php_3:20-21). This corruptible must put on incorruption. He that heareth His Word now, and believeth on Him... is passed from death unto life (John 5:24)
A SUPPER SCENE

John 12:1-8

According to Matthew and Mark, this supper which "they" made for Jesus, was in the house of Simon, who had been a leper, and may have been a united effort, with the two families, to do honour to Jesus and His disciples because of the raising of Lazarus from the dead, and, perhaps, the healing of Simon. It took place six days before the passover, which meant six days before His death and burial. It must have been a hallowed time. Let us think of-

I. Mary, the Sacrificer. While others rejoice to sit at the table with Jesus, and learn of Him, Mary, who had before sat at His feet, feels impelled by the love of her heart to embrace this opportunity of proving her faith and affection by personal sacrifice. To her, at that time, it was more blessed to give than to receive. There surely must be seasons in our lives when we shall find it more blessed to sacrifice than to seek, to give than to take, to praise than to pray. See the nature of it. "Mary took a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly. " Judas reckoned its value at "three hundred pence"-more correctly, shillings As money goes now, it would mean probably about £60. The costlier the better for Mary's deep purpose of love. Hypocritical worshippers are content to give the Lord the lame and the blind, the odd coppers and the spare moments. They never cross the threshold of the sanctuary of self-sacrificing service.

See the manner in which it was given. She "anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. " It is possible to give even a costly gift in such a way as to sting the soul of the receiver. The Lord loveth a cheerful giver. Mary not only offered Him her precious treasure, but her personal glory was also laid at His feet and surrendered to His service. The ointment was all the more precious to the Saviour because the soul of the offerer was in it. See the influence of it. "The house was filled with the odour of the ointment. " Such a self-sacrificing act could not pass without being felt by all who saw it. Such costly offerings, made for such a sacred purpose, are sure to betray themselves (Proverbs 27:16). A consecrated life has always a sweet odour to Christ and His faithful disciples.

II. Judas, the Criticiser. The only one who did not appreciate the holy deed of Mary was Judas. The "odour of the ointment" poured upon the Son of God had no sweet savour to him, "because he was a thief, " and would rather have had the "three hundred shillings" in his bag for his own advantage. His hypocritical plea was, that it might have been sold and the money given to the poor. "Not that he cared for the poor. " Surely the Saviour of sinners was more interested in the poor than he was. He who was rich, for our sakes became poor. "To what purpose is this waste?" (Matthew 26:8). Judas, the son of perdition, could not see that the breaking of this alabaster box, and the pouring out of the fragrant treasure upon the Person of Christ was the consecrating of both to the greatest possible service. It is noteworthy that the word "waste" used by Judas is literally the same word used by our Lord in referring to him as the "son of perdition. " Where the spirit of self-seeking is there is blindness to the honour and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Mary's vision of Jesus was such that it constrained her to surrender all. Judas could not see beyond the black shadow of his own sinful self-interest.

III. Jesus, the Justifier. "Then Jesus said, Let her alone; against the day of My burying hath she kept this. " He understood the full significance of this singularly solemn service, and always puts the highest value upon such gifts. The costly offering was in no sense wasted on Him. To His soul, in view of His death and burial, it had a sweet savour. "Let her alone. " The Son of God who sacrificed Himself for sinners will never put any hindrance in the way of a believing, grateful heart

showing its devotion to Him to the fullest extent. He knows that such love and sacrifice will have its corresponding reward (Mark 14:9). "Let her alone. " Well He knew that there are so few who care to go this length in honouring Him. She broke through all the forms of etiquette, and gave to Christ exceeding abundantly above all that they would have asked or thought of. Such a spontaneous outburst of self-sacrificing affection was to Jesus the principal part of the feast. Love feasts on love. Here He had a meat to eat that others knew not of. "The poor, " he said, "always ye have with you, but Me ye have not always. " But those who reckon it waste to pour out wealth for the cause of Jesus Christ will not be likely to break their treasure boxes in behalf of the poor. The best friends of the poor have always been those who are the most devoted friends of Jesus Christ. The love of Christ constraineth us.

DEATH, LIFE, AND SERVICE

John 12:20-26

Probably these Greeks who desired to see Jesus came from the same city as Philip and Andrew, and may have been personally known to them. Philip and Andrew did what they could to bring about an interview, but seemingly failed. The closing words in John 12:36 are very significant in this connection. "These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide Himself from them. " But while He hid Himself from them, the things which He spake were in themselves a new and fuller revelation of the Christ which He wished them to see. He who would "see Jesus" as God desires Him to be seen, must see Him as "a corn of wheat falling into the ground and dying, and bringing forth much fruit. "

I. Death. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone. " A corn of wheat in the process of dying is here alluded to. As applied to His own preparation for the Cross, the reference is full of solemn suggestion. As a corn of wheat must fall into the ground before it will die, so He had to condescend to come into the place of death before He could reap the fruits of resurrection life. When Christ came into this world He came into the place of death. His coming was the falling of the corn of wheat into the ground, but except it die, it abideth alone. A seed that had lain in the hand of a mummy for 3000 years, remained alone, but when, by another hand, it fell into the ground and did die, then it brought forth fruit. The process of dying is the process of yielding up everything to those forces that are opposed to stationary barrenness. Just as the buried seed slowly surrenders its all, so is its new capacity created for fruitfulness. The life of Jesus Christ, which ended in the shameful death of the Cross, was like the life of the corn-seed in the ground- there was no reserve, no keeping back, the treasures of His marvellous nature were wholly surrendered. "He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life. " He died for us What was true of the Christ as "a corn of wheat" is also true of the Christian, except he die-to the old self-life-he abideth alone. It is by being "alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus is made manifest in our mortal flesh" (2 Corinthians 4:11).

II. Life. "But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. " The life that is yielded up by the dying seed conditions and prepares the way for another and more fruitful life. Christ died, and therefore did not abide alone. The life that He yielded up has been abundantly fruitful in an ever-increasing harvest of resurrected souls. The possibilities of Jesus Christ as seed-corn dropped, as it were, from the hand of the Heavenly Father into the soil of humanity, are the possibilities of God. He shall see His seed, because His soul was made an offering for sin. Christ died, but like a corn of

wheat, He was born anew-begotten again in resurrection fruitfulness. In this new life, in Him and in us who have died unto sin, there is the abiding power of eternity. Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, but "that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die" (1 Corinthians 15:36). If the seed refuses to die, the quickening power refuses to act. The Holy Spirit, the Quickener, can only work this newness of life where there is death. This new Divine life, begotten out of the death of the self-life, is the life that glorifies God in bearing much fruit. He that soweth to the flesh shall out of the flesh, as out of poisoned soil, reap corruption.

III. Service. "If any man serve Me, let Him follow Me. " To follow Him is the highest and holiest of all service. To follow Him is to go on continually denying self. We cannot be following Him in His life of perpetual self-denial unless we are prepared daily to lose our own life. He that loveth his (own) life shall lose it, and he that maketh his own life of no account shall keep it unto life eternal (John 12:25). Christ loved not His own life, but yielded it, day by day, unto the will of the Father, and so served Him by following Him. Our service must be of the same nature, as we have, through grace, been brought into the same privilege. Now are we the sons of God. In essence, then, this service is self-denial for the sake of Jesus Christ. But think of the blessedness of it. "If any man serve Me, him will My Father honour. " The Father honoured the Son for such a service; He will also honour all who so follow His footsteps. They will be honoured with His presence, His peace, and His power, and "where I am, there shall also My servant be. " "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself" (Matthew 16:24). To go after a self-denying Christ is impossible without the denial of self. We must deny our own thoughts, will, power, interests- everything that would hinder His will, power, and interests from being accomplished in us and by us. THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

John 12:44-50

Our Lord's ministry on earth was first prophetic, then priestly. John's reference to the lament of the prophet Isaiah, in John 12:38-41, may be regarded as the close of Christ's work as a Prophet, and here the beginning of His work as a Priest.

I. His Relationship to the World. "I am come a Light into the world." In Him was no darkness at all. The purity and power of ineffable light was in Him, to meet the needs and solve the problems of a guilty and benighted world. "I am come. " There is no other light powerful enough to scatter the darkness of a world. He comes, not as a citizen to share our sorrows, or as a patron to protect our rights, but as a Light to reveal. This was the world's first great need.

II. The Nature of this Light. It was the light of the great Heavenly Father's will revealed in the Son. "I have not spoken of Myself," He says, "but the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a command what to say, and in what words to speak" (John 12:49). The body of Jesus Christ was as a lantern, the light that was in Him was the Light of God, the manifestation was through His words and works. These words and works reveal infinite love and mercy, hand in hand with infinite power and holiness. The shining was perfect, for He could say, "He that seeth Me, seeth Him that sent Me" (John 12:45).

III. The Purpose of the Light. "I am come not to judge the world, but to save the world" (John 12:47). The purpose of every lighthouse is salvation. Light is a great saviour from death and destruction. There were those who were opposed to gas light, when first introduced in 1807, but it

was declared that the new light had done more for the reduction of crime than all the laws of Parliament since the days of Alfred. The light of Christ is sin's greatest enemy. To see a Father's love in the life and death of His beloved Son is to see our own need and God's only remedy. He has not come as a light to shine out judgment, and condemnation, but that the world through Him might be saved (John 3:17).

IV. How this Light is Received. "Whosoever believeth in Me shall not abide in darkness" (John 12:46). This heavenly and saving Light shines into the hearts of those who with the heart believe in Him. This faith cometh by hearing. "If any man hear My words," etc. Hear His words, believe them, yield to them, and the light of life will possess the soul. While ye have this light, believe in it, obey it, follow it, trust it. It is as real and as free as the light of the sun. Having believed in Him as the Light of your life, confess Him, and be not hindered by the fear of man, or the desire for their praise (see John 12:42-43; Hebrews 11:27). To believe in Christ is to believe also in Him who sent Him (John 12:44). We honour the Father when by faith we receive the salvation, which is Christ Jesus (John 6:40).

V. The Consequences of Rejecting the Light. If those who believe in Him "shall not abide in darkness," then those who believe not are abiding in darkness. Light has come into the world, yet men love darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil. To abide in darkness is to abide in death. To reject this light is rebellion against the will of God. They shall lie down in sorrow who prefer the sparks of their own kindling to the light of eternal truth. But although men reject those illuminating words, or message of God in Christ, and cling to the delusions of darkness, they are not done with this light, they must face it again in its more fierce and withering form, for He says, "The word (message) that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). The light that has been rejected, lest it should consume their sin, will become a consuming fire for sinners. As every flower reflects the colour that it rejects, so every Christ-rejecter will be manifested in that day (John 3:19-21).

CHRIST'S LAST TOKEN OF LOVE

John 13:1-17

The passover and the supper, linked together here, is most significant. The passover commemorated deliverance from Egyptian darkness and bondage; the supper supplied the emblems of redemption from the darkness and dominion of sin. What Pharaoh was to the Israelites, Judas was to Jesus Christ, and the consequences were much alike the sudden destruction of the enemy, and the triumph of the Lord and His people. It was here, at the supper, that Christ gave to His disciples the farewell token of His self-humiliating love to them. Let us try and think afresh of-

I. What He Did. "He rose from the supper, and laid aside His garments, and took a towel, and girded Himself...and began to wash His disciples' feet and to wipe them." To wash the feet of guests, at a feast, was the work of a slave. "He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant" (Php_2:7). This was the attitude of the Lord Jesus from the beginning. "He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister (serve) and to give His life" (Matthew 20:28). The Lord would have our feet (walk), as well as our hearts, clean.

II. When He Did It. "When He knew that His hour was come that He should depart...unto the Father (John 13:1)....that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and was going to God" (John 13:3). This lowly act of personal humiliation and service was performed, as it were, in view of the awful death of the Cross and the glory that was to follow. The near prospect of the agony of Gethsemane, the desertion of His washed disciples, and the eternal glory of the Father, did not prevent Him from humbling Himself to attend to their present need. How easy it is for us to get so taken up with our own sufferings or successes as to become self-centred and proud, or unsympathetic. He pleased not Himself, but lived and died for us.

III. How He Did It. He did it lovingly. "Having loved His own..He loved them unto the end" (John 13:1). Love beamed in His eyes, love throbbed in His words, love dropped at His fingers. His touch was as gentle as a mother's. He did it voluntarily. Neither law nor custom required that He should wash their feet. He did it of His own free will and choice. It was an expression of the reality and depth of His inventive grace and love. He did it perfectly. We may be well assured that when He washed their feet they would be well washed. All His words are perfect. "The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

IV. Why He Did It. "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you" (John 13:15). Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus (Php_2:3-5). Feet-washing is a very delicate business, and must be done in the Spirit of Jesus, for it is not pleasant to flesh and blood to have our faults pointed out. There is a way of doing it that may be more offensive than profitable. To rebuke a brother or sister in an unkind manner is like washing their feet in frozen water, and let us also take heed that the water is not boiling hot with temper. Let us not forget that it is more difficult for some Christians to keep their feet (walk) clean, as in their daily calling they have more dirty paths to tread, because they are more frequently in contact with the soiling influences of the world. Humbling and painful as the work may be, Christ's example teaches us that the work at times has to be done. There will always be those who, like Peter, are ready to say, "Thou shalt never wash my feet," but a little kindly explanation may turn it into a gladsome experience. But woe unto those who refuse to accept the blessing offered through Christ's humiliation. They have no part with Him (John 13:8; John 3:5).

SELF-EXCOMMUNICATED

John 13:21-30

Our Lord had just been washing the feet of His disciples; giving them a final example of His humiliation and self-forgetting service. After this, John tells us that "He was troubled in spirit."

I. The Cause of Christ's Trouble. "One of you shall betray Me" (John 13:21). The cause of His perturbed spirit was not the fact that within a few hours He would be crucified, but that "one of you," His chosen companions and friends, would betray Him. Well He knew that they were "not all clean" (John 13:11). His tender compassionate heart was troubled, not on account of Himself, but because of the fearful ingratitude and guilt of that "one" who had already "lifted up his heel against Him" (John 13:18). Think of all that Judas had seen and heard of Jesus, and of the place he occupied, and the confidence that was reposed in him (allowing him to carry the bag), and think also of falling from such an height of privilege into a hopeless perdition. He hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked. "He was troubled in spirit."

II. The Token of Christ's Love. "When He had dipped the sop, He gave it to Judas" (John 13:26). In giving the morsel first to Judas, Christ was not only showing to John who should betray Him, but He was also proving to the traitor that although He knew all that was in his evil heart to do, He loved him to the end. Had He not also washed his feet? washed off the very dust contracted by that secret visit to those murderous priests. If Judas, or any others, will sin their soul to doom, they will never find any occasion in Him, whose love is stronger than death. Did the Lord Jesus hope that this humiliating act of washing the feet of Judas would soften his hard and deceitful heart? If so, how terribly suggestive are the words which follow: "And after the sop, Satan entered into him." The tokens of a Saviour's love had no effect in closing the door of his heart against the entrance of the Devil. Satan is always ready to take full advantage of every opportunity. Those who reject the grace of God, in Christ Jesus, become the willing dupes of the Devil.

III. The Departure from Christ's Presence. "He then having received the sop, went immediately out, and it was night" (John 13:30). He went out. Christ did not cast him out. He preferred to go out into the night, rather than abide in the light. He loved the darkness rather than the light, because his deeds were evil. He went out; his choice was finally made. Think of what he went out from, and what he went out to.

1. He went out from the best company on earth, into the company of God-hating, Christ-rejecting murderers.

2. He went out from the rule and service of the Son of God, into the rule and slavery of Satan.

3. He went out from the place of light and hope, into the night of darkness and despair.

4. He went out from the offer of eternal blessedness, into the place of eternal doom.

He apparently did not go out as one in a rage; he went out quite orderly, as one who had something of more importance to do; something of more importance to get. But in turning away from the love of Christ, at this particular moment, he was rejecting his last chance of salvation. Having refused Christ's place, there is nothing for him now but "his own place" (Acts 1:25)-perdition. Judas may have imagined that his betrayal of the Master, for thirty pieces of silver, would not seriously affect Him, as He was well able to save Himself from the hands of His enemies; but every betrayer is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. The blood of every Christ-rejecter will be on his own head. "Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life" (John 5:40). AN INFALLIBLE CURE FOR HEART TROUBLE

John 14:1-4

There were several reasons why the hearts of His disciples became troubled or affrighted at this time. Judas had left the company; the Lord had been speaking of going away, and had just been warning Peter that before the cock would crow he would deny Him thrice. Our hearts also may often get troubled when we look at the signs of the times, or when we look within at our own sins and failures. Heart trouble is a common malady, but the word and work of Jesus Christ is a perfect remedy. He came to bind up the broken heart. When Jesus said, "Let not your heart be affrighted," He at the same time poured the oil of comfort upon the troubled waters. In this prescription for a troubled heart, given by the Great Physician, there are seven comforting elements.

I. The Power of Christ. "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me." God, Me. To "believe in Me" is to believe in God. "I and My Father are One." What a comfort to a sinful, sorrowful soul to know that He who suffered and died for sinners has all the authority and power of Almighty God. "All power," He says, "is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). Trembling soul, affrighted at your own guilt and at coming death and judgment, let not your heart be troubled, believe in Him.

II. The Many Mansions. "In My Father's house are many mansions" (John 14:2). The "many mansions" is another way of saying there is plenty of room. The reception room of the Father's house is large enough for all, and there are multitudes of private apartments for the individual comfort of the redeemed. You may be in straights here and now; there may be no room for you in the world's inns; although, like the Master Himself, you may not have where to lay your head-let not your heart be troubled, in our Father's house are many mansions.

III. The Prepared Place. "I go to prepare a place for you." He went to the Cross and the grave to prepare salvation for us. He went out of the grave, rising from the dead that He might prepare eternal life for us. He ascended into Heaven that He might prepare a home for us. The prepared place will correspond with the preparedness of the soul here, by the work of the Holy Spirit. The measure of our enjoyment of the Kingdom of Heaven will be according to the measure of our spiritual capacity. Hence the importance of growing in grace now, and in the knowledge of God. The place prepared for the Apostle Paul would not be quite the same as that prepared for the penitent thief. Let not your heart be troubled, the place prepared for you will be in every way exactly suitable to you.

IV. The Coming Again. "I will come again." When He says, "I will come again," He surely does not mean death. He who is the Life can never be compared to death. Neither did He mean the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit had not yet been given. He did not die "for our sins." He meant what He said, for "the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout," therefore comfort one another with these words (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18). Let not your heart be troubled about the loved ones who have fallen asleep in Jesus, for in that day "them will He bring with Him," and we shall be "caught up together" (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Neither let your heart be affrighted at the things that are coming to pass on the earth, for "He shall reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet" (1 Corinthians 15:25).

V. The Great Reception. "I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am there ye may be also." To be received by Him is to have the honour of the Father and of the Kingdom conferred upon us. His prayer on our behalf will then have its perfect fulfilment, "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am: that they may behold My glory" (John 17:24). "If any man serve Me...where I am, there shall also My servant be." Let not your heart be troubled although the world despise and reject you, there is a glorious reception awaiting you at the Coming of the Lord,

VI. The Eternal Home. "Where I am, there ye may be also." Meanwhile the mists of earth partly blinds our eyes to the glories of that place where He is. God hath exalted Him far above all principalities and powers, and given Him a Name that is above every name. He is seated at the right hand of God, crowned with glory and honour; and where He is, there His beloved bride shall be, to behold His glory, and to glory in beholding it. The place of honour purchased by the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Redeemer, is to be shared by the redeemed. Let not your heart be troubled

although your circumstances here may be mingled plentifully with trials and sorrows, all tears will be wiped away when at home with Him where He is.

VII. The Blessed Assurance. "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know" (John 14:4). Blessed be His Name, we know where He is gone, and also the way into His presence. He is gone to prepare a place for us, and He Himself is the Way (John 14:6). The way to where He is is the way of faith in Him. Faith in Him always leads to Him. "The way ye know." There is a way that seemeth right unto men, but the end is death, instead of life and glory. Let not your heart be troubled, the way may at times be rough and thorny, and narrow, and may seem long, but five minutes at home with Jesus will abundantly compensate for all the inconveniences of our pilgrim life. The way ye know, and it should be enough for us that it is the way.

CHRIST AND THE FATHER

John 14:6-21

When Philip said to Jesus, "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us," he was giving expression to the deepest, the most secret, and mysterious longing of the human soul. The curious, critical eye can never look upon the face of God; it is the pure in heart that see Him. Philip, like multitudes in every age, was perfectly sincere in his desire, but slow to believe that Jesus Himself was the visible expression of the invisible God. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). In this chapter our Lord dwells much upon this fact, perhaps in answer to Philip's request. Christ's relationship to the Father can only be understood, in any measure, by thinking deeply into Christ's own statements concerning it. The hypothesis of the Rationalist is of no value in the face of His own plain declarations. From His teaching we learn that-

I. He Dwelt in the Father. "Believest thou not that I am in the Father" (John 14:10). The home of His soul was the bosom of God. As a Son He abode in the love of His Father, delighting in His will. He dwelt in the Father that He might be ever with Him for the glory of His Name among men (See 1 John 4:12-16).

II. His Father Dwelt in Him. "Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me" (John 14:11). The Father, in all the riches of His glorious character, abode in the Son for the edification and salvation of man. He pleased not Himself; yea, more, He emptied Himself, that the Father might be gloried in Him. Being in the Father, He dwelt in eternal love; the Father being in Him, the love of God was thus manifested.

III. He is the Revelation of the Father. He said to Philip, "If ye had known Me ye should have known My Father also; from henceforth ye know Him and have seen Him. He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John 14:7-9). He is the image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15). This is the cause of that halo of glory that surrounds the character of Jesus Christ, making it unapproachably unique among the sons of men. The revelation of Jesus Christ on earth was the apocalypse (unveiling) of the Father. To know Christ in His true inward character is to know the Father.

IV. His Words were the Words of the Father. "The word which ye hear is not Mine but the Father's which sent Me" (John 14:24). This doctrine, in one form or another, is emphatically declared about ten times in this Gospel. It is that deep far-reaching truth, which the critics of Christ and His

teaching so often forget or deliberately ignore. "My doctrine" He says "is not Mine, but His that sent Me" (chap. John 7:16). "I speak to the world those things which I have heard of Him" (chap. John 8:26-28). To reject His words is to reject the message of the Eternal God and Father to men, and to perish in Sin and ignorance.

V. His Works were the Works of the Father. "That the world may know..as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do" (John 14:31). The Father's commandments were the secret motives of His life. Just when He was about to finish His career of obedience unto death, He said: "I have kept My Father's commandments" (John 15:10). He had power to lay down His life and to take it again, because He had received "this commandment of His Father." His wonderful works, as well as His wonderful words, were manifestations of the Father's grace and power in operation through the Son. "Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me; or else believe Me for the very work's sake" (John 14:11).

VI. His Desire was that the Father should be Glorified in Him. "Whatsoever ye ask in My Name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John 14:13). That the Father may be glorified He pleased not Himself, but spoke the words and did the works of His Father; and now promises to answer prayer in His Name, that the Father, who is represented by the Son, might be glorified in the Son. It is surely this Divine fact that explains the value and power of His Name in prayer (John 16:24).

VII. He is the Way to the Father. "I am the Way... no man cometh unto the Father but by Me" (John 14:6). To miss Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Life, is to miss the Father, for the Father is in Him and He is in the Father. "This is the true God and eternal life." He is the Way to the Father, because He is the Truth about the Father, and the very Life of the Father. Christ as The Way, must be received by faith, as well as Christ the Truth and the Life. To come to Him as the Way, is to forsake our own way and to trust in Him as the Truth and the Life and so come into fellowship with the Father in Him and through Him (Ephesians 2:18).

VII. To Love Him is to be Loved of the Father. "He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him" (John 14:21). To love the Lord Jesus Christ is to love the Father and to be loved in a very special manner by Him. The effect of this mutual love is a further and fuller manifestation of Christ Himself as the image of the Father to the heart of the loving one. What a comfort to know that because we love the Son of God we are being loved by God, and that that great love of His can find no higher reward to give His lovers than a fuller, deeper experience of His Son, Jesus Christ. Oh, the depths of the riches that are in Him. How keenly the apostle must have felt this truth when he said: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed at His coming" (1 Corinthians 16:22).

LOVE'S REWARD

John 14:21-24

The words of the Lord Jesus Christ are as fathomless as His unsearchable nature. "God is Love," Christ is the perfect manifestation of that love. "He that loveth Me," He says, "shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him." In these words we have the promise and condition of the greatest spiritual inheritance that God in Christ can bestow upon a human soul.

I. The Promise. "I will manifest Myself to him." The revelation of Himself is the redeemed soul's greatest solace. The purpose of the Holy Spirit in us is to take the things of Christ and show them to us. The quickened spirit of man must seek and yearn for God. "My soul thirsteth for God," said the Psalmist. What Christ has done meets all the needs of a sinner; what Christ is meets all the needs of a servant. Philip may have been ignorant, but he was surely honest when he said: "Shew us the Father and it sufficeth us" (John 14:8). Let me see and know the true God and then I shall be satisfied. He had not yet understood that to see Jesus Christ was to see the Father (John 14:9). This is the true God and eternal life. To meet this deep spiritual need in Philip, Christ manifested Himself to him. What a revelation this must have been to Philip. See how our Lord answered the somewhat similar question of Judas (not Iscariot): "How wilt Thou manifest Thyself unto us and not unto the world?" (John 14:22). The Lord's answer to this most important question is pregnant with vital teaching. He will manifest Himself in the Spirit of the Father to the man that loves Him by "coming unto him and making His-or Their-abode with him" (John 14:23). This manifestation is not outward, or external; it is the coming of the Divine life and character in fresh and fuller power into the inner man. The indwelling presence of God is the most central, the most solemn and influential reality with which the Christian has to do. The craving of a pure heart is to see God. In times of sorrow, loneliness, weariness, fruitlessness, and failure, our real need is expressed in one word: "Himself." We cannot possibly make too much of this fact and privilege of grace, that Christ eagerly desires to manifest Himself as the Healer of all diseases, the Source of all fruitfulness, and the Victor in every fight. Whenever and wherever He manifests Himself, results worthy of Himself will be accomplished. When He showed Himself after His passion it was "by many infallible proofs." Although the two men on the way to Emmaus knew Him not when He appeared, yet did He make their "hearts burn within them while He talked to them." When He manifested Himself to Mary, there followed confession and commission (John 20:16-17). When He manifested Himself to His unbelieving disciples, He first rebuked them (Mark 16:14), then when He had showed them His hands and His feet they were glad, and He breathed on them, saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John 20:20-22). The result of His appearing to doubting Thomas was confession and worship (John 20:26-28). His appearing to the disciples by the sea shore turned their failure into great success (John 21). Three times did the Lord manifest Himself to the Apostle Paul for the purpose of encouraging him in His service (Acts 23:11; Acts 18:9-10; Acts 27:23-24). To the suffering and dying Stephen He revealed Himself as the glorified One (Acts 7:55). In the light of all this let us seek to grasp the significance and preciousness of this promise: "He that loveth Me..I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him." The manifestation of Himself to us is His infinitely gracious way of meeting and satisfying our every need. But how will He manifest Himself unto us and not unto the world? This brings us to the second point, namely -

II. The Condition. "He that loveth Me." This promise of Christ is for ever true, and this simple condition is for ever availing. Christ will manifest Himself to those who love Him. It is possible to be wise and scholarly, faithful and enthusiastic, and yet destitute of that deep joy and satisfaction which comes through the manifestation of Himself to the loving heart. Thank God, this greatest of all blessings is not promised to the learned, or the laborious, but to the loving. "Lovest thou Me?" was our Lord's pressing question after manifesting Himself to His disciples by the sea of Galilee. The heart must become very sensitive that would receive and retain the image of the Son of God as revealed by the Holy Spirit. It is love, not knowledge, that creates capacity for Christ. Intense loving is more pleasing to Him than deep thinking. He who loves the Lord with all his heart will live

in the continual vision of His comforting presence and matchless glory. The condition is love; but the proof of love is the "keeping of His words"-or teaching. "He that hath My words and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me...If a man love Me, he will keep My words..He that loveth Me not keepeth not My words" (John 14:23-24). John, in his first epistle, restates this truth very plainly: "Whoso keepeth His word (teaching), in him surely is the love of God perfected" (John 2:5). The soul in which that love is perfected will be honoured with the apocalypse (unveiling) of Jesus Christ. It was to John, the most loving of His disciples, that the book of "The Revelation of Jesus Christ" was given (Revelation 1:1). The love of God can only be perfected in that heart where love answers to love. It is impossible to keep His words and to grow under His teaching, as He desires we should, unless there is in us a growing love and devotion to Christ's person and work. In these days of intellectual and moral activity, let us be diligent to keep our hearts right with God, otherwise there will be no manifestation of Himself as the sum of all power, and blessing, and success.

OBEDIENCE

John 14:23-24

"If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth Me not keepeth not My sayings: and the Word which ye hear is not Mine, but the Father's which sent Me." Obedience is the necessary consequence of love.

FRUIT-BEARING

John 15:1-8

Israel, as a vine, was brought out of Egypt and planted in Canaan, after the heathen had been cast out like weeds (Psalms 80:8). This vine, though noble, and of a right seed, soon degenerated into a strange plant to God (Jeremiah 2:21). But Jesus Christ is the true Vine, brought down from Heaven and planted in the earth. He was the faithful and true witness. There was nothing in Him to create a feeling of "strangeness" or disappointment in the heart of God. He was true to God, true to His own nature, true to His environment, and to the sons of men. But the principle thought here is that, as a Vine, He is true to those who are associated with Him as branches, so that they might bring forth fruit. Note the-

I. Source of Fruit. "The vine," The branch cannot bear fruit of itself (John 15:4). "Apart from Me, ye can do nothing" (John 15:5, R.V.). Impoverished branches in this vine is no evidence of an impoverished vine, for God giveth not the Spirit with limitations to Him (John 3:34). All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, of grace and power, are in Him, even the "fullness of the Godhead." "From Me is thy fruit found" (Hosea 14:8).

II. Removal of the Fruitless. "Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away" (John 15:2). "If any man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered" (John 15:6). This may refer to those who are in Him religiously, but not spiritually: those who have been from their birth brought up in the form of godliness, but who have never known the power and sweetness of His fellowship. There is an outward resemblance to the vine branch, but no production of the vine fruit, so the husbandman deals with it as having no connection with the vine. Such a branch "cast

forth" can do nothing else but wither. Apart from Christ, there is no saving or preserving power in man. It is only those whose roots are in the river of God whose leaves shall not wither (Psalms 1:3). These withered branches are gathered, not by the angel reapers, but by men, who cast them into the fire of testing, and they are burned. A religious, Christless life will never be of much use to men, far less to God. Like savourless salt, they are good for nothing.

III. Pruning of the Fruitful. "Every branch that beareth fruit, He cleanseth it, that it may bear more fruit" (John 15:2-3). There are growths about the Christian life, as there are about the vine, which do not tend to fruitfulness, shoots that show signs of a vigour which is only fit for the pruning knife. The riches of the grace of God is seen here in seeking to make the fruitful more fruitful. Those fit for His service He desires to make more fit. The process may be painful, to have our new-born desires and fresh efforts nipped off and thrown away as hindrances; but His will be done. The heart life is to be kept pure by faith (Acts 15:9). The pruning knife is the Word of God which is sharp and powerful....discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart. "Now are ye clean through the Word."

IV. Nature of the Fruit. "Bear much fruit, so shall ye be My disciples" (John 15:8). That branch is a true disciple of the vine that bears much of the fruit of the vine. We are the true disciples of Christ when His character manifests itself in our lives. What the sap of the vine is to the branch, the Spirit of Christ is to the Christian. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, etc., because the Spirit Himself is all this, and when He has free access into our hearts, and full control of them, His own personal characteristics will appear as fruit in our lives.

V. Condition of Fruitfulness. "He that abideth in Me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit" (John 15:5). The human side is, "He in me;" the Divine, "I in Him." "The branch cannot bear fruit of itself.... no more can ye except ye abide in Me" (John 15:4). "In me," that is, in my flesh dwelleth no good thing, but in Him all fullness dwells. His grace will be perfected in us, as we by faith abide in Him. Constant contact with Him implies the attitude of continual receptiveness, "I in Him." To abide in Him is to abide in His Word, His will, and His work, then God works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

VI. Results of Fruitfulness. "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples" (John 15:8). The results are twofold: the Father is glorified, and our true discipleship is proven. It is to the honour of the husbandman that the tree brings forth fruit abundantly. It is also to the credit of the tree that it so proves its good character by its works. Where there is wholehearted discipleship there will be fruitfulness and a life glorifying to the Father. Fruit is the natural outcome of a faithful following of Christ, as well as an evidence of it. The life lived in Christ, and for Him, is the only God-glorifying life. "Much fruit" means much love, much joy, much peace, etc.

BRANCHES, DISCIPLES, FRIENDS

John 15

These are not empty titles, the Lord Himself is the Author of each of them, but they are each conditioned with something else. The first with abiding, the second with fruit-bearing, the third with obedience. These three names are suggestive of three different experiences.

I. As Branches, we Receive. "I am the Vine, ye are the branches" (John 15:5). This process and privilege of receiving of the fullness that is in Christ cannot begin until we as branches have been broken off the old fruitless Adam-stock, and grafted into Him who is the second Adam, the True Vine. The precious sap of this Vine (Spirit) will never minister to the pride of the old selfish sinful life. But having been planted into Christ, we now live by faith that is in Him. The branch cannot live apart from the vine, no more can ye. To live apart from Christ is to be dead while we live. "Because I live ye shall live also" (John 14:19), if ye abide in Me. The life of the branch, then, is a life of continual appropriation. The call of the vine to the branch is to take, take, take. "Let him that is a thirst, take." "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." This receiving of the sap by the branch was to manifest itself in fruitfulness To be filled with the Spirit is to be filled with the fruit of the Spirit, as it is possible to grow apples of different quality on the same stock, so, by the same Spirit there may be different manifestation, according to the character of the branch. While our union with Christ is the death of our sinful life, it is not the death of our individuality. In every Christian life the whole fruit of the Spirit should be found (Galatians 5:22-23), but, as a rule, in the lives of Christians, some one or two aspects of this fruit are often found prominent, this may be partly due to the nature of the recipient. Still, "the wind bloweth where it listeth."

II. As Disciples, we Follow. "So shall ye be My disciples" (John 15:8). In continuing the metaphor of the vine and branches here, the idea is, that the branch truly follows the vine, when it abides in it, and when by the power imparted to it, it faithfully carries out the purpose for which the vine had been given. So, by an adherence to the mind and will of our Lord, and by the bringing forth of much of the fruit of the Spirit, we are declaring ourselves to be walking in His footsteps. "If ye continue in My Word, then are you My disciples indeed" (John 8:31). This discipleship implies a readiness to sit at His feet, like Mary, and to learn of Him who is the Great Teacher come from God. It implies also a willingness to believe every word He says. How can His words abide in us if they are not received by faith (John 15:7). How can we follow His example if we do not live and walk by faith in the Word of God as He did. Another mark of discipleship is love one to another (John 13:35).

III. As Friends, we Commune. "Ye are My friends... I have called you friends (not patients), for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you" (John 15:14-15). A friend comes closer to the heart than a servant, "A servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth." It is a very sacred and humbling privilege to walk among men as the friends of Jesus Christ. As His friends, living in communion with Him, we become-

1. Sharers of His SECRETS. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him" (Psalms 25:14). It was of him who was "the friend of God" that God said, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" The deep heart purposes of the Son of God are revealed to those who live in fellowship with Him. In the light of His presence they see light clearly. They walk among the gloomy shadows of a sinful world, with the secrets of life, peace, and eternal glory in their souls.

2. Sharers of His SYMPATHIES. As a devoted wife becomes a partaker of her husband's likes and dislikes, so does the friend of Jesus, through close contact with Him, becomes imbued with His thoughts and feelings. They love all that He loves and hate all that He hates. They are in real heart sympathy with Him in His desire to honour the Father, and at the same time to love, and seek to save, the sinful sons of men.

3. Sharers of His SUFFERINGS. "The world hated Me... because ye are not of the world...therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:18-19). Christ suffered because of His unlikeness to the world. His true friends will fare little better. Christ suffered in His daily life because of His sympathy with God His Father, and His separation from the sins and false conception of His age. The more we become like Him the more shall we feel the power of those forces in the world which were opposed to Him.

4. Sharers of His CONSOLATIONS. "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ" (2 Corinthians 1:5). To be made a partaker of His sufferings, is to become an heir of His consolations. Such consolations are neither few not small, good measure, pressed down and running over. What the Father was to the Son, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter is to us an ever present, all sufficient compensation for all the sorrows and sufferings incurred through our sympathy with Christ, and service for Him. If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him, that is consolation indeed.

"I AND YOU"

John 15:12-26

In this chapter alone Christ uses the first personal pronoun with studied emphasis eleven times. In each case the chief importance of the words spoken lie in the character of Him who speaks. In these impressive I's of His there is the thought of-

I. Grace. "I have loved you" (John 15:12). You who sometime were afar off, but are now made nigh: you who were once in ignorance of Me, and walked according to the course of this world. I have loved you with a love that can only be compared with that love wherewith the Father hath loved Me (John 15:9). "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich."

II. Separation. "I chose you out of the world" (John 15:19, R.V.). "The whole world lieth in wickedness" (John 5:19). To be chosen of Christ is to be called out of the world into His fellowship and Kingdom. In this fellowship ye shall be partakers of His sufferings, for the world that hated Him will hate you. The Cain-spirit that seeks to slay those more righteous than themselves is ever with us (1 John 3:12). We are chosen out of the world like Noah, that we might be saved from it, and become witnesses against it. By faith, like Abraham, we must go out.

III. Friendship. "I have called you friends" (John 15:15). To be called friends by Him who is God's best Friend is an honour indeed. It was a blessed day for Mordecai when he was declared the friend of the king (Esther 6:11). Servants have kitchen privileges, but friends have parlour opportunities. Anywhere in the Lord's house is an honour and a blessing, but covet earnestly the best gifts. He will call you friend if ye abide in Him.

IV. Teaching. "All things....I have made known unto you" (John 15:15). He is the great Teacher come from God. As He sought to instil into the minds of His disciples the things that He heard of His Father, so by the Holy Spirit does He still make known the will of the Father, for all things are now delivered unto Him, and the Spirit takes the things which are His and shows them unto us.

V. Responsibility. "I have chosen you..that ye should bring forth fruit" (John 15:16). Having called His disciples friends, and having instructed them in the things concerning Himself, He expects

them to be something else than mere patients in a doctor's hands. The love that has grown into friendship must go on ripening into fruitful service. A fruitless branch never serves the purpose of the vine. A barren Christian profession is a misrepresentation of Christ. "Chosen and ordained to bring forth fruit" (John 15:16). If the fruit of the Spirit is not manifest in our lives, we are falsifying both our calling and our ordination.

VI. Brotherly Love. "I command you that ye love one another" (John 15:17). Love is the bond that is to hold His people one to another amidst the hatred and opposition of this world. It is His command, His new commandment which is the sum of the whole law. Have this salt of love in yourselves, and there shall be peace one with another (Mark 9:50). Not to love one another is an act of rebellion against the rule of Christ.

VII. Promise. "I will send you..the Spirit of truth" (John 15:26). The word Comforter in this verse may be translated "Helper." This promised "Helper" is the "Spirit of truth." This "Spirit of truth the devil-deluded world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, but He shall be in you" (John 14:17). In promising the Spirit, Christ promised every needful thing for life and service. He is the Spirit of truth, of grace, of burning, and of power. What a Helper He is! How fruitless our testimony without Him! "I will send Him unto you." "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." THE GREAT HELPER

John 16:7-15

The Lord Jesus Christ is mighty to save a sinner; the Holy Spirit is mighty to help a saint. The word "Comforter" has been variously translated. The terms "Advocate," "Paraclete," "Helper," have been used. In Romans 8:26, we read that "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities"- literally taketh hold with me. The same word is used in Luke 10:40, but nowhere else in the New Testament. "Bid her therefore that she help me." The Holy Spirit has come, as one who is willing and mighty to "take hold with me," that I might be helped in doing the will and work of God.

I. The Condition of His Coming. "If I go not away, the Helper will not come unto you, but if I go, I will send Him (not it) unto you" (John 16:7). Christ had to go, taking humanity into the character and presence of God, before the Spirit could come, bringing divinity into the character and presence of man (Acts 2:33). The bodily absence of the Redeemer was to ensure the spiritual presence of the Helper. The Spirit could not be given till Jesus was glorified (John 7:39). The coming of the Helper was the proof that Christ's atoning work was perfected, and that the Father, Son, and Spirit, were all most desirous that men should be helped into possession of the present and eternal fruits of the saving work of Jesus Christ.

II. His Mission in the World. "I will send Him unto you; and He, when He is come, He will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8, R.V.). While the Spirit's attitude to the Church is that of an Helper, His attitude to the world is that of a Convicter. There are three things the world needs to be convicted of: Sin, righteousness, and judgment.

1. "Of SIN, because they believe not on Me" (John 16:9). The great sin of the world, in the eyes of the Holy Spirit, is unbelief-believing not the Son of God. His mission is to glorify Christ (John 16:14), and the first thing He does is to convict of the sin of rejecting His Word and sacrifice.

2. "Of RIGHTEOUSNESS, because I go to my Father." Christ could not go to His Father until He had gone to the Cross and the grave as an atonement for sin. To go to His Father, He must rise

again from the dead. His resurrection and ascension secures for us that righteousness which His death for our sins had prepared. He died for our offences. He rose again for our justification (Romans 4:25). On the Cross He was made sin for us; now at the Father's right hand He is made of God unto us righteousness (1 Corinthians 1:30). This is the righteousness that the world needs, and that the Holy Spirit seeks to convict it of. Our own righteousnesses are as filthy rags in His sight.

3. "Of JUDGMENT, because the prince of this world hath been judged" (John 16:11, r.v). As surely as the prince of this world (Devil) has already been judged, and brought under condemnation by Christ's death and resurrection, so has every unbeliever. "He that believeth not hath been judged already" (John 3:18, R.V.). This is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men love the darkness rather than the light. The Spirit has come to convict concerning judgment. All down through these ages the Holy Spirit has been, as it were, prosecuting the world, bringing it to judgment, because of its criminal attitude toward the Son of God. How is this work done? Does the Spirit use any medium, through which He convicts the men of the world? The last clause of Luke 10:7 should surely not be separated in thought from Luke 10:8. "If I depart, I will send Him unto you, and when He is come-unto you-He will convict the world." It was when the Spirit had come with power unto Peter, that the three thousand were "pricked in their heart," on the day of Pentecost. A powerless Christian, or a powerless Church will never be successful in convicting the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. This needed work cannot be done in any other way, but by the Holy Ghost, the Almighty Helper.

III. His Mission to the Church. To the redeemed of God the Holy Spirit has come-

1. AS A GUIDE INTO ALL TRUTH. "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all the truth" (John 16:13, R.V.). He is the Spirit of truth, because He has come out from Him who is "The Truth," in His person and doctrine. He guides into the truth, because the Spirit searcheth into the deep things of God (2 Corinthians 2:10). O soul, thirsting for the truth as it is in Jesus, receive the guidance of this heavenly Helper; ask Him, and depend upon Him to do it. This holy anointing teacheth you all things and is truth (1 John 2:27).

2. AS A REVEALER OF THE THINGS OF CHRIST. "He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall declare it unto you" (John 16:14-15). He helps us all He can, by taking the things that are Christ's-by right of His sufferings and death -things purchased for His people by His own blood; and to declare them, or make them known unto us, that He might glorify the Son, by filling up and making fruitful the lives of His redeemed ones (John 15:8). Blessed Helper, help me to enter into this most precious inheritance. "All things are yours, for ye are Christ's."

3. AS AN EXAMPLE OF SELF-ABANDONED SERVICE. "He shall not speak from Himself; but whatsoever things He shall hear, these shall He speak; and He shall declare unto you the things that are to come" (John 16:13, R.V.). His ministry was one of entire self-abnegation. As Christ sought, through self-emptying, to glorify the Father, so the Holy Spirit likewise sought to glorify the Son: we also, through self-renunciation, must honour the Holy Spirit. The Son of God spake not from Himself (John 14:10, R.v.). Neither did the Holy Spirit, neither should we. Self-will, and self-wisdom, and every other form of self-assertiveness, is a usurping of the Holy Spirit. If we would have the help of the Spirit in our ministry for Christ, we shall not speak from our own authority, but whatsoever things we shall hear-from Him-these shall we speak, and shall declare

the things that are to come. A LITTLE WHILE

John 16:16-23

In these verses, the words, "A little while," are repeated seven times over, as if they were of special significance. From the fact that our Lord, in explaining the meaning of them, used the parabolic form, we may infer that different applications may be made of them (John 16:25). "A little while, and ye shall not see Me...and ye shall be sorrowful... but I shall see you again, and your heart shall rejoice... and in that day ye shall ask Me no question." These precious words may easily have a threefold meaning. As the

I. Historical. "A little while, and ye shall not see Me." It was but "a little while"-a few hours-and Christ was buried out of their sight, though in a borrowed grave, yet sealed with the royal signet. The interval between His death and resurrection was, indeed, to them a time of "sorrow" and "lamenting," but to the world a time of rejoicing (Luke 24:17). The world's feasts go on more merrily in the absence of the Saviour from sin, but the Christian can find a feast nowhere where He is not. "A little while, and I shall see you again, and your heart shall rejoice." Their hearts did rejoice when, after three days, they saw Him again in resurrection power and glory. "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord" (John 20:20). "They worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy." "In that day" they did ask Him no question. The fact of His appearing to them as the Risen One was itself the answer to all their doubts and questionings. He who had power to rise from the dead, had power to perform His every promise. In a dark and cloudy day, the relative value of other lights may be disputed, but when the sun breaks out in all his glorious majesty, there is no questioning his all-sufficiency to meet the need.

II. Personal. "A little while..ye shall be sorrowful...but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice... in that day ye shall ask no question." The sorrowful "little while" of His called-out ones is now, while their Lord is absent, and the world is rejoicing. "In the world ye shall have tribulation" (John 16:33), but His "I will see you again" is the hope of his suffering saints. Through the gathering gloom we look for the breaking of the day, when we shall see Him face to face. Just now we may see as but through a glass darkly; there are many things that we cannot possibly understand, mysterious movements of the providence of God, and of the Holy Spirit, that at times sorely perplex our eager spirits, many things we should like explained. Yes, but "in that day ye shall ask Me no question." One look into the glorified face of our redeeming Lord will hush at once every restless feeling and every anxious thought. So satisfied shall we be when we see Him, that we shall not be able to ask Him any question. So perfect will be our acquiescence to His will in everything.

"Not a surge of worry, not a shade of care,

Not a blast of hurry moves the spirit there."

III. Dispensational. These words of our Lord may also be prophetic of that time when He will come again, taking to Himself His right to rule and reign over this world for which He died. The Church of God is now passing through its "little while" of sorrow, this is its time to "weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice." In the latter days perilous times will come. But the Church's hope lies in His promise, "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." She, like a woman in travail, hath sorrow now, but when the Man is born into the world, she shall

remember no more her anguish for joy (John 16:21). God's people just now are sadly divided and full of questionings, but on that day when He shall appear in the glory of His power, as King of kings and Lord of lords, "ye shall ask no questions." All human questionings are for ever set at rest in the presence of the glorified Son of God. Angels ask Him no questions, but it is our great privilege now to "Ask that we may receive" (John 16:23).

CHRIST'S GIFTS TO HIS OWN

John 17

In approaching this chapter we feel as if we were passing through the veil into the holiest of all. This prayer of our Great High Priest, just before He offered Himself upon the altar of the Cross as the sacrifice for the sin of the world, is in itself a great unveiling of holy things. Here every petition is a revelation, every declaration a discovery. From these-Christ's own words-we shall note first of all some of the blessings He has conferred upon His own. Observe the-

I. Life of God. "Thou hast given Him authority over all flesh, that..to them He should give eternal life" (John 17:2, r.v.). This eternal life consists in knowing God and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent (John 17:3). To know Him is to be made a partaker of His nature, to be adopted into His family as "sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty." When Christ condescended to take upon Him the likeness of sinful flesh, God gave Him authority over all flesh, that He might give this life to all who believe.

II. Name of God. "I have manifested Thy Name unto the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world" (John 17:6). The life and work of Jesus Christ was "the Lord proclaiming the Name of the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." In manifesting the Name of God, He was manifesting His nature. He could truly say, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." But only those given Him "out of the world" could receive this gracious revelation. "The world by wisdom knew not God."

III. Words of God. "I have given them the words which Thou gavest Me" (John 17:8). This thought is frequently expressed in this Gospel (chaps. John 12:49; John 14:10). Those who have been made alive unto God must feed upon the words of the Living God. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Christ Himself is the truth, because the words He spake were the very words and doctrines taught Him by the Eternal Father. "I and My Father are One." One in nature and in purpose, One in will, in deed, and in truth. "The words that I speak unto you are spirit and life." As He lived by faith in those words given Him, so shall we. "Believe, and thou shalt see."

IV. Service of God. "I am glorified in them" (John 17:10). As the Father was glorified in the Son (John 17:4), so the Son is to be glorified in His own. The words of God have been given us as they were given to Jesus Christ His Son, for a very definite and gracious purpose, that God might be glorified in faithful and successful service (John 17:4). The privilege of working for Him is a precious gift. Alas, that so many should neglect to stir up this gift. How is Christ to be glorified in us unless there is wholehearted surrender to His will and work, as He was to the will and work which the Father gave Him to do? Was not this what the apostle meant when he said, "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death?" (Php_1:20).

V. Glory of God. "And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given unto them" (John 17:22, r.v.). What glory was this that Christ received from God the Father, and passed on to His disciples? Did not this glory consist in God's nature and Name, His words and work, which were given to the Son, and which in grace He has imparted to His followers? As He is, so are we. There is, besides, the glory that is yet to be revealed when we shall be with Him where He is (John 17:24). As God gave Him the glory of Sonship and heirship, so hath He given this glory to us who believe (John 1:12). The purpose of this manifold gift is, "that they all may be one," even as Christ and the Father are One (John 17:22). What would be the results if this glory was really witnessed by the world?

VI. Love of God. "I made known unto them Thy Name, and will make it known that the love wherewith Thou lovedst Me may be in them" (John 17:26). Christ hath made known, and will go on making known the Name (character) of God, that His nature which is love may be continually nurtured in us. This He does by the gift of the Holy Ghost, who sheds this love abroad in our hearts (Romans 5:5). It is surely a heart-searching thought that our Lord should close His great unveiling priestly prayer with this testimony, that the purpose for which He had faithfully declared the Name of God was that the love which God had for His Son might be in us. Has this grace of the Lord Jesus Christ been in vain to us? Are we rejoicing in the depth, the fullness, and the eternity of this love? Is this love being revealed to others through us, as it has been revealed through Christ to us?

CHRIST'S PETITIONS FOR HIS OWN

John 17

This is one of the chapters of which Baxter in his "Saint's Rest" says, "It is of more value than all the other books in the world." But the veil that is over the heart needs to be taken away, before the hidden glory can be seen. This is not a prayer for the world. "I pray not for the world." His cry for the perishing world came out of His agonised heart while hanging on the Cross (Luke 23:34). Here He pleads for those that had been given Him out of the world. He prayed that they might be-

I. Kept by the Father. "Holy Father, keep them in Thine own Name which Thou hast given Me" (John 17:11). To be kept in His own Name is to be kept in His own character and likeness; is to be continually acknowledged and claimed as His own sons and daughters. They are to be kept in that Name which Christ had manifested to them (John 17:6). "The Name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and are safe" (Proverbs 18:10).

II. Happy in Themselves. "Now I come to Thee... that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves" (John 17:13). He who was the "Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief," was no stranger to that joy which is in the Holy Ghost (Romans 14:17). If His joy had been in Himself alone, how could He impart it to others? But being in the Holy Spirit, this He could and did give. The Lord's people are not asked to put on a smiling face without possessing a smiling heart. This holy personal joy is the joy of true fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, in the communion of the Holy Ghost (1 John 1:3-4).

III. Protected from the Devil. "I pray..that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil one" (John 17:15, R.v.). Christ knew, from personal experience, the subtle dangers that lay in being tempted of the Devil, so He prays here that we might be kept from yielding to his illuding devices. "When ye

pray, say, Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one" (Matthew 6:13, r.v.). "He that is begotten of God keepeth Him, and the evil one toucheth him not" (1 John 5:18, r.v.). While we by faith keep hold of Him who has destroyed the works of the Devil, God will keep us by His mighty power from the evil one.

IV. Holy unto God. "Sanctify them in Thy truth... for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be truly sanctified" (John 17:17, John 17:19, margin). As He consecrated, or set Himself apart for us, He prays that we may be consecrated (set apart) for Him, He says, "As the Father sent Me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world" (John 17:18). He delivered the same message to His disciples after His resurrection (John 20:21). Ye are not your own, ye are, in the purpose of His grace, separated unto Himself, "therefore glorify God in your body and your spirit, which are His."

V. Useful unto Others. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe in Me through their word" (John 17:20). Then Christ expected that others would believe on His Name through them; that the "other sheep" which were not of this little fold, were to hear His voice "through their word," and be brought into the one flock under the one Shepherd (John 10:16). Let your light so shine-that light which He hath shined into your hearts-that others, seeing the good works of God in you, may glorify your Father which is in Heaven. He hath blessed us, that we might be made a blessing. Let us see that the Holy One is not limited in His saving grace by our unbelief (Psalms 78:41).

VI. United One to Another. He prayed also, "That they all may be one" (John 17:21). There is here a double union. His request to the Father is that as brethren, they might be one in themselves, and as sons, they might be "one in us..as Thou Father art in Me, and I in Thee." How blessed Christian fellowship would be, if it resembled the fellowship that exists between the Father and the Son. That they may be one as we are, is the longing of Christ's heart (Galatians 3:28). The anticipated outcome of this is, "That the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." The world still needs to know that love of God which sent His Son to save it (John 3:16).

VII. Glorified with Christ. "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory" (John 17:24). When He shall appear, we shall be like Him. Here we are more familiar with the sufferings of Christ than with the glory which is now His with the Father; but our afflictions, which are light compared with His, are working out for us as His afflictions wrought out for Him, "an exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17). If we suffer with Him, we shall also be glorified together with Him. Our eyes have often been dimmed with tears while beholding His sufferings, but all tears shall be wiped away and every heart questioning hushed when we behold His glory. We cannot say of the prayers of Christ, as with the prayers of David, that "they are ended," for they are still being fulfilled. May we, through our sanctified lives, help to give Him these desires of His heart. THE CHRISTIAN'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE WORLD

John 17

I. They are Taken Out of the World. "The men which Thou gavest Me out of the world " (John 17:6). The world, as such, is a ruined mass, lying in the lap of the evil one; being coddled by the illusions and guided by the false principles of the god of this world; but the followers of Jesus

Christ have in spirit been lifted up out of the whole thing, as out of an horrible pit and miry clay, and have been established in the Kingdom of our God, and of His Christ, which is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. "Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

II. They are Distinguished from the World. "I pray for them: I pray not for the world" (John 17:9). As soon as we become separated in spirit from the world, we come under a new set of laws in the Kingdom of grace. We are dealt with as children of God, not as the mere offspring of His creative power. Christ loves His own with a love which is peculiar to His own. While He has the love of pity for the world, He has the love of pleasure for His own. Because they are in heart for Him, He in heart and power is for them; so all things work together for good to them that love Him.

III. They are In the World. "But these are in the world" (John 17:11). As to their spirit and purpose, they are out of the world, but as to their bodily presence and influence, they are still in the world. In the world, but not of it, even as Christ was (John 17:16). In the world, not as a branch in the vine, but as a light in the darkness; not as a member in the body, but as a physician in the hospital. In the world, not as a "man of the world," but as a "man of God"; not as its slave, but as its victor.

IV. They are Hated by the World. "The world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:14). There was no hatred until He had given them the Word of God. "I have given them Thy Word, and the world hath hated them." This God-given Word, when received, so revolutionised their minds and hearts that the world did not know them, and so contrary did they become to the world's ways and maxims that they hated them. The worldly wise and the worldly prudent cannot receive those precious things which God is prepared to reveal unto babes (Matthew 11:25). The hatred of the world is a trifling matter to those whose hearts are filled with the love of God.

V. They are Kept from the god of this World. "I pray..that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil one" (John 17:15, R.V.). He does not pray that we should be taken out of this world, but kept from the evil one who rules in it. We need not weary to get out of this world so long as we can be made a perpetual miracle and monument of His keeping power in it. We are surely at perfect liberty to claim, for the honour of Christ's own Name, the daily fulfilment of this prayer in our own lives. Our beloved gourds may wither, but His promise cannot.

VI. They are Sent Into the World. "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world" (John 17:18). Every Spirit-anointed one is sent to preach good tidings (Luke 4:18). As Christ was sent into the world to seek and save that which was lost, so also are we. As He was an ambassador for God, so also are we for Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20). As He was not sent on His own charges, so neither are we. As He was in the world, not on His own account but as a Sent One, so are we. Those sent by Him will be equipped by Him for the work, as He was equipped by the Father which sent Him. "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you" (John 20:21).

VII. They are Indwelt for the Salvation of the World. "I in them, and Thou in Me....that the world may know" (John 17:23). As the Father was in the Son, so the Son desires to be in us, that the world may know the love of God. Christ fulfilled, in a perfect manner, all required of Him, but what miserable counterfeits many of us are. The Son has given Himself as freely to us as the Father gave Himself to the Son, that His great love might triumph in us and through us. As God so loved

the world that He gave His Son, so doth the Son so love the world that He gives His Spirit-filled followers, and for the self-same purpose. "Christ liveth in me," says Paul (Galatians 2:20), and all the world knows to what a God-honouring result. The one thing needful that this world needs to know is the Love of God; not only God's love to the world, but His love to His Son, and to them that love Him. "That Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me." May this love be shed abroad in our hearts, and out through our hearts into this cold Christ-neglecting world around us.

REVELATIONS IN THE GARDEN

John 18:1-11

Every circumstance in which Jesus Christ was placed, somehow or other, became the occasion of a further revelation of His wondrous character. Wherever He was, He, in His unique Personality, could not be hid. In these few verses we see some rays of His heavenly glory breaking through the dark cloud of His earthly weakness. Here is a revelation of-

I. His Habit of Prayer. "Judas..knew the place; for Jesus oft-times resorted thither with His disciples" (John 18:2). Although Christ possessed the spirit of prayer, He believed also in the place of prayer. When one gets familiar with their surroundings, the mind is more free for intercourse with the unseen and eternal. In the matter of frequent praying, as well as in suffering, the sinless Son of God has left us an example.

II. His Knowledge of the Future. "Jesus therefore, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth" (John 18:4, R.v.). He knew that "all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished," for the Scriptures must be fulfilled (Luke 18:31). Our knowledge of the future must be derived from the same source. If we had the faith that Jesus Christ had in those words uttered by men full of the Holy Ghost, then would we be among those wise men which discern the signs of the times.

III. His Confession Concerning Himself. "I am He" (John 18:5). They declared that they were seeking Jesus of Nazareth. He confessed that He was that Nazarene. Reproach had been associated with that Name, and He willingly accepts it and bears it. It was as if they said, "Where is that despised and rejected One?" He answered, "I am He." This solemn "I am He" of the Son of God may be looked upon as His answer to all who seek Him, whether through love and mercy, or hate and derision. It is with Him all have to do.

IV. His Power Over His Enemies. "As soon as He had said unto them, I am He, they went backward, and fell to the ground" (John 18:6). It was good for them that they had the ground to fall on. The same power that drove them back might have as easily driven them into Hell. This manifestation of His power was His last convincing proof that, apart from His own will, they had no power at all against Him. "No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself" (John 10:18).

V. His Love for His Own. "If, therefore, ye seek Me, let these go their way" (John 18:8). These words are full of solemn significance, as they reveal Christ's attitude toward the powers of darkness and the sheep of His pasture. He was no hireling to flee when the wolf cometh. What He here said to His enemies He could say with a deeper meaning to that "death and the curse" which was coming upon Him. "If, therefore, ye seek Me, let these go their way." As our Substitute and Surety, His chief desire was the salvation of His people. Christ is the end of the law for

righteousness to every one that believeth.

VI. His Submission to His Father's Will. "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11). He knew the Father's love too well to refuse even that awful cup of suffering that was just now being put into His hands. He was so perfectly at one with the Father's purposes that His meat was to do His will and to finish His work. As the weapons of His warfare were not carnal, neither are ours, yet they are mighty, through obedience to God, to the pulling down of strongholds. By His surrender and obedience unto death, He triumphed in resurrection power. He hath left us an example that we should follow His steps.

CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS AT THE HANDS OF MEN

John 18

He suffered by being-

I. Betrayed by the Hypocritical. "Judas also, which betrayed Him, stood with them" (John 18:5). He who companied with Christ, and shared the fellowship of His disciples, now takes his stand among the enemies of his Lord, and lends his influence towards His downfall. "Woe unto you hypocrites."

II. Defended by the Passionate. "Simon Peter having a sword, drew it and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear" (John 18:10). The Lord had as little need for Peter's passion as for his sword. The wrath of man works not for the praise of God. There is a zeal for Christ and His cause that must be more painful than pleasing unto Him.

III. Smitten by the Unreasonable. "Jesus answered, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou Me?" (John 18:23). It is easier for pride and prejudice to sneer and to smite than to face the truth. Self-seeking men are ever ready to justify themselves if it should be at the cost of smiting the character of the Saviour. But the clouds that would hide the face of the sun cannot hinder its progress.

IV. Denied by the Cowardly. When Simon Peter was charged with being "One of His disciples, he denied it, and said, I am not" (John 18:25). The Lord and His cause still suffers much through the cowardliness of His professed followers. There are other ways than Peter's in denying Christ. He did it with his tongue; we may do it with our feet, or by our general conduct. When the act or behaviour is more in keeping with the enemies of Christ than with His Word and teaching it is practically a denial of Him.

V. Shunned by the Self-righteous. "Then led they Jesus...unto the hall of judgment...and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be denied, but that they might eat the passover" (John 18:28). Any thing or place was clean enough for Jesus, but they must preserve their (supposed) ceremonial holiness. "They strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel." This is what one has called "putid hypocrisy." These, like all other self-righteous bigots, would seek the blessing without the Blesser; they would have the passover without Him who is the Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7). They are like men crying for light and closing their eyes to the sun.

VI. Questioned by the Ambitious. Pilate asked three questions of Jesus, and profited nothing by them: (1) "Art Thou the King of the Jews?" (John 18:33); (2) "What is truth?" (John 18:38); (3) "Whence art Thou?" (chap. John 19:9). By such questions the Christ was "oppressed and

afflicted," so He "opened not His mouth." Men animated by selfish and impure motives still oppress Him, whose Divinity is clear as the sun, by their questionings regarding His character and teaching. He that doeth His will shall know of the teaching whether it be of God (John 7:17).

VII. Mocked by the Frivilous. "The soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on His head....and said, Hail, King of the Jews" (chap. John 19:2). These men of war set Him who is the Prince of Peace at naught (Luke 23:11). To them the kingdom of Caesar is everything, the Kingdom of God nothing, material things important, but spiritual things ridiculed and laughed at. Truly they know not what they do, who trifle with the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:17-18).

"I have seen the face of Jesus,

Tell me not of aught beside;

I have heard the voice of Jesus,

All my soul is satisfied."

MARY MAGDALENE

John 20:1-18

John was that disciple whom Jesus loved, but Mary Magdalene was surely that disciple who pre-eminently loved Jesus. She loved much because she had been forgiven much (Luke 8:2). Behold her-

I. Anxiety. She came "early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre" (John 20:1). The darkness without was nothing to her who had had the lamp of heavenly love burning in her heart. Was it only to see the sepulchre she came? Was there not a tremulous restlessness about her feelings that some unusual thing was about to happen?

II. Disappointment. "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid Him" (John 20:2). It never was more blessedly true than in this case, that our disappointment is God's appointment. In search for a dead Lord, she finds but an empty grave. He is "away" not that she might lose Him but that she might-to her heart's satisfaction-find Him.

III. Sorrow. "Mary stood at the sepulchre weeping" (John 20:11-13). Peter and John, at her report, ran together to the sepulchre and looked in and returned again to their own home, but Mary stood, as one bound to that tomb by the cords of faith and love. So intense were her desires, and so blinded were her eyes by sorrow, that "the angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain," never seemed to awaken a suspicion in her mind that the Lord was risen. Yes, it is possible to be so overwhelmed with our imaginary loss that we fail to grasp God's greatest blessing.

IV. Mistake. "She supposing Him to be the gardener," etc. (John 20:15). Even in resurrection power our Lord had still the likeness of sinful flesh. Why did she not know Him? The likelihood is that she was so perfectly absorbed in thought that she was blind to all outward objects-"Swallowed up with overmuch grief." The love of her heart was all right, but the theory of her head was all wrong. It will save us much sorrow and disappointment to have a correct creed as well as a devoted life. He was risen, as He said, but they believed Him not.

V. Discovery. "Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself and saith unto Him, Rabboni" (Master) (John 20:16). She needed to have her eyes turned away from herself and from the grave, to see Him who is the Resurrection and the Life. The word of Jesus caught her ear and sunk into her heart. He called her by her name and claimed her as His own (Isaiah 43:1). His sheep hear His voice. No one who ever seeks the Lord Jesus Christ ever finds a dead or powerless Saviour. The deepest cry of a living soul is for a living God (Psalms 42:2).

VI. Boldness. "Touch Me not" (John 20:17). She evidently fell down and was about to embrace His feet, when Jesus stood back saying, "Touch Me not, for I am not yet ascended to My Father." Another little disappointment to her ardent heart and another lesson to her that she must learn to walk by faith and not by sight. No mortal hand was allowed to touch Him, who died as the sinner's Substitute, until He had presented Himself to His Father for acceptance as our Redeemer and High Priest. Afterwards every doubting Thomas was invited to thrust his hand into His side that he might feel the mark left by the spear wound.

VII. Obedience. "Jesus said unto her, Go to My brethren and say unto them...Mary came and told the disciples" (John 20:17-18). She tarried in the garden until she was endued with the power of a great commission. What a message was Mary's, the Gospel of Sonship; "My Father, and your Father," in the power of the Resurrection. Her love is rewarded by being made the first herald of His resurrection power. "He that loveth Me..I will manifest Myself unto him." The vision of the glorified Christ makes a willing servant (Acts 9:6).

DOUBTING THOMAS

John 20:24-29

That evening of the first day of the first resurrection week was an ever memorable one. The hearts of the disciples were full of fear and wonder at the things which had happened (John 20:18). They had met with closed and bolted doors, for fear of their enemies, to reconsider the whole situation. But He who died to save them set all their doubtings and their fears at rest, by suddenly appearing among them, speaking peace and breathing into them a foretaste of Pentecostal power and blessing. All Christ's acts here are full of significance. (1) He spoke the word of "Peace" to them; (2) He revealed Himself as the Crucified One (John 20:20); (3) He Commissioned them (John 20:21); (4) He Endued them (John 20:22); (5) He promised them success in His business (John 20:23). Now what about Thomas? If Peter was rash with his tongue, Thomas was slow in his mind (chap. John 14:5). Observe his-

I. Lost Opportunity. "But Thomas.. was not with them when Jesus came" (John 20:24). Why he was absent is not stated, but it is at least suggestive that he was absent. He must have known of the meeting, but being incredulous regarding the resurrection of Christ, he probably had given up all hope, feeling utterly perplexed and ashamed. In refusing to assemble with His brethren he only strengthened his unbelief and lost the faith-confirming fellowship of the Lord. Those out of fellowship with the body of believers need not expect to enjoy the fellowship of Christ.

II. Emphatic Denial. When the disciples said unto him, "We have seen the Lord," he said, "Except I see.... I will not believe" (John 20:25). He was faithless (John 20:27). His heart was hardened against the truth of "the resurrection." His "I will not" reveals the desperate antagonism that was in his nature. He would walk by sight, not by faith. It is little short of madness to set one's self against

the united testimony of the disciples of Jesus Christ. The imperious "I will not believe" of the haughty and prejudiced mind can never make the faith of God of none effect. "Believe, and thou shalt see."

III. Humbling Rebuke. Thomas gained nothing but sadness and separation from his independent attitude. He did not, however, miss the next meeting of the disciples, "after eight days," for "Thomas was with them." Again Jesus appeared and saith to Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger..and be not faithless, but believing" (John 20:27). He had now, according to the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, an opportunity of "handling the Word of Life," but as soon as He comes within touch, the hand of unbelief is paralysed. What the disciples could not do in a week's reasoning, Jesus Christ did in a moment by His Word. Unbelief is the most shameful of all things when Christ Himself is seen. How Thomas must afterward have repented over his treatment of the testimony of his believing friends. Are we not losing much blessing just now for the same reason, refusing to believe those who have experienced a fullness of blessing to which we, in our unbelief, are utter strangers? May He so reveal Himself to us that every doubt will be ashamed before Him.

IV. Confession of Faith. "Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my God." He hath seen, and he hath believed, but the blessedness of the man who hath not seen and yet hath believed could never be his (John 20:29). However, he hath believed, and that with all his heart. His words were few, but profound, and came from the uttermost depths of His soul. There was in them a confession- 1. Of His DEITY. "My God."

2. Of His AUTHORITY over him. "My Lord."

3. Of his PERSONAL SURRENDER to Him. "My Lord and My God."

HOW JESUS SHOWED HIMSELF

John 21:1-14

After His resurrection no one could see Jesus through mere curiosity or by accident. Neither Mary nor the two men who walked with Him on the way to Emmaus knew Him till He revealed Himself to them. None but disciples ever saw Him in His resurrection body. The vision now is a spiritual one; only those who believe shall see the glory of God in the Person of the risen Christ. "On this wise shewed He Himself" on that memorable morning.

I. The Time. It was-

1. AFTER A NIGHT OF FAILURE. "That night they caught nothing" (John 21:3). In those days of quiet testing. Peter got somewhat restless and said, "I go a-fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee." They followed Peter, and they caught nothing. Disappointment and defeat may prepare us for a new manifestation of the grace and power of Jesus Christ. To labour without His presence and blessing is like putting our treasure in a bag with holes. Failure in business may be a good preparation for spiritual success.

2. AT THE BREAKING OF THE DAY. "When the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the shore" (John 21:4, r.v.). Sorrow may endure for the night, but joy cometh in the morning when He appears He was there, but they knew Him not There is always the breaking of a new day when Christ shows Himself afresh to the weary soul. Every vision of Him is a new and fuller dawning of

the heavenly day.

II. The Manner. Our Lord followed the example of no man. He had His own unique way of showing both Himself and His doctrine. He began to reveal Himself by-

1. LEADING THEM TO CONFESSION. "Children, have ye aught to eat? They answered Him, No!" (John 21:5, R.V.). This was an honest confession of failure. They had taken nothing, so they made no attempt to make it look like something. They had nothing, neither for themselves nor for others, and they said so; and by so doing put themselves in a position to be blessed by the Lord. Beware of misrepresentation and exaggeration. Christ is interested in our reports.

2. TESTING THEIR FAITH. "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find" (John 21:6). They had toiled all night to no purpose, and now that the day was breaking they had given up all hope. But the authoritative voice of that stranger on the shore, so full of promise, was heard, and immediately obeyed. There is always a ring of certainty about the Word of the Lord Jesus. To hear it is to have our hearts tested by it.

3. TURNING FAILURE INTO SUCCESS. "They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes" (John 21:6). They obeyed, and their faith was abundantly rewarded. By this sign which followed, John was constrained to say, "It is the Lord." This is the Lord's doing; John feels that it is so like Him. Yes, it is just Christ-like to turn our total defeat into unprecedented success, through the giving of His Word and the believing of it. It is in "this wise" that sinners are converted, and fruitless Christians made wise to win souls.

4. PROVIDING FOR THEIR WANTS. "As soon as they came to land they saw a fire of coals, a fish, and a loaf" (John 21:9, R.V., margin). Even in His resurrection body the Lord was not unmindful of the bodies of His cold and hungry disciples. This is another revelation of His love and care for His own. It was not, perhaps, a sumptuous feast, but it was according to His manner as the Shepherd of His flock. "The Lord is My Shepherd, I shall not want." "My God shall supply all your need" (Php_4:19). The Son of God is always before us in His providential arrangements.

5. HAVING FELLOWSHIP WITH THEM. "Jesus said unto them, Come and break your fast..Jesus then cometh and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise" (John 21:12-13). Now, "none of the disciples durst ask Him, Who art Thou?" None but the Lord Himself could act in this manner, showing such grace and power. Christ has a way of giving, whereby He Himself is made known (Luke 24:30-31). He gave Himself for us. The law demands, but the grace of God that has come to us in Christ Jesus delights to give. It is an ever memorable experience to have our long spiritual fast broken by the blessings provided for us, and offered to us by Him who died for us and rose again. Eat, O friends! Come and dine. "Behold, all things are now ready" (Matthew 22:4).

LOVEST THOU ME?

John 21:15.

"Lovest thou Me?" Let this tender but heart-searching question of our Lord come home to our own hearts. It is not enough for Him that we love His words and works if Himself be not the chief object of our affections. If "Tis what I love determines how I love," then love for Christ, the "altogether lovely," should determine the manner and intensity of our love for others.

I. Love Desired. "Lovest thou Me?" Three times with varying emphasis did Christ put this question to Peter (John 21:15-17). Zeal for truth without a personal devotion to the Son of God, as the embodiment of Divine love, is not true piety, but an exhibition of "mildewed theology." In uttering these words to Peter, the. Son of Man was but seeking that fruit which could alone satisfy His own gracious heart. In degree, our love cannot be equal to His, but it ought in kind to resemble it.

II. Love Acknowledged. Where there is love to Christ, He is always quick to recognise and confess it. The woman in Simon's house who had washed, wiped, kissed, and anointed His feet because "She loved much," was not only noticed and commended, but used by the Lord as a powerful rebuke to the frozen-hearted Pharisee (Luke 7:44-47). It is only love alone that can understand love, and make an adequate response. Perfect love casteth out fear.

III. Love Manifested. Love must reveal itself, it cannot be hid. If God loved the world, that love is seen in the gift of His Son. If Christ loved the Church, then He gave Himself for it. If we love God, then we shall love our brother also. Love to Christ will show itself-

1. By SEEKING Him. It was Mary's love for Him that constrained her so passionately to seek Him (John 20:15). The love of Christ constraineth us. Whom seek ye?

2. By CONFESSING Him. Peter said, "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee" (John 21:15). With the waning of our first love comes a waning of our desire for testimony. If we love Him with all our heart, then we shall confess Him with all our strength and might.

3. By SERVING Him. After Peter's threefold confession of love for Him, came the Lord's threefold injunction to serve Him. "Feed." Feeding His sheep and His lambs- not thrashing or amusing them-is the evidence of love for the Lord Jesus Christ. "Love, which is the essence of God, is not for levity, but for the total good of man," is how Emerson puts it. Jacob's seven years' service for Rachel seemed but a few days, because of the love he had for her. Love lightens labour.

4. By SACRIFICING for Him. The love that cannot sacrifice is shallow and hypocritical. The sinner in Simon's house, because of her "much love," sacrificed her "hair" and her "precious ointment" to Him (Luke 7:38; see also John 12:3). The apostle who could say, "He loved me and gave Himself for me," did also say, "I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die for the Name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:13). "Love can be bought with nothing but with itself." Just as the highest act of God's love was the sacrifice of His Son, the express image of Himself, so the highest act of human love is the sacrifice of self for the glory of God.

"IF I WILL"

John 21:15-22

After they had dined, the Lord showed Himself in another way to Peter, when He searched the secrets of his heart with that threefold question, "Lovest thou Me?" This was Peter's final examination for the Gospel ministry. It had to do with the heart more than the head. It was a test of love. There can be no truly educated ministry without a wholehearted devotion to the Person of Jesus Christ. It was because of Peter's confession of love he received his commission to serve, "Feed My lambs." After the Lord had signified to Peter by what painful death he should glorify God, Peter made no protest, accepting it at once as the good will of God, but he became anxious to know how John was to end his earthly journey, "What shall this man do?" Jesus said, "If I will that

he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me." This reply of Christ to Peter's question of curiosity is a further revelation of His unique methods and matchless character. "If I will." This is an I that stretches from the deepest depths to the highest heights; its arms reach out to all time past and to the eternity to come. These words of Christ are a revelation to us of His-

I. Views of Life. His eye was always on the great essentials of true existence. He allowed no place for mere personal curiosity. "What is that to thee? Follow thou Me." Here is the true centre around which our lives should move, and from which they must receive their guiding and inspiring principles. We must be more anxious to follow Christ than to contrast our experience with the experience of others, either in their life or in their death.

II. Methods of Working. "If I will that he tarry... what is that to thee?" His dealings with His disciples is not in any stiff mechanical fashion, not after the rigid law of uniformity. The wealth of Christ's wisdom and power cannot permit of this. Each individual disciple will have His special consideration and providence. He calleth His own sheep by name, which means nature, and will deal with them for their highest good and His highest glory.

III. Divine Power. "If I will." What a will this is! What a refuge for the weary trembling soul! His will is not a burden for us to carry, but a pillow on which to rest. Think of the dignity, authority, almightiness, that lie in these words, like strength in a giant's limb. He has but to will and it shall be done, for His will is done in Heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. If He wills to bless thee and keep thee, then thou shall be blessed and kept. How safe and right our life is when yielded to His will!

IV. Abiding Presence. "Follow thou Me." By His Word and Spirit, lo, He is with us alway, even to the end of the age. He has left us an example that we should follow His steps. "Follow thou Me." Is this possible now that He is risen in newness of life, and seated in heavenly glory? Yes. It is His will. Whatever is His will for us is possible to us. Think of the privilege of following Him whom angels delight to honour, and of the tremendous possibilities associated with such a life.

V. Second Advent. "Till I come" (John 21:22). This is at least the third time in this Gospel that our Lord definitely refers to His coming again (chaps. John 14:3; John 16:22). Throughout the New Testament there are something like 603 references to this subject. He has come as a suffering Saviour. He shall come as a glorious King. The hope of the Church is the Cross of Christ, the hope of the world lies in the throne of Christ When He comes again it will not be in grace, but to assert His right and reign. "Then the kingdoms of this world shall become the Kingdom of our God and of His Christ." Blessed hope! This heavy-laden world, staggering on through the ages with its ever-gathering burden of sin and woe into ever-deepening darkness, shall, at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, be saved and filled with His glory (Hebrews 10:37).

Acts

THE INFANT CHURCH

Acts 1

The infant Church was mighty in its infancy. The present-day snare of precedency was unknown in those early days of simple, childlike trust, when everything seemed to be sprinkled with a dewy resurrection freshness. May this newness of life be ours. To this end let us look at some of those features which characterised the members of the infant Church, and let us ask ourselves whether we as His sheep have the same marks upon us?

1. They were in fellowship with their Risen Lord. "To whom He showed Himself . . . and assembled together with them" (Acts 1:3 and Acts 1:4). The resurrection of Christ was an unquestionable fact to them. He had now become their very life. "Christ our life." They had each personally experienced the power of His presence-a presence which not one of the unbelieving ever knew. Do we know what that means?

2. They received the promise of the Holy Ghost. "Ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence" (Acts 1:5). This great "promise of the Father" (Acts 1:4) is made to every heaven-born child of God, and should be as definitely accepted as the promise of eternal life. This promise was not given that they might be more fully justified before God, but that God might be more fully justified in them before the world (Ezekiel 38:16). See Acts 19:2.

3. They were obedient to His Word. "Then returned they unto Jerusalem, . . . and went up into an upper room" (Acts 1:12-13). The Lord had told them to wait for the fulfilment of the promise, so they had come to wait. They did not gather together to discuss the manner, the time, or extent of the promised outpouring, but to wait. They had made up their minds simply to do their Master's bidding, and leave the rest with Him. "Go thou and do likewise."

4. They were united in Spirit. "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication" (Acts 1:14). Why should they pray when they had His sure word of promise? Was not the very certainty of the promise a powerful incentive to wait and to pray? A Pentecostal day will come at any time when there is the same unity of spirit and persistent, believing prayer (Matthew 18:19-20).

5. They honoured the Scriptures. "Peter stood up and said, Men and brethren, this scripture must needs be fulfilled," etc. (Acts 1:15-20). Peter and the one hundred and nineteen that were with him had no difficulty at all as to David being the author of Psalm 69, and that he spoke prophetically under the guidance of the Holy Ghost (2 Timothy 3:16). He who handles the Word of God so as to foster discredit has grieved the Holy Spirit, and done the work of the devil.

6. They brought their difficulties to the Lord in prayer. "Thou, Lord, knowest the hearts of all: show whether of these two Thou hast chosen" (21-24). Two had been named to fill the one office. They were quite willing to sink their own individual preferences, and accept him whom the Lord should

commend. As it was then, so is it now. Only the called of God will succeed. If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God. The infant Church was mightier than the aged Church of the present day. Why? Well, Why? The clamant need of the church is:- 1. A new revelation of the Risen Christ.

2. A fuller experience of the power of His Resurrection.

3. An unwavering faith in His Word.

4. A fresh baptism of the Holy Ghost.

5. The spirit of unity amongst believers.

6. Believing prayer. THE ASCENDED LORD

Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:4-11

"He led them out as far as to Bethany." From Bethany He started on His journey to the Cross of shame; from there also He starts on His journey to the Crown of glory. Here the disciples witnessed their Lord slowly rising up before their eyes. While His body was gradually ascending into the Heavens, He "lifted His hands and blessed them," and as He blessed He slowly vanished into the cloud that carried Him into Heaven. Do we wonder that after He was gone they still stood "gazing up into Heaven?" They had scarcely awakened to the fact of His resurrection when they beheld another wonder equally momentous and glorious. "Truly, this was the Son of God." If our worldly hopes are crucified with Christ, we shall have new and brighter hopes in His resurrection and translation to the Father's throne. Associated with the Ascension, we have brought before us some of the "things which accompany salvation" (Hebrews 6:9). Let us give earnest heed to them.

I. The Baptism of the Holy Ghost. "Ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 1:5-8). Jesus died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, and ascended for our enduement with the power of the Holy Ghost. The power of the Holy Spirit upon His disciples was the witness that Christ, the Crucified One, was now in the presence of the Father (John 16:7). These early and true-hearted followers did not believe, as the great majority of modern Christians do, that the fruit of Christ's death was the sum of salvation; they waited, and received the fruit of His Ascension-the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4). "Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?" (Acts 19:2, R.V.).

II. Witnessing for Christ. "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me," etc. (Acts 1:8). So faithful were these Spirit-filled disciples that in a short time they had "filled Jerusalem with the doctrine" (Acts 5:28). The power of the Spirit was with them, so we read that "with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" (chap. Luke 4:33). We are unauthorised witnesses for Christ unless we have been "endued with power from on high." Our teaching and preaching will be but "sounding brass" unless we are "filled with the Holy Ghost"-just a sounding trumpet; no divine articulating voice. That we may be true witnesses for Him, let us receive the "promise of the Father" as well as the promise of the Son.

III. The Hope of His Coming Again. "This same Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go" (Luke 24:11). To say, as some do, that the coming of the Holy Spirit was the coming of "this same Jesus" is not only a denial of the personality of the Spirit, and an insult to common sense, but also a wilful perversion of the Word of God. It looks, says the author of "The Coming

Kingdom of God," as if some men so hated the thought of a returning personal Christ that they are prepared to believe any absurdity rather than accept it.. "The Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout" (1 Thessalonians 4:16). This is the hope of the Church of God, which is being presently called out (ekklesia) as a witness to His Name. This is the Bride for which Christ has promised to come and "receive unto Himself" (John 14). As soon as the Lord was out of sight the disciples were taught to believe in and to look for His coming again. This is the hope that cheers in service and purifies the life (1 John 3:3). THE EMPOWERED CHURCH

Acts 2:1-13

A praying Church will always be a powerful Church. The true and real influence of a Church does not consist in the number or social position of its members, not in the stateliness of the building, nor in the largeness of its contributions, but in the presence and power of the Holy Ghost. Where the ministry of the Spirit is absent, the Church is but a breathless body. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth." Observe-

1. Where they were. "They were all with one accord in one place" (Acts 2:1). They were in "one place" just because they were all of "one accord." This is a condition of heart that is absolutely necessary to the receiving of the power of the Holy Spirit. To be filled with the Spirit we must be emptied of all self-seeking and uncharitableness. When brethren dwell together in unity, then the Lord will command His blessing.

2. When the Blessing came. "When the day of Pentecost was fully come." According to the type, that was fifty days after (Christ as) the sheaf of firstfruits was presented as a wave offering (Leviticus 23:15-16). God's workings are always in harmony with the "fulness of time" (Galatians 4:4). He does nothing prematurely; there is an eternal fitness in the divine seasons. There is an earthly as well as a heavenly counterpart in all the arrangements of Him whose work is perfect. The Holy Ghost is still ready to come upon all those who are ready to receive Him. They that wait upon the Lord shall exchange strength.

3. How the Blessing came. "Suddenly, as a mighty, rushing wind, and as cloven tongues of fire" (Acts 2:2-3). It did not come through a process of growth or development; it was not evolved out of their own inner consciousness; it was the direct gift of the Father in answer to their believing prayer, and in fulfilment of His own gracious promise. It came as "mighty wind" and as "tongues of fire," symbolic of a personality that cannot be limited or controlled by the mere will of man (John 3:8).

4. To whom the Blessing came. "It sat upon each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:3-4). God is no respecter of persons; every waiting, believing heart was filled with the Spirit. They each received the like gift, although the manifestation of the power in their individual lives was different; yet it was the same Spirit. The lesson undoubtedly for us is that every believing disciple of Christ may and should be "filled with the Holy Ghost." More than that, each one in that upper room baptised of the Holy Spirit was perfectly conscious of the fact. In this respect between the first century and the twentieth there is no difference (Luke 11:13). The same God is rich unto all that call upon Him.

5. The Effects Produced. These were twofold: (1) Upon themselves. "They were filled, and spake with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." They were possessed and controlled by the

mighty power of God. As earthen vessels they were charged with heavenly treasure a precious gift that is for ever hidden from the worldly-wise and revealed only unto babes (Matthew 11:25). (2) Upon others. "Many were amazed and marvelled;. . . others mocked" (Acts 2:7-13). The coming of the Holy Spirit is always certain to be a telling innovation. There is no hiding of His power. It is such an unearthly movement that ungodly philosophers are all amazed and in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? (2 Corinthians 10:4). This was in truth a "wealthy" church, it was rich in spiritual power and fruitfulness. THE WITNESSING CHURCH

Acts 2:14-36

"This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses" (Acts 2:32). A quickened Church, or a quickened soul, will be certain to give Jesus the pre-eminence. Had not Christ said that "When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He shall glorify Me?" (John 16:13-14). The Church or the individual that is not glorifying Jesus Christ as the crucified and risen Son of God cannot be filled with the Spirit. We are assured of this, that the Holy Ghost will not give His glory to another than Jesus Christ, in whose name He has come, and whose work He seeks to continue on earth. So when "Peter, filled with the Spirit, stood up with the eleven and lifted up his voice" it was to preach "Jesus and the Resurrection." Spirit-filled men have no other theme. We shall note, briefly, the outstanding features of Peter's Pentecostal testimony, and here he speaks as the mouthpiece of the whole Church. He testified-

1. To the Transformation of his Brethren. "These men are not drunken, as ye suppose" (Acts 2:15). There was undoubtedly a very marked change in their behaviour. They were intoxicated sure enough, but not with the world's wine, as they supposed, for they were filled with the new wine of the Kingdom of God. But the natural man cannot understand the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him (1 Corinthians 2:14).

2. To the Fulfilment of Prophecy (Acts 2:16-21). At the marriage at Cana, the best wine-the gift of Christ-was kept to the last. So in "these last days" the best wine has been given in the coming of the Holy Ghost. Between this promise made to Joel and the fulfilment there lay twenty-four generations; but His faithfulness faileth not. The Spirit has been given, but "all flesh" have not yet been touched with the flame of this life-quickening fire. But surely this also will come to pass. Let us join the Lord's remembrancers, and pray for it. The testimony of a living Church must be to God's faithfulness to His Word.

3. To the Divine Approval of Jesus of Nazareth.- "A man approved of God" (Acts 2:22). The works that Jesus did were the works that no other man could do (John 15:24). His "miracles, wonders, and signs" were incontestable evidence of His holiness and superhuman power, of His actual oneness with the invisible and almighty Father (John 14:10-11). This Man approved of God still waits His approval of men.

4. To the Guilt of Rejecting Christ. "Him. . . ye have taken, and by wicked (lawless) hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23). Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, knows no fear, and sees no contradiction between "the determinate counsel of God" and the terrible lawlessness of those who crucified His Son (Luke 22:22). After Pentecost, the first act of the Holy Spirit upon the ungodly was to convince of murder. What is sin? Sin is lawlessness, rebellion, usurpation.

5. To the Power of His Resurrection. "It was not possible that He should be holden of death" (Acts 2:24). He who claimed to be "the Resurrection and the Life" proved His claim by rising from the dead (John 10,17). As it was not possible for the powers of death and hell to hold Him, neither is it possible for them to hold those who by faith are in Him (John 5:24-25; 2 Corinthians 4:14). A witness to the power of His resurrection must have a resurrection experience (1 Peter 1:3).

6. To the Inspiration of David. David spoke concerning Christ, for he "foresaw the Lord always before his face" (Acts 2:25, and Psalms 16:8.) As the One who, according to the promise of God, "He would raise up to sit on His throne" (Acts 2:30). To deny the prophetic character of the Psalms of David is to reject the testimony of the Holy Ghost by whom Peter now was speaking (Luke 24:44). Those moved by the Holy Ghost are "holy men" and are never moved to declare things which are inconsistent.

7. To the Certainty of Christ's Exaltation. The coming of the Holy Spirit was not only the fulfilment of a promise, but also the guarantee that He who had been crucified was now "by the right hand of God exalted" (Acts 2:33-36), and made "both Lord and Christ." Although all authority has been given Him, He still waits with outstretched arms to give "gifts unto men" (John 1:12). When Christ's death, resurrection, and exaltation are firmly believed and emphatically preached signs and wonders will be done in His name. THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

Acts 2:37-47

Peter's sermon was in the power of the Holy Ghost, so there were "signs following." There was-

1. Deep Conviction. "When they heard they were pricked in their heart" (Acts 2:37). "They felt the nails wherewith they had crucified Christ sticking fast in their own hearts as so many sharp daggers." When the Spirit of Grace is poured out, sinners are sure to see Him whom they have pierced (Zechariah 12:10). He came to convince of sin (John 16:8). How shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they preach with convicting power unless they are sent?

2. Open Confession. "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" This burning question (Acts 9:6; Acts 16:30), wrung from Spirit-pierced hearts, declares this fact, that salvation must come from God. "What shall I do?" A convicted sinner never knows of himself what to do. It is not in man. But when frank and full confession is made the guiding light will speedily dawn (1 John 1:9).

3. Plain Directions. "Repent and be baptised every one of you,. . . and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, for the promise is unto you" (Acts 2:38-40). Peter's word was not, "Reform, and be more civilised," but "Repent, and be baptised." To repent was to change their minds completely regarding Jesus Christ, whom they rejected; and to be baptised implied the renouncing of the old life, and an open confession of Christ as their Lord. In doing this they would receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, that they might be endued with power to overcome the world and be witnesses unto Him who died and rose again. Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed, "for the promise is unto you?" (Acts 2:39).

4. Joyful Reception. "They gladly received His Word" (Acts 2:41). The offer of "the remission of sins" through repentance was like cold water to a thirsty soul; they gladly received it. No condemned criminal ever received a free parden more willingly than they accepted the offer of mercy. This is the Gospel that God is commanding all men everywhere to repent and believe.

Three thousand brought in, "but yet there is room."

5. Steady Progression. "They continued steadfastly in doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). They were God-made converts, and so the true signs of an inward transformation are clearly evident. These were-love for the Word, love for one another, love for their absent Lord, and love for private and public prayer. Being grafted into the living Christ, they became possessed with His Spirit, and grew in grace and in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour.

6. Hearty Co-operation. "They were together and had all things common" (Acts 2:44-45). This, perhaps, not of necessity, but because of their warm affection for one another, and practical mutual interest. This spirit is very beautiful, and reveals the wonderful influence the love of God has when shed abroad in our hearts. Jesus Christ had given His all for them; now they were prepared to give their all for Him and for one another (Ephesians 5:2). What hinders the continuance of this spirit of brotherhood? Lack of faith in God, worldliness, and selfishness.

7. Great Jubilation. "Gladness of heart; praising God" (Acts 2:46-47). Repentance is the narrow gate that leads into the happy home of a heavenly Father's heart. The hearts that were pierced with conviction now praise God for salvation. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning (Acts 10:43). This Gospel in the power of the Spirit is still the power of God- To pierce with conviction the heart of sin. To compel men to confess their need. To bring the joy of forgiveness to a believing heart. To keep in fellowship those who obey. To turn self-denial into a great delight. To fill the heart with praise to God. To make the life a testimony for God. A WORK OF POWER

Acts 3:1-26

"Is Christianity a failure?" We might as well ask is the sunshine a failure? The Christianised paganism that is being substituted for Pentecostal life and power is a failure because it offers hungry souls stones for bread-it never touches the unutterable need of the human heart. It was very different with Peter and John, filled, as they were, with the Spirit of prayer and of power. In this chapter we have:-

1. A Picture of Need. "A certain man lame. . laid daily at the gate" (Acts 3:2-3). He was both poor and helpless. But he was willing to be laid in the way of getting help-" at the gate called Beautiful." He was not too proud to beg or to lay his deformity in the path of prayer. If he had been ashamed to confess his need he probably never would have experienced the healing power of the name of Jesus.

2. A Work of Faith (Acts 3:4-6). Peter and John said, "Look on us!" and the lame man, having such a door of hope opened, gave heed unto them "expecting something." Men filled with the Holy Spirit are sure to awaken expectancy in the minds of others. They had neither "silver nor gold," but they had something infinitely better; they had faith in the saving name of the risen Christ. Calvary and Pentecost are God's remedy for lame and helpless humanity.

3. A Miracle of Grace. "Immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength" (Acts 3:7-9). Having been healed through the power of the name of Jesus (Acts 3:16). He gives an unmistakable testimony to it by "leaping, walking, and praising God." Then did the lame man leap

as a hart (Isaiah 35:6). When a poor, lame, hopeless soul comes into contact with Him who is the Resurrection and the Life, there will be a joyful transformation; the place of the beggar is forsaken for the place of the worshipper (Acts 3:8).

4. An Awakening of Wonder. "All the people ran,. . . greatly wondering." Peter said, "Why look ye so earnestly on us?" (Acts 3:11-12). The amazed and bewildered people could only see the instruments that were in the hands of the invisible wonder-working Saviour. Peter and John were the channels of a "power and holiness" not their own, but Christ's. All power is given unto Him, and Pentecost means the imparting of that power to His disciples, for the glory of His name.

5. A Charge of Guilt (Acts 3:3-16). Peter, quick to take advantage of this sudden awakening of interest, charged them with the "denial of the Holy One," and "killing the Prince of Life," then declared that "faith in the name of Him whom they had killed had made "this man strong." Thereby proving that God had raised Him from the dead. Every redeemed and healed soul is a witness to the fact of Christ's resurrection (2. Tim. Acts 1:10).

6. An Offer of Mercy (Acts 3:17-21). We think we see the tear in Peter's eye when he said: "Now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it... Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." Their sins were very great, but the blood of Jesus Christ, whom they had crucified, was able to cleanse them all away. By thus repenting the times of refreshing from His presence would come unto them.

7. A Word of Warning. "Every soul that shall not hear that prophet shall be destroyed" (Acts 3:22-23). To despise the messenger of the Lord is to despise Hun that sent Him (Luke 10:16). He that heareth these sayings of Mine and doeth them shall be likened to a wise man. Hear, and your soul shall live. THE CHALLENGE AND THE DEFENCE

Acts 4:5-23

In preaching "Jesus and the Resurrection," Peter and John were thrusting the sword of truth right into the hearts of the king's enemies. If Jesus who was crucified has risen again then they are the vilest sinners on the face of the earth, for by consent they had killed the Holy Son of God. If Christ is not risen, then all preaching and faith are alike vain (1 Corinthians 15:14).

1. The Challenge. "By what power, or in what name, have ye done this?" (Acts 4:5-7, R.v.). The power was self-evident in the healed man; the name was a mystery. Was it Satanic or Divine? The challengers were numerous and influential. "Rulers, elders, scribes, the high priest, and as many as were of his kindred." How could they rejoice in the healing of this lame-born beggar, when their own personal dignity was in danger of being lowered in the eyes of the people?

2. The Defence. Peter being "filled with the Holy Ghost" was ready to give a faithful and courageous reply (Acts 4:8-12). His searching words were to ring out to "all the people of Israel" that it was through the power of "the name of Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had crucified," that this man was made whole, and that he was a standing witness to the resurrection of Jesus, and to their own guilt. The stone which they had cast aside as unfit for use had been lifted up by God and made both the foundation and the chief corner of a new and better structure. On this foundation only spiritual living stones could be built, and by this "Head of the corner" both Jews and Gentiles were to be made one. "All one in Christ Jesus." Other foundation can no man lay; "for there is

none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

3. The Results. (a) They marvelled at the boldness of Peter and John (Acts 4:13). But they had to confess that, although they were "unlearned and ignorant men," they had stamped on their characters the features of Jesus. God had chosen the foolish things to confound the wise (1 Corinthians 1:27). The treasures of God's grace are still hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed to humble, trustful babes (Matt.11, 25). (b) They were silenced when they beheld the man that was healed standing with them (Acts 4:14). Transformed lives by the power of the Risen Christ are the best apologetics for Christianity. In the cause of Jesus Christ, words are mere empty prattle, without the power of the Holy Ghost (1 Corinthians 4:19). (c) They were moved by a guilty fear (Acts 4:15-18). They could not deny that "a notable miracle had been done," but they were anxious that it should "spread no further!" What amazing perversity! By their speaking in the name of Jesus great good had been done, but they would "command them not to speak any more in the name of Jesus." They could speak as long as they liked in their own name-as long as no souls were saved -but they were not to preach Christ and Him crucified in the power of the Spirit, for that would work such revolutions as would upset their peaceful theories, and spoil the regular quiet and decorum of their manner of worship. The descendants of these unbelieving formalists are still among us; who would rather have the order and quiet of a graveyard that the stir of a revival by the Spirit of God. (d) They let them go (Acts 4:19-23). Peter and John would not lower the banner one single inch, for they "could not but speak the things which they had seen and heard." Being "let go" they found their own company-those who were possessed by the same Spirit-members of the same heavenly family. To which company do you belong? THE APPEAL TO GOD

Acts 4:23-31

"Being let go they went to their own company." It is an old saying that "fowl of like feather flock together." Just as when the needle is set free from every hindrance, it will gravitate to the pole, so those hearts kindled with the same spiritual flame will be powerfully attracted one to another. This love for those who love the Lord is an evidence of heavenly kinship, and a mark of our separation from the world. As soon as Peter and John had "reported," they all fled together in prayer to their city of Refuge, which was the God of their Risen Lord. Prayer is the secret of all strength and consolation, while as servants we suffer for His name. Let us notice some things about this appeal:-

1. It was Believing. "Lord, Thou art God." They did not pray into unresponsive space, they talked into the very ear of God. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is." Their God was the God "which made heaven, earth, sea, and all that in them is." The God of creation, not of evolution.

2. It was United. "They lifted up their voice to God with one accord" (Acts 4:24). They had already proved the value of united prayer. They would trust to see the power of it again. They seemed never to forget the words of their now Glorified Master. "If two of you shall agree," etc. (Matthew 18:19). United believing prayer is one of the mightiest weapons God has put within the reach of His people. Every Church, no matter how small, has this sword of overcoming power hanging at its girdle. O that it were unsheathed. Alas, that it hath slept so long in the scabbard of unbelief.

3. It was Scriptural (Acts 4:25-28). These holy men of God, possessed by the same Spirit which taught the prophets of old, are neither afraid nor ashamed to make mention of David as the author

of Psalm 2, and to interpret his words as the infallible testimony of the Holy Ghost. It will give power to our petitions if the Word of God dwells in us richly. The Polychrome Bible is the gallows on which Higher Criticism will yet be hanged.

4. It was Definite. "Now, Lord grant that with all boldness they may speak Thy Word" (Acts 4:29). How could they speak the Word of God with boldness, if they did not know assuredly what was the Word of God? They prayed for, and expected, an immediate answer. "Now," they spread out their needs as Hezekiah did the letter, and with the same sudden, overwhelming manifestations (Acts 14:3). There is a great difference between saying prayers and making a direct personal appeal to God for a present declaration of His saving power.

5. It was Christ-Honouring. "That signs and wonders may be done by the name of Thy Holy Child Jesus" (Acts 4:30). They were far more concerned about the honour of Christ than the honour of the Church. This is always characteristic of Spirit-filled lives. If the Name of Jesus does not get the prominence, signs and wonders will not be done by the "stretching forth of His hand." Our self-sufficiency will always paralyse the wonder-working hand of the Holy Spirit.

6. It was Answered. "And when they prayed the place was shaken; they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and spake the Word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31). To be filled with the Spirit is God's answer to all our needs as His servants and witnesses. There is a great difference between speaking the Word of God and giving the opinions of men about it. The one is the wheat, the other is the chaff (Jeremiah 23:28). The order here is Suggestions, Praying, Shaking, Filling, Testifying.

TESTING TIMES

Acts 4:32-37; Acts 5:1-16.

The power of a Church will be according to the measure by which that Church is filled with the Holy Ghost. When a Church is of "one heart and of one soul," it is an evidence that there is no controversy among them; then they look every man "not on his own things" (Acts 4:32-37). The proof that we love God is that we "love our brother also." The story of Ananias and Sapphira is an unquenchable beacon of warning to all who would live godly; it is like some terrible hand with five dreadful fingers. Here they are-

1. Human Deceitfulness. Ananias and Sapphira had beautiful names, but they had crooked and deformed natures. Like the other disciples, they sold their possession, but, unlike the others, they "kept back part of the price." They put on the sheep's skin, but they were still goats at the heart. They went a long way in the Christian life in laying a part at the apostles' feet, but they went the wrong way in pretending that they were giving all. Like Achan, they hoped to enrich themselves by deceiving the Lord. The heart must be "deceitful above all things," for it would deceive the very God of Heaven.

2. Satanic Influence. "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie against the Holy Ghost?" (Acts 4:23). This "Liar from the beginning" still seeks to deceive by filling the heart with thoughts that are opposed to the Spirit of God. Beware of his "fiery darts"-those burning desires to honour self more than God. With regard to the service of Christ, first thoughts are usually best. Their first thought was to give all, their second was to keep back part of the price. Whatever would hinder us from seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness is of the world, the flesh, or the devil.

3. Unexpected Detection. It must have been an awful awakening to Ananias when he had laid the money at the apostles' feet, expecting their benediction to hear instead those soul-piercing words, "Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie against the Holy Ghost?" The sins of the heart cannot be hidden from God any more than the blood of a murdered Abel. Men filled with the Holy Ghost, like Peter, are quick to detect the lying spirit of the devil in a false professor. Try the spirits, whether they are of God (1 John 4:1). Remember Lot's wife, and also the man without the wedding garment (Matthew 22:12).

4. Divine Judgment. "Ananias, hearing these words, fell down, and gave up the ghost" (Acts 4:25). There was but little time, between the flash of conviction and the stroke of vengeance. He may not even had time to say, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." He that hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be cut off. He that covereth his sin shall not prosper. He may go a long way round about, but some time, and that suddenly, the great searchlight from the Throne of God will break in upon him, bringing irretrievable self-condemnation and death. Let false professors beware, for no human disguise will ever hide a heart-lie from Him who is the Truth.

5. Fatal Disappointment. It is extremely sorrowful to think of his wife coming in about "three hours after, not knowing what was done," expecting, perhaps, to find her husband exalted to a place of honour, and with the same lie on her lips and in her heart, to be met with the same sudden and overwhelming retribution. God is no respecter of persons; the same sin meets with the same condemnation. Sapphira may have been a beautiful woman, as her name indicates, but outward comeliness is no shelter for inward deceit. This startling vindication of the holiness of God had a very salutary effect in putting a wholesome fear into the hearts of many (Acts 4:13), and magnifying the power of God in the life and testimony of the apostles (John 14:12).

APOSTOLIC BOLDNESS

Acts 5:17-42

One of the most pronounced effects of Pentecost was the bringing of the disciples into a closer and more vital relationship with Jesus as their risen Lord. By this fiery baptism were they all made "one body," and, planted together in the likeness of His death, were also made in the likeness of His resurrection (Romans 6:5-6). So that they now knew Him in the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings. No one can enter into the heaven-born fellowship of His sufferings who has not entered into the soul-sanctifying power of Pentecost. The disciples were not able, nor were they asked, to take their God-given stand for Him, who was the Truth and the Crucified, until they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. Neither can we without the same equipment.

1. They suffered for Him. They were put "in the common prison" (Acts 5:18). They well knew that it was their love and their likeness to Jesus Christ that brought this persecution upon them; it was "for His name." If any man would live godly he must suffer. The words of their Master were now being fulfilled in them (Luke 21:12). The rulers were filled with indignation and fear for the doctrine of the apostles had filled Jerusalem, and, if true; it proved them to be the murderers of the Son of God (Acts 5:28). Those who preach a doctrine like this, that drives guilt and condemnation home to the hearts of self-righteous men, will also know what it is to suffer.

2. They were encouraged by Him. "The angel of the Lord brought them forth and said, "Go, stand and speak all the words of this life" (Acts 5:19-20). Those who are faithful to God, their Saviour,

have miracles of mercy wrought for them that others can never understand. This new deliverance and fresh commission must have been a mighty buttress to their faith. They were to go and speak to the people all the words of this life. This life, which was divine and eternal, and was offered to all who repent of sins and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (1 John 5:11). Those who would speak all the words of "this life" will always have plenty to speak about, and these are the words that the people need.

3. They were devoted to Him. "Behold the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people" (Acts 5:21-25). They were not disobedient to the heavenly vision. These Spirit-taught men knew nothing worth living for apart from doing the will of God. The desire to please Jesus Christ was the overmastering passion of their souls. One is your Master, even Christ, and if we are true to Him, we shall speak out, and live out, all His revealed will. To substitute our own thoughts for the "Words of this Life" is to deny the Lord, and to become false witnesses.

4. They were fearless for Him. "We ought to obey God rather than man," etc. (Acts 5:29-32). Although they had just escaped from prison they were not afraid to look the enemies of Christ in the face and say, "God Hath raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. The Spirit of God had come to "convince the world of sin" through the lips and lives of those in whose heart He dwells. The sin-convicting power of the Holy Ghost is hindered and thwarted by the downright poltroonery of many of Christ's ambassadors. The fear of man bringeth a snare, not only to the soul of the preacher, but also to the Gospel which he preaches.

5. They were joyful in Him. "They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts 5:41-42). They did not lift up their hands in pious horror at the thought of doing anything to bring shame upon their own name if Jesus was to be honoured thereby. Only those filled with the Spirit can take pleasure in reproaches for Christ's sake (2 Corinthians 12:10). We are not ashamed of our Scottish martyrs who suffered as Christians, but we may well be ashamed of those who are ashamed to suffer for His name's sake (1 Peter 4:13-16).

SERVING AND SHINING

Acts 6:1-15

The portion before us here may be divided into two sections:-

I. A NEW TRIAL. The number of the saved had grown rapidly, and so the work of administering help to the needy ones was becoming increasingly difficult.

1. The Complaint (Acts 6:1). The Greek-speaking Jews "murmured because their widows were neglected." This neglect could not be wilful. It is pleasing to note how careful these early brethren were about the interests of their sorrowing, suffering sisters.

2. The Remedy. "Look ye out men full of the Holy Ghost," etc. (Acts 6:2-4). There are two important lessons for us here, the first is, that to minister "the Word of God" is a more urgent business than doling charities to the poor; and the second, that even for the simple work of distributing gifts among the needy the filling of the Holy Spirit was needed. The Lord would not have the poor of His people relieved in the manner in which a man may relieve the hunger of his dog; but in the tenderness and compassion of the Spirit of Grace, that the receiver may be doubly blessed thereby. It is not of God that the poor among His flock should be constantly reminded of

their pauperism. All those who have seen that God-inspired work among the orphans at Bridge-of-Weir must feel thankful to God for the absence of the very smell of the "charity-workhouse" system.

3. The Results. "They chose Stephen, a man full of the Holy Ghost. . . and the Word of God increased" (Acts 6:5-7). These seven men, whom they had "looked out," were not chosen because of their social position or scholarship, but because they were "filled with the Spirit;" this is the indispensable equipment for acceptable service in the eyes of the glorified Christ. The Word of God is sure to increase in power and fruitfulness through the ministry of such men. If the "Word of God" is not increasing in its hold upon the hearts and lives of its hearers it is because it is preached in the spirit of doubt and fear, instead of in the power of the Holy Ghost.

II. A NEW TESTIMONY.-Stephen's face became a witness to Stephen's faith.

1. See Him Serving. Being "full of faith and power, he did great wonders" (Acts 6:8). The secret of Stephen's wonder-working influence is an open one, and within the reach of every servant of Christ. He had two mighty hands-"faith and power"-and with these it became easy for him to do great things. This strength is not something we may put off or on, like a garment, it belongs to the constitution of our spiritual manhood (Acts 1:8).

2. See Him Suffering. Stephen was never more like his Master than when they sought false witness against him (Matthew 26:59). Truly they hated him without a cause. In this fiery trial he was filled with a wisdom and spirit that "they were not able to resist," thus experiencing the fulfilment of the Lord's promise (Luke 21:15). Men filled with the Holy Spirit are sure to stir up the enmity of the carnal mind. But greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world (1 John 4).

3. See Him Shining. All those who sat in judgment on him "looking steadfastly, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." The glory of his transfigured soul-by the indwelling Spirit of God-shone through his eyes as the windows of that body of his which was the temple of the Holy Ghost. This was a new witness to the sanhedrim, of the resurrection and glorification of Jesus of Nazareth, whom they crucified, and in whom Stephen trusted. It is the Spiritual Life within us that is the light that shines through us. "The life is the light of men." Let your light so shine. But our light will be darkness, unless, like Stephen, we are filled with the Spirit of Life (2 Corinthians 3:18). Covet earnestly the best gift.

APOSTOLIC CHARACTER

Acts 7:51-60

Stephen's defence is a masterpiece of spiritual policy and power. He did not begin his address by saying, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart." No; but with these very courteous words-" Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken." He that winneth souls is wise. We might observe here:-

1. His Knowledge of Scripture.-This Spirit-filled man had a clear and comprehensive grasp of the doing and purposes of God in Old Testament history. The knowledge of the will of God will always be a mighty weapon in the hand of anyone full of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of God will have but little to work on, unless our hearts are filled with the words of God. This is the secret of successful prayer (John 15:7). It is the honest heart which hears the Word and keeps it, that brings forth fruit (Luke 8:15).

2. His Faithfulness. "Ye stiffnecked... ye do always resist the Holy Ghost" (Acts 7:51-53). A man filled with the Spirit cannot but be courageous, for the Kingdom of God; the truth burns like a fire in his bones, while sin, and the things of eternity, stand out before his anointed eyes in the clear light of Him who sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven. They are in an awful condition who resist the Holy Ghost by the stiffness of their wills and the hardness of their hearts. They may be "cut to the heart" (Acts 7:54) by a faithful testimony, but unless they are "pricked in the heart" (Acts 7:11-37) they will "gnash with their teeth," and die in their sins.

3. His Vision. While "they gnashed on him with their teeth," he saw the "glory of God." Our heavenly Father has always rich compensation for His suffering children. Seeing "Jesus standing on the right hand of God" is a wonderful balm for the wounds made by the teeth of the enemy. This revelation to Stephen is the vision that is ever before the mind of those who, like him, are enabled by the power of the Holy Ghost, through faith, to look up "steadfastly into heaven." It is the work of the Spirit to reveal the things of Christ to the believing heart (John 16:14). To have the vision of the soul filled with the glory of the exalted Redeemer is to have the life consciously "hid with Christ in God."

4. His Martyrdom. "They stoned Stephen, calling upon God and saying. . . Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts 7:57-60). This first martyr for Christ was a witness to that overcoming grace of God in the heart which constrains to pray for them "which despitefully use you." If the death of Stephen was but the means in the hand of God of sending the goads of conviction into the soul of that "young man whose name was Saul" (Acts 9:5), then it was a death that has helped to open up a channel of life and blessing to the world. The Kingdom of Jesus Christ never suffers defeat through the killing of His followers. The bloodstained prayers of those saints who suffer martyrdom for His name's sake, God in grace will mightily avenge, "The blood of the martyr is the seed of the Church."

5. His Mercifulness. "He kneeled down and cried, Lord lay not this sin to their charge." The love of a merely natural heart never constrained any one so earnestly to seek the highest good of those who were committing the greatest personal wrong. This last cry of the dying martyr is a convincing proof of the transforming power of the love of Christ in the heart. This merciful spirit manifested in Stephen's last breath toward those sin-blinded murders is the spirit Jesus Christ has sent into the world to seek and save it. "This sin" which they were committing was an awful one. They were destroying the temple of the Holy Ghost. If Stephen had not been filled with the Holy Ghost he would not have been stoned. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto Me." THE CITY'S AND THE CHURCH'S NEED

Acts 8:1-25

We may learn from this portion:-

1. That Persecution is not an Unmixed Evil (Acts 8:1-5). If the Church at Jerusalem had been allowed to remain in the very comfortable position into which they had settled down (chap. Acts 4:32) it would have been a long time before "the regions beyond" would have had the Gospel of Christ preached unto them. The wind of persecution "scattered abroad" the good seed of the Kingdom, which sprang up into fresh harvests of souls for the glory of God. What is true in the history of the Church is true also in the individual experience, so that we may glory in tribulations

(Romans 5:3; Matthew 5:11-12).

2. That the Great Need of a City is Christ. "Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them.... and there was great joy in that city" (Acts 8:5-11). No field of labour could possibly look more unpromising than Samaria did at that moment. Simon the sorcerer, an agent of the devil, had got the people by the ears, for "they all gave heed unto him, from the least unto the greatest," and were completely bewitched by him. They were so carried away with "lying wonders" that they had no wits left for sober judgment. What better are the multitudes in our cities and towns to-day, who are bewitched by the deceitfulness of riches, the excitement of gambling, the love of pleasure, the allurements of Satan, and the deceitfulness of a heart at enmity with God. Slum souls, grovelling in the mire of iniquity, loving the darkness rather than the light. Philip, being full of the Holy Ghost, preached Christ unto them. Holy Ghost men have no other remedy but God's to offer sin-blinded souls being driven into perdition. He did not preach science and philosophy, history, morality, or the "learned results of criticism." He preached Christ, as the sin-bearing Redeemer, and unclean spirits were cast out and useless, crippled lives were healed and restored, "and there was great joy in the city." The joy of souls emancipated from the deluding powers of darkness.

3. That all Believers Should Receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 8:14-17). Samaria had "received the Word of God"-the message of life declared to them by Philip, through Christ-but as yet the Holy Ghost "had fallen upon none of them." They had been converted, but they had not yet been anointed. To Peter and John the receiving of the Holy Ghost was as definite a blessing as the receiving of the forgiveness of sins. In apostolic days the gift of the Holy Ghost accompanied the remission of sins. Paul's first question to the Ephesian converts was, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" (Acts 19:1). He was anxious that they not only should be disciples, but that they should be powerful witnesses for Christ. The receiving of the Holy Ghost is as absolutely necessary for service as the receiving of Christ is for salvation.

4. That the Power of God cannot be Purchased with Gifts. Simon said, "Give me this power," and offered to purchase the gift of God with money (Acts 8:18-25). The power of the Holy Ghost cannot be given as a reward for anything that man can do or give; it is the "Gift of God." Is it not possible for us to be offering this prayer of Simon's in another form? We would not, perhaps, say, "Give me this power," for I am rich, but in our hearts we may have been saying, "Give me this power," for I am clever, or for I am earnest. God does not barter with man about the Holy Spirit. Let your prayer be, "Give me this power," for I am weak; and believe that ye receive, and ye shall have (Isaiah 40:29-31; Luke 11:13).

SOUL-WINNING

Acts 8:26-40

There are several examples set before us here, to which we shall do well to take heed. There is an example of-

1. Anxiety of Soul (Acts 8:27-28). It was no trifling curiosity that brought this Ethiopian nobleman, this chancellor of the exchequer, up to Jerusalem to worship. He was, doubtless, an earnest seeker after the soul-satisfying truth of God, and as an honest, anxious inquirer, he had, meanwhile, laid everything else aside that he might seek this one thing needful. He came to

Jerusalem that he might hear; he searched the Scriptures that he might see. Those who seek with all their heart will speedily find (Jeremiah 29:13).

2. Obedience to God. When Philip received the call to "Arise and go.... he arose and went" (Acts 8:26-27). His desire was to do the will of God, whether that was in the quiet of "the desert," or in the excitement of a mighty spiritual revival. He went out, like Abraham, by faith, not knowing whither he went. This was God's way of meeting those Spirit-begotten longings that were in the heart of that anxious Ethiopian pilgrim. In some way or other the earnest prayers of the needy will be answered, while they use the means within their reach. God could have blessed the eunuch without Philip's aid, but it hath pleased the Lord to make those who are filled with the Spirit co-workers together with Him.

3. Enthusiasm for Souls. At the bidding of the Spirit "Philip ran thither to him" (Acts 8:29-30). Only those whose hearts have been enlarged by the Spirit of God will run in the way of His commandments. Men filled with the Holy Ghost will always be at home in dealing with an anxious soul. Real enthusiasm in the work of God is a rare accomplishment in these cold, intellectual, critical days. Those who would be wise to win souls must be willing to "run and join themselves to their chariots;" to get alongside of them, not as unfallen angels, but as fellow-pilgrims to eternity, seeking, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to lead them to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

4. Faithfulness to the Bible. The anxious Ethiopian was reading the prophet Isaiah at chapter fifty-three; Philip, filled and guided by the Holy Ghost, began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus" (Acts 8:32-35). We have teachers among us now who are evidently filled and guided by another spirit, for they would gravely rebuke the modern Philips for such a misuse of the Bible. But "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine." And "they are they which testify of Me," said the Son of God. Philip preached unto him Jesus. Who else can meet the need of a sin-smitten soul? What other preaching could be of any avail?

5. Readiness to Confess. "Faith cometh by hearing." The eunuch heard the Gospel from the lips of Philip, and believed and was saved. Now, he was ready and willing to be cut off from his own religious beliefs and habits, and to confess Christ in baptism. To him it was an outward sign of his inward fitness to join the family of the redeemed in the House of God on earth, and be numbered with the joint-heirs of Christ. Faith should always be accompanied with confession (Romans 10:9-10).

6. Happiness in Christ. "He went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:39). Being justified by faith, he had peace with God, now he goes on his way rejoicing in hope (Romans 5:1-2). The darkness is passed, the true light now shines in his heart. What a change Jesus brings into the life when He is received and trusted. The great majority of business men go on their way plotting and scheming, instead of rejoicing, because they are strangers to the blessedness of the man whose sins are forgiven (Psalms 32:1-11).

SAUL'S CONVERSION

Acts 9:1-19

The claims of all other religions can be met by mere outward conformity, but Christianity demands the regeneration of the inner man. Even unconverted men like Saul, as touching the law, may live

blameless lives in the sight of men, but the converted man is one whose whole heart has been turned to God. The process is here exemplified in the experience of Saul. We see him-

1. As a Rebel. "Saul yet breathing out threatenings," etc. (Acts 9:1). Yet, after all the evidences he had had of the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the life and testimony of Stephen, witnessing the triumphant death of a Christian is seldom enough to slay the enmity of the human heart against the revealed will of God.

2. As a Prisoner (Acts 9:2-4). He was apprehended by a "light from heaven." The searchlight of God was turned upon this religious burglar on the way to Damascus to rob the Church of its living treasure. There is nothing the evil-worker dreads more than the light (John 3:20). From this moment Saul could speak of himself as the "prisoner of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1). Like many another sinner, he was apprehended "suddenly." The light of truth flashed into the heart by the power of the Holy Spirit is still God's way of subduing rebels to Himself. The pressure of the light was so overwhelming that he fell to the earth. This light, like the Word of God, was quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12). The weapons of our warfare are not carnal.

3. As an Inquirer. "Who art Thou, Lord?" Along with the arresting light there came a "voice, saying, Why persecutest thou Me." When the truth comes in the power of the Holy Ghost there is always a voice with it, making the sinner feel that it is with Him, not it, that he has to do. This question reveals the terrible blindness of Saul's heart and mind-he knew Him not. How could he possibly know Him and live at enmity with Him. It was very different with Stephen (vv. Acts 6:15). But light from the Lord is sure to lead to an honest inquiry after Him.

4. As a Convert. "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). "Trembling" at the discovery of his past sin and guilt, "and astonished" at the greatness of the Lord's mercy and grace, he asks this question, as a true penitent, ready and willing to yield himself to do His will. This is conversion. Not the talking about religious duty, but the entire surrender of the whole being to the person and service of the Lord Jesus Christ. Saul repented at once, as soon as he discovered the error of his ways (Matthew 18:3). As a disciple he was easily led (Acts 9:8).

5. As a Worshipper. "Behold he prayeth" (Acts 9:11). Saul had frequently said his prayers, but now he prayed. Now his renewed heart yearned for fellowship with the risen Lord, who had revealed Himself to him. A young convert once said-"Before I was converted I prayed to myself, but now I pray to God." Those who don't know Jesus Christ as their own personal Saviour can only draw nigh unto Him with the lips; they worship they know not what.

6. As a Witness (Acts 9:15-19). Before this he was a vessel fitted for destruction, but now "he is a chosen vessel"-having been cleansed and transformed by the grace of God-"to bear My Name," as precious treasure "before the Gentiles." As a vessel, tie was made strong, for he was to "suffer great things" for His Name's sake. He was often cast down, but not destroyed. As a vessel, he was made meet for the Master's use, being "filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 9:17). We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us. Saul's conversion and equipment for Christ's service has been given for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 1:16). Be ye filled with the Spirit.

SAUL'S TESTIMONY

Acts 9:20-31

Paul, in writing to the Galatians, refers to his conversion in very striking language. He says-"It pleased God, who called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him." The words here put in italics give us the whole Gospel in brief. Saul was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

1. A Courageous Stand. "Straightway he preached Christ as the Son of God" (Acts 9:20). It was impossible for Saul to be a Unitarian, or for any one who, like him, has been transformed in heart by the power of the resurrected Christ. He who was an enemy to Jesus, now becomes one of His most successful recruiting sergeants. He was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ (Romans 1:16).

2. A Suggestive Question. "Is not this he that destroyed them?" etc. (Acts 9:21-22). Yes; this is he, yet it is not he, for Saul the persecutor has died, and Saul the preacher has been quickened from the dead. The lion has been converted into a lamb, and a religious icicle has suddenly become a flame of holy fire. Henry Martyn said-"If I could see a Hindoo convert, I would see the dead raised." Who can explain the process of resurrection? So is every one that is born of the Spirit (John 3:8).

3. A Vigilant Enemy. "They watched the gates day and night to kill him" (Acts 9:23-25). The more "Saul increased in strength" the more bitter did the enemies of Christ become. All those who would grow in grace may be prepared for a growing opposition in some quarters. The subjects of the "Kingdom of God" will surely be despised by the subjects of the "Kingdom of Satan." But the servant of Christ need fear no evil, there will always be a "basket" or a hole in the wall for them in time of need. It is said that "man is immortal till his work is done."

4. A Confession of Discipleship. "He assayed to join himself to the disciples" (Acts 9:26). When Saul offered himself as a member to that Church of Jerusalem which he had so lately persecuted, "they were afraid of him"-perhaps thinking this was another of his dodges to catch them-"and believed not that he was a disciple." But as he had been brought into the fellowship of Jesus Christ, he longed for the fellowship of the saints. It is a certain sign of discipleship when we love the people of God, and seek the company of the redeemed.

5. A Brotherly Act. "Barnabas took him and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord" (Acts 9:27-28). This "son of consolation" did a most gracious work in smoothing the way for this new convert. There are disciples still who seem slow to believe the testimony of those who have been suddenly transformed by the grace of God. It will ever be a blessed and Christ-like ministry to help those who are misunderstood.

6. A Confirming Testimony. "He spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 9:29-30). The fact of Saul being changed was very soon apparent. He was now doing the same work for which Stephen was stoned, and in the same fearless and powerful manner, because he was animated by the same heaven-born motives. (Gal. 1 ,15-16).

7. A Grand Result. This result was five-fold. (a) They had peace (Acts 9:31, R.v.). How sweet this calm was after the fiery tempest of persecution. How sweet peace is after the inward battle of sin and unbelief. (b) They were edified. Built up in the holy faith, strengthened by the study of the Scriptures. (c) They walked in the fear of the Lord. Their daily life was lived in the presence of Him who said-"Lo, I am with you alway." (d) They had the comfort of the Holy Ghost. The promised

Comforter had come (John 14:16), they had received Him, and were now experiencing the blessedness of His indwelling. (e) They were multiplied. Success is absolutely certain to any Church bearing these characteristics. Peace, wisdom, comfort are still being eagerly sought after by the restless "men of the world." O, that they could see these blood-bought gifts exhibited in the lives of Church members to-day. THE VICTORY OF FAITH

Acts 9:32-43

For a time the name of Saul drops out of the record, and the halo of divine glory is seen on Peter. To him was given the keys of the kingdom, and he used them well in opening doors for others. He came down to see the saints. "How sweet to mingle with such kindred spirits here"-and the poor paralysed Aeneas was able to bless God for his visit. "He had kept his bed for eight years" (Acts 9:33). Like a man sick and paralysed by sin, he was utterly helpless and hopeless, apart from the saving power of God. "Peter said unto him, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole." This bold declaration recalls Peter's unstaggering faith in his risen Lord, and, according to his faith, so was it done unto him. Peter knew that it was glorifying to the name of Jesus that he should venture much in Him. HIS VICTORY AT JOPPA.-

1. Why he Went. The disciples sent unto him two men desiring that "he would not delay but come" (Acts 9:36-38). They had been suddenly plunged into sorrow through the death of their beloved Dorcas What a mercy that Peter, the man of Pentecost, was only a few miles off. The more we are filled with the Holy Spirit, the more shall we be able to minister the consolation of Christ to the needy.

2. What he Saw. With tearful eyes the widows showed him "the coats and garments which Dorcas made." While the great battles of Roman Emperors have been forgotten, the gracious deeds of Dorcas are being held in everlasting remembrance. Every "Dorcas Society" is a monument to her immortal memory. Whatsoever we do for the glory of God shall be as gold and silver and precious stones; all the testing fires of time and coming judgment shall never be able to efface their beauty, or dim the memory of them in the mind of God (1 Corinthians 3:11-14).

3. What he Did. The several acts of Peter here in raising Dorcas from the dead may be suggestive to us as to how we may be successful in restoring souls to the new life which is in Christ, (a) "He put them all forth" (Acts 9:40). This was a work that God only could do, so he gets alone with God. Everything that would in any way distract our faith in Him must be put out. (6) "He kneeled down and prayed." Special definite prayer is needed. Peter's whole soul was centred on this one thing. When Elijah prayed for rain we may be sure that at that time he prayed for nothing else. When a beggar cries for everything he usually gets nothing, (c) He called on her by name. "Tabitha, arise!" It is not enough that we speak to God, we must speak to the people, and speak to them personally, and as if we expected them to hear and believe at once, Peter did not say, "Tabitha, I hope you may see your way to get up soon," but, "Arise!" In the name of the Risen Christ, arise from the dead. (4) He gave her his hand and lifted her up. This is a beautiful touch of real sympathy and tenderness. If we would lift up new-born souls, we must not only speak the truth, but speak it in love. As soon as she "saw Peter," she felt the uplifting power of his compassionate hand. (e) "He called the saints and presented her alive." He would have them all rejoice in this victory through the grace of God. The result was that "many believed in the Lord." Such results are sure to follow where there is definite, prayerful dealing with God for the deliverance of souls from

the power of death.

DIVINE PREPARATION

Acts 10:1-23

Caesarea was the headquarters of the Roman Governor. Cornelius was captain of the one hundred Italians who formed the bodyguard. The Jewish and the Gentile streams meet and mingle in Peter and Cornelius. The time had come for the overflowing of the river of grace that had so long been limited to the narrow channel of Israel. "It was the bursting of the chrysalis, in which the life has been preserved indeed, but confined." Let us look at- I. CORNELIUS THE PETITIONER.-

1. His Character. "Devout, feared God, gave alms, and prayed alway" (Acts 10:2). This is a very brief biography of a great man, who dared to be holy in the most unlikely circumstances. Do we wonder that his influence was such that all his house feared God? A man may be a brave soldier, and yet be a religious coward.

2. His Vision (Acts 10:3-6). He who prays much will see much. God is ever ready to unlock the treasures of His grace to the humble seeking heart. The vision came about the ninth hour-the hour of prayer (chapter Acts 3:1). It brought him a message of personal assurance (Acts 10:4), and also a plain word of direction (Acts 10:5). When God answers our prayers there is no doubt about it, everything is so perfectly clear and God-like.

3. His Obedience. As soon as the heavenly messenger was departed, he sent to Joppa, about thirty miles off, for Peter (Acts 10:7-8). The willing and trustful heart will never seek a more convenient season than now. It is such joy to the man of prayer to know the will of God that it becomes his delight to do it.

II. PETER THE PREACHER.-

1. His Call to Caesarea. "Send to Joppa and call for Peter" (Acts 10:5). God could easily have made the angel His messenger to bring to Cornelius all the light and comfort he needed, but He chooses redeemed ones to be co-workers together with Him in the preaching of the Gospel.

2. His Love of Prayer (Acts 10:9-10). Time never hangs heavily upon those who delight in secret fellowship with the Lord. While the dinner was being cooked, Peter was pleading, perhaps, that his way might be made plain as to where he should next go to preach Christ.

3. His Strange Preparation (Acts 10:11-23). The vision of the "great sheet" or "vessel" let down from heaven was certainly intended as a revelation to Peter of the gracious purpose of God to gather all sorts into His kingdom, through faith in Christ Jesus. When the hungry apostle saw this strange lot, and was asked to receive them, he refused to have anything to do with them. He would have no fellowship with the "common and unclean." But these, "all manner of four-footed beasts, wild beasts, creeping things, and fowls of the air," represented all manner of sinners, wild sinners, creeping, grovelling, earth-worm sinners, and intellectual, high-flying sinners, but no longer "common or unclean," for God hath cleansed them by the blood of Christ, through faith in His name. They were all one in the "vessel," even as we are "all one in Christ Jesus," both Jew and Gentile. The little "creeping thing" was equally safe with the strong beast or the fowl of the air, all tied up together in the bundle of life. They were taken from the earth, but their abode was in the

heavenlies; they were sent back to the earth as a testimony to the cleansing power of God. Wild beasts and creeping things, such were some of you, but ye are washed. The effect of this vision on Peter was that he was now ready and willing to preach the Gospel to every creature (Acts 10:42-43). THE APOSTOLIC GOSPEL

Acts 10:38-44

It was a very warm reception Peter got from Cornelius. No medical professor ever had a more hearty welcome from any pain-stricken patient. He received him as one shut up in a besieged city would receive the General of the relief force. Blessed are the feet of them that bring good tidings. "He fell down at his feet" (Acts 10:23-26). Then Peter went in and "talked with him." As they each rehearsed their individual experience, it became abundantly clear to both that God had been guiding them, and that they were both brought together to witness a very definite manifestation of His grace and power (Acts 10:27-33). Peter's vision prepared him to go wherever God should send him. The vision of Cornelius prepared him to receive all that God should give him (Acts 10:33). In this we have a very decided example of how God may prepare a people and a preacher when times of reviving are about to come from His presence. The spring of blessing began on both sides in secret prayer, where every heaven-born revival has its human origin. Peter never preached to a more interested audience than this, and although the meeting was small, the results were mighty and far-reaching, because he preached unto them, Jesus.

1. Jesus, the Anointed One. "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 10:38). This anointing took place at Jordan when the Spirit of God, like a dove, lighted on Him (Matthew 3:16). "Him hath God the Father sealed," who was His eternal Son, and into whose hands the salvation of sinners and the glory of the Father have been committed.

2. Jesus, the Compassionate One. "Who went about doing good." Having been "anointed to preach the Gospel to the poor" (Luke 4:18), His pitiful eyes were ever on the look-out for humble, needy souls, that He might bless them with His good. O, the depth of that good that was in Him.

3. Jesus, the Mighty One. "Healing all that were oppressed of the devil." He preached deliverance to the captives, for He had come that He might destroy the works of the devil (1 John, 3, 8). The devil oppresses with the burden of darkness, of doubts, and of hopeless despair, affecting the mind, the heart, and future prospects. He not only delivers from the thraldom of the devil, but heals the wounds sin and Satan had made. He was mighty, for the Almighty One was with Him (Acts 10:38; John 14:10).

4. Jesus, the Suffering One. "Whom they slew and hanged on a tree" (Acts 10:39). What condescension and gracious self-emptying is this? He who delivered others from the oppressive death-grip of the devil submits to be oppressed to death at the hands of men. They slew that loving, tender heart of His with their pride and unbelief before they hanged that weak, exhausted body on the tree. He suffered for us, the Just for the unjust.

5. Jesus, the Risen One. "Him God raised up the third day." "God loosed Him from the pangs of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it" (Acts 2:24). The love of God for His Son and for those for whom He died, made it impossible that death should keep Him. Being raised from the dead. He is "declared to be the Son of God with power"-with power to save and keep all who believe on His name.

6. Jesus, the Exalted One. "Ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead" (Acts 10:42). All judgment hath been committed unto the Son, because He is the Son of Man (John 5:22-27). In 2 Corinthians 5:10 we have the judgment of the quick-those alive unto God. In Revelation 20:11-15 we see Him judging the dead-those who have died in their sins.

7. Jesus, the Universal Saving One. "Whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43). "Through His name" the door of Mercy and Access has been thrown wide open, and through this open door the voice of divine entreaty is now being heard in the Gospel. When this door is shut no man will be able to enter in (Luke 13:24-25). The effects of Peter's sermon were most manifest. He preached Jesus, and "signs and wonders" followed (Acts 10:44-48).

PETER'S TESTIMONY

Acts 11:1-18

Every new move of the Spirit of God is likely to stir up doubtful questionings in the hearts of some conservative Christians. The Church has not yet learned to hail with joy any Spirit-directed innovation that brings glory to God in the salvation of sinners. They contended with Peter for having fellowship with Gentiles, although they knew that they had "received the Word of God" (Acts 11:1-3). We ought always to be liberal-minded as the Holy Ghost is, otherwise we are narrow-minded. Where did we learn that the Gospel was only to be preached on a certain day in the week in a stated place at a fixed hour? Is not the Church of God an army on a campaign against the enemies of Christ and of righteousness? Would any nation permit its army to fight only one day in the week, and allow its foes to do their deadly soul-destroying work all the other six days? Peter had carried the holy war into the enemies' country, and had gained a glorious victory, but was now gravely charged with imprudence by those who had preferred to stay at home. Peter's defence is beautiful for its humility and simplicity. If it was analysed we might find in it-

1. A Spirit of Prayer. "I was in the city of Joppa praying" (Acts 11:5). Those who are possessed by the spirit of prayer will always find a time and place for the purpose of prayer Yes, "in the city," as well as out of it. If the fire of divine love has been kindled in the heart, flaming tongues of holy desires will leap God-ward.

2. A Heavenly Vision. This "vessel, let down from heaven by four corners" (Acts 11:5), was to Peter, as we have seen, a revelation of the purposes of God in relation to the Gentiles. The secrets of heaven are still revealed to those who wait upon God in secret prayer. Such exchange their own weakness for the uplifting strength of His manifested will (Isaiah 40:31).

3. A Definite Commission. "The Spirit bade me go." Men of faith and prayer hear voices and see visions that other mortals are quite incapable of understanding (2 Corinthians 12:4). Under the guiding Spirit of God things will also be done that will look foolish and absurd in the eyes of the worldly wise. We cannot be filled with the Spirit to excess.

4. A Special Preparation. "He showed us how he had seen an angel in his house" (Acts 11:13-14). Cornelius was also prepared like Peter for fuller blessings through prayer. The soil of the centurion's heart was made ready for the seed of the Word. "He shall tell thee words, wonder-working words, words whereby ye shall be saved." Words, in the power of the Holy Ghost, are spirit and life.

5. A Divine Manifestation. "As I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them" (Acts 11:15-16). The Spirit who bade him go sealed Peter's testimony for Jesus by His coming down in mighty power upon the hearers, baptising them into the mystical body of Christ, and so making of twain; one new man.

6. A Silencing Question. "What was I, that I could withstand God?" (Acts 11:17-18). Well done, Peter! That was a dexterous stroke with the sword of defence. What could he do, being caught in the rush of that heavenly wind that "bloweth where it listeth." He could no more withstand the pressure of the Spirit of God than Saul of Tarsus could withstand the "light from heaven." "When they heard these things they held their peace and glorified God." They saw the hand of God in it, and they had grace enough to praise Him for it, although they themselves had no hand in it. Is this the grace wherein we stand? THE REVIVAL IN ANTIOCH

Acts 11:19-26

Antioch was the eastern capital of the empire. There was a great exhibition on in this metropolis, not of human art and industry, but of the mighty saving grace of God. Such an unprecedented show, that it was well worth the while of Barnabas going all the way from Jerusalem to see it. Those who would travel back in the line of history to the purity and power of primitive Christianity must take care that they don't lose their way in that "valley of the shadow of death," called "The Dark Ages." The pure light of the Gospel shines most brightly at the dawning of this new day:- I. THE REVIVAL AT ANTIOCH.-

1. The Origin of it. "The persecution that arose about Stephen" drove those nameless disciples "as far as Antioch." In this case the wrath of man was made to praise the Lord (Psalms 76:10). They thought evil against the Church, but the Lord meant it for good (Genesis 1:20). The things which happened unto them fell out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel (Php_1:12).

2. The Means of it. There was first the "preaching of the Word" (Acts 11:19), "preaching the Lord Jesus" (Acts 11:20). There was, second, "the hand of the Lord with them." The Word of the Gospel of Christ is the weapon in the hand of the Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 1:5). We preach Jesus, and the hand of the Lord works wonders. Thus we are labourers with God (1 Corinthians 3:9).

3. The Results of it. "A great number believed and turned unto the Lord." The turning of the heart to the Lord is the evidence of having believed. The great end of all preaching should be to turn men unto the Lord. John Owen said long ago, that "Ministers are seldom honoured with success unless they are continually aiming at the conversion of sinners." This is a true witness.

II. THE VISIT OF BARNABAS.-Observe-

1. What He Was. "He was a good man, full of the Holy Ghost and of faith" (Acts 11:24). He was an all-round good man (Acts 9:27), baptised with the Holy Ghost and full of faith in the Gospel, which he preached, expecting direct results. These are the elements which constitute the gift of the evangelist.

2. What He Saw. "He saw the Grace of God" (Acts 11:23). A Roman philosopher could only see in this movement "a vile superstition," where the Spirit-anointed eyes of Barnabas saw "the grace of God." A man's inward character determines what he shall see. The Athenians saw, with great pride, their many gods; but Paul saw "the city wholly given to idolatry." There are things which can

only be "spiritually discerned," and the "Grace of God" is one of them. When you go into a city, what seest thou?

3. What he Felt. "He was glad." His heart was filled with joy at seeing the work of God prosper, although he had no hand in it. A man's character is unmistakably revealed by what saddens or gladdens him. As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.

4. What he Did. "He exhorted them all... to cleave unto the Lord." To cleave unto Him as the branch does to the vine (John 15:4). As a helpless child would do to its mother; and as a faithful follower and friend, "with full purpose of heart." Be ye steadfast and immovable (1 Corinthians 15:58). He also sought for Saul to help him in the work (Acts 11:25-26). It is a great matter to be able to set others to work for God. It was here and at this time, that disciples were first called Christians. What a sweet, suggestive title. They were called after the name of Christ because they had believed on Him, and turned to Him, and were now, with full purpose of heart, living for Him. Would that all who are called Christians in our days had these marks of the sheep of Christ. How sad to have a name to live, and yet be dead.

PERSECUTION AND DELIVERANCE

Acts 12:1-17

The infant Church was not rocked in the cradle of ease, or nursed in the lap of luxury. It had early to face the fiery baptism of persecution. Herod thought that he had done a fine stroke of business when he discovered that the killing of James with the sword had "pleased the Jews" as well as himself. So he proceeded to gain further honour by apprehending Peter also. But He that ruleth in the heavens said, "So far, but no farther." Herod had already got to the end of his tether. Look at Peter-

1. His Perilous Condition. Peter was kept in prison, guarded by sixteen soldiers (Acts 12:4-5). The sentence of death seemed hanging over him; in himself he was utterly helpless and hopeless. Such is the condition of all those who are under the power of the god of this world (John 3:18).

2. His Faithful Remembrancers. "Prayer was made without ceasing unto God for him" (Acts 12:5). Thank God, all the forces of earth and hell cannot close the door of prayer-this highway to heaven-this secret bloodstained path into the very audience chamber of the King of kings. We may not be able to speak to our friends personally, who are suffering affliction for the cause of Christ, or who may be led captive by the devil at his will, but we can speak to God on their behalf. The prayer of faith will save. Many have been pulled out of the fires of sin, as Peter was pulled out of prison, by "effectual, fervent prayer."

3. His Peaceful Submission. "That same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers" (Acts 12:6). That same night that Herod was to bring him forth to condemnation and death Peter's mind was so calmly resting in the good will of God, that he went to sleep as sweetly as a babe in its crib, rocked by a loving mother's hand. It is well known that Argyle, the martyr, had to be awakened out of his sleep that morning he was executed. Easy lies the head that wears a crown of holy innocency. Even on the cold, damp pavement of a dungeon the Grace of God can make us to lie down as in green pastures.

4. His Supernatural Deliverance. "The angel of the Lord came," etc. (Acts 12:7). Soldiers are poor clumsy things in the presence of an angel, yet not more clumsy than the ways of men are, compared with the ways of God. His salvation is perfect. There was the Divine Presence. "The angel of the Lord" in personal touch with the needy one. There was the Light shining in the prison. Into the place of darkness the light of heaven came (2 Corinthians 4:6). There was the smiting of the prisoner, the awakening touch of the Messenger of God. "When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will convince." There was the call, "Arise up quickly!" God hath commanded all men everywhere to repent, and believe the Gospel. There was the offer of liberty. "His chains fell from his hands." The Gospel of Christ offers liberty to the captives" (Luke 4:18).

5. His Instant Obedience. "And so he did." Peter was wise enough neither to argue nor object. He was profoundly conscious that Salvation is of the Lord, and that his privilege was to trust and obey. Salvation had come to his prison-house; he gladly accepted it as God's message to his soul. Be ye not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

6. His Perfect Assurance. "Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath delivered me" (Acts 12:10-11). No conqueror ever had a more triumphant march than Peter had from the State prison to the street. Those soldiers in charge of his life remained blind and dumb as he passed them by, and the ponderous gate swung open at his approach. How could he be anything else than sure that he was saved, after such an experience of the mighty power of God (Daniel 6:22). Do you know of a surety that the Lord hath delivered you?

7. His Joyful Testimony. "He declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison" (Acts 12:12-17). It was a wonderful story that Peter had to tell; the story of God's salvation is always so. While Peter continued knocking at their door, it was God's answer to their prayers seeking admission, but they would hardly believe it. Those who have been delivered by the Lord should not be ashamed to confess Him by telling how great things He hath done for their souls. THE CALL OF BARNABAS AND SAUL

Acts 13:1-12

After a missionary in China had been showing them the folly of idols, and had preached Jesus to them, one old man said-"Stop and tell us, for we cannot find the door." How sad to think of the multitudes who are groping in the dark for the door of eternal life and cannot find it. How shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they preach except they be sent. The Holy Ghost is very desirous to thrust out labourers; pray ye Him. The young Church at Antioch had grown in number and power. Among the notable converts was Manaen, who had been a companion of that Herod who ordered the death of John the Baptist, and who mocked the Lord Jesus Christ, "setting Him at naught." But by the grace of God he was plucked as a brand out of the fire. As the members of this Church "served and fasted," the Holy Spirit met their real need by pressing home to their hearts this message of definite direction, "Separate Me Barnabas and Saul." Perhaps they had been waiting on the Lord for special guidance, as to how they might further the cause of Christ when this unmistakable call came-

1. It was a Divine Call. "The Holy Ghost said," etc. (Acts 13:2). They were as surely "called of God" as was Aaron. As all fitness for this service must come from Him, so also must the call. The Holy Ghost will never choose a man possessed by the spirit of the world as an ambassador of the

Kingdom of Christ.

2. It was a Personal Call. "Barnabas and Saul." There was no room for questioning as to whom the Lord meant, neither was there any occasion for envy or jealousy. The Holy Spirit divideth to every man severally as He will (1 Corinthians 12:11). Not everyone that saith Lord, Lord, is fit for the service of God. "No man taketh this honour unto Himself but he that is called of God" (Hebrews 5:4).

3. It was a Call to Separation. "Separate Me," etc. Barnabas and Saul were to be separated unto the Holy Ghost, that He might breathe the will of God through them, as He had done with the holy men of God in old time (2 Peter 1:21). To be used of the Holy Spirit we must be separated from the world, and entirely yielded unto Him, as vessels meet for His use. But we are not to suppose that those who remained in Antioch were not separated unto God. We can live the separated life anywhere by living for His glory.

4. It was a Call to Work. "For the work whereunto I have called them." Only those who are new creatures in Christ Jesus can have a hand in the work of this "new creation." We are not called to ease and idleness, but to be "workers together with Him," who hath called us into this holy calling. Have we entered into this work whereunto God, the Spirit, hath called us? Or are we idlers in His vineyard?

5. It was a Call which met the Approval of the Brethren. "They sent them away" (Acts 13:3), but not without "fasting and prayer." It would be a great blessing to the Church and the world to-day if the Church was anything like so willing to recognise, and send forth, those who have been called of the Holy Ghost to do the work of an evangelist. By their fruit ye shall know them. These holy men were "solemnly ordained," not with dinners and toasts! but with "fastings and prayer." There were no "hip, hip, hurrahs!" but there was a solemn doing of the will of God. Many modern ordinations are a scandal to the cause of Jesus Christ.

6. It was a Call, Followed by Mighty Deeds. How can we believe that we are called and empowered by God if "signs and wonders" worthy of God are not being done through us in His name? (Acts 13:5-12). Two wonders were wrought here by Barnabas and Saul (a) The overcoming of the sorcerer. This "child of the devil" and "enemy of all righteousness" was smitten with temporary blindness. The works of the devil were destroyed. (b) The conversion of the deputy (Acts 13:12). The salvation of the governor of the island, and the silencing of Elymas, the enemy of God, were surely works worthy of the Holy Ghost, unto whom Barnabas and Saul had been separated. THE GOODNESS OF GOD

Acts 13:13-43

Paul and Barnabas had penetrated to the far away Antioch in Pisidia, and on the Sabbath day they quietly took a seat among the worshippers in the synagogue. Being asked, as strangers, if they had a word for the people, "Paul stood up" and delivered such a "word" as they had never heard before. This first recorded address of the great Apostle to the Gentiles may be entitled, "The Goodness of God." Paul may have taken the pattern of it from that great address of Stephen's, which must have been to him most memorable. He deals with- I. THE GOODNESS OF GOD REVEALED IN HIS DEALINGS WITH ISRAEL.-

(1) They were Chosen (Acts 13:17). God had been pleased, through grace, to make them His people, chosen, not for good in them, but as the monuments of His mercy (Deuteronomy 7:6).

(2) They were Delivered (Acts 13:17). When they were strangers in the land of Egypt, "with an high arm He brought them out." He saved them from the house of bondage.

(3) They were Preserved (Acts 13:18). For forty years His longsuffering patience bore with their murmurings and unbelief. Yet, as a people, they were kept from perishing (Psalms 95:9-10; 2 Peter 3:9).

(4) They had a place Prepared for Them (Acts 13:19). Seven sinful Canaanitish nations were cast down and destroyed, that they might have a possession. The forces of iniquity have all to be overcome ere the children of God can enter into their inheritance.

(5) He Supplied Their Need. He gave them judges, a prophet, and a King. Then He raised up David, a man after His own heart (Acts 13:20-22). David was a type of Jesus Christ, as a man raised up by God, to do His will among the people. Paul, true to his mission, at once links on the Christ to the seed of David, and shows next- II. THE GOODNESS OF GOD REVEALED IN HIS SON JESUS CHRIST.-

(1) He was Given According to Promise (Acts 13:23). He was the rod out of the stem of Jesse, and the branch out of his roots (Isaiah 11:1). Prepared in eternity, and raised up in the fulness of time as a Saviour.

(2) He was Heralded by John (Acts 13:24-25) as the Baptiser with the Holy Ghost and fire, whose shoes he was not worthy to loose.

(3) He was Condemned by the Rulers (Acts 13:26-29). Paul makes it clear that Christ was slain by those who found "no cause of death in Him," thus bringing out the awful enmity of the natural heart against the Holiness of God.

(4) He was raised from the Dead (Acts 13:30). This was a startling dogma for the apostle's hearers. Dogmatic was he? Yes; as dogmatic as the Son of God. He spake as one having authority (1 John 1:1). If a man cannot speak dogmatically on these great verities of the Gospel, then let him hold his peace, for he has no message from God to the people; and there is plenty of sickly namby-pambyism in the world already.

(5) He was Preached by Eye-witnesses of His Resurrection (Acts 13:31-37). We have not followed cunningly-devised fables. The resurrection of Christ is quite in harmony with His unique life and testimony. Christ's death and resurrection are the two pillars of the bridge of Grace.

(6) He is now able to Save all who Believe (Acts 13:38-39). "All that believe are justified. This is another blessed dogma (Romans 3:28). No. The law of Moses could never do this. It is through His blood the forgiveness of sins come (Ephesians 1:7).

III. THE WARNING AGAINST DESPISING THIS GOODNESS.-"Beware, therefore," etc. (Acts 13:40-41.) Despisers are sure to perish. God is still working this work of salvation in our days, in the hearts and lives of all who believe. Yet there are many who still "despise, and wonder, and perish" in their unbelief, although a man-saved and transformed by the power of this

Gospel-declare it unto them. Behold, therefore, the "goodness of God" as exhibited in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the Saviour of Men, and let thy heart be bowed and broken by repentance. These words of Paul were to many as good news from a far country, so they wanted to hear them again the next Sabbath. No other story can bear to be repeated so often as this.

RESULTS OF PAUL'S PREACHING

Acts 13:42-52

Somehow or other, wherever these first preachers of the Gospel went, they succeeded in creating a stir. If they "turned the world upside down" it was because the world was wrong side up. Men who have been made, as it were, into new bottles, and filled with the new wine of the kingdom of God-the Holy Spirit- cannot possibly act as ordinary mundane mortals. They are intoxicated by a new possession that excites to a holy enthusiasm for the eternal honour of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is impossible for a man full of the Holy Ghost to be cold and formal; the Word of God burns in his bones as an unquenchable fire; he cannot but speak the things which he has seen and heard. The effects of Peter's sermon were emphatic and varied-

1. There was a Desire to Hear. "The Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath" (Acts 13:4). The Gospel had been so preached that morning that a real thirst had been created in the hearts of many to hear it again. There were many anxious inquiries at the close of Peter's address (Acts 13:43). "After meetings" are no new thing.

2. There was a general Awakening. "The next Sabbath day there came almost the whole city together to hear the Word of God" (Acts 13:44). It must have been an intensely interested audience that Paul and Barnabas addressed that day. We should see the multitudes oftener crowding together "to hear the Word of God" if they were sure that the Word of God was going to be preached. Much of the present-day preaching does not seem to stir up any interest whatever in the Word of God. Multitudes of sermon hearers are in total darkness as to what the Bible teaches.

3. There was Bitter Opposition. "The Jews were filled with envy, and spoke against Paul," etc (Acts 13:45). There was no fear of Paul ever bringing himself under that woe that comes upon those of whom "all men speak well of." The proud, envious Jews, like the Prodigal's "elder brother," could not rejoice in that Grace of God which saves sinners and transforms them into sons. Those who would preach "the Word of God" must be prepared for the "contradiction and blasphemy" of self-righteous, religious sinners, who are entirely out of sympathy with God in the salvation of the lost. But their opposition only stirred up the apostles to greater boldness, and to bring a more direct charge against them (Acts 13:46). How sad to think of those who, in the pride of their heart, judge themselves unfit to receive everlasting life as the gift of God's grace through Jesus Christ, His Son.

4. There was Joy among the Gentiles. "They were glad and glorified the Word of the Lord" (Acts 13:48). See Romans 15:9-12. These "other sheep" which were not of this Jewish fold were heartily glad to get into those life-giving pastures of His Word. The hungry Gentiles are fed, while the self-satisfied Jews are sent empty away. To the poor the Gospel is preached with God-honouring results. "Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life."

5. There was Apparent Defeat. "They expelled them out of their coasts" (Acts 13:50). It is melancholy to think of "devout and honourable women" lending their influence to such an unholy and dishonourable cause. They may cast out the servants of God, but they cannot cast out the seed of the Word that has been sown in the hearts of the people. No; the purpose of God in the lives of His chosen and consecrated servants can never suffer defeat. All things work together for good to them that love God (Romans 8:28).

6. There was Grace Triumphant. "The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 13:52). When the preachers were expelled from them God gave them a greater blessing in filling them with the Holy Ghost, and so sealed them unto the day of the final redemption (Ephesians 1:13). These young disciples were rejoicing over a new found treasure, which they knew would enrich them during all the ages that were yet to come, while these persecutors had yet to reckon with that dust which the apostles shook off their feet against them.

MISSIONARY EXPERIENCE

Acts 14:1-20

In Iconium, Paul and Barnabus "so spake that a great multitude believed...boldly in the Lord," so that He "granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands" (Acts 14:1-3). Signs and wonders are not likely to be granted where the Word of God is so preached that a great multitude are sent to sleep. Preaching "boldly in the Lord"-not in the strength of our carnal wisdom and fleshly energy-will certainly be accompanied with the witness-bearing power of the wonder-working presence of God (Hebrews 2:4; Mark 16:20). Wherever God grants signs and wonders to be done, you may look for persecutions (Acts 14:4-6). The rulers of darkness will always oppose a violent disturbance of their kingdom.

I. AN EXAMPLE OF FAITH.-This man, who had been "a cripple from his mother's womb," was a picture of helplessness (Acts 14:8-9). He had never walked, and in all likelihood never hoped to walk. Such liberty and joy were not seemingly for him. Have we ever thanked God for the use of our feet. But this same man "heard Paul speak," and that faith which "cometh by hearing" sprung up as a new-born faculty in the sorrowful soul of the cripple. He hears, and he believes, that the Risen Saviour is able to heal him. See, there is a new light in his eye, it is the light of that new hope that is born of the Spirit of God, through the preached Word. He has "faith to be healed," and the Spirit-taught apostle is quick to perceive it, and calls him to "Stand upright on thy feet!" (Acts 14:10). And he "leaped and walked." He leaped before he walked, not only for joy, but perhaps also because he had never yet learned to walk. This great change was none the less real because it came suddenly.

II. AN EXAMPLE OF FOLLY.-When these idolatrous Lycaonians saw the well-known cripple leaping and walking, they foolishly supposed that their gods had come down in the likeness of Paul and Barnabas The gods of idolaters are deaf and dumb and dead. How could they heal a poor cripple, and where could they "come down" from? (Acts 14:11-13). But from their blind enthusiasm, let us solemnly learn how possible it is for us to be very earnest over religious notions that are only imaginary and delusive. How thankful we should be for the written Word of God, which is as a light shining in darkness, whereunto we do well to take heed. Any amount of "oxen and garlands" will never make a wrong thing right. They called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul,

Mercurius; but these heathen Galatians are not the last of those who have attempted to adapt the things of God to their own idolatrous practices (Jude 1:4).

III. AN EXAMPLE OF FAITHFULNESS.-It is possible that Paul and Barnabas may not have understood the people when they spake "in the speech of Lycaonia," but as soon as their purpose of sacrifice was known they were quick to make a vehement protest against all forms of man-worship. They "rent their clothes" as an outward sign of inward horror-of hearts rent with agony at the thought. So jealous were they of the honour of God, that nothing pained them so deeply as that they, as the servants of Christ, should have the place in their thoughts and minds that their Lord and Master alone should have. The longing of their hearts and the object of their lives was to "turn them from these vanities unto the Living God" (Acts 14:14-18). They were "men of like passions with themselves," but what a difference the grace of God had made. Elijah was a man of like passions as we are, but how few of us can pray as he did (James 5:17). How differently Herod acted when the people worshipped him. "He gave not God the glory," and immediately the angel of the Lord smote him (Acts 12:22-23). Seek the honour that comes from God only (Daniel 4:37).

IV. AN EXAMPLE OF FICKLENESS.-In a few days after they "stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead" (Acts 14:19). There is not much between the world's honours and its frowns, between its "garlands" and its stones. To-day they cry, "Hosanna!" to-morrow, "Crucify!" What a Friend we have in Jesus, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

HELPING THE SAINTS

Acts 14:19-28

"Once was I stoned" is the name of one of the medals Paul received for his faithfulness to Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 11:25). There is not much between the praises and the anathemas of an ungodly crowd (Acts 14:18-19). Woe be to them who seek their happiness in the favour of men, instead of the favour of God. It was perhaps while Paul lay outside the city of Lystra, as one dead, that he had that "unspeakable" experience of being "caught up into paradise," so that whether "in the body or out of the body he could not tell" (2 Corinthians 12:3-4). If so, see how the Lord can compensate His suffering servants that they might be able to "glory in tribulations also." After preaching the Gospel in Derbe and making many disciples (Acts 14:21, R.V.), they began their great return journey, which was crowded with holy deeds and crowned with abundant results.

1. They Confirmed the Souls of the Disciples (Acts 14:22). This is a very needful work, if young believers are to be saved from backsliding. To confirm a soul in the faith is to strengthen that soul against the temptation and assaults of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Deal tenderly with young converts, show them the whole armour of God, and tell them how to put it on. Give them line upon line, and perhaps a little of your own experience, if you have any.

2. They Exhorted to Continue in the Faith. The Christian fight is a fight of faith. Faith, fighting against feelings, failings, and appearances. As ye have therefore received the Lord Jesus-by faith-so walk ye in Him. Continue trusting in the promise of God against everything that seems opposed, and so make God true, if it should make every man a liar. This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith. There is a great need for faith, for it is "through much tribulation that we enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). In the world ye shall have

tribulation, but faith clings to Him who hath said, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

3. They Ordained Elders in every Church (Acts 14:23). It was needful, in the absence of the apostles, that suitable and trustworthy men should be elected as rulers and teachers. They would likely be appointed by the vote of the people. All men are not fit to rule and to "labour in word and doctrine." Since the beginning there have been those who, through divine grace, and a more entire consecration of themselves to God, have become better qualified for spiritual service than others. Covet earnestly the best gifts.

4. They Commended them to the Lord. After being called they were handed over to the Lord as His own private property that He might use them as it may seem good in His sight. Do you think this would be a hardship? It is glorious liberty. Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price.

5. They Preached the Word (Acts 14:25). Oh, what a Word was this that filled and fired their souls with an unquenchable desire to labour and suffer for the salvation of men and the glory of the name of Jesus Christ. From the day of Paul's conversion to the day of his translation you never find him "off duty." He was as much a witness for Jesus out of the pulpit as in it. "To me to live is Christ."

6. They Rehearsed all that God had done WITH THEM (Acts 14:27). It was a wonderful story of grace they had to tell. The Lord had done not only great things for them, but great things with them. There be many who are ever ready to tell us what God has done for them, but we long most of all to hear what God has been able to do with them. If you are saved, God hath wrought a great work for you. If you are consecrated, God will do a great work with you. THE DISPUTE ABOUT WORKS

Acts 15:1-35

I. THE CAUSE OF THE DISPUTE (Acts 15:1-2). - It arose about as to whether the Gentile converts should be circumcised "after the manner of Moses" or not. Those brethren that came down from Jerusalem were so strong in their arguments for it as to make it "necessary to salvation." These nameless men, which disturbed the peace of the Church with this controversy, are the forerunners of a class still extant, who are not famous for spirituality of mind or success in the Lord's work, but who are for ever ready to put those right who are being greatly owned and blessed of God. The most unspiritual are usually the greatest sticklers about forms. Paul and Barnabas, who had seen so much of the grace of God, hotly opposed this attempt to bring them back into bondage. So keenly did Paul feel it that in writing to the Galatians shortly after, he says: "If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing" (Acts 15:2).

II. THE CONFERENCE AT JERUSALEM.-It was agreed to submit the case to the General Assembly at Jerusalem (Acts 15:2-21). So the evangelists hastened thither. After they had given their report, "declaring all things that God had done with them," the burning question was at once introduced by certain converted Pharisees, who had enough of their old nature still in them as to make it hard for them to believe that Gentiles could be saved "without the works of the law." After "much disputing," Peter rose up and addressed the Assembly as one clothed in the authority of God. He spoke of what his eyes had seen of the power of the Gospel among the Gentiles, how God had "given them the Holy Ghost, even as He did unto us," putting no difference between them, "purifying their hearts by faith." There was great stillness in the court when Barnabas and

Paul again addressed the audience (Acts 15:12) on the special subject before them, taking care to show that the wonderful works wrought among the Gentiles were the works of God. The river of His grace is always too broad for the narrow channel of man's pride or prejudice. The next to speak is James-a man deeply taught in the Scriptures. He shows from the Word that it was the purpose of God to take out of the Gentiles "a people for His name," and takes the further liberty of submitting to the Church the divine programme of the present dispensation. A people "for His name" are now being taken out, through the preaching of the Gospel of Christ. This is James's first point. The second is the return of the Lord: "After this I will return." Third, the restoration of Israel: "Build the tabernacle of David." Fourth, the Millennium: "That the residue of men might seek after the Lord" (Acts 15:14-17). In closing his magnificent address, he makes this wise proposal: That the Gentile converts should not be troubled about forms that were not vital to their life and usefulness, but that they should be asked to abstain from those heathenish practices that were so common around them (Acts 15:20)

III. THE RESULTS.-James' motion was carried unanimously. Letters of congratulation and sympathy were sent by special messengers to all those affected by this controversy. It was a cause of great joy to them when they heard that "it seemed good to the Holy Ghost to lay no unnecessary burden upon them" (Acts 15:28). The goodness of the Holy Ghost in this respect is not always acknowledged by those who rule in some ecclesiastical courts. The true object of Church government is not to advocate or elaborate men's opinions, but to find out the mind of the Holy Spirit of God, and to do it. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. THE CRY OF THE HELPLESS

Acts 16:9-15

Paul and Silas had been "forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the Word in Asia," and when they assayed to go into Bithynia, the "Spirit suffered them not." These are facts full of deep significance to every servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. They reveal how completely the Holy Spirit has control over their lives. It is the mission of this Great Teacher come from God to guide us into all truth, and to carry on the work of God through the lives of those who are wholly yielded up to Him. Our subject may be divided into three parts-

1. The New Call. "Come over into Macedonia, and help us" (Acts 16:9). It now became plain to Paul why the Holy Spirit had been closing other doors in his face. Macedonia needed the help that Paul and Silas, apostles of the Cross of Christ, were able to give. What help could they have given if they had not been possessors of the grace of God and the knowledge of His saving power, through the death and resurrection of His beloved Son. The best help anyone can get is to be lifted out of a life of sin and hopelessness into a life of holiness and victory. How the vision came to Paul we need not stop to inquire, it was simply the Lord's way of revealing His will to His servant (Romans 10:14-15). May we not hear this cry for help, in a muffled fashion, rising in one torm or another from every grade of social life to-day?

2. The Immediate Response. They at once obeyed, "assuredly gathering that the Lord had called them to preach the Gospel unto them" (Acts 16:10). Paul and the Gospel were so vitally joined together that an open door to him meant an open door for the Gospel of Christ. When Paul said, "To me to live is Christ," he was stating not an article in his creed, but the all-absorbing principle of his heaven-born existence. Let us beware of being disobedient to any heavenly vision that may be

beckoning us into new spheres of service, or into higher and fuller experiences of the deep things of the Spirit of God. It is only those who, like Paul and Silas, have had their lives enriched with the grace and power of Jesus Christ that can render the help that is needed to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death and despair.

3. The Blessed Results (Acts 16:13-15). They were not long in finding out the place of prayer. It may have been a spot by the river-side, set apart as a public oratory, because of its natural adaptations. In this roofless "house of prayer" Paul and Silas sat and spake the wonderful words of life to the women which resorted thither. The interest centres in a "certain woman named Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened." She had been a worshipper of God, but now the door of her heart was opened to receive the message of the Gospel, sent to her by the Lord, through His servants. Take note that the "Word of Salvation" sent from God to man is not so much for the head as for the heart. With the heart man believeth unto righteousness. The open heart will always be "attentive unto the things" spoken by the servant of God, and God is sure to open hearts for the reception of the message that He hath sent. Another evidence of the open heart is a willingness to confess Christ and a love for the fellowship of the people of God (Acts 16:15). We can never work out our own salvation until God hath worked it in us. Some hearts are opened as with the gentle kiss of light (2 Corinthians 4:6), others have been broken open as with a rod of iron. To open the heart to the Lord is to give Him the control of all the springs of the life. Son, give Me thine heart. THE JAILOR'S CONVERSION

Acts 16:16-40

These incidents remind us of a picture gallery, where you have different scenes grouped together, and that, perhaps, strike you most by way of contrast Shall we look at each separately?

1. A Picture of Demoniac Possession. "A damsel possessed with a spirit of divination" (Acts 16:16). How sad to think of this nice-looking young woman, wholly given over to the control of a deceitful, wicked spirit. She was the property of several sin-hardened wretches, who probably sold her half-mad ravings as the oracles of God. What she cried after the apostles on their way to the prayer meeting was quite true (Acts 16:17), but then the words had such a hollow, fiendish ring about them that "grieved" Paul; so, by faith in the name of Jesus Christ, he "commanded the evil spirit to come out of her."

2. A Picture of Selfishness and Cruelty (Acts 16:19-24). "When her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone," because the poor girl was now delivered from the soul-maddening power of the devil, instead of being thankful to God for such an emancipation, and because her salvation touched their pockets, they sought the ruin of the servants of God. "The love of money is the root of all evil." The spirit that possessed her masters was no better than the spirit which possessed the deluded damsel; for greed of gain they would traffic in the souls of their fellow-creatures.

3. A Picture of Heaven-Born Happiness. "Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God" (Acts 16:24). Although lying in the deepest, darkest hole of that miserable prison, with bleeding backs and aching limbs, the joy of the Lord so filled their hearts that they were able also to "glory in tribulation." What but the grace of God could make anyone sing in such circumstances. "The prisoners heard them." Might not this have been one of the reasons why God permitted His servants to be cast into prison. These fellow-prisoners also share in the victory which God

wrought, for "everyone's bonds were loosed."

4. A Picture of Divine Intervention. "Suddenly there was a great earthquake," etc. Paul and Silas resisted the devil in the damsel, but no doubt they prayed for those who had despitefully used them and persecuted them (Matthew 5:44). Having calmly and joyfully trusted in God, the mighty, wonder-working hand of God is now stretched out for their deliverance. Truly, when they prayed "the place was shaken." This was a fulfilment of Psalms 10:15.

5. A Picture of Sudden Conversion (Acts 16:27-31). It was a very dark moment in the experience of the jailor when he drew out his sword intending to commit suicide; but it was immediately followed by the brightest experience he ever had. "He called for a light" that might guide his feet into the inner prison of the suffering saints, but when he cried, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" he was calling for another light that might guide his feet into the paths of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Then they told him words whereby he and all his house should be saved (Acts 16:31). Just as he had been saved from self-destruction through the word of the apostle- "Do thyself no harm, for we are all here"-so can he be saved from the power of sin and the wrath of God by "believing on the Lord Jesus Christ" (John 3:16).

6. A Picture of Joyful Fellowship (Acts 16:32-34). What a change. A few hours before this the jailor was fastening their feet in the terrible stocks. Now he is bathing their wounds, taking them into his house, and spreading the best he has before them, eating with them, "and rejoicing, believing in God with all his house." He had been suddenly awakened out of his sleep, but now he was at one with the servants of God, and with them enjoying an early hallelujah breakfast- such a scene as would do credit to a modern Salvation Army "glory feast."

SPECIAL MISSIONS

Acts 17:1-14

It was a long journey from Philippi to Thessalonica (about 100 miles) for two men who had just lately been beaten with "many stripes." But as the sufferings of Christ abounded in them, so also did the consolation of Christ (2 Corinthians 1:3-6). About one year after this Paul reminds the Thessalonians that their entrance unto them was after they "had suffered and were shamefully entreated at Philippi" (1 Thess. 2). It was often at great personal sacrifice that these early apostles preached the Word.

I. EXPERIENCES AT THESSALONICA.-

1. Where they went. There was a synagogue of the Jews there, "and Paul, as his manner was, went in." There seems to have been no synagogue at Philippi, the only recognised place of worship being the place by "a river side, where prayer was wont to be made" (chap. Acts 16:13). The manner of this evangelist, wherever he went, was to seek out the "house of prayer," because there was there liberty given for prayer and exhortation.

2. What they did. "Paul reasoned with them out of the Scriptures." He proved to them, from Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms that Messiah must suffer death and be raised again from the dead, and that Jesus of Nazareth, whom he preached, was that same Anointed One. "This Jesus whom I preach." This preacher was never ill off for a text. He was so in love with Jesus, as his Redeemer and Lord, that he could glory in no one else. No one can preach the Gospel of Christ as it ought to

be preached, unless it is the all-absorbing passion of their soul.

3. How they succeeded. "Some believed, and some were moved with envy" (Acts 17:5-9). The Gospel, in the power of the Holy Ghost, is either a savour of life or death, of justification or condemnation, according as it is received or rejected. In either case a change of attitude toward God will take place. If the enmity is not slain thereby, it is likely to be embittered. "The baser sort" are always ready to oppose the Kingship of Jesus.

II. THEIR EXPERIENCES AT BEREA.-In obedience to the Word of their Lord, "If they persecute you in one city, flee to another," they set off by night for Berea, a distance of sixty miles. They found the people here-

1. Open-hearted. "They received the Word with all readiness of mind" (Acts 17:11). Their minds were not sealed with prejudice; they were quite prepared to give this new doctrine a careful and favourable consideration. The minds of many Gospel hearers are like a well-trodden footpath in a field; the seed may fall on it, but it never gets a chance of entering into it. There is no readiness to receive the Word.

2. Noble-hearted. "They searched the Scriptures daily whether these things were so." A willingness to bring all teaching to the test of the "Scriptures of truth" is an evidence of nobility of mind (Acts 17:11). What could be more noble than a soul eager to know and obey the mind of God? There is something fatally wrong with our thoughts and opinions if they cannot stand the test of God's revealed will as found in His Word. If we are building on a sandy foundation, surely the sooner we find out our folly and danger the better.

3. Honest-hearted. "Therefore many of them believed" (Acts 17:12). Having been convinced of the truth of Paul's teaching, after searching the Word for themselves, they were honest enough to believe it. When a good and honest heart hears the Word, it keeps it and brings forth fruit with patience (Luke 8:15). Be honest with God. If any man will do His will, he shall know whether the teaching is of God (John 7:17).

PAUL AT ATHENS

Acts 17:15-34

The reason why Paul came to Athens is stated in the previous verses. It may simplify the lessons here just to put them in this modern form-

1. The Preacher. Paul. A man learned in all the wisdom of the philosophers. A man who had been soundly converted by God to a special revelation of Jesus Christ. A man with a definite commission from the Risen One. A man who had already suffered much in the service of Christ. A man with a soul ablaze with love for his fellowmen, who knows no fear, and who is prepared to face all the wisdom of the Greeks, in the name of his Lord and Master. A preacher who has always a message, and who is never ashamed to tell it out.

2. The Preparation. "While he waited, his spirit was stirred in him" (Acts 17:16). The city was stocked with thirty thousand gods, many of them magnificent works of art. But Paul was no mere sight-seer. He looked upon things in the light of the revelation of God in Christ and of eternity. While others could only see Grecian handiwork in Athenian "devotions," this man of God saw "the

city wholly given to idolatry." The man whose eyes God hath opened will look upon "the things which are unseen." In many of our towns or cities there are signs of "religious devotions" that are not of God enough to stir the spirit of any preacher who has the heaven-lit eyes of the apostle.

3. The Pulpit. "Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' Hill" (Acts 17:22). That was after he had been in the synagogue and the market place preaching unto them "Jesus and the Resurrection." As the lonely evangelist stood in the midst of that open-air court, while the Athenian dignitaries rested on these rock-hewn seats, he was occupying the leading pulpit of the city. It was a bold stand that he took, but he believed that the Lord who stood by him, was worthy of the highest place in this philosophical centre. Paul counted this a great privilege for his Master's sake.

4. The Audience. "Ye men of Athens" (Acts 17:22). No preacher ever addressed a more critical congregation; they made it their life's business to inquire into every new thing (Acts 17:21). In the Epicureans, he had a company of high-minded Rationalists, whose god was their belly; the Stoics extolled virtue, but denied human responsibility and future judgment. In them Paul was face to face with the wisdom of Socrates and Plato, but in him they were face to face with the "wisdom of God." The world by wisdom knows not God.

5. The Sermon. It was not read, it was poured out of a burning heart. The subject was "Him." Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship Him declare I unto you. This preacher always found a short cut to Christ because he gloried in Him (Galatians 6:14). The Heads of this wonderful sermon are very clear. He preached (a) The Existence and Creative Power of God. "God that made the world," etc. This was a blow at the Epicurean theory of evolution or "chance." (b) The Spiritual Character of God (Acts 17:25). He is not worshipped "with men's hands." Out of the heart are the issues of life. (c) The Universal Brotherhood of Man. "Made of one blood all nations." (d) The overruling Providence of God. He hath determined the times before appointed (Acts 17:26). (e) Man's Need of God, "They should seek the Lord." (f) The Universality of the presence of God. "He be not far from every one of us" (Acts 17:27; Isaiah 55:6). (g) That God Himself is the source of all Life. "In Him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28). How much more fully is this truth realised by those whose "life is hid with Christ in God?" Then came the Application-(a) Something we ought not to do. "We ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold," etc. (b) Something we ought to do. We should repent, for "God hath commanded all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30); and "because He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world by Jesus Christ" (Acts 17:31; Romans 2:16).

6. The Results. (a) Some mocked (Acts 17:32). The doctrine of the resurrection and final judgment cut at the roots of their selfish lives and false philosophy. What made Felix tremble, made them mock. Any fool can do that. (b) Some hesitated. "We will hear thee again," they said. They wavered, and lost their opportunity, for they never heard him again (Acts 17:33). (c) Some believed. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth.

PAUL AT CORINTH

Acts 18:1-17

Athens was perhaps the hardest field in which the apostle had ever attempted to sow the good seed of the kingdom. The wisdom of this world is one of the strongest forts of the kingdom of Satan. Paul writes no epistle to the Athenians. When he visited Corinth, the capital of Achaia, he

must have found it a busy and populous centre of commerce. Let us look at him here-

I. AS A TENTMAKER.-"Because he was of the same craft he abode with them and wrought" (Acts 18:3). It was a principle with Paul that if any man "would not work, neither should he eat." Rather than burden anyone with the responsibility of his board and lodgings, he would labour night and day (2 Thessalonians 3:8). Paul was courageous enough to preach the Gospel to the Athenian professors at the Mars' Hill University; he was also humble enough to act as a journeyman tentmaker in the workshop of Aquila. Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as unto the Lord.

II. AS A REASONER.-"He reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath" (Acts 18:4). Paul did not reason with them merely to bring them over to his way of thinking, or to prove his own superior scholarship; he reasoned with them "out of the Scriptures" (chap. Acts 17:2), that he might bring them over to the mind of God concerning His Son Jesus Christ. If the will of God, as revealed in the Scriptures of truth, has not become the governing and impelling factor in our lives, then is our preaching vain, and men will remain in their sins. Many preachers nowadays, instead of reasoning out of the Scriptures, go out of the Scriptures to reason. Instead of giving the people bread, they offer them luminous dust.

III. AS A WITNESS.-"He testified to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ." He not only could reason with them over an open Bible, but he could also give his own personal testimony to the Messiahship and saving power of Jesus, who was called Christ. Had he not seen Him, and heard Him, and been transformed by His wondrous grace? (Acts 9). Mere finger-post preachers may be correct, but they are always cold, and stiff, and lifeless. God never sent anyone to preach Christ who had not first Christ revealed in them (Galatians 1:16). "We speak that we do not know."

IV. AS A PROTESTANT.-" When they opposed.....he said, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean" (Acts 18:6). He protested against the unreasonable opposition and wilful blindness of these Jews by turning his ministry specially to the Gentiles. That very dust that he shook off his raiment will remain as a witness against them. It is a very solemn thing to grieve the Spirit of God, so that the message of the Gospel, which is the message of Life, is turned into a sentence of death (Ezekiel 3:18-19).

V. AS A SOUL-WINNER.-"Many of the Corinthians hearing, believed" (Acts 18:7-8). His turning away from the Jews was the salvation of these Gentiles. If you don't come into the marriage feast of the Gospel, another will, for every seat will be occupied when the King comes. But the apostle's testimony among the opposing Jews was not in vain; it never was. Among the converts he had "Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue." My Word shall not return void.

VI. AS ONE BELOVED BY GOD.-"Then spake the Lord to Paul," etc. (Acts 18:9-10). If there was any lingering doubt or fear in Paul's mind as to the wisdom of turning away with the Gospel from his own kinsmen, this message from the Lord would give him perfect rest. There was in it (1) a word of cheer, "Be not afraid;" (2) a word of counsel, "Speak and hold not thy peace;" (3) a word of assurance, "I am with thee;" (4) a word of promise, "No man shall hurt thee;" (5) a word of hope, "I have much people in this city." They are always blessed who are heaven's favourites.

VII. AS ONE DESPISED BY MEN.-"The Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul" (Acts 18:12-17). Woe unto you when all men speak well of you. The more intently anyone seeks the glory of God in the salvation of souls, the more bitter will those self-righteous religious

formalists become. They beat Sosthenes in the presence of a careless governor (Gallio), but as to Paul, it happened unto him just as the Lord had said. "No man shall set on thee to hurt thee." Be thou faithful.

PAUL AT EPHESUS

Acts 19:1-20

Paul did a great service in bringing Priscilla and Aquila to Ephesus. Next to winning souls, there is no greater work than putting others in the way of doing better service for God. Jealousy is a cruel monster that would hinder us from rejoicing in the success of others. It was surely the guiding hand of God that brought Apollos into contact with these two deeply taught disciples (chap. Acts 18:26). If they were not eloquent them selves, they were able, by the grace of God, to sharpen the sword of the mighty Apollos. He knew only John's baptism, and evidently was a stranger to the mighty baptism of the Holy Spirit. He was a fervent, eloquent, diligent believer in the Lord, but he lacked what many preachers still lack, a definite baptism of the Holy Ghost. Apollos was not too proud to sit at the feet and learn of those who were less scholarly, but more deeply spiritual than himself. Humility is a characteristic of all who are prepared to be used in the work of God.

Paul, having again visited Jerusalem, returned to Ephesus. His heart must have been cheered in finding there "certain disciples" (Acts 19:1). His first question was a searching one-"Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" He did not wish these young believers to be, like Apollos, strangers to this gift of the Ascended Christ. The apostle knew that without this they were in great danger of backsliding, or of living fruitless and powerless lives. It was well that he did, for they had not even heard of the Spirit of Pentecost, having only known the "baptism of John." But as soon as they heard of this second blessing they at once yielded themselves, that they might receive it.

"Then the Holy Ghost came on them, and they spake with tongues." No one ever yet received the baptism of the Holy Spirit without signs following. It is impossible for anyone to be filled with the Spirit and yet no supernatural Works following. How will ever the world be convinced that God is in us if no God-like wonders are being wrought? The Church of God will never be anything else, in the eyes of an ungodly world, but an impotent thing, beating the thin air until experimentally this great truth is grasped. God will not give His glory to another on earth save the Holy Spirit. This is a question of urgent and tremendous importance for every believer in Jesus Christ. "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" Pentecost must follow Calvary in the experience of every one that would honour God by a life of service. And we say it in all tenderness, the will of God is not being done in the lives of those who are not filled with the Spirit. For two years Paul spake of the "things concerning the kingdom of God" (Acts 19:10). Some believed not, but all that dwelt in Asia heard the Word of the Lord Jesus. Whether men received the message of God or not, Paul sounded out the "Word of Life." He did not seem to trouble himself much about results. He knew the Word would not return void to Him who sent it. His great business as a preacher was to make men hear. The miracle of the "handkerchief" seemed to excite the jealousy and emulation of the vagabond Jews; they, too, would work miracles for their own glory in the name of "Jesus, whom Paul preached" (Acts 19:13), but the demon-possessed "overcame them and prevailed against them." The victory of the man with the evil spirit over those would-be exorcists was proof enough that they were not sent by God, and that they were not possessed by the Holy Ghost. No

one can be a match for the devil in his own strength. The powers of darkness will always prevail against those who are not in themselves right with God. "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye?" said the demon. It is a startling fact that devils know no enemies but those filled with the Spirit and in living touch with God. It is by "He that is in you," who is "greater than he that is in the world," that we overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil.

WORLDLY WISDOM

Acts 19:21-41

"No small stir" was created in Ephesus through the faithful testimony of Paul. When the Word of God is preached in the power of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, it is as a two-edged sword piercing and dividing asunder the things that affect both soul and spirit. It is the flash-light of the Eternal Throne of God cast upon the iniquitous thoughts and acts of men, and is always sure to produce a consternation when it suddenly falls upon those who love the darkness rather than the light.

Demetrius became almost demented when he saw that his idolatrous "craft was in danger." It mattered nothing to him how many souls were being blessed of God, in being redeemed out of heathen darkness, so long as his purse was not affected. This silversmith, like many others, could be very religious so long as it brought him a good income. He showed real "worldly wisdom" in gathering together "the workmen of like occupation" to protest against the teaching of Paul. It would be good for us if we were half so earnest in contending for the truth as those men were for their heathenish superstitions. In connecting "this our craft" with the "great goddess Diana," Demetrius did a magnificent stroke of business. His craft and his god were to stand or fall together. Is there not a more urgent lesson here for every Christian worker? Is our work for Christ so vitally connected with Him that His honour waxes or wanes according as we succeed or fail in His service? As through the work of Demetrius and his associates' images of their god were made and circulated among the people for the glory of Diana, so, through the work of Paul and his companions in labour, images of his God were being created and circulated for His glory and honour in those souls that had been transformed by the Holy Spirit. Here the powers of the kingdom of Satan and the forces of the kingdom of Christ meet in terrible conflict. Do we wonder that "the whole city was filled with confusion?" These enemies of God were blinded by the smoke of their own guns. In their desperation they caught two of Paul's companions and made a rush for the public oratory (theatre), that their triumph might be all the more conspicuous. Paul, the fearless, would at once have faced those lions in their own den, but his trustworthy friends advised him not to "adventure himself" (Acts 19:31). The scene in the theatre was like the troubled sea casting up mire and dirt. "Some cried one thing, and some another." Confusion reigned; for the greater part of the mob knew not for what reason they had come together. But like all other narrow-minded, sin-blinded bigots, they could say one thing, and for the space of two hours they kept saying it: "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" What is the use of us crying up the greatness of our God if we ourselves act like a lot of silly imbeciles. It is easy to preach on the faithfulness of God while we show by our acts that we are living in unbelief. The town clerk seemed to be a man worthy of his honourable position; faithful, clear-headed, and reasonable. He knows how to manage the tumultous crowd by first speaking a word of praise for the world-renowned city and its goddess (Acts 19:35). Then, in substance, he declares, seeing that the God which ye worship is

the greatest that ever came from heaven, and that the things which ye believe are infallible, and "cannot be spoken against," ye ought to show the reality of your faith by being calm, and not doing anything rashly. How very applicable all this is to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Is He not great? Did He not come down from heaven? Has He not spoken things which cannot be overthrown? Ought we not then to be "quiet, and do nothing rashly?" He that believeth shall not make haste. When we know that greater is He that is for us than all that can be against us, surely we can well afford to be quiet and do nothing rashly. They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. A MIDNIGHT MEETING

Acts 20:2-12

One prominent characteristic of the great apostle of the Gentiles was his intense carefulness over young believers, that they might be established in the faith (Acts 20:3). He counted no personal sacrifice too great so that they might be made strong in the Lord, to live and witness for Him. It is not enough that we are saved; we are saved to serve. We fail in our ministry if we do not lead young converts into the secret joy and power of His service. It is a great matter to lead a soul into the saving knowledge of Christ, but it is an equally important matter to lead a soul into active work for God. A soul yielded to Christ is a soul saved, but a life given to Him is a life saved. We are not rewarded at last for being saved, but for works done in His name and for His glory. It might help us to grasp the teaching of this portion more easily if we look at-

1. The Speaker. "Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow" (Acts 20:7). His stay at Troas was short, only "seven days," but it was a memorable time. Who could ever forget a sermon by Paul? When the soul of a preacher is aflame with heaven-born fire, the bread of life is sure to be served in season. It is possible even to preach the truth in such a way as to sicken even a hungry soul. The Gospel of the Love of God must be served hot if men are to receive it gladly. We feel perfectly sure that Paul would give no countenance to read sermons.

2. The Time. "The first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread." The "first day of the week," which is our Sabbath, is a day for which we should continually thank God. It is the memorial of Christ's resurrection, and the "breaking of bread" was the memorial of His death. Paul seems to have waited the whole week to get this opportunity of ministering the Word to them. Were there no Sabbaths, how few, even in our own Christian country, would ever think of going to hear the Word of God. Let us pray that the sanctity of it may be long preserved.

3. The Place. "The upper chamber, where there were many lights" (Acts 20:8). Ever since Pentecost, the disciples seem to have a special liking for the "upper room" (chap. Acts 1:13). Being an all-night meeting, they had need of lights, but perhaps the "many lights" suggests the willingness of all the disciples to provide abundance for the occasion. The natural consequence would be the heating of the atmosphere to an excessive degree, which may partly account for the window being open, and the sleepy young man falling over.

4. The Speech. "Paul continued his speech until midnight" (Acts 20:7), and after taking some refreshment, he "talked a long while, even till break of day" (Acts 20:11). The people who clamour for short sermons are not likely to be found at a midnight meeting. From the attitude of some modern church-goers, you would think that they look upon listening to the preaching of the Word of God as a kind of penance that should be made as short as possible. They are perfectly satisfied

with the smallest crumb of the heavenly bread for their souls, then they go home and have a dinner with five courses. It is quite true that there are some sermons long at five minutes, while others are short at fifty. Everything depends on the man and the message

5. The Interruption. "Eutychus sunk down with sleep and fell from the third loft" (Acts 20:9). This young man suffered severely for his "first sleep in the kirk;" he nearly lost his life. Are there not multitudes in our own days who are running the risk of losing their souls through the same drowsy habit, and with only about the tenth part of the provocation that befell Eutychus? Immediately Paul ran to the help of the unfortunate man, and by "embracing him" restored him again to consciousness, to the great comfort of the disciples. Are there not-in another sense-many fallen ones lying within our reach who might be restored to a new and better life if only they were embraced by the arms of Christian love and faith? We shall never be successful in "lifting the fallen" unless we can take them into the affections of our hearts. A PERSONAL TESTIMONY

Acts 20:13-27

Paul's company sailed into Assos, he arranged to meet them there, preferring himself to walk the distance, which was only a few miles; perhaps that he might have a quiet time of meditation by the way, or that he might have some further opportunity of preaching the Gospel. A true Christian can enjoy the presence of God in the highway, just as much as anywhere else. It is said of a certain man of God that he used to walk along the road with his hat off, so conscious was he of the nearness of the presence of the Lord. Paul faithfully kept his appointment, as every honourable man should, (Acts 20:14). There are some who always study to be late. If they cannot be notable in one way they will in another. It is he that is faithful in the least that will be honoured in the much. To save time they passed by Ephesus and halted at Miletus, from whence Paul sent for the Ephesian elders, that he might leave with them his last parting message. His words to them were in the form of a personal testimony. It was no egotism that moved the apostle to give them this perfect photograph of his own spiritual character as a servant of Christ. We feel profoundly thankful to him for it, as it gives us a true picture of what every servant of the Lord Jesus Christ should be. Let us carefully look at it.

1. He was Humble. "Serving the Lord with all humility" (Acts 20:19). There is no room for pride, or selfish boasting where the Spirit of the "meek and lowly in heart" rules. The Lord can never be served in any other way but in "all humility of mind." Brokenness of spirit is an essential condition even of fellowship with Him, and there can be no real service for Him out of the communion of the Holy Ghost. His humility is further seen in his working with his hands for the support of himself and those who were with him (Acts 20:34). He was not ashamed to call himself "the least of the apostles" and to declare that it was "by the grace of God I am what I am."

2. He was Compassionate. He served the Lord "with many tears and temptations" (Acts 20:19.) "He ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:31). Paul's ministry was not a cold, formal, glass-eyed business. His words were moist with the heart-dew of divine love and tenderness. Many preachers use the words "I tell you," but how few can add, "even weeping. " (Php_3:18). We might as well throw stones at the people, as heartless words of wisdom. The truth must be spoken in love. The man who cannot weep over the enemies of the Cross of Christ fails to make full proof of his ministry. We can weep over our own sorrows and losses, and if the interests of Jesus Christ were as real to us we would also weep over His. Servant of God, is your heart

right?

3. He was Faithful. "I kept back nothing that was profitable, " etc (Acts 20:20-21). He taught from house to house, both Jews and Greeks, preaching repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, and shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). Paul had no theories of man to defend, he had a revelation of God to declare. It is a most lamentable fact that one of the most prominent doctrines of this great apostle-repentance toward God-has almost died out of the modern sermon. To seek popularity, and the praise of men, instead of to declare the whole counsel of God, is to become a traitor to Christ, and a stumbling-block to the souls of men. Only the faithful shall be rewarded (Luke 19:17).

4. He was Submissive. "I go bound in spirit unto Jerusalem... but none of these things move me" (Acts 20:22-24). Although Paul had the witness of the Holy Ghost that "in every city bonds and afflictions waited for him, " there was no offence in his heart at this painful providence. In nothing that the finger of God touched was he offended. He believed that all things work together for good to them that love God (Romans 8:28) "Bonds and afflictions" are not in themselves evidences that we have erred, and so need them as chastisements; they are often conditions necessary to the discipline of the soul, for further and deeper experience of the things of God. Our Lord's sufferings were in no sense corrective, but served, in one way, as a background for the manifestation of His glorious character.

5. He was Devoted. "Neither count I my life dear unto myself, that I might finish the ministry... of the Gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24). To publish the Gospel of the grace of God was a thing more dear to Paul than bis own life. It was his meat and drink to do the will of his Redeemer and Lord. He could say, "To me to live is Christ." The Gospel is never preached as it ought to be, unless by those who are more desirous to glorify God than themselves. He who seeketh "great things for himself" is morally unfit for the service of Christ. If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself.

6. He was Courageous. "I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). No "fear of Man" could fetter the tongue of this faithful witness. A full-orbed Gospel had been revealed to him, and at any personal cost he was determined that not one ray of it should be hindered from shining through him. The perfect love with which the heart of Paul was filled cast out all fear. He loved the Lord Jesus Christ and the souls of men too intensely to keep back anything that was profitable (Acts 20:20). It is a base and false charity that shuns to declare the whole counsel of God.

FAITH AND FAILURE

Acts 21:1-36

"St. Paul was a great trader of Christ both by land and sea." So said John Trapp, and it is a most suggestive saying. No merchant could more urgently push his wares than Paul pushed the things of the Kingdom of God. Wherever he went, whatever he did, it was always as an ambassador for Christ. To him religion was no cloak, to be thrown off or on as occasion demanded. It was the bone and sinew and vital breath of his being. As Saul, he was crucified with Christ; as Paul, he had no existence but in Him and for Him. "To me to live is Christ." Note here some further things about him-

1. His Sorrowful Prospect. While on his way to Jerusalem, he was warned at least twice of dangers, and of certain imprisonment, if he should go there at that time (Acts 21:4-11). He knew before this-by the Holy Ghost-that bonds and afflictions awaited him in every city (Acts 21:20-23). In his unconverted days, he "profited much in the Jew's religion" (Galatians 1:14) in that he was honoured and praised of men; but all was sacrificed for Him, who had called him by His grace, and who had promised to show him what great things he must suffer for His sake. He was called into the fellowship of Christ's sufferings.

2. His Fearless Faith. Paul's reply to their united entreaty was short and decisive. "I am ready" (Acts 21:13). Ready, not only to be bound, but to die for the name of the Lord Jesus. The secret of peace and victory in the face of all trial and persecution is to connect the Name of the Lord Jesus with it. He who can say confidently, "Who shall separate me from the love of Christ?" will also be able to add "We are more than conquerors through Him." "I am ready." What a ring of unstaggering confidence there is in this. How much has been lost politically, commercially, morally, and spiritually for the want of being ready when the crisis came. It was "they that were ready" who went in when the Bridegroom came; they who were getting ready were shut out.

3. His Powerful Testimony. "He declared what things God had wrought among the Gentiles" (Acts 21:17-20). Having arrived at Jerusalem, and having been warmly welcomed by the brethren, Paul gave them another chapter out of his life's book, thrilling with the wonders of the grace of God. Those who by faith attempt much for God, will have experiences that will glorify God (Acts 21:20). If we would see the wonder-working power of God, we must needs "launch out into the deep"-into the deep of God's fathomless grace, and the unsearchable riches of His Son. Believe and thou shalt see.

4. His Compromising Meekness (Acts 21:21-26). Seeing that there were so many in Jerusalem who believed that Paul's teaching led the converts to "forsake Moses," the elders persuaded him to show his devotion to the law of Moses by shaving his head, and joining himself with those four men who were about to present themselves as observers of the law of the Nazarite (Numbers 6:13-18). This was intended to shut the mouths of those who madly cavilled against the apostle's preaching, and showed the great humility of Paul, when he submitted to it for their sakes. He was willing to be made all things.... that he might save some.

5. His Conspicuous Failure (Acts 21:27-31). The very means he used to disarm the enemy became the cause of offence. He had shaved his head through the fear of man; now he is caught in the snare. We cannot but think that, in his willingness to please the brethren, and perhaps to justify himself in the eyes of men, he for the time being failed to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made him free." But in any case trouble was sure to come upon him in Jerusalem, for the Holy Ghost had already witnessed to this, and the beloved Paul seemed in no way disappointed with the terrible consequences.

6. His Rescue by the Soldiers (Acts 21:32-36). This was a sad scene. The worshippers of the temple of God going about to kill him, whose body was the temple of the Holy Ghost. Religious formalists are always at war with the Spirit of God, for where the Spirit is there is liberty. The chains of the Roman soldiers were more merciful than the tongues of these hypocrites. But a man of God is immortal till his work is done.

PAUL'S DEFENCE. A GOSPEL.

Acts 22:1-21

Paul's life is an exhibition of what the grace of God can do. Even in the most trying and unexpected circumstances, he could possess his soul in patience. See his beautiful courtesy, "May I speak unto thee?" (Acts 21:37) and note his wonderful wisdom and courage when he asked, as a "Jew of Tarsus and a citizen of no mean city," he might be allowed to speak to the people What a blending of giant strength with childlike simplicity. Having received permission to speak from the stairs of the castle, he addresses the religious rabble, not as bloodthirsty enemies, but as "Men, brethren, and fathers." His defence takes the form of a personal testimony. He is not so anxious to justify himself before the people as to show them what great things God had done for him. He refers to himself here-

1. As a Learned Jew (Acts 22:3). He was no ignorant bigot, no prejudiced Gentile, but a Jew born in the famous free city of Tarsus, and educated at the feet of the great Gamaliel: a Hebrew of the Hebrews. Paul's natural gifts and high-class training made him one of those men that were not to be easily deceived.

2. As a Zealous Persecutor. "I persecuted this way unto the death" (Acts 22:4). This way refers to the way of Christians, the way he now walked. In carrying out the unenlightened conviction of his heart, he thought he ought to oppose the things connected with the name of Jesus (Acts 8:3). The "I thought" of the unregenerate man is always contrary to the mind of God. There is a religious enthusiasm that has not been kindled by the holy fire from heaven, but by the fire of hell.

3. As a Conquered Foe. "I fell unto the ground" (Acts 22:6-7). A sudden burst of soul-convicting light from the presence of the glorified Saviour, overwhelmed the haughty Saul; smiting him to the earth. What other power could have arrested such a sinner and subdued such a determinate will? When God speaks it is with convincing power. What can speak more effectively than light? By the light of His Word He still brings rebel souls to the dust. Is not My Word a hammer and a fire, saith the Lord. With this hammer God, the Spirit, can break the rocky heart to pieces.

4. As a Humble Inquirer. "And I answered, Who art Thou, Lord? . . . What shall I do, Lord?" (Acts 22:8-10). Those questions reveal a radical change in the mind and heart of Saul, but between the first and the second there comes the revelation of Jesus Himself to his soul. When anyone is ready to obey the light and the voice of God's Word they will not be left long in ignorance of the saving power of Jesus. But, Who art Thou? should be followed with, What shall I do? for we are saved to serve (Luke 1:74).

5. As a Comforted Believer. "Brother Saul, receive thy sight" (Acts 22:11-13). At first he "could not see, for the glory of that light" had blinded his eyes to every earthly object. The light of the glory of God is always an eye-blinding light to the glory of this world. "Brother Saul." How soothing this salutation would be, coming from the lips of the saintly Ananias; and as an evidence that the Lord, whom he had met, desired to bless him, he received his sight, a new sight for the new world into which he had now entered. With him old things had passed away, and all things had now become new.

6. As an Instructed Disciple. "God hath chosen thee, that thou shouldst know His will. . . and be His witness unto all men" (Acts 22:14-16) He was called to be a witness to the resurrection of Christ, as one born out of due season. The Gospel which he preached was not received of man, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:12). Through Ananias he learned more fully the purpose of God in calling him. Have we learned all that God, by His grace, means us to be and to do?

7. As a Divinely Commissioned Apostle (Acts 22:17-21) It was while praying in the temple that the vision of God came, saying, "Make haste..... out of Jerusalem..... Depart, for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles." Is it not usually while praying that the vision of God's will is made known? (Acts 9:11, Acts 9:30) Ask and ye shall receive. As a "chosen vessel," Paul was not sent on his own charges, but was filled with the wealth and power of the name of Jesus (Acts 9:15). He was divinely called, divinely commissioned, and divinely equipped. So is it with all the true servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. A DAY OF TRIAL AND A NIGHT OF CHEER

Acts 23:1-24

After spending a night in the rocky fortress of Antonia, Paul was brought down to answer for himself before the chief priests and all their council. The leading points in this portion will perhaps be more easily grasped if we put them thus-

1. An Honest Confession. "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day" (Acts 23:1). To have a conscience "void of offence toward God" was the constant ambition of the apostle (chap. Acts 24:16). There are some whose consciences are seared as with a red-hot iron, through their many refusals to obey the Word and will of God. A good "conscience" is one in perfect harmony with the mind of God, and is the guarantee of a blissful life.

2. A Holy Indignation "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall," etc. (Acts 23:2-4). This may seem harsh, but the pure righteous soul of the prisoner was so grieved that the man exalted to administer justice should, through personal hate, order him to be smitten "contrary to the law." The high priest's business was to condemn the wicked, and not to smite the righteous (Deuteronomy 21:5). We are told that in the beginning of the Jewish wars this same priest was actually smitten to death by a captain of the Jews.

3. A Skilful Attitude. "But when Paul perceived," etc. (Acts 23:6). Paul was a man whose eyes the Lord had opened, and so was quick to take in a situation. He was wise as a serpent, but not so poisonous, because he had also the harmlessness of the dove. In declaring himself a Pharisee, and a believer in the resurrection, he was stating that which was absolutely true, for none could be more jealous for the truth of God that he.

4. A Divided Jury. "There arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees" (Acts 23:7-10) Before this they both cried, "Away with this fellow from the earth," but now the Pharisees attempt to justify Paul by saying, "Perhaps an angel hath revealed it to him." This was also a side-thrust at the Sadducees, who denied the existence of angels and spirits. We have here an old exhibition of a modern sin, that of putting partyism, personal passions, and interests before the truth of God and the general cause of righteousness.

5. A Divine Encouragement. "The night following the Lord stood by him and said, Be of good cheer, Paul" (Acts 23:11). It was a blessed night, luminous with the glory of His presence, and his soul comforted with His word of promise. How easy it is for the faithful Saviour to meet the need of His suffering saint. He can speedily turn our prison house into a "palace beautiful" While Madame Guyon was lying in a French prison, she said "the very stones of her prison shone like rubies in her eyes." He knows how and when to speak a word to the weary.

6. A Dastardly Plot (Acts 23:12-15). These forty fanatics, who bound themselves neither to eat nor drink until they had killed Paul, doubtless thought that they were doing God's service, but such take good care never to consult God about it. There is no night black enough to hide such murderous plans from the eye of the Lord. The counsel of the wicked shall come to naught, their words shall not stand (Isaiah 8:10).

7. An Unexpected Discovery (Acts 23:16-24). This son of Paul's sister was a brave young lad. He evidently had overheard the plot, perhaps those cruel men were so intent on their fiendish purpose that they paid no heed to the boy near by. The boy heard, believed, and acted at once. To go up to the castle on a prisoner's behalf was a bold venture, but love constrained him. His timely effort was crowned with success. He was the means of saving the life of his beloved uncle. Procrastination is not only the "thief of time," but it is also the thief of souls and of heaven. What thou doest, do quickly.

PAUL BEFORE FELIX

Acts 24:1-27

The journey from Jerusalem to Caesarea was over sixty miles. To Paul it was a triumphal march out of the clutches of his would-be murderers. The Lord knows how to deliver the godly. Five days later the high priest with the elders, and the orator, Tertullus, arrived as the accusers of the prisoner. The priest and the elders had made the bullets, and hired this eloquent orator to fire them; but he missed the mark, for Felix had knowledge of "that way." Look at-

I. THE ACCUSATION.-After Tertullus had spoken some flattering words to the voluptuous Felix, he launched four terrible charges against the holy apostle. (1) A Pestilent Fellow. A man whose character is thoroughly diseased, and a danger to the morals of the people. (2) A Mover of Sedition. A disturber of the national peace, and an enemy to the Roman Government. (3) A Ringleader of the Nazarenes. A religious fanatic. A man who has gone crazy over the supposed resurrection of Jesus who was crucified. (4) A Profaner of the Temple. A rank heretic. A man who has no regard for the true worship of God. The charge was as foul as the prince of darkness could make it. The image of the "father of lies" was stamped upon it.

II. THE DEFENCE.-Paul makes no attempt to flatter the governor, but is glad to mention the fact that Felix had been for "many years a judge of the nation," and was well able to understand the nature of the case (Acts 24:10-11). (1) He Denies the Charge (Acts 24:12-13). What else could he do but hurl their hate-kindled darts back to their own bosoms with the challenge that they "cannot prove the things whereof they accuse me." (2) He makes a confession of his faith in the Word of God (Acts 24:14). Of his hope toward God, and the resurrection (Acts 24:15). Of the purity of his aim in seeking "always to have a conscience void of offence" (Acts 24:14). Because of the true, childlike simplicity of his character, Paul could not but speak out the deep and tender feelings of

his soul. These things formed the very tissue of his spiritual life. (3) He gives an Explanation (Acts 24:17-21). He tells, in simple, truthful language, what in reality did happen. The truth always suits best, and the honest and the upright love it.

III. THE DEFERMENT.-When Felix heard these things he made up his mind to do nothing till Lysias, the chief captain of the Roman band at Jerusalem, should come and explain matters more fully to him (Acts 24:22-23) Meanwhile Paul was to have liberty and the privilege of seeing the friends who may call on him The honest man has scored a victory.

IV. THE PRIVATE HEARING.-Felix, willing to entertain his wife, who was a Jewess, and also evidently believing that Paul's name was one to conjure with, sent for him, and had a private interview, which reveals: (1) A Courageous Prisoner. Called to explain to them the cause of his "faith in Christ," he did not fail to reason with them of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." He took this quiet opportunity to rebuke the noble sinners personally. Truly, he sought not great things for himself. (2) A Cowardly Judge. Although he trembled at the truthful words of his blameless prisoner, yet he "sent for him" and "bound him," just as he thought it might bring gain or honour to himself (Acts 24:26-27). But Paul lived before another Judge, whose mercy and grace had never failed him (Acts 23:1). Those who dare for Jesus Christ, can dare to stand alone. Felix was convicted-he trembled-but he was not converted. His conscience condemned him, but his stubborn will, through fear of man, or of woman, refused to yield. He proposed to consider this matter when he had a more convenient season. How readily we are to forget that there are two sides to a "convenient season." We cannot make a spring season at will. A fanner may have more time to sow his seed in the winter, but what would it profit him? The most convenient of all seasons for getting right with God, is when His Word is pricking us to the heart, and when we are trembling under the power of it.

PAUL'S APPEAL UNTO CAESAR

Acts 25:1-12

Paul had now been two years in prison. A new governor had just arrived (Festus) to take the place of Felix This was a new opportunity for those "Chief of the Jews" whose hearts were still full of murderous hate at the apostle, and they were quick to take advantage of it-

1. A Cunning Plot. They sought the favour of Festus that they might persuade him to send for Paul to Jerusalem, so that they might have a chance of killing him by the way (Acts 25:2-3). They were not privileged to kill Paul, but they were surely guilty of murder in the sight of God. "He that hateth his brother is a murderer." The Lord looketh upon the heart.

2. A Reasonable Proposal. It must have been very disappointing to these enemies of the apostle when Festus refused to yield to their sinister request (Acts 25:4-5). Caesarea, being the Roman headquarters, was the proper place for trial. As many of them as were able-having sufficient time and means-and we may add, sufficiently hardened in heart, could go with him and "accuse this man." But it was not justice these Jewish rulers wanted, it was the death of him who preached "Jesus and the Resurrection."

3. A Renewed Charge. The next day, after Festus arrived, Paul was brought out for the third time to be examined. The complaints of the Jews were many and grievous. They were as numerous

and as black as so many lying tongues could make them, but not one of them could they prove. It has been said that "truth seldom goes without a scratched face." He who Himself was the Truth had a face more marred than any man's. Those who live at enmity with God will always love the darkness rather than the light. Christ said they hated Me without a cause, and they will also hate you.

4. A Renewed Denial. All the vile charges they brought against Paul could not bring the faintest tremor to his heart, or blush of shame to his cheek; be had not "offended in anything at all." Those who live before God with a good conscience need fear no evil (chap. Acts 23:1), for greater is He that is in them than he that is in the world. It is the Spirit of God in the believer that wars against the wicked spirit that works in the children of disobedience (Ephesians 2:2).

5. A Strange Request. Festus said to Paul, "Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem to be judged?" Why does the judge ask the prisoner as to where he might be judged? He is now wavering, and, being desirous to favour the Jews, he becomes "double-minded and unstable in his ways" (Isaiah 1:6-8). Those who would have the light of truthfulness to shine in their lives must, in heart, walk in the light.

6. A New Weapon. When the wide-awake apostle saw that his judge was likely to be bribed over to the side of his bloodthirsty enemies, he unsheathed an unexpected, but mighty, weapon of defence. "I appeal unto Caesar." As a Roman citizen, not proved to be a criminal, he had this right. When Festus answered, "Unto Caesar shalt thou go," it was another victory for the man of God. The finger of God is clearly seen in this. Had not the Lord told him just a little while ago that he must witness of Him at Rome (chap. Acts 23:11). Now he has the promise of being taken there free of all charge, to preach the Gospel in Rome also. Truly, God moves in a mysterious way, making all things work together for good to them that love Him.

PAUL AS A WITNESS FOR GOD

Acts 26:1-32

When King Agrippa came to Caesarea to salute Festus, the new governor, he was told the story of Paul, the prisoner; how the charges brought against him had not been proven, and how he had "appealed to Caesar." Festus was quite pleased that Agrippa should hear him on the morrow, in the hope that this might help him out of the "unreasonableness" of sending a prisoner to Augustus without being able to "signify the crimes laid against him." So Paul is brought out once more and permitted to speak for himself. The apostle's defence was the story of his conversion-this was always his apologetic for Christianity. Like the sword of Goliath, "there is none like it." It so affected Festus that he thought Paul had gone mad through "much learning;" it so touched the conscience of Agrippa that he said, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Look at Paul's defence, then, as revealing the characteristics of a true Christian-

I. HE IS A CHANGED MAN (Acts 26:9-15).-Once he did many things contrary to the name of Jesus. Now he was His bond-slave. The change was radical and complete, wrought not by the will of the flesh, nor the will of man, but of God. He was born from above. No one can be a Christian without being "born again." A new nature is needed before we can see the things of the kingdom of God, or enjoy the fellowship of Christ, the only begotten of the Father.

II. HE IS AN EMPOWERED MAN.-Empowered by the Lord Jesus Christ to be a witness unto Him by opening the eyes of sin-blinded men, and turning them from the power of Satan unto God (Acts 26:16-18). God does not send us a warfare on our own charges (Acts 1:8). The evidence that a man is sent by God is that he does the work that none others can do by their own strength and wisdom. Signs must follow those who believe.

III. HE IS AN OBEDIENT MAN.-"I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision" (Acts 26:19). To be disobedient to the heavenly call is to seal our own spiritual doom. Neither did he dishonour Him who had called him by immediately conferring with flesh and blood (Galatians 1:15-16). He settled the matter right off with the Lord Himself as to what he would do.

IV. HE IS A DIVINELY HELPED MAN.- "Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day" (Acts 26:21-22). He had been often persecuted, but never forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed He had experienced the promise of his Lord-"I will never leave thee." Every faithful servant of Christ will be able, at the close of life, to raise an Ebenezer to the honour of His name. Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.

V. HE IS A DEVOTED MAN.-"Saying none other things than those. . . that Christ should suffer" (Acts 26:23). Paul was wholly yielded up to the interests of Christ and His cross. He meant it when he said," To me to live is Christ. I am determined to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Unless our lives are entirely yielded up to Him our testimony for Him will be powerless and fruitless.

VI. HE IS A MISUNDERSTOOD MAN.-Festus said, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad" (Acts 26:24). The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, they are foolishness unto him. To those who are in a perishing condition "the preaching of the cross is foolishness" (1 Corinthians 1:18). The disciple is not greater than his Lord Did they not say of Christ, He hath a devil and is mad? (John 10:20).

VII. HE IS A COURTEOUS MAN.-"I am not mad, most noble Festus." Honour to whom honour is due. The grace of God will always teach a man to be civil There is no man on earth who can better afford to honour the nobility than the Christian, for he himself has been exalted into the ranks of the blood-royal of heaven. Children of God.

VIII. HE IS A FAITHFUL MAN.-"King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets?" This personal appeal to the king must surely have come to him with startling suddenness, while it reveals the simple, fearless courage of the man whose heart God had transformed, and perhaps a real longing for the spiritual and eternal well-being of Agrippa. Paul had always an eye on his Master's business; pulling men out of the fire of sin.

IX. HE IS A SATISFIED MAN.-When Agrippa confessed that he was "Almost persuaded to be a Christian," see how quickly Paul shows him that it is the better part. "I would to God that thou and all... were altogether such as I am, except these bonds" (Acts 26:29). There was not a richer or happier man in Caesarea than Paul. The peace of God was in his heart, and the unsearchable riches of Christ were his.

PAUL'S SHIPWRECK, OR THE POWER OF FAITH

Acts 27:1-44.

The taking of Paul the apostle to Italy was one of the most important and far-reaching undertakings ever attempted by the powerful Government of Rome. The coming of that lonely prisoner was the coming of the Ambassador of Heaven to establish a new and everlasting kingdom among the Gentile nations of the earth. It was the planting of that new tree, the leaves of which will ultimately heal the nations. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth. We cannot go into detail here, but will seek some spiritual lessons from the outstanding features. We note-

I. A PERILOUS POSITION.-"Exceedingly tossed with tempest... neither sun nor stars. . . and all hope taken away" (Acts 27:17-20). We can scarcely imagine a more agonising predicament. Such is a true picture of those who have been awakened by the Holy Spirit to a real sense of their guilt and danger as sinners in the sight of God. Tossed with fear and alarm, without seeing any guiding light, and all hope of salvation taken away. At that time ye were without Christ, having no hope (Ephesians 2:12).

II. A MERCIFUL REVELATION.-"The angel of God stood by me, saying, Fear not, Paul. . God hath given thee all them that sail with thee" (Acts 27:23-24) The effectual, fervent prayer of this righteous man hath availed much (James 5:16). It was doubtless in answer to Paul's earnest pleadings that this answer was given. What a victory of faith it was. Are we not reminded here of God's answer to the cry of Christ's heart, "I will give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance?" All who sail in the same boat with Jesus Christ will be eternally given to Him.

III. A FAITHFUL PROCLAMATION.-"Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer, for I believe God" (Acts 27:22-25). It was a "glad and glorious Gospel" that Paul had to preach to those whose souls were sinking in despair It was, indeed, the Gospel of Salvation. "There shall be no loss of any man's life." It was a Gospel of certainty to Paul, for he adds, "I believe God that it shall be, even as it was told me." Such is the Gospel of Christ to all who, like Paul, have received it as a revelation from God. Only those who believe the Word of God have any Gospel of certain salvation to preach.

IV. A NECESSARY CONDITION.-"Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved" (Acts 27:31). Paul warns the soldiers that if the sailors are allowed to desert the ship, they could not be saved (Acts 27:30). There is no inconsistency between the sovereign grace of God and the responsibility of man in the use of prescribed means. The promise was that "all would be saved;" the condition was, "abiding" in the ship. The Gospel of Christ offers salvation to all, but the condition is, believe in Him and abide in Him.

V. A COMPASSIONATE EXHORTATION.- "Wherefore, I pray you to take some meat, for this is for your health" (Acts 27:34). No shepherd could be more careful over his flock than Paul is over those 276 fellow-passengers. He seeks not only their salvation, but their health and comfort. But God's order is salvation first, then health, and better houses if you will. The Holy Ghost is the agent in every God-sent revival, and He never begins with the social conditions of men, always with their sinful, sorrowful spirits. But here note that eating, as well as abiding, is a condition of full salvation. "Thy Word was found, and I did eat it."

VI. A WONDERFUL TRANSFORMATION.- "Then were they all of good cheer" (Acts 27:36). What a contrast between the experiences mentioned in verse 29, "all hope taken away," and Acts 27:36, "good cheer." What has made the difference? The promise of salvation. After they had got the assurance that none of them would perish, they were able to eat with gladness of heart. It is so

with all those who, by faith, receive the promise of God in Christ Jesus (Acts 16:31). Those who have had their feet taken out of the fearful pit of despair and planted upon the rock of God's Word will have the "good cheer" song put in their mouth (Psalms 40:2-3).

VII. A PERFECTED SALVATION.-"And so it came to pass that they escaped all safe to land" (Acts 27:44). Not all in the same way; not all at the same time; but all enjoyed the fulfilment of the same promise of deliverance. If they had not been obedient and abode in the ship, they would not have got the "boards" and "broken pieces" to float them ashore. It is always safe to trust God and obey His will. "None perish that Him trust." Christ shall lose none of those whom the Father hath given Him (John 6:39); in some way or other all shall come safely to the heavenly land. But how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation. From Paul's action at this crisis we may learn the value and power of individual faith in God.

PAUL AMONG THE BARBARIANS

Acts 28:1-10

"They all escaped to land." This seems to have been the third time that Paul had "suffered shipwreck" (2 Corinthians 11:25). There are few who have ever had such vivid glimpses of heavenly things as Paul, and few who have ever had to suffer so much for the cause of Christ. It would appear that every new spiritual experience needs its counterbalance of suffering. We observe here-

I. UNEXPECTED KINDNESS.-"The barbarous people showed us no little kindness" (Acts 28:2). Although the inhabitants of this island were not Romans, they were not savages. They had the "milk of human kindness" in their hearts. The fire was a welcome sight to those who had just come out of the sea into the drenching rain and biting cold. The Lord has many a way of scattering crumbs of comfort to those who fear His name (John 21:9). Doubtless Paul looked upon this fire as if it had been kindled by the hand of Jesus Christ.

II. HUMBLE SERVICE.-"Paul gathered a bundle of sticks." The great apostle of the Gentiles did not think it beneath him to go a-searching for fuel to help to dry the clothes of those soldiers and sailors who were his companions in tribulation. He had learned from his Master that the way to be greatest of all is to be the servant of all. The deeper our experience is of the greatness of God's grace the more generous and attentive shall we be to those little things that minister to the good of others. Paul did not need to be told to "mend the fire" before he did it. "Consider one another to provoke unto love and good works."

III. ANOTHER TRIAL.-"There came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand, and he shook off the beast into the fire." Why should the self-humbling effort of the apostle to comfort others be rewarded with the sudden grip of a poisonous viper? Why? Paul does not know, but he believes that "all things work together for good to them that love God." Those who would sacrifice themselves for the warming up of their shivering fellow-creatures need not be surprised although the heat should bring to life some torpid snake that will seek to fasten itself to that hand of mercy. Is it a temptation to sin, either in thought or act, shake the slimy thing off into the fire from whence it came, and possess your soul in patience.

IV. FALSE JUDGMENT.-These islanders, judging by appearance, thought first that Paul must be a murderer, then they believed him to be a god (Acts 28:4-6). When the viper succeeded in catching him, they condemned him, but when he conquered the viper they adored him. There is not much between the frown and the favour of those who know not the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. The world is always ready to applaud those who succeed, and is quick to believe in the worthlessness of the man who happens to become the prey of that venomous snake called calumny. It was such a viper that came out of the heat and fastened on Joseph while in Potiphar's house, but he shook if off, and felt no harm (Genesis 39:13-14). The devil often spoils his pictures by using a brush that is too big.

V. GENEROSITY REWARDED.-Publius was entertaining an angel unawares when he received Paul and lodged him and others for three days (Acts 28:7). He was amply recompensed for his kindness in the healing of his father by this mysterious prisoner. In some way or other God will compensate those who give even a cup of cold water to His disciple. Paul the prisoner was still Paul the apostle. No circumstance in which he was placed could ever mar his authority or stain the purity of his apostolic mantle.

VI. NEEDS SUPPLIED.-"They honoured us, and laded us with such things as were necessary" (Acts 28:10). They had lost their all by the shipwreck, but now, because of the merciful wonder-working power of Paul, all their needs for the journey to Rome were supplied. Truly the presence of this man of God among them was the salt that saved them from the corruption of death. The ungodly do not know how much they owe to the presence of those who believe in God. Judgment could not fall upon Sodom until Lot was taken out (Genesis 19:22). When the "preacher of righteousness" was shut up in the ark then the flood came.

PAUL'S MINISTRY IN ROME

Acts 28:11-31

The entrance of Paul into Rome, although unknown and unheeded by the multitude, was a greater event than the coming of an army of soldiers or the arrival of a fleet of battleships. He was as a corn of wheat cast into the ground to die, but destined to bring forth such fruit as would be a blessing to the nations of the earth. The possibilities of one single life, wholly yielded to God, and possessed by His Holy Spirit, are, for us, incalculable. Paul's life and testimony have been given as an example to them who should hereafter believe (Php_3:17).

I. THE CHEERING SALUTATION.-When Paul saw the brethren who had come to meet him, "he thanked God, and took courage" (Acts 28:15). Appii Forum is about twenty-seven miles from Rome, but some of the weaker brethren could only go the length of "the Three Taverns," a distance of seventeen miles. The angel-like ministry of encouraging the hearts of God's tried and suffering servants is quite within the reach of all the brethren who care to make a little self-sacrifice for their sakes. Don't wait till they come to you for sympathy, go and meet them. There are wonderful comfort and consolation in mutual faith and love (Romans 1:12).

II. THE PRELIMINARY CONFERENCE.- After three days Paul, who was "suffered to dwell by himself, called the chief of the Jews together," etc. (Acts 28:16-22). Although he had suffered so much at the hands of his Jewish brethren, yet his heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel was that they might be saved (Romans 10:1). He tells them of his sufferings in Jerusalem, and the

reason why he was "bound with this chain." They had heard about this sect that was "everywhere spoken against," and were desirous of hearing from his own lips what he had to say about it. No man on earth could better tell them the story of the Gospel of Salvation.

III. THE STORY TOLD.-On the day appointed for this special purpose "there came many to him into his lodging," etc. (Acts 28:23). Has there ever been anywhere such a "lodging-house" gathering as this? A prison turned into a church, the prisoner the preacher; the subjects were "The Kingdom of God and the Things Concerning Jesus." The arguments are drawn from Moses and the prophets, and the sermon lasted "from morning till evening." Once more, note that Paul, ever since his conversion, knew nothing among men save Christ and Him crucified. Why should it be otherwise with preachers now?

IV. THE DIFFERENT RESULTS.-"Some believed, and some believed not" (Acts 28:24). Yes, thank God, "some believed." Wherever Christ is faithfully preached some will believe and be saved, while others will prefer, through unbelief, to remain vessels of wrath, instead of being changed into vessels of mercy. The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness. No matter how clearly the word of salvation is preached, it will not profit unless the hearing of it is mixed with faith (Hebrews 4:2). By grace are ye saved through faith.

V. THE FINAL MESSAGE.-These are solemn and decisive words recorded in Acts 28:25-29. They contain Paul's last words of warning and rebuke to his impenitent brethren according to the flesh. They had eyes and ears, but they failed to use them in a proper manner, because their heart had become gross and sensual through pride and self-righteousness (Acts 28:27). There are none so blind as those who don't want to see. Those who have "pleasure in unrighteousness" will not believe the truth, but will readily believe a lie unto their own condemnation (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12).

VI. THE TWO YEARS' MINISTRY.-For two whole years in his own hired house, and with a soldier to guard him, Paul kept an open door for inquirers after the "things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ." With all confidence he preached, "no man forbidding him." Here several of Paul's richest epistles were written. How much the Church of God owes to Paul's imprisonment eternity alone can reveal. It was out of Bedford jail that Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" came. It is often out of the depths of our deepest trials that our richest fruits are found.

Romans

JUSTIFICATION

Romans 3-5

In the book of Job (chap. Job 25:4) this great question is asked:. "How can a man be justified with God?" And in these chapters before us we have a clear and decided answer. The importance of the question demands a plain heart-satisfying answer. The question is often asked: "How can a man get on best in the world?" How can a man be healthy? How gain the favour and patronage of men? How can a man be happy? etc. But when a man discovers himself a guilty sinner before God his question is: "How can a man be justified?" We shall try and answer this question by asking a few others.

I. Do all Men Alike Need to be Justified? In Romans 3 we read, "All are under sin" (Romans 3:9); "All the world guilty" (Romans 3:19); "All have come short" (Romans 3:23). "The portrait of both Jew and Gentile under the law is distinctly drawn in Romans 3:10-18. And the result sought is "every mouth stopped," every conscience smitten, every soul guilty before God. Each one believing and becoming subject to the judgment of God (see margin). All must be justified alike, for all are condemned alike, "for there is no difference" (Romans 3:22).

II. What is it to be Justified? In these chapters we notice a sevenfold blessing possessed by the justified. Taking the facts as we find them, they are these- 1. To be justified is to be FORGIVEN (chap. Romans 4:7-8).

2. To be justified is to be SAVED FROM WRATH (chap. Romans 5:9).

3. To be justified is to be RECKONED RIGHTEOUS (chap. Romans 4:9).

4. To be justified is to have PEACE WITH GOD (chap. Romans 5:1).

5. To be justified is to REJOICE IN HOPE (chap. Romans 5:2).

6. To be justified is to POSSESS THE LOVE OF GOD (chap. Romans 5:5).

7. To be justified is to be RECONCILED TO GOD (chap. Romans 5:10). In view of these precious blessings, what is it not to be justified? The difference is as far apart as light and darkness, Heaven and Hell.

III. Who is it that God Justifieth? "Oh," says the wisdom of man, "I believe God justifies the good and the godly." But what saith the Scriptures? "He justifieth the ungodly" (chap. Romans 4:5). "For Christ died for the ungodly" (chap. Romans 5:6). "He came to save sinners." So "while we were sinners Christ died for us (chap. Romans 5:8). He came not to call the righteous, therefore how could God justify them, whom Christ had not called? Man must take his place in the ranks of the ungodly before he can be justified in God's sight. It is very humbling, but it is the "bowed down" He raiseth up.

IV. How can God Justify the Guilty? Jesus was delivered for our offences, and raised for our justification (chap. Romans 4:25). God hath set Jesus forth to be a propitiation that He might be just and the Justifier of him which believeth on Jesus (chap. 25, 26). God can justify the guilty, because atonement has been made for them (chap. Romans 5:11). The propitiation was God's own appointment. He Himself paid the price of atonement (Exodus 30:15); and that price having been fully paid, He is just in justifying the believers in Jesus. Man's guilt is first forgiven, then God can righteously justify. He cannot justify men in an ungodly state, it is the believers in Jesus He justifies, for when we believe in Him we are forgiven and so fit to be justified.

V. Will a Man not be Justified by his Good Works? "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight" (chap. Romans 3:20). If a man does as well as he can (and who does that?) will he not be justified? Yes, in the sight of men (James 2:21), but not in the sight of God. "If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory (in the sight of men), but not before God" (chap. Romans 4:2). There can be no good works in God's sight unless they come from a good heart. And the fact that a man trusts his own goodness instead of God's proves that his heart is still at enmity against Him.

VI. In what Way does God Justify a Man? He justifies him judicially, as by His own righteous act as Judge, the moment he believes in Jesus as his atoning Substitute. But there are three words that occur ten times in this fourth chapter that clearly express the nature and manner of this justification. These words are, "counted," "reckoned," "imputed." Thus the righteousness of God is counted, reckoned, imputed to the believer. In the same sense as our sins were laid on or imputed to Christ. It is wholly a Divine reckoning. This righteousness is "upon all that believe" (chap. Romans 3:22) just as surely as He bore our sins in His own body. Where is feeling then? It is excluded. The question is: What hath the Lord done?

VII. Can a Man be Justified by simply Believing? Yes, completely, at once, and for ever-and in no other way. God justifies the believer in Jesus (chap. Romans 3:26). Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith (chap. Romans 3:28). Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God (chap. Romans 5:1). Abraham believed God, and it was counted for righteousness (chaps. Romans 4:3-16; Romans 3:22; Acts 13:39). The believing is ours, the counting is God's. By faith we count on God's Word being true, and act accordingly. He that does not reckon on this is an unbeliever; and he that believeth not is condemned already (John 3:18).

JOY IN GOD

Romans 5:11

"Joy" has been defined as the "smile of happiness, and the flower of glory." This joy is-

I. Needed. There is room for a broader "smile of happiness" on the countenance of our life and work. But the smile may be on the face while an aching sorrow is in the heart. This joy comes through the experience of God's salvation, but how possible it is to know God, and yet, like David, to lose the "joy of His salvation" (Psalms 51:12). Where there is spiritual bondage there can only be a joyless testimony. It is when the captivity of the soul is turned back that the joy becomes so great; then we are like men that dream (Psalms 126:1).

II. Possible. It is the will of Christ that His joy should be in us (John 15:11). Christ's joy was the joy of conscious fellowship with the Father. This "oil of joy" is a blessed substitute for the spirit of heaviness. No Christian worker should be without it. Even when he goes forth weeping, bearing precious seed, he knows that he will doubtless come back rejoicing, bringing sheaves with him (Psalms 126:5-6). Peter and John found this joy possible even while suffering shame for the Name and cause of Jesus Christ (Acts 5:41; see Acts 16:25).

III. Conditional. It is joy "in the Lord" (Isaiah 61:10). It is not joy in ourselves, in anything we have or are. It is joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained reconciliation (Romans 5:11). This holy gladness can come from no other, source, and from no other condition. There is a joy that is like beauty in a face, it is attractive, but only skin deep: this joy is as deep as the heart of the Eternal God; it is joy unspeakable and full of glory (1 Peter I. 8). To rejoice in the Lord is to be joyful- 1. In His NAME. His Name stands for all that He is in His essential character (Psalms 20:5).

2. In His WORK. The redeemed of the Lord shall come with singing, and everlasting joy upon their head (Isaiah 51:11).

3. In His WORD. When His words are believed the soul must rejoice, as one who has found great treasure (Nehemiah 8:12).

IV. Effectual. It is "your strength" or "stronghold" (r.v., margin). Joy is strength, in the same sense in which despair is weakness. Joy in the Lord is one of the most aggressive of all spiritual forces. It was D. L. Moody who said that "God never uses a discouraged man." This joy is a power, because it is the evidence of a life happily adjusted to the perfect will of God. This strength is needed to overcome the manifold temptations that are ever at hand (James 1:1-3), and to uphold when we are made partakers of the sufferings of Christ (1 Peter 4:13). If joy in the Lord is to make us strong, then let us rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, rejoice. The Lord Himself fulfil His joy in us for His own Name's sake (John 17:15). THE BELIEVER'S RELATIONSHIPS

Romans 6.

This chapter explains the "death and life" character of the Christian. The beginning, the cause, and effect of both are clearly stated. To the unspiritual this statement is full of inexplicable riddles. And even to many who know Christ it is full of mysteries. To those who are taught of the Spirit it is an exact portrait of the birth and life of the new inner man. It teaches- I. The Believer's Relationship to Christ. This connection is of the closest possible kind. It implies-

1. DEATH WITH CHRIST. "Crucified with Him" (Romans 6:6). "Baptised into His death" (Romans 6:3). "By one Spirit are we all baptised into one body" (1 Corinthians 12:13). Our first connection with Christ is with His death. Our first dealings with God must be as a sinner. Life for God implies the death of self. "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live." The question of sin must be settled first. It is settled for us in our identity with His death.

2. BURIAL WITH CHRIST. "Therefore we are buried with Him" (Romans 6:4). When a man is buried he is supposed to be out of sight, and on the fair way soon to be beyond all possibility of identification. If the death has not been real the burial will not take place. We don't bury as long as there is a spark of life remaining. So the old man will not be put out of sight as long as he lives.

You might try to hide him and conceal his working, but if he is not dead he will be seen or heard somehow.

3. RESURRECTION WITH CHRIST. "Like as Christ was raised from the dead so we also" (Romans 6:4). Resurrection can only follow where death has taken place. The power of the old life must go before the new can come; and this new life is wholly from God. It is a being born from above, a new creation. "You hath He quickened who were dead." As surely as we have been dead and buried, so surely are we risen. "Passed from death into life" (John 5:24).

4. LIKENESS TO CHRIST. "We shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection" (Romans 6:5). This resurrection likeness is the result of being planted in the likeness of His death. If we have not felt the pangs of crucifixion we cannot have the resurrection image, any more than we can have day without night. This is the Divine likeness, the likeness of a conqueror, one endued with power.

II. The Believer's Relation to Sin. It is-

1. THE RELATIONSHIP THAT LIFE HAS TO DEATH. "Reckon yourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God" (Romans 6:11). Sin is not dead, but the believer is to be dead to it. Death puts an end to fellowship in this life. There is a great gulf fixed between the living and the dead. No passing from one to another. So ought it to be with the Christian and sin.

2. THE RELATIONSHIP THE ACQUITTED HAVE TO THE BROKEN LAW. "He that is dead is freed (justified) from sin" (Romans 6:7). When a man has been acquitted before the Court, the law has no more claim on him. So the believer has been liberated from the claims of sin. The claims of the law end in death. Having therefore died in Christ, we are justified from sin. It will still make demands, but, remember, ye are free (Romans 6:18).

3. THE RELATIONSHIP THE VICTOR HAS TO THE VANQUISHED. "Sin shall not have dominion over you" (Romans 6:14). It is a foe disarmed, a king dethroned; as one whose power and authority are destroyed, but whose nature remains unchanged and unchangeable. A frozen serpent (that is powerless until warmed), over which we have the mastery and can easily destroy. Sin was once our master, but we must no longer "obey it" (Romans 6:12).

III. The Believer's Relationship to Service. It is-

1. ONE OF PERSONAL SURRENDER. "Yield yourselves unto God" (Romans 6:13). They first gave themselves unto the Lord. The whole man, with his affections and desires, must be consecrated to God. Some are prepared to yield time and money, but still reserve themselves for themselves. Your members are to be yielded as His servants to righteousness (Romans 6:19).

2. ONE OF HEARTY OBEDIENCE. "Ye have obeyed from the heart" (Romans 6:17). There can be no true service without hearty obedience. There is much service done to please man. God looketh upon the heart. If a man has not obeyed the doctrine of Christ he cannot be a servant of Christ. His truth and work go together.

3. ONE OF SINGLENESS OF PURPOSE. "Become servants to God" (Romans 6:22). "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as unto the Lord." Call no man master in this matter. If a believer has got the single eye, where is man-pleasing? There is often a wide difference between men-pleasers and God-pleasers. "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price." NO

CONDEMNATION

Romans 8:1

I. What? "No condemnation!" What a happy privilege! What a blessed hope! All the black dread past blotted out. Blessed are the people that are in such a case.

II. When? "Now." "There is therefore now no condemnation." Then this great blessing may be enjoyed in this present life. We may walk through this world of sin and sadness with the assurance in our hearts that we are forgiven, and that our sins have already been judged, and that the night of guilt is passed and the day of peace hath dawned in the soul.

III. Why? Because "In Christ Jesus." He is the Refuge of the soul. God is our refuge and strength. Here the soul is as secure as Noah was in the ark. To be "in Christ" is to be cleansed from all sin, and wrapt up in the centre of God's eternal purposes. To be in Him is to be a branch in the True Vine, fitted to bear fruit. In Christ, we are complete, for He is made of God unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30). In Him, we are not found with our own righteousness, but clothed upon with the beauty of the Lord. If any man be in Christ he is a new creation, therefore there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT

Romans 8:2.

The law of the Spirit is as certain as the law of gravitation. He has His fixed method of operation, although, like the wind, He goeth where He listeth.

I. Its Nature. "It is the law of life." "The law of the Spirit of life." The law of the living One. It is the Spirit that quickeneth. The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life. The moral law cannot give life, its force is only felt in making sin exceeding sinful. "I through the law am dead" (Galatians 2:19).

II. Its Sphere of Action. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." This law of life can only operate through the Prince of Life. The living truth of God comes to us through Him who is the Word of God (John 3:34). The Spirit of the Lord was upon Him to preach good tidings to the meek. The last Adam was made a life-giving Spirit (1 Corinthians 15:45).

III. Its Power. "Hath made me free from the law of sin and death." The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus is mightier than the law of sin and death, bringing deliverance and freedom. Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free" (Galatians 5:1). Having been made free from sin, it is that we might become servants to God (Romans 6:18-23). The sting of death is sin, but thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:56-57). THE CONDEMNATION OF SIN

Romans 8:3

I. The Weakness of the Law. "What the law could not do." The law can do much for it is "holy, just, and good," but it cannot forgive sin. It is utterly weak to justify a sinner. "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified." The law made nothing perfect (Hebrews 7:18).

II. The Love of God. "God sending His own Son." In this was manifested the love of God toward us (1 John 4:9). Who can measure the depths of this love in allowing His "Only Beloved" to be identified with human sin and guilt (John 3:16).

III. The Grace of Christ. "His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh." What grace is this on the part of the Son! "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us... full of grace and truth. Although in the form of God, and equal with God, He made Himself of no reputation... and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Php_2:6-8). By grace are ye saved.

IV. The End of Sin. "And condemned sin in the flesh." By the offering of His body as a sacrifice, He hath finished transgression and made an end of sin as an obstacle in man's way to God. "He was made sin for us...that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (Hebrews 10:10). Sin was condemned in Him that we might be justified in Him. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE LAW

Romans 8:4-5

I. Its Character. The law is righteous, and demands righteousness. It is "Holy, just, and good." It is an expression of the righteousness of God. By the law is the knowledge of sin. They are ignorant of God's righteousness who seek to establish their own.

II. Its Fulfilment. "The law might be fulfilled in us." Fulfilled by our submitting to the righteousness of God in Christ, for He is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. Love is the fulfilling of the law. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness. We can only be made the righteousness of God in Him, who was made sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21).

III. The Condition. "Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." They who would rejoice in Christ Jesus can have no confidence in the flesh (Php_3:3). To walk after the Spirit is to walk in the mind of Jesus Christ. Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. Those led by the Spirit are not under the law. Walk in the Spirit and the righteousness of the law will be abundantly fulfilled in you, for the fruit of the Spirit which is "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control," will be manifested. Surely the law could not have a better fulfilment than this. These are not works, but the fruit of the indwelling Spirit (Galatians 5:16-25). Those created after the Spirit will mind the things of the Spirit (Romans 8:5). THE CARNAL AND SPIRITUAL MINDS

Romans 8:6-7

I. The Carnal Mind. "The carnal (or fleshly) mind is death." There is absolutely nothing in it that is pleasing to God. He that soweth to this fleshly mind shall reap corruption, the proof of death. They that are in the flesh cannot please God. The carnal mind is not death in a passive sense, for it is even worse than that, it is "enmity against God," and so very bitter that it cannot possibly be subject to the law of God (Romans 8:7). A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit. The only cure for the carnal mind is crucifixion. Saul was delivered from his fleshly mind when he said, "What wilt Thou have me to do?" "I am crucified with Christ."

II. The Spiritual Mind. "To be spiritually minded is life and peace." It is the evidence of a great change. Life and peace are the results of this new Spirit-creation. The enmity has been slain by the Cross. They now sow to the Spirit and reap life everlasting. The spiritual mind is a mind

illumined by the Spirit of truth, enjoying the love of God, and seeking the carrying out of His purposes. They are alive unto God, and thus members are yielded to Him as instruments of righteousness (Romans 6:11-13). It is the good tree that cannot bring forth evil fruit (Matthew 7:18). It is a condition of life in Christ and peace with God. IN THE SPIRIT

Romans 8:8-9

I. Not in the Flesh. "Ye are not in the flesh," although still in the body. They that are in the flesh (carnal mind) cannot please God, for they are in a state of death (Romans 8:6). Ye are not in that condition, for ye have passed from death into life, being born of God.

II. In the Spirit. Not in the fleshly mind is to be in the spiritual mind. Not to have the Spirit of Christ is to be none of His. The flesh stands for sinful, helpless man the Spirit is the holy, mighty, life-giving One. To be in the Spirit is to be in God, bound up in the bundle of the living ones.

III. The Spirit in You. "If so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16). After that ye believed ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts (Galatians 4:6). The indwelling Spirit is the secret of Divine wisdom and power. He is able to work the good will of God in the heart and through the life. If the Spirit of God who leads into all truth, is in you, then you need not that any man teach you (1 John 2:27). THE RESURRECTING SPIRIT

Romans 8:10-11

I. The Cause of Death. "Sin." "The body is dead because of sin." Sin was the death of the soul, it is also the death of the body. In Christ Jesus both soul and body will yet be delivered from its power (John 11:25-26).

II. The Secret of Life. "The Spirit is life because of righteousness." The Spirit brings life because it brings the soul of the believer into rightness of relationship with God. "He that is joined unto the Lord is one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:17).

III. The Abode of the Spirit. "The Spirit that raised up Jesus dwell in you." When Christ was restored to the home of His Father's bosom, the Holy Spirit came to seek a home in the hearts of those redeemed by His blood. "He shall abide with you for ever."

IV. The Relationship Between the Spirit and Christ. "If Christ be in you...His Spirit dwelleth in you." The indwelling or abiding of Christ in the Spirit is often spoken of as synonymous. "Strengthened by His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith" (Ephesians 3:16-17). The precious truth is this, that Christ's presence and power is realised by us in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us. Hear what the Spirit saith.

V. The Power of the Spirit. We are taught here that-

1. HE RAISED UP CHRIST FROM THE DEAD. He was put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit (1 Peter 3:18). This same mighty Spirit who hath quickened us into newness of life quickened Him.

2. HE SHALL ALSO QUICKEN YOUR MORTAL BODIES. He who raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise us up also (2 Corinthians 4:14). This corruptible must put on incorruption. The Holy Spirit, who hath begun the good work in us, will perfect that which concerneth us, even our mortal bodies. By the same Spirit shall they be changed like unto His own glorious body (2 Corinthians 5:4-5). THE NEW LIFE

Romans 8:12-14

I. This is a Life not After the Flesh. "We are debtors not to live after the flesh." Fleshly wisdom or energy could never produce such a life. It is a life which ye have from God. Born of God.

II. This Life Owes Nothing to the Flesh. "We are debtors not to the flesh." It received nothing from the flesh, gave nothing to it. The new man owes the old man nothing. Let the time past suffice for the will of the flesh.

III. This is a Life Opposed to the Flesh. "Mortify the deeds of the body." The salvation brought to us by the grace of God teaches us to deny all ungodliness. Paul kept his body under lest he should be cast aside as a useless weapon (1 Corinthians 9:2-7).

IV. This Life should be in the Power of the Spirit. "If ye through the Spirit." In yielding to the Spirit we shall obey the truth, thereby our souls shall be purified (1 Peter 1:22). This is God's great purpose concerning us (2 Thessalonians 2:13).

V. This Life is to be Under the Control of the Spirit. "Led by the Spirit." When the Spirit comes within us it is that we might "walk in His ways" (Ezekiel 36:27). He will guide you into all truth.

VI. This is to be a Life of Fellowship. "Sons of God." Beloved now are we the sons of God. Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, and in the Communion of the Holy Ghost. THE PRIVILEGES OF SONSHIP

Romans 8:15-17

In our present condition we are very slow to apprehend all that is meant by being "Sons of God."

I. Sons are Delivered from Bondage. "They have not received the spirit of bondage." The fear of the law has been taken away (Exodus 20:18-19). As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse. Perfect love casteth out fear.

II. Sons have the Spirit of Adoption. "We have received the Spirit of adoption." They are not only adopted, but they have the true Spirit of children born of God.

III. Sons Acknowledge the Father. "We cry Abba Father." I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, the Maker and Lord of all is my Father.

IV. As Sons they have the Witness of the Spirit. "The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God" (1 John 5:10).

V. As Sons they are Heirs of God. "If children, then heirs." Having been joined to Christ they become jointheirs with Christ, and He is "Heir of all things." All things are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

VI. As Sons they Suffer with Him. "If so be that we suffer with Him." The disciple is not greater than his Lord. If ye be reproached for the Name of Christ, happy are ye.

VII. As Sons they shall be Glorified with Him. "Glorified together." The Head and the members are not separated in suffering, nor in glory. The will of Christ the Son has made this sure (John 17:24). Having been made partakers of the divine nature they shall also be made partakers of His heavenly glory. THE FUTURE MANIFESTATION

Romans 8:18-25

I. It is a Great Reality (Romans 8:18-19). "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." Just now the world knoweth us not as it knew Him not. When He shall appear then shall we appear with Him.

II. It will be the Deliverance of Creation from Bondage (Romans 8:21). When Adam sinned the ground was cursed for his sake. At the appearing of the Second Adam, the Lord from Heaven, the curse will be rolled away.

III. It will have an Effect in every Creature (Romans 8:22, margin). The glorious manifestation of the sons of God will herald the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to every creature.

IV. It will be the Redemption of the Body (Romans 8:23). The sealing of the Holy Spirit is until the day of Redemption, when we shall have a body like unto His own glorious body (Php_3:20-21).

V. It is a Time Earnestly Longed for (Romans 8:23). We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Spirit and the Bride say. Come, and let him that heareth of the Coming Saviour say Come. Come, Lord Jesus-Come quickly.

VI. The Prospect of it gives Joy in Suffering (Romans 8:18). Our present affliction is light, knowing that it worketh for us an eternal weight of glory while we look at the things which are unseen. Like Moses let us have respect unto the recompense of reward, and endure as seeing Him who is invisible. The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. THE PLEADING SPIRIT

Romans 8:26-27

I. The Spirit is Needed. "We know not what we should pray for as we ought." Without the guiding Spirit the Lord would need to be saying to us continually what He said to the mother of Zebedee's children, "Ye know not what ye ask."

II. The Spirit Helpeth our Infirmities. He imparts the needed wisdom whereby we may know our need and Christ's fullness.

III. The Spirit Maketh Intercession for the Saints. It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. The indwelling Spirit pleads for the saint before both God and men. Being filled with the Spirit is the sure way to prevail, both in prayer and testimony.

IV. The Spirit Maketh Intercession with Groanings. The groanings of the Spirit are often realised by a soul thirsting for God in silently waiting before Him in the unspeakable solemnity of holy adoration.

V. The Spirit Maketh Intercession According to the Will of God. What was true of the Son is also true of the Spirit. Him God heareth at all times, because He delights to do His will. If we are "praying always in the Spirit" we are praying always according to the will of God. If we ask anything according to His will He heareth us. Believe in the Holy Ghost.

VI. The Searcher of Hearts Knoweth what is the Mind of the Spirit. Solomon says: "The prayer of the upright is the Lord's delight." How will He delight, then, in the prayer of the Holy Spirit! The great Heart-Searcher looks for the mind of the Spirit in us. Let our wills to Him be given. THE ALL-SUFFICIENT PROMISE

Romans 8:28

I. To Whom it is given.

1. TO THE LOVING ONES. "To them that love God." We love Him because He first loved us. He seeks first, not the work of our hands, but the love of our hearts.

2. TO THE CALLED ONES. "To them who are the called according to His purpose." "Beloved of God called to be saints." Make your calling sure (2 Timothy 1:9).

II. The Nature of It. It is- 1. GREAT. "All things." All things that pertain to life and godliness are included here. "All things are yours."

2. ACTIVE. "All things work." In the kingdom of grace everything is constantly on the move for the believer's good. As in the material world, there is no standing still here.

3. HARMONIOUS. "All things work together." There is no jarring or irregularities where all is working according to His purpose. All is right for the called of God, even when it seems most wrong. "Believe ye that I am able to do this?"

4. PRECIOUS. "All things work together for good." Jacob said, "All these things are against me," but they were all for good (Genesis 50:20). Have faith in God.

5. SURE. "We know." We know, because we know the faithfulness of the God in whom we trust. Faithful is He that hath promised. And because we know, our hearts are kept in perfect peace with regard to things present and things to come. "My grace is sufficient for you." THE ETERNAL PURPOSE I. The Great Purpose of God.

1. THAT HIS SON SHOULD BE THE FIRSTBORN among many brethren. He humbled Himself, but God hath highly exalted Him. In all things He must have the pre-eminence.

2. THAT BELIEVERS SHOULD BE CONFORMED to the image of His Son. As His workmanship, we are created in Christ Jesus, who is the image of the invisible God. Be not conformed to the world.

II. The Footsteps of Grace. It is profoundly interesting to notice the workings of infinite love on the way out to seek and save the lost.

1. FOREKNOWN. "Whom He did foreknow." "I knew thee before thou earnest forth" (Jeremiah 1:5). Written in the book of life, before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4).

2. PREDESTINATED. Appointed according to the will of God. In Acts 4:28 the same word is translated determined. Whom He foreknew, them He hath appointed.

3. CALLED. There is no room for cavilling at these things. Let us say with Paul, "It pleased God, who called me by His grace." Called through the Holy Ghost to be a separate people unto Himself.

4. JUSTIFIED. "Whom He called, them He also justified." It is God that justifieth. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Justified freely by His Grace. 5. Glorified. "Whom He justified, them He also glorified." The glory which thou hast given Me, I have given them." If we suffer with Him, we shall also be glorified together by having a body like unto His glorious body. THE GREAT CHALLENGE

Romans 8:31-35.

I. Who can be Against us if God be for us? (Romans 8:31).

"The Lord is on my side, I will not fear what man can do unto me" (Psalms 118:6). Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world. All the resources of God are for those who are for Him.

II. Who can Condemn when Christ has Died for us and is risen again? (Romans 8:34). Having died with Him, we are now risen with Him. Free from the law. To them who are in Christ Jesus there is therefore now no condemnation, neither by God, man, angel, nor Devil.

III. Who can Lay Anything to our Charge when God has Justified? (Romans 8:33). The heritage of the servants of the Lord is, "No weapon that is formed against them shall prosper" (Isaiah 54:17). When Satan attempted to bring a charge against Joshua, the Lord rebuked him (Zechariah 3:1-2).

IV. Who shall Separate us from the Love of Him who Gave Himself for us? (Romans 8:35). "I have given unto them eternal life, they shall never perish, neither shall, any pluck them out of my hand:" The Lord's people purchased by His own blood, are too precious to be easily parted with. The Father having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.

V. Who can Hinder God from Giving us all Things when He Spared not His Son? (Romans 8:32). Being reconciled, we shall be saved in his life. (Romans 5:10, R.V.., margin). In Him every need will be met. Ye are Christ's, and all things are yours. How will He not with Him freely give us all things?

MORE THAN CONQUERORS

Romans 8:35-37

I. We are to be Conquerors. Not slaves to the fashions and pleasures of the world, but victors for God. Having been born of God, we belong to the upper class, and overcome the world through faith.

II. We are Conquerors in the Midst of Suffering. Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and sword. All these are still with us, but faith gives the victory. We are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake. This present world always keeps in the place of death those who have the life of Jesus in them, but they conquer still, and press on to know Him.

III. We are More than Conquerors. Enemies are not only conquered and subdued, but brought as willing servants into the work of the Lord. Saul was more than conquered when he became a preacher of the Gospel he so much hated. Take note of this. To be more than conquerors we must be more than conquered. It is not enough that we be overcome, there must be the willing and entire surrender of ourselves into the hands of God, to say, to be, and to do all that He may appoint.

IV. We are More than Conquerors through Him. The power of conquest and aggressive work for God is not in ourselves, nor in our plans and organisations, but in the God who worketh in us. Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. They overcame by the blood of the Lamb. The blood of the Lamb is the sharp edge of the sword of the Word, the Spirit's holy weapon. Cling to it, use it. THE LOVE OF GOD

Romans 8:38-39

I. Nature of It. "The love of God." God is love, so that in manifesting His love He manifests Himself. Herein is love. Yes, herein is God. Not that we loved Him, but that He loved us. Behold, what love!

II. Channel of It. "Which is in Christ Jesus." He is the Mediator between God and men, the Ladder that reaches from earth to Heaven. In Him was manifested the love of God toward us that we might live through Him. "I am the Way."

III. Objects of It. "Us." He loved us and gave Himself for us (John 3:16). Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sin.

IV. Power of It. "Neither death," etc., "shall be able to separate us from the love of God." "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." The trifling things of this world may be allowed at times to separate our love from Him, but, bless His Holy Name, nothing can separate from His love. His love is stronger than death.

V. Assurance of It. "I am persuaded." It is a great testimony when we can say in truth, "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us" (1 John 4:16). Having the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, and going on living day by day as those who believe in the infinite and everlasting love of God, this is the secret of a restful, joyful, contented life. "I am persuaded that nothing shall separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

SELF-DEDICATION

Romans 12:1-2

In the foregoing chapters Paul has been dealing with fundamental doctrines. Now he comes to the application, for he is no mere theorist. Christianity is intensely practical, and the beseeching of the apostle proves how keenly he feels it. The Christianity of some is like a certain fish that is almost nothing but head. Whole-heartedness for God ought to characterise every Christian, and this is evidenced by our presenting our bodies a living sacrifice unto God.

I. The Sacrifice to be Offered. "Present your bodies." We are so apt to be content with committing our souls unto Him, and to give the body as a sacrifice to the soul. We seem to think that our

bodies are all our own, and that our souls belong to God. Now the body is the temple of soul and spirit, and the medium through which these act, and by which they manifest themselves. The inner man thus acts through the outer man. Then the medium ought to be in the hands of God as well as the individual actor. In fact, unless God has full charge of the whole being, the Divine power will be withheld. He does not give us power so much as He desires to manifest His power through us. Each one must present his own body, as the Jew presented his lamb, and left it in the hands of the priest.

II. The Nature of this Sacrifice. It is to be-

1. A LIVING Sacrifice. The death of Christ has swept for ever all dead sacrifices from the altar. Now He seeks living ones. That is, we are, as it were, to live on the altar. The old sacrifices were on the altar only for a few moments. Ours is a CONSECRATED LIFE. "To me to live is Christ."

2. A HOLY Sacrifice. "Know ye not that your bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost?" This temple must be holy, for God dwelleth in you, and in offering the body a sacrifice we offer Him what He has already claimed and sanctified for Himself.

3. An ACCEPTABLE Sacrifice. In the margin of the Revised Version it is "wellpleasing unto God." Not only acceptable, but in reality satisfying to God. God is not fully pleased with regard to our salvation until we offer ourselves a willing, holy, sacrifice unto Him. We are saved to serve.

III. The Motives Urged. These are twofold.

1. THE MERCIES OF GOD. "I beseech you by the mercies of God." "Great are Thy mercies, O Lord" (Psalms 119:156). What are His mercies toward us? Think of His love in Christ, His forgiveness, His peace, His joy, His Holy Spirit, His promises (chap. 8). These should constrain us to yield ourselves entirely up to Him. The goodness of God ought to lead us to repentance in this matter of withholding from Him what is His due, nay, what is His own by right of purchase (1 Corinthians 6:20).

2. THE REASONABLENESS OF THE SERVICE. "Which is your reasonable service." It is but rational that we should yield ourselves to God if He has redeemed us to Himself. It is but reasonable that He should have all. Then it is most unreasonable to withhold what is His.

IV. The Consequences of this Sacrifice.

1. A NONCONFORMING TO THE WORLD. "And be not conformed to the world." This is the remedy for worldly conformity. A definite yielding of ourselves unto God and a constant acknowledgment of the same. There is no likelihood of the dead following the fashion of this world. "Reckon ye yourselves dead." "He gave Himself for us that He might deliver us from this present evil world" (Galatians 1:4) Those who are wholly in God's hands are not much troubled as to whether this or the other thing is consistent with the, Christian life. He decides.

2. A TRANSFORMING OF THE CHARACTER. "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." The transforming of the outward life will just be in proportion to the renewing of the inner man. When Christ was transfigured it was but the visible manifestation of the glory within. "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he." Many long for the renewed life who wish not the renewed mind. The yielding is ours, the transforming is God's.

3. A NEW EXPERIENCE OF THE GOOD WILL OF GOD. "That ye may prove what is that good...will of God." Many have never proved the goodness and perfection of the will of God, because they have not given themselves wholly to God. And so the will of God to them is irksome. They dread it, instead of delight in it. The will of God is perfect, and only in His will are our lives perfect before Him. When the acceptable sacrifice is presented the acceptable will will be proved. He is able to work in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. OUR REASONABLE SERVICE

Romans 12:1

The thought of sacrifice runs through the books of the Bible like the crimson thread in the ropes and cords of government. Sacrifice has two general aspects: (1) As a gift, handed over for the good of another, as in Mark 7:11; (2) As an object of "burning" to be utterly used up, as in Leviticus 1:9. Cain's offering belonged to the one class, and was incomplete. Abel's belonged to the other, and was acceptable. Both were voluntary acts, and so became a revelation of character. Here are three reasons why sacrifice on our part is most reasonable: Because-

I. Sacrifice was Made for Us. "Christ loved us and gave Himself for us" (Ephesians 5:2). "Himself for our sins" (Galatians 1:4). What a costly sacrifice for such a purpose. By the sacrifice of Himself He hath put away sin for ever, as an obstacle in the sinner's way of approach unto God (Hebrews 9:26). In giving Himself, He gave all that He was and had: not an impoverished self, for He who was rich for our sakes became poor, that we, through His self-emptying, might become rich (2 Corinthians 8:9). He, as the "corn of wheat," willingly died, that He might bring forth fruit in the lives of those for whom He died. If He gave Himself for us, surely we should give ourselves for Him.

II. Sacrifice is Asked of Us. "I beseech you therefore by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice unto God" (Romans 12:1). Why the body? Because the body is the instrument, or weapon, of the Holy Spirit, which dwelleth in you. The possibilities of the body, for good or evil, are tremendous (Romans 6:13). How often backsliding and failure may be traced to the unconsecrated members of the body. To be a "living sacrifice" is to be continually and completely at God's disposal. This is "holy and acceptable to God." And also because of its acceptability to Him, it is most reasonable that it should be given. The yielding of ourselves unto God is the root and branch of self-denial, without which there can be no true discipleship (Matthew 16:14). It is true in the deepest possible sense, that "Ye are not your own, for ye have been bought with a price: therefore we should glorify God in our bodies and our spirits which are His" (1 Corinthians 6:20). Is it not reasonable that God should have His own, that which He hath bought with His own blood? We are robbing God when we are keeping back this part (bodies) of His purchased possession.

III. Sacrifice Ensures Greater Blessing for Us. In presenting ourselves "a living sacrifice" to God, we are saving ourselves from being "conformed to this age," and also putting ourselves into that position in which we can "prove the good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:1-2). The goodness and beautiful perfectness of the will of God we shall never prove in our own personal experience until we are completely abandoned to it; just as we cannot prove the power of water to sustain our own bodies until we have made an entire committal. A life wholly surrendered to God is the only reasonable life which a Christian can live. It is the secret of usefulness, because it means the proper adjustment of the faculties and functions of our being to the perfect will and

purposes of God. Every gift laid on the altar is sanctified by the altar.

1 Corinthians

THE CALL OF GOD.

1 Corinthians 1:4-9.

All true Christian experience has its origin in the call of God: "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you." "Whom He called, them He also justified" (Romans 8:30). We shall note some precious things inherent in this call. It is-

I. The Call of Grace. "The grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 1:4). This grace by Jesus Christ could never come as a response to human merit. "By grace are ye saved, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). In grace He calls, because that, while "we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

II. A Call to Enrichment. "In everything ye are enriched by Him, in all utterance and all knowledge" (1 Corinthians 1:5). The new life in Christ is enriched with a new value and a new power. There is a deeper knowledge of God, a clear vision of the treasure of His Word, and fuller expression of all these in the life. Truly he is a rich man. Rich in faith, rich toward God.

III. A Call to Patient Waiting. "Ye came behind in no gift. Waiting for the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is to be feared that many do come behind in their gift of looking for the Coming of the Lord. The Christians at Thessalonica had this gift (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10). We should be thankful that this gift is being freely bestowed on God's people in these days.

IV. A Call to a Blameless Life. "That ye may be blameless in the Day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 1:8) Herein lies the practical use of this "Blessed Hope," which if often questioned by the unbelieving. Our lives must be affected by our prospects. "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself" (1 John 3:3). How sayest thou then that there is no good in looking for His Coming?

V. A Call to Fellowship. "Ye were called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:9). Brethren, what a high calling this is! Called into partnership with God's Son in seeking to save the lost and in the building up of His Church, and in the hastening of His Kingdom. In all this we are to be-not sleeping partners, but-active "co-workers together with Him." We are called into fellowship with Him, but the "capital" is all His own in this great business. "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9). And from this fulness have we all received.

VI. A Call by a Faithful God. "God is faithful by whom ye were called" (1 Corinthians 1:9). This holy calling does imply serious responsibility. We might well tremble when we think of our own poverty and ignorance and weakness. But then, it was by the God who is ever true to His promise that ye were called. Hear what the apostle says to the merciful Philippians: "My God, so great in His wealth in Christ Jesus, will fully supply every need of yours" (Php_4:19). Only believe! THE APPEAL OF THE CROSS.

1 Corinthians 1:18-31.

The preaching, or message, of the Cross, is treated in these days much in the same way as Christ Himself was treated in the days of His humiliation and sorrow (1 Corinthians 1:18). The worldly wise sneered, and official dignity denied Him. By the preaching of Christ crucified the Cross is still making its appeal.

I. To them that are Perishing it is Foolishness (1 Corinthians 1:18). A man must be sinking into the blackness of final despair who thinks God's method of salvation is "foolishness." He might as well call it foolishness to expect light from the sun.

II. To them that are being Saved it is the Power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18). To them who are being plucked out of the fire, like brands from the burning, and being delivered from the dominion of sin, and translated into the Kingdom of His dear Son, and being taught by His Holy Spirit and satisfied with His grace it is the power of God.

III. To the Jew it is a Stumblingblock (1 Corinthians 1:23). The poor Jew, blinded by unbelief has been stumbling over the Cross ever since Christ rose from the dead. The Cross of Christ lies right across his path. He cannot possibly get it out of his way. Some of the things spoken of by this prophet have been literally fulfilled by the life and death of this Man called Jesus, the Christ (Isa. 53), whom they crucified. They as a nation will go on stumbling till the Lord Comes, and they look upon Him whom they have pierced (Zechariah 12:10).

IV. To the Greek it is Foolishness (1 Corinthians 1:23). The Greeks seek after wisdom, but the message of the Cross, which is the embodiment of the wisdom of God, is to those worldly-wise ones "foolishness." Surely the "foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of the wisest men" (1 Corinthians 1:25). "The age by its wisdom knew not God" (1 Corinthians 1:21). There are many in our own day, like those Greeks, who are earnestly seeking after wisdom, and yet deliberately pausing by Him who is the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24).

V. To the Christian, whether Jew or Greek, Christ and Him Crucified is the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24). The Gospel of Christ is the power of God to save to the uttermost of man's need, and the wisdom of God to satisfy to the uttermost man's search for truth. To know God as revealed in His Word is to be made wise unto salvation. Our view of Christ in relation to God may be a great thing, but God's view of Christ in relationship to us His people is a much greater thing. It is with His reckoning we have specially to do. For by the reckoning of Almighty Grace Christ is made of God unto us-

1. "Wisdom" for the Mind. The quality of being wise belongs more to character than to thought. He has given us capacity to understand spiritual things. He can make us to abound in this wisdom (Ephesians 1:8), so that we might be filled (Colossians 1:9).

2. "Righteousness" for the Heart. This righteousness comes not by the "works of the law," but by the reckoning of grace. "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." To get right with God means, "Not I, but Christ."

3. "Sanctification" for the Work. Set apart, not as a recluse, but as a worker-together with Him. Jesus said: "On their behalf I consecrate Myself, in order that they may become perfectly consecrated in truth" (John 17:19, Weymouth). We are not saved as a miser saves his money, but

as a wise father saves his son, by giving him fitness for his life's work.

4. "Deliverance" for our Assurance. This promise may well put cheer and confidence in our hearts, that He will work deliverance for us, whether as tempted and tried pilgrims, or as warriors for the truth. "Lo, I am with you alway." THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION.

1 Corinthians 2:9-16.

I. This Revelation cannot Possibly be the Invention of Men. The eye of man's carnal mind hath never seen it. The ear of man's worldly wisdom hath never heard it. Neither hath it ever entered into the heart of man (apart from the Holy Spirit) the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him (1 Corinthians 2:9), and since the beginning of the world it hath been so (Isaiah 64:4). The world by wisdom knew not God (chap. 1 Corinthians 1:21).

II. It is a Revelation from God. "But God hath revealed them unto us" (1 Corinthians 2:10). God only could reveal the mysteries of His suffering Son. "O the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God concerning His Son" (Romans 11:33). This is the glory of the Gospel message, that it is as true and as gracious as the God who gave it (Galatians 1:12).

III. What this Revelation Is. It is the unveiling of the mystery of Christ and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2). The revelation of the fact that He died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, and that He is coming again for our final deliverance (Hebrews 9:26). It is a revelation of His abounding grace to sinful men, and of His power to save to the very uttermost all that come unto Him.

IV. How this Revelation is Made Known. "God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit" (1 Corinthians 2:10). It has come from God, and it comes home to the believing heart by the Spirit of God. For "the Spirit searcheth the deep things of God." "The things of God no man knoweth without the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:11). The Holy Spirit is the minister of the things of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:8-11). He is the "Spirit of Truth," and He shall teach you all things bearing on the revealed will of the Father, "for He shall receive of Mine and shall shew it unto you" (John 16:13). Oh, that all His people were so taught of God. With such a "Teacher, come from God," there is no excuse for spiritual poverty. "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." For ye may know the letter of the word, and yet be strangers to its mighty power.

V. How these Things should be Preached. "My preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Corinthians 2:4). "Our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost" (1 Thessalonians 1:5). Without this power, preaching is without authority-"sounding brass." There may be a demonstration of eloquent words and fleshly energy, but without the demonstration of the Spirit it is spiritually powerless (1 Corinthians 2:13). "But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me" (Acts 1:8). Ye ministers of His, "Tarry ye until ye be endued with powers from on high" (Luke 24:49). "For the promise is unto you" (Acts 2:39).

VI. The Christian's Attitude Towards this Divine Revelation. "I am determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). In Corinth there were many contentions, as there are in the world everywhere to-day. But Paul knew that the one thing needed by all was the power of the Gospel of Christ. The worldly, in their wisdom, would call this

narrow-minded; but it is the wisdom of God to offer the Divine remedy for all the world's woes. "I am determined," he declared. "This one thing I do." Would God that this determination was the settled motive in the hearts of all who serve in the preaching of God's Word. The whole counsel of God radiates from the "Christ and Him crucified." "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord" (Php_3:8). OUR LIFE'S WORK TESTED.

1 Corinthians 3:10-20.

Paul, as a master builder, is here dealing with some fundamental facts concerning the Christian's life and work.

I. A Foundation has been Laid. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:11). A foundation was needed, first, by God Himself, in which to build the structure of His redeemed Church; second, by man, on which to build his hopes for this life and the life to come. This foundation has been well and truly laid by the hand of infinite wisdom. Laid as deep as the grave, and as stable as the Eternal Throne. "Upon this Rock (Christ) I will build My Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). "For the foundation of God standeth sure" (2 Timothy 2:19). Since God the Father has purposed to build His Church and His Kingdom on that Rock, which is Christ, let us have the faith of God, and build our all on Him.

II. A Superstructure is Being Raised. "If any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones," etc. (1 Corinthians 3:2). Here are two different classes of builders-

1. The Wise Builder. Who builds "gold, silver, and precious stones." He puts in this foundation that which is consistent with its precious character (Revelation 21:19). He is careful about his doctrine, that the things he teaches in God's Name are in harmony with His Word. He is careful also about his manner of life. In 2 Peter 1:5-7 there is laid down before us a whole load of suitable material for a wise builder.

2. The Foolish Builder. He uses "wood, hay, and stubble, or timber, hay and straw." The foolish builder is wise in his own conceit. He thinks that as long as you believe in the foundation it matters little what you build upon it, and so false teaching becomes easy, and the vain philosophies of the proud in heart become attractive. He is careless and indifferent in practice, his faith in Christ has brought no change in his life and outlook. He still believes in building with "wood, hay, and stubble." These may be useful in some ways, but they are "after the tradition of men and not after Christ" (Colossians 2:8).

III. A Testing Time is Coming. "That day in which the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is" (1 Corinthians 3:13). The foundation has been already tried (Isaiah 28:16). But the work done that has been associated with His Name will be tried with the fire of God's searching judgment. "Behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, when the proud and all that do iniquity shall be as stubble" (Malachi 4:1). If the proud and the workers of iniquity are reckoned as stubble, so also are the works of the proud self-seeking Christians. This fiery test is not to reveal whether we are Christians or not, but whether cur works as Christians are worthy of Christ or not. Will He own them, or will He burn then? That depends on their own intrinsic character, whether they are gold, or wood, silver or hay, precious stones or stubble. What they are will determine their destiny.

IV. The Results.

1. Some Rewarded. "If any man's work-or building which he has created-stands the test, he will be rewarded" (1 Corinthians 3:14). He is not rewarded because he is a Christian. Salvation is not a reward for good works. It is the gift of God. The reward comes for the good works done in His Name, that are well pleasing in His sight; works that are consistent with the character of the Foundation. True and good, precious in. His eyes, and that bear the stamp of eternal value.

2. Some Not Rewarded. "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire" (1 Corinthians 3:15). If his work is burned up it is because it is as wood, hay, and stubble, fit fuel for the fire. He may have a saved soul, but he has a lost life. Such will be the poorer through all the coming ages, as the result of his present ignorance and folly. The wages of this sin is also death. Death to the prospect of being rewarded for faithful service at the Coming of the Lord (1 Peter 5:4), who shall try every man's work of what sort it is. For we must all of us appear before Christ's judgment, set in our true characters, in order that each may then receive an award for his actions in this life, in accordance with what he has done, whether it be good or worthless (2 Corinthians 5:10). "Let no man deceive himself" (1 Corinthians 3:18), for we are assured that God will not be mocked. He cannot mistake the hollow, heartless, worthless hay and stubble service for the faith, love and works of the consecrated life. Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon (1 Corinthians 3:10).

THINGS WE OUGHT TO KNOW.

1 Corinthians 6.

At this time the Corinthian Church was unstable in doctrine and factious in fellowship. Some things are specially emphasised by the prefix: "Do you not know" or "Know ye not." See what some of these things are. Know ye not that-

I. The Saints shall Judge the World (1 Corinthians 6:2). Daniel, in his vision, saw the Ancient of Days come, and the time that the saints possessed the kingdom (Daniel 7:22), Jesus said: "Ye which have followed Me in the times of regeneration, when the Son of Man shall be enthroned, ye also shall sit upon thrones judging" (Matthew 19:28). They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years (Revelation 20:4). It is a small matter for His saints to be judged of men now. Their day is coming.

II. Your Bodies are the Members of Christ (1 Corinthians 6:15). "The body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body" (1 Corinthians 6:13). Know ye not that these bodies of yours belong to Christ as really as your souls? The Lord is for your spirit, He also is for your body. Your body is a visible working member of Christ. The temptations of the Devil often come by way of the body. Keep it in subjection, lest by any means it might lead to uselessness (1 Corinthians 9:27).

III. Your Body is the Temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Corinthians 6:19) In Solomon's Temple the glory of the Lord rested on the mercy seat, right in the centre of the Holy of holies, making the Temple a true witness to His Presence and power. The Church of God is also His temple. "Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (2 Corinthians 6:16). "Ye also are builded together for a habitation of God, through the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:21-22). We are all one in Christ, as a corporate body, it is the temple of God. But the body of each individual believer becomes a temple of the Holy Ghost. This is a more humbling, searching, and inspiring thought than that God dwells in His Church.

Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit Right in the centre of this temple, in the Holy of holies, the heart, the Holy Spirit broods and works, bringing comfort and guidance in life, and power for testimony. God in the midst.

IV. Ye are Not Your Own for Ye are Bought with a Price (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Is this freedom or bondage? It is both. It means the freedom of the sons of God, the liberty of the Spirit; and the bondage of a conquered love. Independence is an impossibility. To be independent we must be without a country, without a body, and without a God. "Ye are bought with a price." A price which only God Himself could pay: the precious Blood of His own dear Son (1 Peter 1:18-19). Christ is much more than an Example for us, He is our Ransom. Having been bought by His Blood, ye belong to Him; therefore, "ye are not your own," and should "glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:20). The love of Christ ought to constrain us, that we who live by His redeeming grace should not henceforth live unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and rose again (2 Corinthians 3:14-15), that we might show forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light (1 Peter 2:9). THE MINISTRY.

1 Corinthians 9:7-27.

The apostle is here vindicating both his ministry and his method, and there are suggested some qualifications for a successful ministry.

I. He had a Personal Experience of Jesus Christ. "Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?" (1 Corinthians 9:1). He had both seen Him and heard Him, and knew the transforming power of His revelation. He could truthfully say: "I know Him whom I have believed." Should not this be the initial experience of every messenger of the Gospel? How can we say, "We speak that we do know," if we have no personal experience of His saving power?

II. He had Faith in God for the Supply of his Need. Although he asked nothing from those to whom he ministered the Word, but showed them that if he sowed spiritual things it was no great thing if he should reap their carnal things (1 Corinthians 9:11), he reminded them that it was an ordination of the Lord, "that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 9:14). The Gospel of Christ is without charge, and he would put no price on it for his own advantage (1 Corinthians 9:18). He could say: "My God will supply all your need" (Php_4:19). It is a sorry service that can be bribed with money.

III. He has Enthusiasm for the Gospel. "Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:16). This is not that kind of enthusiasm that can be worked up for a special occasion; not a convulsive effort that may be produced by a torrent of words. It is the result of the holy fire from the altar of the Cross blazing in the heart, where the "wood, hay, and stubble" of all self-seeking has been burned up, and where the Holy Spirit has taken possession of the life, and focused the energies of the soul in Christ and Him crucified. "To me to live is Christ."

IV. He has Humility of Spirit. "I have made myself the slave of all, that I might gain the more" (1 Corinthians 9:19). He was ready to take the lowest place that he might, if possible reach the lowest down. Like his Master, he took the towel of humility and girded himself, that he might wash the feet of others (John 13:4-5). "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." "The proud He knoweth afar off." "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His" (Romans 8:9).

V. He has the Power of Adaptation in Method. "To the Jews I become as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews. To them under the law, as under the law, that I might win them that are under the law" (1 Corinthians 9:20-21). He declares further: "That I am made all things to all, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the Gospel's sake" (1 Corinthians 9:22-23). In all this we may be assured Paul never condescended to pander to that which was evil, or encourage customs and practices which were dishonouring to the Name of Jesus. He simply and lovingly stooped down far enough to get a hold of them, that he might lift up into God's salvation. No weakling in the faith should attempt this. It takes a strong man to swim against this tide.

VI. He is Self-denying that he might Keep Physically Fit. "I keep my body in subjection, lest I myself should be rejected" (1 Corinthians 9:27). The body is a sacred instrument for the work of God. In eating and drinking, in work or in physical exercise, let us remember that the body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body (1 Corinthians 6:13). "Ye are not your own," therefore take care of the Lord's property.

GOD'S PROVISION FOR HIS PILGRIM PEOPLE.

1 Corinthians 10:1-4.

Paul assures us here twice over (vv. 1 Corinthians 6:11) that these things happened unto them as types, or examples unto us, upon whom the ends of the ages are come. We, like them, are pilgrims and strangers on the earth, enjoying great spiritual mercies. They had the "shadows," we have the realities.

I. The Moving Cloud. "All our fathers were under the cloud" (1 Corinthians 10:1). The cloud of shelter by day, and of fire by night as their protection and guide (Exodus 13:21). The cloud was the symbol and evidence of the Divine Presence, in itself a mystery. When it moved they moved. It seemed to move easily, but nothing on earth outside could move it. What a suggestive emblem of the revealed Word of God! They all were under it, and God was in it, and all were baptised into the one name (Moses), their leader and law-giver (1 Corinthians 10:2). They were infallibly led by the God-created cloud, just as we can be by His unerring Word. To move without the cloud was to go in their own name, wisdom, and strength, which would mean for them confusion and failure. This is what it means for us when we choose our way, and act without His authority. It was because they believed and followed the cloud that they were able to go into the midst of the sea upon dry ground (Exodus 14:22). It is because we have believed and acted on the "Word of the Lord" that we have passed from death into life, from the place of bondage into the liberty of the land of the promises. Keep on believing. Keep your eye on the God-inspired cloud.

II. The Daily Manna. "They did all eat the same spiritual meat" (1 Corinthians 10:3). "He gave them bread from Heaven to eat" (John 6:31). Those who follow the Word of God will surely be fed by the "Bread of God." Jesus said: "I am the Living Bread which came down from Heaven" (John 6:48-51). The manna, then, is typical of Jesus Christ, who came down from Heaven as "the Bread of Life." The manna was like Christ in that-

1. It was the Gift of God. Of course all bread is God's gift, whether it comes out of the earth or out of the Heavens; but the wilderness could do nothing by way of producing it. So Christ was God's gift to a starving world (John 3:16). God knew what the hungry heart of man needed when He gave His Son as "the Bread of Life."

2. It was Suited for All. All alike found it what it pretended to be: something to satisfy the craving of hunger. What Christ has to give is just what all the sons of men need, that which exactly suits them, the forgiveness of sins and grace to help in every time of need. Satisfied with His abundance.

3. It was Offered to All. From the youngest to the oldest, without money, without price. The rich and the poor alike needed it. In this offer of Heaven's bread, God is no respecter of persons, for all have sinned. So Christ as the "Living Bread" from Heaven is offered, in God's grace, to any man who will eat this bread (John 6:51), promising that he that eateth shall live for ever.

4. It was Personally Used. "They did all eat the same spiritual meat." It was not enough to gather and boast of how much they had gotten. To be personally profited there must be a personal appropriation. We may possibly gather much knowledge about Christ, and yet receive little strength and satisfaction from it, if the truth is not assimilated in our own spiritual life. "He that eateth Me shall live by Me" (John 6:47).

III. The Rock that Followed Them. "They drank of that Spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:4).

1. Like Christ, this Rock was Revealed by God. It may only have taken God a few moments to show Moses this rock in Horeb, but it took Him over thirty years to show the Rock, Christ; for all the years of His earthly life was an unveiling of His character as the Chosen One. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

2. Like Christ, this Rock was Divinely Possessed. 'Behold I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb" (Exodus 17:6). At Christ's baptism the Holy Spirit rested upon Him. There was to be no mistaking Him as the God-appointed medium of blessing to His trusting people. "God was in Christ seeking to reconcile a wandering world to Himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19).

3. Like Christ, this Rock was Rich in Unrealised Blessing. The Israelites might say, "How can any good come out of this rock?" as they said of Christ, "Can any good come out of Nazareth?" or, "How can this Man save us?" but it pleased God that in Him should all fulness dwell (Colossians 1:19). But they could say later on: "Of His fulness have all we received" (John 1:16).

4. Like Christ, this Rock must be Smitten. "Thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink" (Exodus 17:6). The rock was not smitten for itself, but for the salvation of the people. He was wounded for our transgressions, the rod of God's judgment fell upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed (Isa. 53).

5. Like Christ, the Smitten Rock Poured Forth its Hidden Treasures. "He clave the rock, and gave them drink as out of the great depths" (Psalms 78:15). O wonder of wonders, that from His smitten Son there should come forth streams of redeeming mercies, out of the great depths of God's eternal purpose. In that day in which Christ was pierced, there was opened a fountain of cleansing for a sinful world. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters" (Isaiah 55:1).

6. Like Christ, this Spiritual Rock followed Them. They drank of that Spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:4). This water from the Rock was to them an abiding blessing. It followed them. Something to satisfy all the way. Jesus said "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well, springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14). And, "Lo, I am

with you, and will never leave you nor forsake you." He is our Rock, the Rock of our eternal salvation and eternal supply.

OVERTHROWN BY SIN.

1 Corinthians 10:5-15.

They went up out of Egypt a mixed multitude (Numbers 11:4), but not a man of them saw Caleb and Joshua enter into the promised possession (Numbers 26:65) What a warning we have here against secret sin, which leads to backsliding and to final overthrow I. Who were They that Fell in the Wilderness? They had been-

1. Saved out of Egypt. They passed through the sea, and knew something of the God of Deliverance. They had identified themselves with the ransomed host.

2. Baptised into the Name of the God-appointed leader, acknowledging his authority, and professedly his followers.

3. In Full Communion. They did all eat of the same bread and drank from the same Rock (1 Corinthians 10:3-4). What privileges were theirs, but how hollow their profession.

II. Their Failure. It was great, and brought fatal results. "They were overthrown in the wilderness," There fell on one day twenty-three thousand (1 Corinthians 10:8). The character of their failure as backsliders may be seen in that they-

1. Displeased God. With many of them God was not well pleased (1 Corinthians 10:5). God's displeasure may not be apparent for a time, as He is slow to anger, but if not repented of will certainly ripen into judgment.

2. Missing the Mark. The mark was the Land of Promise, but they missed it because of their unbelief (Jude 1:3). They failed because they lost their faith in God.

3. Premature Death. Every one of them died, we might say, before their time. God was willing to bring them into the "good land," but evil slays the wicked (Psalms 34:21). Those who wander in heart away from God scarcely realise how they are cutting short their lives.

III. The Causes of Failure. They are many, but all have their root in heart-departure from the Living God, by ceasing to honour and obey His Word. Their sins are the sins of many in our own day, who have turned aside in heart from following the Lord.

1. They Lusted after Forbidden Things (v. 6). The pleasures of the old unregenerate life are longed for, the bread of God has become stale (Numbers 11:4), God Himself has become unreal.

2. They Worshipped Other Gods (v. 7). When any other object is loved and honoured more than the Lord our God, then we are idolaters, whether it be our business, our pleasures, our children, or ourselves. "He that loveth any one or anything more than Me," saith Christ, "is not worthy of Me" (Matthew 10:37-38).

3. They Indulged in Social Impurity (v. 8). This secret, soul-withering sin is without a covering in the eyes of God. "Be sure your sin will find you out."

4. They Murmured at the Providence of God (v. 10). They murmured against Moses, against Aaron, against God's method of dealing with them, and became discontented even with the manna from Heaven (Numbers 14:2). When a professing Christian begins to murmur against God's servants, and to criticise and find fault with God's Word and message, be sure that in heart they are estranged from God, if they ever truly knew Him.

IV. The Present Application. These things are all examples unto us (1 Corinthians 10:6-11). All sins, secret or open, have still the same effect in separating the soul from fellowship with God, and overthrowing the testimony of the life as a witness to the power of Christ. Discontent with the provision and promises of God is the blighted fruit of a doubting heart. Brethren, let us labour therefore to enter into that "rest of faith," lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief (Hebrews 4:11). "Thou standest by faith; be not high-minded, but fear" (Romans 11:20). "The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer" (1 Peter 4:7). THE LORD'S SUPPER.

1 Corinthians 11:23-29.

This ordinance is the heirloom of the Christian Church. The emblems are of a most simple and homely character- "Bread and Wine." Yet the significance of them in the hands of Christ embody the profoundest facts in the Christian faith. The bread, "My Body;" the wine, "My Blood." Symbols of His character and mission.

I. His Incarnation. "He took bread and said, This is My Body" (1 Corinthians 11:23). A body hast Thou prepared me. He took on Him not the nature of angels, but the "likeness of sinful flesh" (Romans 8:3). He took the body prepared for Him by the Father, that He might have somewhat to offer as a visible sacrifice for the sin of the world. The taking of the bread as a symbol of His body was a voluntary act, for He made Himself of no reputation when He took the form of a servant (Php_2:7).

II. His Devotion. "He gave thanks" (1 Corinthians 11:24). He took the bread, emblem of His body, and gave thanks to God for it. Think of it! Giving thanks to God for a body that was to be bruised and broken on a Cross: thanks to the Father for the privilege of dying for a guilty and thankless humanity! In this simple, common act, see the whole-hearted devotion of our Lord to the awful work the Father had given Him to do. "Not My will, but Thine be done."

III. His Suffering. After giving thanks He brake it. Every word and act seems full of meaning. He did not ask Judas to break it. He Himself broke it. He gave Himself a sacrifice for our sins. He could say: "No man taketh My life from Me: I lay it down of Myself." He broke the bread, of which He said, "This is My Body" (John 10:18). It was because He loved us that He gave Himself for us an offering unto God (Ephesians 5:2). His life was a life of thanksgiving; His death was a voluntary offering. "Father, I will."

IV. His Substitution. "This is My Body which is broken for you." Not broken by accident. He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him. He was "broken for you" (Isaiah 53:5). The wine of His precious blood was poured out for our redemption (1 Peter 1:19). We are apt to speak lightly and think little of these words uttered at His last meal on earth. "My body, broken for" you. What would be the thoughts in His mind when uttering them? He already saw the Cross, and perhaps already felt the pangs of Gethsemane in

His soul. But love constrained Him. When we sit at the Lord's table and handle the bread and cup, do we realise this as we should: "My Body broken for you," "My Blood shed for you?"

V. His Invitation. "Take, eat." "Do this in remembrance of Me." After atonement has been made by His suffering and death, there comes (symbolically) the invitation to partake of the benefits purchased. "Take, eat," appropriate to yourselves what is here set before you. This is the message of the Gospel. "Do this in remembrance of Me." There is no virtue in the mere eating and drinking. The soul of the ordinance is in remembering Him. The elements are but the memorials of what He hath done for us in giving His body and His Blood a Ransom for our souls.

VI. His Purpose in It. "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew forth the Lord's death." There is no symbolic ordinance left us to show forth His Incarnation, or His Transfiguration, or His Ascension, but there is for His Crucifixion. Why is that His death is to be so prominently and persistently kept before our minds? Because all our salvation has come out of it, and all the hopes of the ungodly are in it. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of Jesus Christ our Lord" (Galatians 6:14). Preach Christ and Him crucified.

VII. His Prospect. "Ye do shew forth the Lord's death till He come" (1 Corinthians 11:26). When He comes again, according to His promise, the Church will have no need of this memorial of Him. We have little need for an absent friend's photograph when He Himself has come to us. The present dispensation is an interval between His Cross and His Throne. While we may sit at His table with sorrowful, yet peaceful, hearts; while we think of His sorrow and shame on our behalf, we can look hopefully up, knowing that He is coming again to receive us unto Himself (John 14:1-3). When we think of the Lord's table we must recognise that it is not the table of any particular Church or sect. It is the Lord's, and all have the right to it who are able to discern the Lord's body in the emblems. Our worthiness or unworthiness to sit at His table lie, not in our good education, not in our moral character, or religious profession, but in our spiritual discernment (1 Corinthians 11:29). THE CHURCH AS THE BODY OF CHRIST.

1 Corinthians 12:12-31.

The human body is a perfect metaphor, or image, of the Church of Jesus Christ, as it is a living organism with many members, controlled by one spirit

I. The Church is One Body. A body with two heads would be a monstrosity. So would a head with two bodies. "Ye are the body of Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:27). "Ye, being many, are one body in Christ" (Romans 12:5). We have Churches many, but Christ has only one.

II. The Members are all United by One Spirit. "By one Spirit are we all baptised into one Body" (1 Corinthians 12:13). We may be admitted into a local Church on a profession of faith, but to be united to the Spiritual Body of Christ we need the regenerating power of the Holy Ghost. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing" (John 6:63). The Lord knoweth them that are His.

III. The Body of Christ includes Every Member. "Whether they be Jew or Gentile, bond or free" (1 Corinthians 12:13). Whether they be black or white, brown or yellow, rich or poor, young or old, learned or ignorant, living or dead: all who in every age have been made to drink of the one soul-nourishing Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13), all are His. All who have been brought nigh by the Blood of Christ (Ephesians 2:13). Is the Church a failure? It may be. But the Church which is the

Body of Christ is no failure, for when He comes to gather up His precious treasure, He will have a body that will be a glorious witness to the triumph of His sufferings.

IV. Each Member has its Own Function. "God hath set the members every one of them, in the body as it hath pleased Him" (1 Corinthians 12:18). The foot is not expected to do the work of the hand, nor the eye to do what the ear is made for. There are diversities of gifts (see 1 Corinthians 12:28-31), but one Spirit and one purpose. Be not discouraged if your gift is not so prominent and helpful as some others. The eye doth not covet the function of the ear, nor the ear that of the eye. Let us prayerfully seek to find out what that gift is which God hath been pleased to bestow. If you are a member of Christ's Body, there is something you can do for Him. A paralyzed member is a betrayal of His character.

V. All the Members are Interdependent. "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee," etc. (1 Corinthians 12:21). Each member of the body needs the help of the others. We ought to praise God for the gifts of other members, when the work of the Lord is being helped on. What does it matter which member has the special gift, so long as the will of the Head is being done through the body.

VI. There is no Division in the Body in His Sight (1 Corinthians 12:25-27). "Ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). "The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him" (Romans 10:12). "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope" (Ephesians 4:4). Things that divide the members of His Body, in the eyes of men, are things devised by the pride and prejudice of men. As Christians, let us "Endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3).

VII. All the Members of the Body are in Mutual Sympathy. So the members of Christ should have the same care one for another. "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it: if one be honoured, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Corinthians 12:25-26). There is no place for envy or jealousy here. In the Lord's service such unclean spirits must be cast out. For "though I speak with the tongue of an angel and have not love, I am become as sounding brass" (chap. 1 Corinthians 13:1). "Love seeketh not her own." Follow after love and desire spiritual gifts (chap. 1 Corinthians 14:1). THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

1 Corinthians 15:12-23.

Here the apostle reasons on this great truth from two different standpoints- 1. The negative. "If Christ be not risen"-then what?

2. The positive. "But now is Christ risen,"-then what? As if one should say: "If the sun should not rise again, then what would happen?" But now the sun is risen and becomes self-evident.

I. If Christ be Not Risen.

1. Then Christ's Own Testimony was Untrue. He had given His promise: "I will rise again." "Destroy this temple (body) and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). If He failed here, how could He be "the Resurrection and the Life?" (John 11:25).

2. Then His Disciples were Completely Deceived. For this was the keynote of their joyful testimony. "They taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead"

(Acts 4:2). When their Lord was crucified, the disciples were of all men the most miserable, hiding in shame from their countrymen. But suddenly they became the most joyful and courageous of mortals. What had happened? They had seen their Lord risen from the tomb.

3. Then the Christian Church is a Gigantic Fraud. It is a majestic structure, without any foundation. If there was no empty grave in Joseph's garden on the third day, then this is the emptiest thing on earth. It is built on the supposition that Christ rose from the dead. If He did not rise from the grave, then how are we to account for its strength and perpetuity all these long ages?

4. Then Christian Experience is a Grand Delusion. Our assurance of forgiveness, our joy in being justified in the light of God, our peace of heart and mind, our answered prayers, our sweet fellowship with God, our bright hopes for the world to come, are all imaginary; and all the millions in every age who have had these experiences have been fatally betrayed.

5. Then we who Believe in Immortality have been Living in a Fool's Paradise. Instead of "departing to be with Christ," those who have died in this faith have perished like the beast. The joys, hopes, and visions of the dying Christian have all been delusive. Their expectation of seeing Jesus and meeting the loved ones gone before have been but a treacherous empty fancy. Their whole life has been a mere hallucination.

6. Then we are of All Men the Most Miserable. For we, of all men, have stood on the highest pinnacle of expectation, having the brightest outlook and the most confident hopes of any other man. It means for us to be cast down from the high tower of our personal blessedness into the abyss of darkness and despair. If Christ be not risen then the Christian life is but a ghastly mirage, for there will be no resurrection of the dead (1 Corinthians 15:12), our preaching has been in vain, and our faith is also vain (1 Corinthians 15:14). We have been false witnesses, and we are yet in our sins, and all who have died in the faith are perished (1 Corinthians 15:18).

II. But Now is Christ Risen (1 Corinthians 15:20). What a joyful ring there is in this shout. It is like the blast of the trumpet of victory. "Now is Christ risen," and the foundations of Hell have been shaken. The sun has arisen in His strength and scattered the darkness, and brought health and beauty with His healing beams. "Now is Christ risen."

1. Then our Preaching is Not in Vain. The great commission still stands good and true: "All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore" (Matthew 28:18-20). "Lo, I (the Risen One) am with you alway." He will not fail you, be not discouraged. The Gospel of the Risen Christ is still the power of God unto salvation to every believer.

2. Then our Faith is Not Vain. We are not trusting a dead Saviour, but Him who is "the Resurrection and the Life" (John 11:25). It is no vain thing to trust in the Living Lord, who had the power to lay down His life and to take it again. He who conquered death and the grave can easily restore our sickly faith and raise our dying efforts from the tomb of uselessness.

3. Then we are Not Now in our Sins (v. 17). He died for our sins, "but He rose again for our justification." His death was the paying of the price. His resurrection was the evidence that God had accepted the price paid for our redemption. Now we who believe are accepted in Him, being raised together with Him in the purpose of God.

4. Then those who have Fallen Asleep in Christ are Not Perished (v. 18). They are with their Lord, who was the firstfruits from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:23). "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him" when He comes to be glorified in His saints (1 Thessalonians 4:14-15) "Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus" (2 Corinthians 4:14).

5. Then we are Not of All Men the Most Miserable (v. 19). Christians should be the happiest people on the face of the earth. They have the best of all friends in Jesus, the sweetest of all promises in God's Word, the greatest of all treasures in the fulness of Divine Grace. They hold the highest of all earth's positions in being the servants of the Lord, crowned with honour and glory. They enjoy the brightest of all prospects in the Coming Kingdom. They shall reign with Him a thousand years (Revelation 20:6). THE RESURRECTION

1 Corinthians 15:20-22; 1 Corinthians 15:35-58.

There were some in the Corinthian Church who taught that "there is no resurrection of the dead" (1 Corinthians 15:12). To combat this fatal error, and to establish the doctrine more firmly in the minds of the saints, Paul wrote this magnificent compendium of the subject. There is nothing like it anywhere; no, not in all the world, for the great apostle; here delivers that which he had received from the risen Christ Himself (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). The great truths of this resurrection chapter are-

I. The Resurrection of Christ. "But now is Christ risen from the dead" (1 Corinthians 15:20). The Christ of the Scriptures must die, be buried, and rise again (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). That Jesus was the Christ was proved by His rising from the dead, and appearing to Cephas, and to "five hundred brethren at once" (1 Corinthians 15:5-6). To deceive five hundred brethren at once would have been about as great a wonder as rising from the dead, especially when these brethren were at first very sceptical. This is no myth, but a fact established by many infallible proofs (Acts 1:3).

II. The Resurrection Hope. "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins, and they who have died in this faith are perished" (1 Corinthians 15:17-18). Upon this foundation-the resurrection of Christ-this Spirit-taught apostle builds the whole structure of the Christian faith. The death of Christ will avail us nothing if He is not risen and accepted of God in our behalf. He died for our sins, but He must be raised and exalted with God's right hand ere forgiveness could be preached in His Name (Acts 5:31). If Christ be not raised, there is no hope for man (Romans 5:10).

III. The Resurrection of the Dead. Nothing but confusion and error can come to those who think that Paul is here speaking of a general resurrection at the last day. The dead referred to in this chapter are those who have "fallen asleep in Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:18). "Even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22). All are in Adam, but all are not in Christ. "They that are Christ's at His coming" (1 Corinthians 15:23). The wicked dead shall have no part in the first resurrection (Revelation 20:5). How could he speak of them as "sown in dishonour, and raised in glory?" (1 Corinthians 15:43).

IV. The Resurrection Body. Paul now raises this great double question, and proceeds to answer it. "How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" (1 Corinthians 15:35-49).

1. It will not be the same body that is sown in the grave (1 Corinthians 15:37). Thank God, there will be no cripples in Heaven; no deformed bodies there.

2. It will be a God-given body (1 Corinthians 15:38). A body in everything pleasing to Him, and worthy of a redeemed spirit (2 Corinthians 5:1).

3. It will be a body in every way suited to the individual spirit. "To every seed his own body (1 Corinthians 15:38). One body may differ from another body in glory, as "one star differeth from another" (1 Corinthians 15:41-42).

4. It will be an incorruptible body (1 Corinthians 15:42). Incapable of death, disease, or decay.

5. It will be a body of glory (1 Corinthians 15:43). Like unto His own glorious body (Matthew 17:2).

6. It will be a body of power (1 Corinthians 15:43). Not subject to the laws of earth. Every material fetter broken.

7. It will be a spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15:44). Entirely subject to the volitions of the blood-washed spirit (1 John 3:2). Then shall we be in the image of the heavenly (1 Corinthians 15:49).

V. The Resurrection Mystery. "Behold I show you a mystery," etc. (1 Corinthians 15:51-54). Here the apostle reveals a truth that had hitherto been veiled, and, strange to say, a truth that is still veiled to many, although revealed, viz., that all the children of God shall not die, but that all must be changed (1 Corinthians 15:51). The Lord Himself will come, and those who are alive and remain at that time shall be caught up together with those who have fallen asleep in Christ, but who shall then be raised from the dead (Thess. 1 Corinthians 4:15-17). In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the dead shall be raised, and we (those living at that time) shall be changed (1 Corinthians 15:52). It is appointed unto men-not all men-once to die (Hebrews 9:27).

VI. The Resurrection Song. This song is entitled, "Death swallowed up in victory" (1 Corinthians 15:54). It is a victory over the power of sin, and sin, too, that was strengthened by a holy law (1 Corinthians 15:56). It is a perfect victory over all the effects of sin. "O death, where is thy sting?" Where is not the effect of thy poison in these new bodies of ours? "O grave, where is thy victory?" Once thou didst claim our bodies as thy spoil, but thou hast been eternally defeated in this new incorruptible body. But this is a song of praise as well as of triumph. "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57). He alone could "swallow up death in victory" (Isaiah 25:8). This will be the complete fulfilment of Hosea 13:14. Notice there His "I wills."

VII. The Resurrection Incentive. Paul now closes his great argument with an exhortation which is full of motive power. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast" (1 Corinthians 15:58). Seeing that such glorious prospects are before us, what manner of persons ought we now to be?

1. There should be stability of character. "Be ye stedfast, immoveable." Let not the unbelief of others turn you aside from the faith of this Gospel.

2. There should be constancy of service. "Always abounding in the work of the Lord, "knowing that it is not in vain; for in the resurrection state, and at the Judgment-Seat of Christ, the reward will be

given (Revelation 22:12). Every man's work shall be tried of what sort it is (1 Corinthians 3:12-15).
THE FINAL VICTORY.

1 Corinthians 15:51-58.

"Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:56).

I. Victory over Sin. "The sting of death is sin." "O death, where is thy sting?" (1 Corinthians 15:55-56). Death is as common as birth, as impartial as the law of gravitation, and as uncertain as a thief. To the Christian death is stingless, for the sting of sin was buried in the Crucified Christ, who bore our sins in His own body to the tree. The strength of sin is the Law, but His obedience unto the death on our behalf met the just demands of the righteousness of God. "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14). The Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17). Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory over sin.

II. Victory over Mortality. "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal (body) must put on immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:53). These bodies of ours are to share the victory of our Saviour's resurrection when He comes again. Then "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we (those who are still alive) shall be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:52). "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened (with the infirmities of the body): not that we are ourselves to be unclothed but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life" (2 Corinthians 5:4). He is longing for that "house which is from Heaven," the new abode of the Spirit. "It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body" (1 Corinthians 15:44). Our resurrection bodies may differ in lustre, according to the lives we have lived. "For one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead" (1 Corinthians 15:41-42). "Thanks be to God who giveth us this victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

III. Victory over Death. "O death, where is thy sting?" He hath swallowed up death (Isaiah 25:8), Christ Himself took part of the same flesh and blood that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil, and deliver them who through feat of death were in their lifetime subject to bondage (Hebrews 2:14-15). Death has always been a winged monster to the human race, where Christ and His resurrection is unknown. For Jesus Christ hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel (2 Timothy 1:10). Thanks be to God who giveth us this victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

IV. Victory over the Grave. "O grave, where is thy victory?" The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and come forth (John 5:28). "The Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first" (1 Thessalonians 4:16). Those who are the members of His Body shall be the first to share in the triumph of their Lord over the bondage and corruption of the grave. This is the first resurrection. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection, the terrors of the second death and the second grave will have no power over them" (Revelation 20:5-6). "Therefore, beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). Thanks be to God who giveth us this victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians

THE TRIUMPHANT LIFE.

2 Corinthians 2:14-17.

"Thanks be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ" (2 Corinthians 2:14). The life that has always been led on in triumph should indeed be a thankful one. There are so many seeming failures in one's experience. What are the secrets of a victorious life? In those few verses as above, we note some of them.

I. A Life in Christ. "God causeth us to triumph in Christ." There is no possibility of living the victorious life, in God's sight, put of Christ. To be in Christ is to be at one with Him, and so entirely yielded to His will that His will will be done in us. As the apostle put it, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Galatians 2:20). "We know that we dwell in Him, because He hath given us of His Spirit" (1 John 4:13).

II. A Life that Reveals Something of the Wisdom of God. "He maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us" (2 Corinthians 2:14). The guiding principle in the Christian life is the truth revealed in His Word (2 Corinthians 4:2). Those led by the Spirit of God will surely be witnesses to something higher and nobler than the wisdom of this world, which is foolishness with God.

III. A Life that has a Sweet Savour of Christ unto God. "For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ" (2 Corinthians 2:15). "Christ gave Himself for us an offering to God for a sweet smelling savour" (Ephesians 5:2). Those who have been partakers of that offering are to be partakers also of the same sweet savour unto God. He could say: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," for He knew that all His interests committed to His Son would be safe and successful. Let us so seek to please God.

IV. A Life that Affects both Saved and Unsaved. "A savour of Christ in them that are saved and in them that perish" (2 Corinthians 2:15). The influence of one Christian's life can be made a confirmation to another who loves the same Lord. The "savour of Christ," like the fragrance of the rose, can be easily detected by those who are saved, but to those who are perishing it smells condemnation, so they don't like it (2 Corinthians 2:16).

V. A Life True to the Word of God. "We are not as many which corrupt the Word of God" (2 Corinthians 2:17). Those who walk in craftiness are sure to handle the Word of God deceitfully (chap. 2 Corinthians 4:2). If the heart is not true to God, the life will not be true to His Word. It is easy to corrupt God's message by mingling it with Christ dishonouring philosophies and the traditions of men. There can be no spiritual victory for those who have gone out of the way (Colossians 2:8).

VI. A Life Lived in the Presence of God. "In the sight of God speak we in Christ" (2 Corinthians 2:17). Abiding in Christ and practising the presence of God in the daily life is the evidence of vanquishing power. This is the victory that overcometh the world, our faith. Faith in Him who is

greater than all that can be against us. "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7). Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God. "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." THE GOD OF THIS AGE.

2 Corinthians 4:1-7.

"The god of this age hath blinded the thoughts of the unbelieving, that the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them" (r.v., margin). This Scripture is burdened with neglected but tremendous realities. There are mighty spiritual forces that war against the higher interests of the souls of men. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness" (Ephesians 6:12). All under the leadership of "the god of this age."

I. His Personality. This god is no mere phantom, but a great and mighty spiritual individuality. So great that even "Michael the archangel" did not dare to use abusive terms when contending with him (Jude 1:9). It was no ordinary wicked spirit that could dare to tempt the Lord Jesus Christ with the kingdoms of this world (Matthew 4:8-9). Even the Lord did not sneer at his folly and ridicule his presumption. He simply said: "Get thee hence, Satan." This is not language suitable to some unseen evil influence, but to the "prince of devils."

II. His Position. He is "the god of this age." This age is the dispensation of the ministry of the Holy Spirit; it is also the "hour and the power of darkness" (Luke 22:53). In John's Gospel Satan is called "the prince of this world" three times; also "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2). It was doubtless under his influence that the rulers of this world killed the Prince of Life, for he "deceiveth the whole world" (Revelation 12:9). The god of this age is not worshipped and obeyed as an ugly, cruel-faced devil, but as an "angel of light," for Satan has so transformed himself (2 Corinthians 11:14). He is the great arch-deceiver in these latter days, when knowledge has increased and multitudes run too and fro upon the earth.

III. His Purpose. It is to blind the thoughts that the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ should not dawn upon them (2 Corinthians 4:4). The Gospel of the coming glory of Christ, when He shall put down all authority and power, and take unto Himself His right to reign, must strike terror into the heart of Satan; for then he will be spoiled of his goods; then "that great dragon, that old serpent called the Devil and Satan, will be cast out" (Revelation 12:9). Why in this age is Satan so anxious to hinder, if possible, the dawning of the light of the truth about His Coming again in power and great glory? Is it because this revelation brings fresh inspiration and a more joyful confidence into the hearts of Christ's servants in these last and testing days? But this diabolical purpose is being largely thwarted now, in that multitudes of God's people are rejoicing in the light of the Gospel of that glory of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is surely drawing nigh.

IV. His Manner. How does he manage to blind the thoughts of men to the light of the Gospel of the glory of the coming Christ? See how he dealt with our Lord when tempting Him. Was he not trying to blind the thoughts of Christ to the Father's time and method of giving Him the dominion of this world when he "showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them," and offered them to Him for an act of obeisance? Does he not still show men the honours and pleasures of

earth that he might blind their thoughts to the greater and more enduring things of the Kingdom of God and of His Christ? By putting a special lustre on material things it is not difficult for the great deceiver to blind the eyes of men to the things that are eternal. Even when the seed of God's Word has been sown in the heart, it is easy for this wicked one to catch it away, by blinding the understanding with confused interests (Matthew 13:19). We are not ignorant of his devices. Let us watch and be sober.

V. His Subjects are those which believe not (2 Corinthians 4:4). Those whose hearts are closed to the "light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6), and fit subjects and willing dupes to Satan's delusions. They cannot enter into the light and liberty of the sons of God because of unbelief. They may have a growing desire for the fictitious, the theatrical, and the sentimental, but the things that belong to their eternal peace are still hid from their eyes, and those counterfeits of the god of this age become increasingly attractive. If he can only hide the Gospel of Jesus Christ from their eyes he knows that his purpose will be successful-they will be lost (2 Corinthians 4:3). For this is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than the light. He that believeth not is condemned already (John 3:18-19).

VI. His Overcomers are those into whose hearts "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God hath shined" (2 Corinthians 4:6). The light of God's truth alone, as revealed in the face of Jesus, can deliver from the power of darkness, which is the domain of Satan's operations. Here spiritual death reigns; but Christ, by His death, has delivered us from this death and from him that had the power of death- the Devil (Hebrews 2:14). Christ our Redeemer and Conqueror now holds the keys of Hell and of death (Revelation 1:18). He that is born of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not (1 John 5:18). Jesus said to Peter, "Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, but I have prayed for you that your faith fail not" (Luke 22:32). Listen to this joyful shout of final and eternal victory that will ring from the Heavens: "Now is come salvation and strength and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down! They overcame him by the Blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 12:10-11). "Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory." THE IDEAL LIFE.

2 Corinthians 4:7-11.

God is being pleased to manifest Himself. In creation God is manifesting His wisdom and almightiness in the works of His hands. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the earth His handiwork." In Jesus Christ God is manifesting His love in merciful plenitude for our salvation. In the lives of the redeemed He desires to manifest His saving and satisfying grace for a witness and encouragement to the unbelieving; for the life of Jesus is to be made manifest in our mortal flesh (2 Corinthians 4:10-11). The life of Jesus is the ideal life, and the life of the Christian is to be, in measure, a spiritual reproduction. Many lives of Christ have been written, but the most effective and God-honouring is the living one. "The life of Jesus made manifest in our body." Let us think of it. The life of the Lord Jesus was-

I. A Life from God. He was born from above (Luke 1:35). He could say: "I am from above: I came down from Heaven." He was God manifest in the flesh (1 Timothy 3:16). If then, the life of Jesus is to be manifest in our mortal flesh, we must be born of God, born from above. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." How then can he live the life of Jesus if he has not received the Jesus' life? Christ must live in us if His life is to be manifested by us (Galatians

2:20).

II. A Life Entirely Yielded to God. It was a life fully surrendered to the Divine will. At His baptism he gave Himself up to fulfil the righteousness of God. He said: "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do" (John 5:19). He also spake the words of the Father (John 14:10). "My doctrine," he declared, "is not Mine, but His that sent Me" (John 7:16). The keynote of His life was: "Not My will, but Thine be done." What an example for all who desire to live the life of Jesus in their mortal bodies. Entire surrender to God's Word and will and work was needful for Him. How can it be less needful for us in seeking to live His life and to do His work? "Yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead" (Romans 6:13).

III. A Life Empowered by the Spirit of God. John bare record, saying: "I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him." God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power (Acts 10:38). Being made in the likeness of sinful flesh, He made Himself dependent on the power of the Holy Spirit given Him by the Father (see Isaiah 11:2-3), and when He began His public ministry He testified that "the Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel" (Luke 4:18). He knew that all His disciples needed this spiritual enduement from on high if they were to be true witnesses for Him. So He told them to tarry at Jerusalem until they were endued. How can we expect to live this life of Jesus without this gift? There is no substitute on earth for spiritual power. There is no excuse for being without it. For the promise is to you and to all that are afar off (Acts 2:29).

IV. A Life of Unwavering Faith in God. His face was steadfastly set to do the will of His Father at any cost. Because of this attitude and His devotion, He must needs suffer. The holiness of His character brought suffering, because He could not be understood by sinful and wicked men. He suffered through His faithfulness in testifying against the world's evil works (John 7:7). He was not of the world, therefore the world hated Him (John 15:9). He suffered because of His intense love for blind, deluded sinners, as seen in His tears over guilty Jerusalem. Yet withal, His faith in the Father had no tremor of doubt. "If any man will live godly he must suffer." How ready we are to shrink from seeking to live "the life of Jesus" in our mortal bodies, because of the testing conditions that are sure to follow. This is when a steadfast faith is needed. But who is sufficient for these things? Our sufficiency is of God (2 Corinthians 3:5). "For it is God Himself who worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Php_2:13).

V. A Life of Concentrated Activity. His first recorded utterance was: "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" The Father's business was His life's business. Never was there any one more diligent in business than Jesus. "Lo, I come, in the volume of the Book it is written of Me. I delight to do Thy will, O My God" (Psalms 40:7). In our Lord's ministry there was no dissipation of interest or of energy. Everything was subordinate to the known will of His Father. If this feature of the character of Jesus is to be manifest in our present life, then we also must be willing to make ourselves of no reputation, and take the form of a servant, by putting on His yoke, that we might learn of Him meekness and lowliness of heart; and so in fellowship with Him in service, manifest in our bodies the devotion of Jesus Christ. "This one thing I do."

VI. A Life Crowned with Victory. It was one prolonged battle, with one prolonged victory. His words were all victories of wisdom. His miracles were all victories over human weaknesses. His dying was His victory over the world's sin, in the breaking down of the great barrier that stood in the way

of man's approach to God. His resurrection was His victory over mortality, death, and the grave. He knew no defeat. May we who are called upon to manifest "the life of Jesus" in our mortal flesh, expect to have victory all along our pilgrim life? Has God made provision for victory or defeat? Was the apostle fearful because of the infirmities of the flesh when he said: "Thanks be to God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ" (2 Corinthians 2:14). Again, "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:54). If Jesus Christ has conquered in us, then in all these things we are more than conquerors (Romans 8:37). We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God (2 Corinthians 4:7). "Bear about. . . the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus may be manifest in the body" (2 Corinthians 4:10). "Not I, but Christ." THE GREAT CHANGE.

2 Corinthians 5:14-21.

The experiences of a Christian may not all be Christian experience. Experiences may be as varied as Christians themselves. But there are some radical and fundamental experiences that lie at the root of every real Christian life. Here are some of them. We shall note-

I. The Change Needed. "If One died for all, then were all dead" (2 Corinthians 5:14). "Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12). "The wages of sin is death." Sin separates from God, and to be separated from God is spiritual death. A change is needed, not in God, but in the condition of the soul that is already lost to Him because of sin.

II. The Change Wrought. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17). To be in Christ is to be trusting Him so entirely that God is pleased in grace to reckon the righteousness of His Son as for us. In this new creation old things have passed away. No man can create himself. We are His workmanship. "Created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Ephesians 2:10). The change is so great that "all things become new," both in us and around us, because the heart is renewed and the eyes are enlightened.

III. The Divine Method in Accomplishing this Change. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19). Yes, in Jesus of Nazareth this lowly Man of Sorrows, God was seeking to reconcile a world at enmity with Himself. In Christ we meet with this seeking and forgiving God, finding salvation and newness of life, being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Romans 3:24). "By grace are ye saved through faith." "It is of faith that it might be by grace" (Romans 4:16).

IV. The Evidence of this Change. "He died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them" (2 Corinthians 5:15). The evidence that we have of being redeemed and transformed is a changed attitude towards ourselves and our Lord. It is not "I" now, but "Christ." He gave Himself that He might redeem us. Now henceforth it must be ourselves for Him. This new purpose in life is surely what is expected from a new creature. Let the time past suffice for the love of self, the will of the flesh, and the pride of place. The grace of God that saved us now teacheth us to deny worldly lust and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world (Titus 2:12). For God hath called us unto holiness (1 Thessalonians 1:7).

V. The Responsibilities Connected with this Change. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:20). We are Christ's representatives in the world, both as to His character and His purpose. In Christ's stead we are to beseech men to be reconciled to God. Having been reconciled

to God by Jesus Christ, there is committed unto us "the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:18). Thank God, it is not the ministry of hopeless damnation. God is not waiting to be reconciled to men, but to reconcile men to Himself. As ambassadors, we are not left to our own resources. We are workers together with Him (chap. 2 Corinthians 6:1). Out of His fulness are we all to receive. Let us labour and pray that souls may be won for Christ and His Kingdom A CALL TO SEPARATION.

2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 2 Corinthians 7:1.

The Christian is not of the world, but has been sent into it as a new creature, to be a witness for Jesus Christ (John 17:18). The danger is to compromise with the evil customs and false doctrines with which he is surrounded.

I. Why is Separation Needed? Because the two great currents of influence in the world are diametrically opposed to each other. "The Spirit of Truth and the spirit of error." The purpose of the Lord Jesus Christ and "the god of this age" are vastly different.

1. "What Fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?" How can the righteousness of God and the unrighteousness of Godless men abide in fellowship?

2. "What Communion hath light with darkness?" Darkness, it is said, is the natural condition of the universe. Light is its conqueror. "Ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." Walk as children of light. Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness (Ephesians 5:6-11).

3. "What Concord hath Christ with Belial?" What harmony can exist between the Holy Christ and pure vileness and worthlessness? (Deuteronomy 13:13).

4. "What Part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" The part of the believer is the knowledge of God and the joy of His salvation. What is the part of the infidel?

5. "What Agreement hath the temple of God with idols? "Ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you" (1 Corinthians 3:16). How could the Spirit of God agree to that which would dethrone God? Separation is absolutely needed.

II. The Gall to Separation. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean" (2 Corinthians 6:17). God at the first "divided the light from the darkness" (Genesis 1:4), and ever since man has been trying to blend them. The carnal and the spiritual, the works of the flesh, with the works of the Spirit. In our minds and hearts, in our thoughts and affections, there is to be an exodus from the dominion of world influences, and a complete surrender of ourselves to the call of God. "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth, for ye are risen with Christ, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Ephesians 3:1-3). They are reckoned enemies of the Cross who are devoted to earthly things (Php_3:18-19). "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Therefore come out and be separated for God and for His Christ.

III. The Promises Made to the Separated.

1. "I will receive you" (2 Corinthians 6:17). You are not going out into cold isolation. When you separate yourself for God, you are but going closer into His arms, and nearer to His heart. The

man of the world may look upon you with wondering pity, because he has no experience of fellowship with God or of victory by His constraining Spirit.

2. "I will be a Father unto you" (2 Corinthians 6:18). Our God knows how very much we shall need Him when we are separated for Him. So He promises, and will act the true Fatherly part toward His devoted children. They can joyfully say: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us" (1 John 3:1). Fear not, He will not fail thee.

Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord (chap. 2 Corinthians 7:1). Father, I will. OUR WARFARE.

2 Corinthians 10:3-7.

The idea of warfare here is very emphatic. It is a bloodless struggle for the higher life. Being deserters from the camp of Satan, we must expect conflict, but greater is He that is for us.

I. Our Enemy. Our enemy consists of allied forces. There is-

1. The Flesh, or Carnal Mind. "Though we walk in the flesh (body) we do not war after the flesh" (2 Corinthians 10:3). "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh." The carnal mind is a sworn enemy to the things of the Spirit. It is a rebel against the law of God (Romans 8:7). The worldly mind is essentially opposed to the mind of the Spirit. To be carnally minded is death.

2. Imaginations. "Casting down imaginations" (2 Corinthians 10:5). Those high-flying renegade thoughts that would carry us to the palace called vanity, and that seeks to put the crown of pride, upon our self-satisfaction. Such vain imaginings are dangerous to the soul's highest good (Psalms 2:1).

3. Every Thing that Exalteth itself Against the Knowledge of God (2 Corinthians 10:5). Every thought and feeling and act that springs up from a doubting heart against the word, the will, and the wisdom of God is vile presumption. Everything that is moral in the "old man" seeks to exalt itself. Beware of pride.

II. Our Weapons. The weapons of our warfare-

1. Are Not Carnal (2 Corinthians 10:4). They don't belong to the "old nature." They are not man-made. Not a product of human ingenuity. Spiritual enemies cannot be overcome by material weapons. We cannot overcome evil with evil. "Railing for railing" and such like are of the flesh and not of God.

2. They are Mighty through God. They are mighty because God's hand grips them, and that hand is almighty. These are His weapons for bringing down the "strongholds" of unbelief, sin, and Satan, and breaking the wings of our vain and lofty imaginations, and everything that would exalt itself "against the knowledge of God." This unbending and never-failing weapon is the "Word of God" in the hand of the Holy Spirit, for the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17). With this weapon of His Truth, we are also, through faith, to be more than conquerors. "For the Word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). Like the sword of Goliath, "There is none like it.

Give it me."

III. Our Victory

1. Is Sure. "The pulling down of strongholds" (2 Corinthians 10:4). The first stronghold that has to be pulled down is our own self-will. This is the citadel of the carnal man. Here we have victory by surrendering to the Prince of Life. When our wills have been conquered by the subduing power of His mighty love, then we become partakers of the Divine nature, and are brought into league with Christ Himself, and so become, by His grace, victors over sin and the strongholds of Satan. "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might" (Ephesians 6:10).

2. It is to be Complete. "Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5). When a fort has been captured, then all that are in it are taken prisoners. Thoughts are fugitive things, and have to be watched and restrained, "for as a man thinketh, so is he." Thoughts constitute character. Pure thinking leads to noble action. They are the subtle weapons of life's warfare. How important then it is that our thoughts should be brought into captivity to the will of Jesus Christ. Thoughts require mastering. Who can guide, sanctify, and use them as Christ can? Under His control they become weapons of triumph. Thoughts are difficult things to get hold of, but when captured by Christ, He will hold them for thoughts are captured when they are captivated. Like Rebekah, they say, "I will go with this Man" (Genesis 24:58). We can bring out thoughts into the captivity of obedience of Christ by keeping steadfastly "looking unto Jesus," who is the Author and Finisher of our faith, the Subduer of our wills, the Winner of our affections, the Captor of our thoughts, and the Giver of every good and perfect gift. "What think ye of Christ? "

SUFFERING FOR CHRIST

2 Corinthians 11:24-33

When Paul was called as a chosen vessel to bear the Name of Jesus Christ before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel, the Lord uttered these significant words: "For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for My Name's sake" (Acts 9:15-16). He who would live godly, by receiving Christ's Word, occupying His place, acting only in His Name, and for His glory, must suffer; for the world still lieth with the wicked one, and the carnal mind is still at enmity against God. "Woe unto you when all men speak well of you." The sufferings of this servant of God were terrible. See the-

I. Reason why He Speaks of Them. Some "false apostles and deceitful workers" had been glorying in themselves, and seemingly doing all they could to belittle the name and character of Paul. He condescends (as a fool) to take them on their own ground by giving them a list of his sufferings and perils in the cause of Jesus Christ. Had the great apostle not played the fool for once, we never would have known the half of all that he endured in faithfulness to his Master. The fact that he felt ashamed to speak of his sufferings for the Christ who had died for him shows the nobleness of his true inward character.

II. Nature of Them. They are simply appalling. It is almost hard to believe that any one man could go through such an ordeal in the course of a single lifetime. Five times lashed, at the hands of the Jews, receiving 39 strokes each time. Three times beaten with rods by a Roman official. Three

times shipwrecked and tossed in the deep, perhaps clinging to a spar for a whole "night and a day." Many long and wearisome journeys. Endured eight different kinds of peril, suffered eight kinds of bodily privations, and, beside all this, having the personal care of all the churches upon him. But all this tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, and peril did not separate him from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:35). How like his sufferings were to those "many sorrows" which marred the face of his Holy Master, and how truly did he thereby become a "partaker of the sufferings of Christ."

III. Effect of Them. He did not mourn over them, he gloried in them (2 Corinthians 11:30-31). He did not look upon them as misfortunes, but as marks of his Master's favour. They were medals won in his battles for the Lord (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). Glorying in tribulation was an article in Paul's creed (Romans 5:3). He knew that, if "we suffer with Christ, we shall also reign with Him" (2 Timothy 2:12). Perhaps this was one of the reasons why they could sing praises in the prison, with bleeding backs and aching limbs (Acts 16:25). Only those who look at the things which are unseen, can possibly "esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt (Hebrews 11:26). "If men revile you and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake, rejoice and be exceedingly glad; for great is your reward in Heaven." THE GRACE THAT GLADDENS.

2 Corinthians 12:9.

Notice Paul's testimony. He has had a revelation from the Lord and a messenger from Satan. Revelations and buffetings, visions and thorns, make up much of the Christian's experience.

I. The Promiser. He said, "My grace," He who cannot lie, He into whose lips grace has been poured, He will give grace and glory-He, the God Man, Mediator, in whom all fulness dwells.

II. The Promise. "Grace sufficient." Sufficient.

1. To Save. It is made perfect in weakness. It delights to forgive, to deliver, and keep.

2. To Supply. To meet all need (Php_4:19). It is a stream sufficient to turn every mill, to satisfy every longing of the trustful heart.

3. To Support. It bears up in midst of all trials and temptations, all the thorns and thistles in life; enables also to bear the unspeakable revelation without pride.

4. To Overcome. It slays the power of sin within, resists the devil without, and turns the dark shadows of death into forerunners of glory.

III. The Result.

1. Gladness. Most gladly will I glory. Glad because everything needed is promised by such a loving and faithful one (Romans 8:32).

2. Power. Power of Christ resting upon him, because he rejoiced in his weakness, the weakness that enabled him to lean all the more on His mighty promise.

POWER IN WEAKNESS.

2 Corinthians 12:1-10.

The personal experiences of the apostle, as recorded in those verses, are deep with significance for all who are persistently staggering after his example.

I. A New Revelation. "He was caught up, and heard unspeakable words" (2 Corinthians 12:4). This revelation was for himself alone, therefore it was unutterable to others. We can only know its character by its fruits, for by their fruits ye shall know them; and the fruits as seen here are worthy of the God of all grace. Special revelations are given to many of God's faithful servants, when their minds and thoughts are caught up by the Holy Spirit, as on wings of faith and hope, into the highest Heavens (Ezekiel 11:24; Acts 8:39), where they see and hear things which the language of mortals cannot fully express. They are precious seasons of the consciousness of God's presence, and the reality and power of eternal things.

II. A New Trial. "There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure" (2 Corinthians 12:7). New trials usually come after new visions. God knows that pride goeth before a fall, so He permitted Satan to drive this stake of affliction into his body. What it really was it is difficult to say. To the Galatians he wrote: "Ye know that through the infirmity of the flesh I preached unto you the Gospel" (Galatians 4:13). He was still more anxious to preach the Gospel than glory in his special revelation. It is better, in His eyes, that we should be witnessing for Christ than revelling in our new discoveries, but know that these are not contradictory, but complementary.

III. A New Promise. "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). The power of this weakness is abundantly evident in 1 Corinthians 2:3-5. This is not the weakness of ignorance or of unbelief, but that of conscious self-inefficiency and entire dependence on the offered grace of God. If God's strength is to be made perfect in weakness, surely here is an opportunity for all of us. But it is much easier for some to be self-confident than self-emptied. To be full of self-confidence is to be empty of the power of God. God will not give His glory to another for self-display. Humble thyself, and He will exalt thee.

IV. A New Source of Gladness. "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Corinthians 12:9). Glorying in our infirmities is something nobler than merely submitting to them. But no one can glory in afflictions because they are afflictions; but if by faith we can see them to be the Divinely appointed means whereby we are made more effective witnesses to the power of Christ, then we may gladly glory in them. It is common for Christian workers to find gladness in their gifts, but not so common to find gladness in their infirmities. Rejoice in the Lord alway: He doeth all things well.

V. A New Resolution. "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10). He took pleasure in every trial and hardship that made him feel more keenly the measure of his weakness, knowing that this only made more room in his life for the grace and power of God. We glory in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, experience, hope (Romans 5:3). "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheless afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that are exercised thereby" (Hebrews 12:11). Let this afterward strengthen our faith for the present.

Galatians

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.

Galatians 1:3-9.

The Gospel of Christ is simply the good news concerning Christ. The Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth, that is, the favour and exact expression of God, came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17-18).

I. What is Offered to Men in this Gospel?

1. Forgiveness. "He gave Himself for our sins" (Galatians 1:4). Here we have God's best, in contact with man's worst. The Holiest One in Heaven, with the foulest thing on earth. What must sin be in the eyes of God, when it took the life and death, and all the wealth of the character of His own Son to put it away? Now in Him we have redemption through His Blood, and the forgiveness of sins (Ephesians 1:7).

2. Deliverance. "That He might deliver us from this present evil age" (Galatians 1:4). Although forgiven and justified, we are still here in the midst of all the evils of this present age, and need to be delivered and continually kept from their enthralment. "He is able to keep you from falling. "

3. Grace and Peace (Galatians 1:3). Grace sufficient to meet your every need, and the peace of God to keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Php_4:7). Bless God for such a full salvation.

II. How are these Blessings to be Received? How can I make sure that they are mine? "Him that called you into the grace of Christ" (Galatians 1:6). The Gospel brings God's call to the soul to enter into the full enjoyment of that grace abounding which is in Christ Jesus. There is no other way but by the obedience of faith. You believe the message, you obey the call, and the grace of God does all the rest (1 John 3:5). "He is faithful that hath promised. "

III. How Can this Gospel be Perverted? "There be some who would pervert the Gospel of Christ" (Galatians 1:7). The Gospel in itself cannot be perverted: it is always and everywhere the same. But it can be so misrepresented that the minds and thoughts of men may get a very distorted view of its real character. The Judaizer taught that they must be circumcised to receive the full benefits of the Gospel of Christ. We Gentiles are not concerned about being circumcised; but there are many who think that they ought to be compromised, that God will save them because of their moral character and good works. This is a perverted view of the Gospel of Christ. Anything we can do, or be, will never add any value to the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Therefore it is by faith that it might be by grace (Romans 4:16). "The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. "

IV. There is No Other Way. "Though we, or an angel from Heaven, preach any other Gospel, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8-9). Neither the wisdom of the ages, nor all time, nor eternity, will

ever produce another Gospel whereby sinful men-without the grace of God in Jesus Christ His Son-can be saved. "There is none other Name under Heaven given among men, whereby ye can be saved" (Acts 4:12). Jesus said: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me. " "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). Believest thou this?

"THE LIFE I NOW LIVE."

Galatians 2:16-21.

This was certainly not the life he used to live, when he was "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord" (Acts 9:1), but it is a brief spiritual autobiography of the life he now lived. It is-

I. A Life Justified Without the Deeds of the Law. "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Galatians 2:16). If we have offended in one point, we have broken the law. The law cannot forgive sin, but by the law is the knowledge of sin (Romans 3:20). To be justified in God's sight is to be free from guilt. So free from punishment.

II. A Life Imparted Through Faith in Jesus Christ. "We have believed in Jesus Christ that we might be justified by faith in Christ" (Galatians 2:16). Thus by faith in Christ the righteousness of God is imputed to the believer. The law is but our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith (Galatians 3:24). "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Romans 4:3). This is the Divine law of grace. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God."

III. A Life Lived Unto God. "I am dead to the law that I might live unto God" (Galatians 2:19). Being now delivered from the terrors of the law, and the ensnaring power of sin; saved out of the self-life into the happy freedom wherewith Christ hath made His believing ones free, his one absorbing purpose is to love, honour, and obey Him who hath redeemed by the Blood of His Son and brought into sweet communion with Himself.

IV. A Life Crucified with Christ. "I am crucified with Christ" (Galatians 2:20). The old man, with all his fleshly passions and lusts is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed (Romans 6:6). In the Cross of Christ he sees the whole body of his sinful nature nailed to the tree, and in this he gloried. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (chap. Galatians 6:14). Crucifixion is a painful remedy, but it is effectual.

V. A Life Indwelt by Christ. It is now, "Not I, but Christ liveth in Me." He has now become, as it were, a new personality. A new will, a new purpose, and a new power now rules and reigns. Where Christ dwells is always a centre of attraction, like the home in Bethany. To be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man is as Christ dwelling in the heart. This comes by faith (Ephesians 3:16-17). Christ's indwelling is manifested by the Holy Spirit's presence and power. "Herein know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit" (John 4:13).

VI. A Life Continued by Faith in the Son of God. "The life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God" (Galatians 2:20). This life begun by faith in Christ, is to be perpetuated by a

continuous act of faith in Christ. By grace are we saved through faith, all the way long. Ours is a life of faith in the Son of God. We live by faith, not by sight. Continue in the faith, and be not moved away from this doctrine. He that endureth to the end in this steadfast attitude of unfailing trust will be saved with a full salvation. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

CHRIST IN ME

Galatians 2:20

Paul had two distinct revelations of Jesus. While on the way to Damascus Jesus was revealed to him. This revelation slew the enmity of his heart and converted him to God. Then he writes to the Galatians that "It pleased God to reveal His Son in me" (Galatians 1:16). This second revelation proved his sanctification and fitness for service, for he adds, "That I might preach Him among the heathen." How barren and fruitless our testimony for God is until Christ in all His power and sufficiency is revealed-not only in Heaven-but in us. Then, like him, we can triumphantly say, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." If Christ is in me, then I must be-

I. A New Creature. When the "Living One" enters, then the reign of death ceases, "I am come that ye might have life." Regeneration is the incoming of the "Life of God" into the soul by the Holy Spirit. Which were born, not of blood-it is not hereditary; nor of the will of the flesh-it is not by carnal energy; nor of the will of man- it is not by intellectual power, but of God. How will evolutionists explain this? Until Christ is trusted and received there can only be death and degeneration; but when He enters into the heart and life of man how completely His Word is fulfilled: "Behold, I make all things new."

II. A Temple of God. Solemn thought. Shall God in very deed dwell with men? "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God?" (1 Corinthians 3:16). As God came down and dwelt in the temple of Solomon, so God the Holy Ghost has come to dwell in the body of each believer, to show forth the glory of His grace and power (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). The indwelling of the Spirit implies the all-cleansing of the blood. Cleansed, possessed, used. Spirit, soul, and body.

III. Governed by His Will. "Not My will, but Thine be done," was a gleam of Heaven's glory from Jesus as the temple of God. The house cannot stand that has two opposing wills within. If I recognise "Christ in me," then all my ways and purposes will be heartily submitted to Him. The earth is His footstool; but He sitteth not on a footstool, but on a throne; the centre of power and authority. The reign of Christ within is the divine remedy for unruly passions, ungovernable tempers, fruitless testimony, and the spirit-grieving life of selfishness. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done in us, as it is in Heaven.

IV. In Possession of all Sufficiency. The continual needs of the spiritual life are very great, but all fullness dwells in Him; and if He dwells in us, then we may be filled with all the fullness of God. Surely the "unsearchable riches of Christ" are sufficient to meet the daily and hourly demands of our new and God-given natures. "Christ in me." What a reservoir to draw from. Christ in me, to fill up every crevice in my being, as the waters cover the deep. Christ in me, to impel and constrain, as the steam in the engine. "God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that ye always may have all sufficiency in all things" (2 Corinthians 9:8).

V. Sinful Pleasures will have no Attraction for Me. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." What fellowship can light have with darkness? If Christ fully satisfies the desires of the heart there will be no cravings for things contrary to His will. When Christians hanker after doubtful things, it is an evidence that Christ is not fully trusted. She that is satisfied with her lover does not seek another. The cabbage leaf cannot have the attraction for the butterfly that it had for the caterpillar. Those whose lives are hid with Christ in God will set their affections on all things above.

VI. Willing to Sacrifice for Others. If Christ is in me, then the Christ-like life will be manifested. "He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister" (Matthew 20:28). He glorified God by a life of self-sacrifice for the good of man. He did not seek popularity by striving and crying in the street (Matthew 12:19); If Christ is in us there will be no striving for the chief seats of honour; no courting the praise of man. Since Christ hath loved us, and given himself for us, ought we not, through love to the perishing, give ourselves to God for their salvation?

VII. More than Conqueror. The Christ-possessed soul will come into contact with principalities and powers, with rulers of the darkness, and with wicked spirits, in a way that others cannot understand; bat "greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). Let us never forget while fighting against unbelief, unrighteousness, and all the powers of darkness, that the battle is the Lord's. God, who dwelleth in you, He doeth the works. "God working in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Php_2:13). How the apostle must have realised the power of the indwelling Saviour when he exclaimed, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." By faith we, too, must reckon on His almighty power, so great things will be done in His Name. Doubting or ignoring "Christ in us" is the source of weakness, fruitlessness, and discouragement in the service of God. Believe God, that Christ by the Spirit dwells in you; reckon always in His presence, power, and fullness, and soon you will sing, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

LAW-GRACE-FAITH.

Galatians 3:6-14.

These three, but the greatest of these is "grace." The law shows us our need. Grace reveals God's provision to meet that need. Faith is the personal application of that provision to meet that need.

I. By the Law there is Condemnation.

1. It Demands a Perfect Obedience. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the law to do them" (Galatians 3:10). "He that offendeth in one point is guilty of all." You cannot break one link without breaking the whole chain.

2. It Cannot Justify a Transgression. "No man is justified by the law in the sight of God" (Galatians 3:11). It is easy for us to justify ourselves in our own eyes, but then it is with God we have to do. This was the delusion of the Pharisees (Luke 16:15).

3. To be Trusting the Works of the Law is to be Under the Curse (v. 10). That is a withering sentence against those who are hoping to earn eternal life by their trying to obey the just demands of the law. "Whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped" (Romans 3:19). The law would shut us up, that we might look to Christ.

II. By Grace there is Salvation. "Grace came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

1. "Christ hath Redeemed us from the Curse of the Law" (v. 13). Jesus Christ hath bought us with His own Blood. We now belong to Him and are not under the law. So we are freed from its curse. One is your Master now, even Christ.

2. By "Being made a Curse for Us." "He was made under the law, that He might redeem them that were under the law" (Galatians 4:4-5). He became under the law, that He might come into contact with those who were under the curse. He could not be made a curse for us by becoming disobedient to the law. He said: "I am not come to destroy the law, but to fulfil" (Matthew 5:17). He willingly took the place and curse of those under the law, and bore their penalty when He was hanged on a tree (Galatians 3:13). He died for us, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.

3. Christ Redeemed us "that we Might Receive the Promise of the Spirit" (Galatians 3:14). It is a great blessing for us to be delivered from the curse and dominion of the law. It is also a great honour to Christ that we should be possessed by His Spirit and made witnesses for Him. Is not this the ultimate purpose of our redemption? Saved to serve. He hath redeemed us that we might receive the promise of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is promised to every believer in Jesus, and a promise is for faith. "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? " (Acts 19:2).

III. By Faith there is Justification. "The just shall live by faith" (Galatians 3:11). Abraham was justified by faith because he believed the promise (Galatians 3:6). This was 430 years before the law was given. The promise of eternal life, given us in Christ, which the Scripture foresaw before Abraham (Galatians 3:8) is an infinitely greater revelation of God than the law given by Moses. The law offers no promise, but is a command with a penalty for disobedience. Having no promise, then it cannot be by faith. The Gospel is a glorious God-honouring promise, therefore the appeal is to faith. "All that believe are justified from all things." "He that heareth my Word, and believeth in Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation" (John 5:24). As the Gospel is offered in promise, then salvation cannot be by works. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith (Romans 3:27). THE PURPOSE OF THE INCARNATION.

Galatians 4:4-7.

I. The Time. "When the fulness of the time was come" (Galatians 4:4). There is no premature action in the Divine Providence. He does not pluck unripe fruit. The time was ripe for the coming of the long promised Seed (Genesis 3:15). The Mosaic age had come to its close. "Now once in the end of the age He appeared to put away sin" (Hebrews 9:26). The psychological moment had arrived, prophetically and politically, for the Coming of Him who was to bring to the sons of men the new age of saving grace.

II. The Person. "God sent forth His Son" (Galatians 4:4). The pre-existence of the Son is clearly implied. "In the beginning was the Word" (John 1:1). "He is before all things" (Colossians 1:17). "He only could speak of the glory which He had with the Father before the world was" (John 17:5). "It was by His Son God made the world" (Hebrews 1:2). Now by His Son He seeks to save it. What a "good-bye" among the angels when He left His Father's Home to take the form of sinful flesh, and become "God manifest in the flesh." It is humiliating to think that there are teachers so blind

and so presumptuous as to say that this Christ was a product of the age. "God loved the world, and sent His only begotten Son" (John 3:16).

III. The Manner. "Made of a woman" (Galatians 4:4). With regard to His physical nature, He was born of a woman; but He was never called the Son of Mary. He was not the Son of Joseph. But He called Himself "The Son of Man," the Son of humanity, as if the blood of the whole race was in His veins. He was the Child of all ages and of all nations. "Unto us a child is born; unto us a Son is given." As a child in human form He was born; but as a Son in the likeness of His Father He was given (Isaiah 9:6). "Made under the law." No angel ever knew what it was to be under the law, yet He who was higher than the angels, humbled Himself to become a debtor to do the whole law, and to be obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. Neither the law, nor any of His accusers, nor the prince of this world, could find anything against Him (John 14:30). Worthy is the Lamb!

IV. The Purpose. When the clock of time struck the appointed hour, God sent forth His Son.

1. To Redeem "them that were under the law" (Galatians 4:5). All were under the law, and all were under the curse (chap. Galatians 3:10), and the only way of escape from the curse was by a Divinely ordained redemption: for no man could "redeem his brother." He gave Himself as the Surety for an insolvent humanity.

2. "That we might receive the Adoption of Sons" (Galatians 4:5). This sonship is based on redemption. There are those who teach that Christ came to reveal the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. These facts are implied in the teaching of Christ, but never is it stated that He came and suffered and died to make this known. "He came to seek and to save the lost." He came to redeem us, that we might receive the adoption of sons. All men are God's creatures, but only those who have been reconciled to God by the death of His Son can have the true spirit of sonship (Galatians 4:6). Sonship implies family likeness. "All one in Christ."

3. "If a Son, then an Heir of God." "An heir of God through Christ" (Galatians 4:7). "If children, then heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:16). All who are in Christ are heirs with Him of that inheritance of "honour and glory" which is now His, being exalted to the right hand of God. This is an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and reserved in Heaven for you (1 Peter 1:3-4). "All are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Corinthians 3:23). "What think ye of Christ?"

SOWING AND REAPING.

Galatians 6:7-9.

In chapter 5, verses 17-25, there is a description of the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. The contrast is between rottenness and perfect soundness, between the basest and the best. The works of the flesh are separate individual acts. The fruit-not fruits-of the Spirit are all of one, but manifold in its expression. This fruit is the outcome of the energy of the indwelling Spirit, and "against such there is no law," because they are above and beyond the law. Now he speaks about sowing to the flesh and sowing to the Spirit. Here we have- I. An Unalterable Law. "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

1. The Seed. The harvest will not be according to how much we know, but how much we sow. There may be a large stock of seed in the barn of the mind, but unless planted in suitable soil there shall be no profit in the time of harvest. The seeds of thought are sown in words and deeds. The

"Word of God" is the incorruptible seed (1 Peter 1:23). That always brings forth fruit "after its kind."

2. The Soil. There are two classes of soil: the flesh and the Spirit. To sow to the flesh is to sow rotten seed, in a poisonous soil. Nothing can come from it but corruption. We sow to the flesh when we sow to our carnal self-pleasing, worldly lives. There is nothing in this for the honour of God, so it will rot like a lifeless carcass. To sow to the Spirit is to sow to the revealed will of God, that which is pleasing unto Him. Then the fruit of the Spirit will appear.

II. A Solemn Reminder. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked" (Galatians 6:7). No one can ever gather "grapes from thorns," or "figs from thistles," or the fruit of the Spirit from the works of the flesh. The flesh is bad, and cannot bring forth good fruit in the sight of God. The Spirit is good, and cannot bring forth evil fruit (Matthew 7:17-18). By their fruits ye shall know them.

1. Be Not Deceived. It is easy to deceive ourselves by false expectations, by trusting to appearances, by being guided by our feelings, instead of God's Word. We deceive ourselves when we think it matters not what we sow, if only we mean well. Would that be wholesome advice for a farmer? Most certainly the self-life will never produce the fruit of the Spirit.

2. God is Not Mocked. He is not going to be silenced and put to shame by men's indifference and unbelief, in regard to this great eternal law, that spiritual things can never be produced by carnal things. The unrenewed man cannot bring forth the fruits of the new creation. The flesh and the Spirit are as different as death and life. The Christless man sows to the fleshly life, and reaps corruption. The Christian sews to the Eternal Spirit and reaps life everlasting (Galatians 6:8).

III. A Word of Encouragement. "Be not weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9). We have much need of this cheerful word in these conflicting days. The season for us to reap the final harvest from all our spiritual sowing is not yet due; but the firstfruits are being gathered, when the personal character is being made rich with the graces of the Holy Spirit. Some weary themselves looking for the fruits of their labours, and get discouraged because they seem so scanty and poor. Let such seek more earnestly that the fruit of the Spirit may be manifested in their own lives, and God will look after the fruit of their labours (John 15:5)

Ephesians

CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCES.

Ephesians 1:3-14.

This is a marvellous and comprehensive statement of Divine grace and of the believers' progressive discovery of its riches. "Blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). The apostle's view is from the Divine standpoint. "Chosen in Him before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4), then following step by step down to the day that "ye heard the Gospel of your salvation" (Ephesians 1:13). It might help us to reverse this order, and take the truths as they appeal to Christian experience.

I. "Ye Heard the Word of Truth, the Gospel of your Salvation" (Ephesians 1:13). What a Gospel this is. Good news of Christ's redeeming love, that has its origin away back in the eternal purpose of the Eternal God. To hear it is to behold the open door into the fulness of blessing in the favour of a reconciled God.

II. "Ye Trusted after that ye Heard the Word of Truth" (Ephesians 1:13). It is not enough to hear, there must needs be the committal of the heart's affections and confidence. This trust is the personal appropriation of the offer God has made in Jesus Christ. "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ" (Galatians 3:26).

III. Ye were Sealed with the Holy Spirit of Promise "After that ye believed" (Ephesians 1:13). The Holy Spirit of Promise has been given as an earnest in our hearts of all that God hath laid up in store for His children (2 Corinthians 1:22). "Ye are sealed until the day of final and perfect redemption" (Ephesians 4:30). Ye are claimed by Him and stamped with His signature.

IV. Ye have Redemption through His Blood (Ephesians 1:7). Ye were not sealed that ye might be redeemed, but because ye have been redeemed. He gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity (Titus 2:14). He was the "Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world." Redemption is an older thought than creation, and will be the theme of the final song (Revelation 5:9).

V. Ye have the Forgiveness of Sins, and that "According to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7). Bought by the precious Blood of Christ, and forgiven according to the infinite riches of almighty grace. Oh, how marvellous is His lovingkindness to us, who deserved nothing but His righteous condemnation. He hath loved our souls out of the pit, and called us sons of God (1 John 3:1).

VI. Ye are Accepted in the Beloved (Ephesians 1:6). Yes, already accepted in Him in all our ignorance, weakness, failure, and conscious helplessness, through faith in Christ. God is pleased to wrap the trusting soul within the folds of the riches of His grace in Christ Jesus that we might be to the praise of His glory (Ephesians 1:6). How gladly and fully did the Father accept the Son when He raised Him from the dead. That is the measure of your acceptance in Him.

VII. Ye have Obtained an Inheritance. "In Him also we have obtained an inheritance" (Ephesians 1:11). Not only accepted in the Beloved, but a partner in His inheritance. "If children, then heirs: heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ; for if we suffer with Him, we may be glorified together" (Romans 8:17). This will be the inheritance of the saints in light (Colossians 1:12). "Heirs of God?" What can this mean? Jesus Christ is God's only begotten Son and Heir. The Church is the Bride of Christ. All saved by His grace and possessed by His Spirit are one with Him. The redeemed Bride shall share the glory and honour of the Bridegroom in that day when the "Marriage of the Lamb" is come.

VIII. Ye were Predestinated unto the Adoption of Children (Ephesians 1:5). Having been forgiven, accepted, and honoured as heirs, we make this great discovery that all these experiences were according to the predetermining purpose and good pleasure of His will (Ephesians 1:5). "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29-30). We in our simplicity, may have thought that when we first trusted in Christ we were adding some fresh lustre to the glory of Christ, but now we see that we were only fulfilling the promise of the Father to the Son, that He would give Him an inheritance from among the nations of the earth. Jesus said: "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me" (John 6:37).

IX. Ye were Chosen in Him before the Foundation of the World (Ephesians 1:4). The origin of the Church, as the body of Christ, may date as far back as, "In the beginning was the Word" (John 1:1). Pentecost was the visible manifestation of this eternal purpose (2 Thessalonians 2:13). There was nothing haphazard about the covenant God made with His Son to give Him a people for the eternal honour of His Name. Christ did not die in chance that some might believe in Him and be saved. He knew that the Father had given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as the Father had given Him (John 17:2). So our Lord could say: "This is the Father's will which hath sent Me: that of all which He hath given Me, I shall lose nothing" (John 6:39). What a halo of glory is here seen on the brow of the Church of God; that it was a completed thing in the Divine purpose a thousand ages before the incarnation of His beloved Son. The Christ who loved the Church before it was born, and gave Himself for it, will, one day present it to Himself a "glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Ephesians 5:27). Then shall He see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied. "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory, and majesty, dominion and power for ever and ever" (Jude 1:24-25).

SEALED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

Ephesians 1:13

Here is Weymouth's translation of Ephesians 1:13 : "In Him you Gentiles also, after listening to the Message of the truth, the Good News of your salvation-having believed in Him-were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit."

I. The Seal is the Holy Spirit, which was promised, and is now given. His presence in our hearts is the evidence of our approval in the sight of God (2 Corinthians 1:22, R.V.). As a seal may be marred and broken, so the Holy Spirit may be "grieved" and "quenched."

II. The Sealer is God, who gives the Spirit to them that believe. "Him hath God the Father sealed" (John 6:27). He that wrought us for this very thing is God, who gave unto us the earnest of the Spirit (2 Corinthians 5:5).

III. The Sealed are they "who have heard the Gospel of salvation, and have trusted in Christ" (Ephesians 1:12-13). It is "because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Sons into your hearts" (Galatians 4:6).

IV. The Significance of the Sealing. It is usually given as the closing act of a bargain. Mohammed is called by the Moslems, "the seal of the prophets," because they believe him to be the last of that order. The sealing of the Holy Spirit speaks of-

1. SECURITY. The stone laid at the mouth of the den where Daniel was imprisoned was "sealed with the king's signet" (Daniel 6:17) that the purpose might not be changed. The sealing of the stone at the sepulchre of Jesus was also with the same intent. Those who are chosen of God, "according to His purpose," are built upon that foundation of God, which standeth sure having this seal. "The Lord knoweth them that are His." None shall pluck them out of His hand.

2. OWNERSHIP. When the Holy Spirit descended upon the Son of God there came also the voice saying, "This is My beloved Son." Those sealed by the Spirit are owned of God. All who are established by God in Christ are also anointed and sealed (2 Corinthians 1:21-22). The blood of Christ redeems to God. The Holy Spirit possesses for God. God's marked men are those whom the pleasure-loving world would avoid, those who "sigh and cry" (Ezekiel 9:4).

3. AUTHORITY. THE SEAL IS THE SIGN OF AUTHORITY. Joseph and Mordecai were both clothed with royal authority when they received the seal of the king (Genesis 41:41-42; Esther 8:8). Possessed of the king's seal, they acted in the king's name; so we possessed of the Holy Spirit are to act "in Christ's stead" (2 Corinthians 5:20). They are witnesses unto Him in whom the power of the Holy Ghost has come (Acts 1:8).

4. LIKENESS. A seal imparts its own image to the object sealed; that is, if the object is in a condition to receive and retain the image. Not even the Holy Spirit can imprint the image of Christ on a hard and stony heart. The humble and contrite heart will have God the Holy Ghost dwelling with them (Isaiah 57:15). Those sealed by the Spirit will have the mind of the Spirit, which is "the mind of Christ." The work of the Spirit with us produces the character of Christ in us. Yield yourselves unto God. He is able to work in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure. A COMPREHENSIVE PRAYER.

Ephesians 1:15, Ephesians 1:21.

The spirit in which this great prayer was offered was that of thanksgiving and abounding faith. Prayer and thanksgiving are twin sisters (Ephesians 1:16).

I. To Whom it was Offered. The manner in which men approach God is often a revelation of their spiritual character. This prayer was offered-

1. To "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 17). He is doubtless thinking of the manifestation of His own character in the person of His Son. He is praying to the God of infinite love and super-abounding grace.

2. To "the Father of Glory." The Father of all the glory that belongs to His eternal Son, in whose face this glory was seen (John 1:14). Christ's personality was the Shekinah of God, unveiled before the eyes of men.

II. The Petitions. They are in sweet harmony with such a gracious God.

1. That He may "give unto you the Spirit of Wisdom, and Revelation, in the Knowledge of Him." This would mean a precious inheritance to any possessor. Wisdom to discern spiritual things. Fresh revelations and a growing knowledge of the glorious character of Him who is the Wisdom and the Power of God. All such gifts are for the magnifying of Jesus Christ in our hearts and lives.

2. That the Eyes of your Heart may be Enlightened (v. 18). There may be things Spiritual and Divine which we can see with our hearts, that we cannot comprehend with our minds. The affections of the heart may lay hold on what the intellect is inclined to doubt, as when doubting Thomas said, "My Lord and my God" (see 2 Corinthians 4:4-6).

III. The Expected Results. That ye may know-

1. What is the Hope of His Calling. Not what is the hope of your calling. But what is the hope of His calling. The greatness and grandeur of that hope into which the grace of God hath called us, how few can realise. "Walk worthy of God who hath called you unto His Kingdom and glory" (1 Thessalonians 2:12). Our calling as we view it, and our calling as God views it, may be vastly different things. The apostle had the Divine outlook when he said: "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus: for our citizenship is in Heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall fashion our bodies like unto His glorious body."

2. What is the Riches of the Glory of His Inheritance in the Saints? We often think of our inheritance in Christ, but here it is the riches of Christ's inheritance in the saints (Ephesians 1:18). All are His saints-or separated ones-who have been born from above, possessed by His Spirit and yielded to His will. They are Christ's peculiar treasure. The Lord's portion is His people; and in the coming ages the glorified Church will be an everlasting witness to the riches of the glory of Christ's saving grace.

3. What is the Exceeding Greatness of His Power to Usward? We believe that God is Almighty. We see His power in the creative work of His hands. But what is the greatness of His power in operation toward us, who are now His needy children? It is the same mighty power that wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and set Him in the heavenlies, far above every form of power and every name that is named in this world, and also in that which is to come (Ephesians 1:20-21). This is the power at the disposal of the Church of God to-day; for it is given to Christ to be Head over all to the Church (Ephesians 1:22). "All power is given unto Me. Go ye, therefore." "Ye are complete in Him" (Colossians 2:10). THE BELIEVER'S PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE.

Ephesians 2:1-13.

I. Their Past. This constitutes a dark and dismal review. They were-

1. Without Life. "Ye were dead in trespasses and sins." Spiritually dead to God, and buried in graves of their making-"trespasses and sins." No response to all the overtures of Divine mercy in

Christ Jesus. "To be carnally minded is death."

2. Without Strength. "Ye walked according to the course of this world" (Ephesians 2:2). Carried away by the current of the world's influences, and, like a dead fish in the stream, without any power of resistance.

3. Without Christ. "At that time ye were without Christ" (Ephesians 2:12). All that Christ now stands for in our personal experience and future hopes, at that time had no existence in our lives. Here see the poverty and desolation of unregenerate souls. Destitute, afflicted, tormented.

4. Without Promise. Strangers from the covenants of promise (Ephesians 2:12). It is said that there are thirty thousand promises in God's Book, but not one for the man whose mind is at enmity with God. There are "exceeding great and precious promises," but the worldly, carnal, Christless soul sees no value in them.

5. Without Hope. "Having no hope" (Ephesians 2:12). Being without a promise, they are without hope. This is God's judgment of their case: but it is not theirs. Jesus Christ said: "No man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6). But at that time we were "without Christ," and so could not come to the Father in His own appointed way. "He that believeth not is condemned already." Without hope.

6. Without God in the World. Without God, in a world teeming with evidences of His wisdom and power. In the world, loved by God, where God's own Son lived, loved, and died to save sinners (John 3:16). Yes, such were some of us, "but ye are washed."

II. Their Present. But now in Christ Jesus. What a change!

1. Ye are Quickened (Ephesians 2:1). The Holy Spirit of God hath breathed into you the breath of a new life. Your eyes have been opened to see the mysteries and realities of eternal things. The darkness is past and the true Light now shineth. The clouded promises now appears like stars of the first magnitude. Christ has become an overshadowing reality.

2. Ye are Made Nigh. "Now made nigh by the Blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:13). Christ has been trusted, and He who died, the Just for the unjust, has brought us to God (1 Peter 3:18). The sins that separated have been put away. We have now the fellowship of the reconciled.

3. Ye are Raised together with Christ (Ephesians 2:6). In the purpose of God we were one with Him in the Cross. Now we share His resurrection life and power. "He died for our sins, but He rose again for our justification."

4. Ye are Seated together with Him in the heavenlies (Ephesians 2:6). His last word on earth was, "It is finished," then He ascended to the Father's right hand and sat down. Our blessed privilege now is to rest with Him in the work accomplished for us.

5. Ye are His Workmanship. It is all His doing. Through faith we are saved by grace, that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Php_2:13).

III. Their Future. "That in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:7). In this present age we have seen much

of God's kindness toward us through Christ Jesus in His saving, keeping, satisfying fulness. But in the age to come we shall be witnesses of the glory that was to follow. When the Lord Himself shall appear, and when all His redeemed shall be caught up together to meet Him and to be glorified together with Him as "heirs of God," we shall then have entered into our glorious inheritance (Romans 8:17-19, Luke 22:28-30). THE CHURCH AS A NEW MAN.

Ephesians 2:14-22.

In by-gone ages the Church's character "was not made known unto the sons of men" (chap. Ephesians 3:5). It was "a mystery hid in God" (chap. Ephesians 3:9). In all ages God had His Holy ones; but the Church as a new man, a new created Body of Christ, through which the manifold wisdom of God was to be make known (chap. Ephesians 3:10) had not yet been revealed. This is the theme before us now.

I. The Divine Plan. This was to make in Himself of twain (Jew and Gentile) one new man, one new Body, so making peace (Ephesians 2:15). This new Body was to be-

1. Composed of Jew and Gentile. These terms represent the whole human race. He that is not a Jew is a Gentile, whatever be the colour of his skin or the language he may speak. The Church is to be composed of "called out" ones from every nation and people under the heavens.

2. Reconciled One to Another. No more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens and of the household of God (Ephesians 2:19). "All one in Christ Jesus." In being brought to God, each member is to be brought into sympathy and fellowship with one another. They all belong to the "household of faith" (Galatians 6:10).

3. Reconciled to God. "That He might reconcile both unto God in one body" (Ephesians 2:16). Before God there is now neither Jew nor Gentile, but one body, made nigh by the Blood of Christ (Ephesians 2:13). All are saved by grace. This "new man" is "accepted in the Beloved" for the Head of this new creation is Christ Himself.

II. The Divine Preparation. Before this gracious purpose of God could be accomplished a great work had to be done, a work that God only could do. There was-

1. A Wall of Partition to be Broken Down. "He hath broken down the middle wall of partition" (Ephesians 2:14). In the temple worship the Gentile court was cut off from the inner court by a separating wall or partition. But in this new creation in Christ all such prejudice, sectarianism, and every dividing thing is to be broken down. But men are still building partition walls in their priestly pride, religious bigotry, and pagan superstitions; but, thank God, that in Christ all are done away, "broken down."

2. Enmity to be Slain. "He hath reconciled both unto God by the Cross, having slain the enmity thereby" (Ephesians 2:16). The Cross of Christ is God's mighty weapon for breaking down barriers between individuals and nations, between human hearts and a Holy God. The greatest of all partition walls is the enmity of the carnal mind (Romans 8:7). This enmity cannot be cured, it must be slain; and the humbling and melting vision of Christ crucified for our own sins can slay it.

3. Both Must be Possessed by the Same Spirit. "Through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father" (Ephesians 2:18). This union between Jew and Gentile is not a mere expediency

for a temporary end. It is a vital and eternal work of God's grace. One Spirit animates the whole body. "For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jew or Gentile, bond or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13). Christ is the Fountain Head of this Spirit-life that flows through every member of the body. "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink" (John 7:37).

III. The Divine Purpose is to have this "new man" as a fixed abode of God through the Spirit (Ephesians 2:22, Weymouth trans.). Does that mean that in the coming age the Church will be the fixed abode of the Holy Spirit for the manifestation of the glory of Christ? "He shall abide with you for ever."

1. All Built on the One Foundation. Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone (Ephesians 2:20). The prophets as well as the apostles built upon the truth revealed, whether by the Holy Spirit or by Christ Himself (Hebrews 1:1-2). In both instances Jesus Christ Himself was the chief corner stone, binding the whole spiritual fabric as one to Himself. The strength and stability of the structure depends on the presence and position of the "Chief Corner Stone" (Matthew 21:42).

2. All Fitly Framed Together. "In Him all the building is fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord" (Ephesians 2:21). In Christ every separate believer is depending on Him as the foundation of all their hopes, but they are also individually to be "fitly framed together" with their local fellow-believers. There is to be "no schism in the body." Stones which do not fit with each other make an untrustworthy or uncomely structure. Christians have often rained their testimony by being out of harmony with their brethren. The Church is a growing concern, "growing unto an holy temple in the Lord."

3. All Uniting to Make a Fixed Abode for God through the Spirit (v. 22). When this holy temple in the Lord will be ready as a fixed abode for Him to whom it belongs, no tongue of angel or pen of scribe can tell. But the day will come when the last addition will be made, and when the top stone will be put on, with "shoutings of Grace, Grace, unto it" (Zechariah 4:7). Truly every stone in the building is a monument of the grace of God through Christ Jesus. Thus this "new man," full-grown and glorified, will become the temple of the Lord, and a witness to the triumph of Christ's sacrifice in the kingdom that is to come. Well may we pray: "Thy Kingdom Come."

BELIEVERS' POSSIBILITIES.

Ephesians 3:14-21.

"For this cause I bow my knees." This was no mere formal prayer. Paul deeply realised the immense importance of the petitions he was about to offer. He knew that as Christians these experiences were needed.

I. What these Blessings Were. He prayed that they may have-

1. Spiritual Power. "Strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man" (Ephesians 3:16). The might of the Holy Spirit in the inner man is the supreme need of every Christian in our own day. Herein lies the secret of our real influence for God. This power He is ready to give to the faint (Isaiah 40:29-31).

2. The Indwelling Presence. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith" (Ephesians 3:17). There can be no spiritual power where Christ is not honoured. If by faith Christ dwells in us, then the Spirit will take the things that are Christ's and show them through us. This indwelling is assured by an unfailing faith in Him.

3. Stability of Character. "Ye being rooted and grounded in love" (Ephesians 3:17). The downward growth of the roots of our being are to be in the rich, fruitful soil of God's love, and the upward growth of the building of character is to be based also in love. "Rooted and built up in Him, and established in the faith" (Colossians 2:7).

4. Enlarged Comprehension. "That ye may be able to comprehend with all saints... and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge" (Ephesians 3:19). It will take the comprehension of "all saints" in every age to find out the breadth, length, depth, and height of that love of Christ which in itself passeth knowledge. It is a great discovery to find out the immeasurable magnitude of that love wherewith Christ hath loved us. And who shall separate us from that love? (Romans 8:35).

5. Complete and Abiding Satisfaction. "That ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" (Ephesians 3:19). Filled out of this fathomless fulness of God. "That ye might be complete in accordance with God's own standard of completeness (Weymouth). Already "from His fulness have all we received, and grace upon grace" (John 1:16). But, Lord, increase our faith, that we may rise to the Divine standard of fulness.

II. The Unfailing Source. "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20). These were great requests, but the apostle knew that he was coming to a great and gracious God. He knew and believed what we so easily forget, that "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things" (Romans 8:32). If this princely truth reigned over our prayers, how different many of them would be. God has given us His Son, this is the proof and pledge that He will withhold no good thing from those that love Him and ask Him. But the measure of our receiving is "according to the power that worketh in us" (Ephesians 3:20). "According to your faith." This power worked mightily in the apostle, and mighty things were done (see Heb. 11).

III. The Measure of God's Giving. "According to the riches of His glory" (Ephesians 3:16). We think that we know something of "the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7), but what can we know of the "riches of His glory?" In dealing with His pleading servants, it is the larger measure of His eternal glory that He uses, according to the wealth of His risen and glorified position. If in His poverty He could so bless and enrich needy souls, how much more now, since He has entered into the inheritance of His Father's glory. "All power is given unto Me in Heaven and on earth." Believest thou this? "Ask, and ye shall receive." "He giveth liberally and upbraideth not."

CHARACTER AND CONDUCT.

Ephesians 4:17-32.

As those who have learned of Christ (Ephesians 4:20), the apostle exhorts the Ephesian brethren that their manner of walk must be different from "other Gentiles," who walk in the "vanity of their mind," with the understanding darkened and "alienated from the life of God," because of ignorance

and blindness of heart (Ephesians 4:17-19). What a sad picture this is of the unrenewed man. "Such were some of us, but ye are washed." The difference grace makes must be apparent in character and conduct. To this Christ-honouring end he calls upon them and us to-

I. Put Off the Old Man (Ephesians 4:22). This old man is just the same age as yourself. You cannot put him off like an old coat, nor can you put him off with promises. It is the natural carnal mind, whose motto was "Me first"-the self-seeking, self-praising, self-satisfying spirit. It is the old, corrupt heart, that loved the things that dishonoured the Christ. Shake him off as you would a poisonous viper! Let him be crucified (Romans 6:6).

II. Put on the New Man. This new man is after the image of God in righteousness and true wholeness (Ephesians 4:24). This new man is the "second man, the Lord from Heaven." "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the old man" (Romans 13:14). To put on Christ is to put on His Spirit and the yoke of His will. When He has His rightful place in the heart and life there is no room for any other. "Jesus must reign."

III. Put Away all Unreality. Every deceptive and untruthful thing (Ephesians 4:25). Does it seem strange to be warning those who have been made anew after the likeness of Christ, of lying, anger, and stealing? We all know that the thoughts of the heart, as well as the words of the tongue, often betray. In their most incipient stage these things are to be hated and disowned.

IV. Give No Place to the Devil (Ephesians 4:27). The Devil is always in search of a place in our lives. He knows that if he can but get his poison into the blood, that the whole man will be affected. Paul forgave others, "lest Satan should get an advantage of us" (2 Corinthians 2:10-11). The hasty temper and the unforgiving mood gives Satan a great advantage. "Resist the Devil and he will flee from you."

V. Let your communications be free from corruption, and Good for Edifying (Ephesians 4:29). When conversation degenerates into mere gossip, or a display of repartee, there is little thought of obeying this injunction of making it a "ministry of grace to the hearers." Many a God-given opportunity has been utterly lost by the frivolous mood displayed at times by God's servants in the presence of quiet, thoughtful, anxious souls (Colossians 4:6).

VI. Grieve not the Holy Spirit. This is an awful possibility on the part of a Christian worker. He may be grieved by ignoring His presence, by unholy talk and temper which falsifies His character, by resisting His teaching, by depending on our own wisdom and strength. A grieved Spirit means the loss of the enjoyment of God's love, the loss of communion which is by the Holy Spirit, the loss of power for service (Isaiah 63:10). Grieve Him not, for by the Holy Spirit are ye sealed and secured unto the day of Christ's final redemption (Ephesians 4:30).

VII. Be Kind and Tender-hearted. "Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32). Be kind, tender-hearted, forgiving one another for Christ's sake: even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. This measure is "until seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:22). BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT.

Ephesians 5:16-18.

To "redeem the time" (Ephesians 5:16) and to "understand what the will of the Lord is" (Ephesians 5:17), we must be "filled with the Spirit." God does not now thunder from a mount or send prophets

with new messages. The last of the prophets was His Son from Heaven, and His last great gift for this age is the Holy Spirit, who reveals the will of God and inspires with power to do it.

I. A Striking Contrast. "Be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the Holy Spirit." A contrast between being drunk and Spirit-filled. Between man's most debasing vice and God's holiest and highest virtue. Between that which genders mockery and self-deception and that which gives Divine illumination. Between that which gives license to lust and shame and that which gives liberty and power in God's service. The one means waste and loss of self-control, the other means new gifts and self-renewal. The one leads to vain imaginations and regretful deeds, the other guides into truth and makes strong to do the will of God. "Wine is a mocker." The Holy Spirit is the great Teacher come from God to take the place of the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. A Needful Exhortation. "Be filled with the Spirit." This implies-

1. That the Holy Spirit has been Given, and that as surely as God gave His Son, Pentecost is a witness to that (Acts 2:1-4). Just as there is an ample provision in the Sacrifice of Christ to meet all our needs as sinners in the sight of God, so there is sufficiency in the Holy Spirit to meet our need as sons and servants of God in the presence of men.

2. Every Believer has been Influenced by the Spirit. It was He who first convinced of sin (John 16:8). It was He who gave the first quickening touch to our spiritually dead souls (Ephesians 2:1), and since we first trusted in Christ has been in many ways helping, guiding into truth, and revealing the things of Christ to our lagging hearts. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." But there is something more than this-

3. Every Believer should be Filled with the Spirit. When the Spirit was first poured out, He rested upon each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:3-4). Again, after prayer, we read that all assembled together were filled with the Holy Ghost (Acts 4:31). While Peter yet spake, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word (Acts 10:44). It is perfectly clear that the apostles, at the beginning of their ministry, were taught by the providence of God that every believer in the risen Lord was to be, or might be, filled with the Spirit. Paul's first question to the Ephesian disciples was: "Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed?" (Acts 19:2). There are many young disciples to-day that could give the same answer they gave: "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost to be received." "By grace are ye saved," but by the Holy Spirit are ye to be filled. This filling is for you. Seek it.

III. A Powerful Inducement to seek this filling is presented to us in the peaceful, faithful, and fruitful lives of those who were filled with the Spirit in Bible and in modern times. We can only note some of the more prominent characteristics.

1. A Deep Sense of Personal Unworthiness. The more of the Spirit the less of self. "Not I, but Christ." They know that apart from Him-nothing.

2. A Hunger for the Word of God. When the Spirit has full control within, and reveals afresh the things of Christ, there is a growing love and reverence for the living Book.

3. A Quickened Realisation of the Presence of God. There are wonderful sights and sounds in nature, which cannot be seen nor heard without some special instrumentality. There are more wonderful things in the spiritual sphere, that the natural eye or ear hath never seen or heard, but

God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:9-10). We know Him.

4. A Desire for, and a Delight in, Prayer. Prayer now means having fellowship with God in our need. There is no misgivings as to God's Personal interest in His trusting child. His prayers are mingled with notes of thanksgiving and heart-felt praise.

5. A Yearning for the Salvation of Others. Paul wept over those who were the enemies of the Cross of Christ (Php_3:18). Spiritual things have become so vital and precious that compassion and pity have been intensified for those who are out of the way. The love of Christ constraineth.

6. A More Real Conflict with Spiritual Enemies. Hitherto we were but onlookers and students of spiritual forces, but now we are right in the arena of battle, "wrestling against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness and wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12), and know the power of the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

7. A More Christ-like Attitude in the Face of Opposition. When misunderstood and misrepresented (Acts 2:13), not giving railing for railing, but contrariwise, praying for them that despitefully use you, as Christ and Stephen prayed: "Father, forgive them." To be filled with the Spirit is to be filled with the knowledge of His will and a desire to please Him.

IV. What Doth Hinder? There is no hindrance on the Divine side. He says: "Be filled with the Spirit." Then, if we are not, the hindrance must be in us. Is it ignorance of its possibility and need? Is it unbelief in its reality? It may be indifference as to its vital importance, or it may be love of the world and sheer self-satisfaction. Whatever it is, we are responsible for not being filled with the Spirit. Then, for the sake of Jesus Christ, and your own eternal honour, "Be filled with the Spirit." "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him" (Luke 11:13). "If thou knewest the gift of God thou wouldst have asked of Him" (John 4:10).

CHRIST AND THE CHURCH.

Ephesians 5:21-33.

The union brought about by a truly Christian marriage is here used by the apostle as a metaphor of that spiritual union between Christ and His Church. Let us examine- I. The Relationship of Christ to the Church.

1. It is that of a Lover. "Christ loved the Church" (Ephesians 5:25). When did this love begin? He loved it before it was born, as the promised gift of the Father. His love is an abiding benediction, a love that passeth knowledge (chap. Ephesians 3:19).

2. It is that of a Redeemer. "He gave Himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25). Like a true lover, He gives Himself first. He has bought the Church for Himself by the ransom of His own precious Blood (Ephesians 1:7). "Ye are not your own."

3. It is that of a Husband. "The husband is head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the Church" (Ephesians 5:23). The Head is the seat of authority. With the Head also rests the responsibility of supplying the needs of the wife- the Church. Why, then, for the work of the Head, do we constantly appeal to the wife for the means to carry on? If we are doing the Lord's work we

ought to do it in the Lord's way, by trusting Him who is "able to supply all our need" (Php_4:19).

4. It is that of a Sanctifier. "That He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing by His Word" (Ephesians 5:26). He sanctifies, or separates, her for Himself. He found her in rags and wretchedness, but He looked on her in love and spread His skirts of mercy over her. He washed and clothed her with broidered work. He anointed her and decked her with ornaments and jewels, and made her perfect with the comeliness He put upon her (Ezekiel 16:5-14). It is all His doing. Praise His Name.

5. It is that of a Satisfier. "He nourisheth and cherisheth it" (Ephesians 5:29). No mother was ever more careful over her child than the Lord is over His Church. He nourisheth her with the milk of His Word, and fondles her in the arms of His love (John 17:14-15). He satisfies with good things by His comforting Spirit (John 16:13-14).

6. It is that of a Bridegroom. He longs to "present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Ephesians 5:27). A Bride without blemish in His eyes. Seeing that this is His ultimate purpose concerning all His own, should we not expect Him to work out that which is pleasing to Him now in each individual life? Let us ever remember that we are always in the hands of Him who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy (Jude 1:24-25). That will be the happy day of the "Marriage of the Lamb."

II. The Relationship of the Church to Christ. It is that of-

1. Saved Ones. "He is the Saviour of the body" (Ephesians 5:23). It can never be forgotten that the Church is as a brand plucked out of the fire.

2. Members of His Body, of His flesh, and of His bones (Ephesians 5:30). So close is the relationship that "they two shall be one flesh" (Ephesians 5:31) The members of the body are the operators on behalf of the Head (Romans 12:5).

3. Submission. "Therefore the Church is subject unto Christ" (Ephesians 5:24). The members of the body that is not subject to the control of the Head is either separated or paralyzed.

4. Reverence. "The wife see that she reverence her husband" (Ephesians 5:33). We reverence our Lord when we believe His Word, love His will, and adore His Holy Name. This is the happy slavery of love. "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive honour." THE CHRISTIAN'S ARMOUR

Ephesians 6:10-20

Bunyan was wise in sending his Pilgrims into the armoury immediately after supper. As soon as we are brought into communion with God, we need to be fitted for the fight of faith. All who are in the Kingdom of God's dear Son have got the forces of the kingdom of Satan against them, so they need to be panoplied with the whole armour of God. Let us look at-

I. The Enemy. "Not flesh and blood, but principalities, powers, world rulers, spiritual hosts of wickedness" (Ephesians 6:12, R.V.). All the authorities of Hell and all the rulers of the darkness of this world, who are in league with the Devil, are opposed to the progress of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. Not flesh and blood, but that wicked spirit that works in the children of disobedience, using

flesh and blood as an instrumentality (Ephesians 2:2). Our warfare is not so much with mortal beings as with the immortal powers of evil that rule in their lives, and that come to us in the form of the "wiles of the Devil." These wiles are very varied, and are adapted to suit the different tendencies of the age or the individual. If he fails with his wiles he will surely try his "fiery darts" (Ephesians 6:16). These may come as unclean thoughts shot into the mind like ignited arrows from the pit. Truly, in the face of such a mighty and invisible foe we need the whole armour of God.

II. The Armour. Our putting on of the armour of God simply means being fortified against all the powers of evil by those virtues or moral excellences by which the Son of God was able to withstand all the temptations of the Devil (Colossians 2:15). This armour consists of six parts-

1. THE GIRDLE OF TRUTH. The loins of the mind are to be girded with the truth as it is in Jesus Christ, and so made strong to think and act for Him. This truth is "light from Heaven," which scatters all the darkness of doubt and fear, and enables one to speak out what they do know, and not what they don't know, like those who don the girdle of doubt.

2. THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. A conscience void of offence toward God and men, is that rightness which is as a protecting breastplate for the peace and joy of the heart. This breastplate Christ constantly wore, because He always delighted to do the will of His Father.

3. THE SHOES OF PREPAREDNESS. The "Gospel of peace" provides for our feet the shoes of preparedness, so that we should be always ready to do His will and to run in the way of His commandments. Those who have received the Gospel of peace should have swift feet to publish it (Isaiah 52:7).

4. THE SHIELD OF FAITH. The Roman shield was so large that the soldier could hide himself completely behind it, thus it was above or over all. This was the shield behind which David sheltered when he faced the terrible Goliath. This piece of armour signifies that unstaggered confidence in God which always overcomes (1 John 5:4).

5. THE HELMET OF SALVATION. The assurance of salvation is a mighty protection for the head in these days when there is so much false teaching all about us. The strength of this helmet lies in the fact that God Himself is our Salvation. This piece, like the others, is the gift of God, so we are to take it.

6. THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT. The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God, not the thoughts or opinions of men. Jesus Christ did not fail to use the written Word when assaulted by the arch-enemy of God and man (Matthew 4:4). There be many in our days that seem at a loss to know where to find this sword now; the Devil has so blinded their minds that they imagine that the "Word of God" has been buried in a heap of ancient rubbish, and so they go on fighting with the rotten sticks of their own theories. Nothing but failure and shame can follow where the Word of God is not preached, because the Holy Spirit of God, the author of life and blessing, can use no other weapon. It is the sword of the Spirit.

III. The Warfare. The attitudes to be maintained in this conflict are-

1. STANDING. "That we may be able to stand." Having been justified freely by His grace, and accepted in the Beloved, we have got a blessed standing, from which the great enemy of souls is ever seeking to drive us. The stratagem of the Devil is to get in between bur souls and God, that

the source of our spiritual supply may be cut off."

2. WRESTLING. "We wrestle against principalities," etc. In this warfare we cannot hide ourselves in the host. Wrestling is a personal conflict, an individual contact with the enemy. By putting on the whole armour of God every single Christian is to overcome by faith in Him who is able always to give the victory.

3. PRAYING AND WATCHING. This will not only keep the armour bright, but will keep it on. Polished armour hanging up in the hall of pur creed will not save us in the day of battle. A praying heart and watchful eyes will never be taken unawares by the scouts of the kingdom of Satan. Daniel prayed three times a day, and, in spite of the trap carefully set by his enemies, he triumphed. This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. THE WARRIOR'S ENEMY.

Ephesians 6:11, Ephesians 6:12.

(For Notes on "The Whole Armour of God," see Vol. IX, page 179.) Here we shall briefly look at "Your Adversary the Devil." The Christian's great enemy is "not flesh and blood" (Ephesians 6:12). Not even human nature, as such, but a real spiritual and powerful personality. "Called the Devil and Satan" (Revelation 12:9).

I. His Character. There is but one Devil, or Satan, but there are many "demons." "The Devil and his angels." He has had long experience in sinning. "The Devil sinneth from the beginning." He is great. Called "the Son of the Morning" (Isaiah 14:12). He is also called a "lion" for strength, a "dragon" for fierceness, the "old serpent" for subtilty. Even our Lord called him "the prince of this world." When he led the revolt in Heaven it was the great Archangel Michael who fought against him (Revelation 12:7). This is the passage we have to deal with: Who is the "accuser of the brethren" (Revelation 12:10).

II. His Sphere. When cast down from Heaven, he seems to have pitched his camp in the aerial regions near this world, and became "the prince of the power of the air," and the god of this age (2 Corinthians 4:4), and "the spirit that now worketh in the Children of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2). Although his stronghold is spiritual wickedness in high places, he is found "going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it" (Job 2:2),

III. His Resources. These are difficult to define. But when we take our "stand against the wiles of the Devil" (Ephesians 6:11) we are in conflict with the despotisms, the empires, the forces that control and govern this dark world-the spiritual hosts of evil arrayed against us in the heavenly warfare (Weymouth). But, thank God "greater is He that is for us."

IV. His Methods. We are not to be "ignorant of his devices," lest he should get an advantage of us (2 Corinthians 2:11). His devices are varied-

1. He tries "Wiles" (Ephesians 6:11). Something attractive, but deceptive and ensnaring. This was his method with Christ in His great temptation.

2. He tries "Fiery Darts" (Ephesians 6:16). Poisoned tipped arrows, that strike as suddenly as an unclean thought or a dishonest and evil imagination. If you do not love such, but hate them, you need not worry over them. Disown them.

3. He tries the Prolonged Struggle, or "wrestling." "We wrestle against the rulers of darkness, against spiritual wickedness" (Ephesians 6:12). The conflict may be severe, but resist the Devil and he will flee from you.

V. His Subjects are not those who are warring against him, but those who are his willing, because blinded, slaves (Ephesians 2:2; 2 Corinthians 4:4). They live in his "kingdom of darkness," being captured by his powers, his signs, and lying wonders (2 Thessalonians 2:9). They are in bondage to a great delusion. This is the condition into which sin and unbelief had brought us, and where all unsaved ones now are. May the love of Christ constrain us to seek their deliverance.

VI. His Victors. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the stronger One, has come into the Devil's dominion, and has overcome him, and spoiled him of his goods (Luke 11:21-22). By His life and death, and triumphant resurrection, He has spoiled principalities and powers. He shook them off, and boldly displayed them as His conquests, when by His Cross He triumphed over them (Colossians 2:15). The Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the Devil, even him that had the power of death (Hebrews 2:14). Now we who believe in Him have been delivered from the power and dominion of Satan, and translated into the Kingdom of God's dear Son (Colossians 1:13). We know that we have passed from death into life (John 5:24), and that the darkness is passed, and the true light now shineth (John 2:8). "Thanks be to God, who hath given us the victory" (Revelation 12:11). THE SELF-HUMBLED BUT GOD-EXALTED CHRIST.

Php_2:5-11.

I. His Humiliation. The pre-incarnate position and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ is frequently referred to in the Scriptures. "He was in the form of God, and thought it not dishonouring to claim equality with God" (Php_2:6). "In the beginning was the word... and the Word was God" (John 1:1). He is before all things (Colossians 1:17). It was He who "laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of His hands" (Hebrews 1:10). This is He who was "the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8). This is He who-

1. Made Himself of No Reputation (Php_2:7). Think of the reputation He had in the Heavens, before the world was, and how much He stripped Himself off when He appeared amongst men to be despised and rejected. "A man of sorrows, acquainted with grief."

2. Took Upon Him the Form of a Servant. He who was the Creator of the ends of the earth, whom angels delighted to serve and adore, who was in the form of God, takes the form of a servant, that He might bring blessing to a rebel world (Luke 22:27).

3. Was Made in the Likeness of Men. He Himself took part of the same flesh and blood, for it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren (Hebrews 2:14-17). "The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give" (Matthew 20:28). He who was the "express image of the invisible God" takes upon Him the likeness of a sinful humanity.

4. Became Obedient unto Death (Php_2:8). Obedient! but not to the clamoring of a proud, sin-blinded race, but to the will of His Father. "I delight to do Thy will, O my God" (John 6:38). Nothing on earth or in Hell could turn Him aside from His great and gracious purpose. "He set His face like a flint."

5. Became obedient Even unto the Death of the Cross (Php_2:8). From our natural standpoint it is simply appalling to think of the Eternal and Beloved Son of God submitting to be nailed to a Cross by those whom He lovingly sought to save. The utter unworthiness and guilt of men could never make itself more hideous before the eye of Heaven. But yet the infinite grace of God is hereby revealed. He was giving "Himself a ransom for us all." The Just One was willingly suffering for the unjust, that He might bring us to God (Galatians 3:13).

II. His Exaltation. "Wherefore God hath highly exalted Him" (Php_2:9). Because of His voluntary humility and suffering, in the fulfilling of His Father's purpose, He hath highly exalted Him as the Son of Man, as the Eternal Son of God. He could not be exalted above His pre-natal position, "as One with the Father" (John 14:9). There was given unto Him-

1. A Pre-eminent Name. "A Name which is above every name" (Php_2:9). The Name which is for ever above every name is "Jehovah." Now the Man, Christ Jesus, who became a "Man of Sorrows," has been lifted up above every name that is named. He who was crowned with the thorns of shame for us is now crowned with glory and honour (Hebrews 2:9) as our Representative.

2. Universal Authority. At the Name of Jesus every being in Heaven and on earth, and in the under world shall yet bow (Php_2:10) "All power is given unto Him in Heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18). He who now bears the eternal stigma of the Cross upon His hands and feet, will "subdue all things unto Himself," not only in this world, but also in that which is to come (Ephesians 1:20-21).

3. Universal Worship. "Every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father" (Php_2:11). It was God the Father who sent His Son to seek and save the lost, and He shall be honoured and satisfied when a whole redeemed world shall confess Jesus as Lord. For He shall be Lord both of the dead and the living (Romans 14:9). Now we see Jesus, who tasted death for every man, crowned with glory and honour. "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever. Amen." "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

HOLY ASPIRATIONS.

Php_3:7-14.

When Paul met the Lord on his way to Damascus (Acts 9) his whole being was revolutionised. His eyes being opened, he discovered that in Him he had found a limitless store of spiritual wealth, for which he counted everything else as worthless (Php_3:7). We have here some of the experiences which his holy ambition aimed at. May our own hearts also be stirred up to seek them.

I. That I may Win Christ (Php_3:8). Christ had already won him (Acts 9). But the apostle realised that although he was now in the land of promise, there was still much land to be possessed. He evidently wished to find Him as a daily prize. He was determined not to know anything among them but Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 2:2).

II. That I might Know Him (Php_3:10). There are, of course, many degrees in knowledge. All Christians know Him whom to know is life eternal. But the Christ some saintly men and women know is a much greater Christ than many have ever experienced. It is the same Jesus, but they have a much deeper and more intimate knowledge of His character and capabilities. It will take all

eternity to know Him as He really is. We are to "grow in grace," but also "in the knowledge of Hint."

III. That I may be Found in Him (Php_3:9). It is an abiding victory for all those whose faith and works are found in Him. If He abides in us we shall be found in Him (John 15:4), and at last, when the time of our departure is at hand, it will be a joy to us, an honour to Christ, and glory to God, when He finds us enveloped in the worthiness of His own Son. To be found in Him will be to find us blameless and complete (Romans 8:1).

IV. That I Might Know the Power of His Resurrection (Php_3:10). There is no doubt as to the fact of Christ's resurrection. He had seen Him, and had such exultant faith in Him, that he longed for the power that raised Jesus from the dead, that the risen life of Jesus might be manifested in his mortal flesh (2 Corinthians 4:10). If we have been crucified with Christ, then are we raised together with Him. The power of His resurrection is the power of His life-giving Spirit. The vitality of the Gospel has its source in His resurrection.

V. That I may Know the Fellowship of His Sufferings (Php_3:10). With the sufferings of Christ as our atoning Substitute, we can have no fellowship. He was alone, and will be for ever alone in that, but in suffering because of His holy, God-honouring devotion to His Father's will, He hath left us an example, that we should follow His steps; for "if any man will live Godly he must suffer" (2 Timothy 3:12). We cannot know the fellowship of His sufferings unless we are possessed by the same Spirit and faithfully serving in the same cause. This fellowship demands a consecrated life, a life willing to be "made conformable unto His death."

VI. That I Might Attain unto the Resurrection from Among the Dead (Php_3:11). At the coming of our Lord the dead in Christ shall rise first (1 Corinthians 15:20). This is called "the first resurrection." "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection, for they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years" (Revelation 20:5-6). Doubtless this is the truth the apostle refers to here in being raised from among the dead. (The rest of the dead lived not till the Millennial reign had closed.) He desired to attain a place of honour and service in the coming Kingdom of his Lord; and certainly he will, for he "fought the fight and finished the course," he kept the faith and expected the crown (2 Timothy 4:7). "Seek those things which are above."

VII. That I may Apprehend that for which also I am Apprehended (Php_3:12). It was Jesus Christ who suddenly apprehended him, while on a persecuting expedition (Acts 9). He still yearns to know and to carry out to completion the whole purpose of His Lord in saving him. Many there are who are satisfied just because they are saved from the penalty of sin. They have no concern as to the work the Lord has saved them to do. Saul was very practical and reasonable, for as soon as he was converted he said: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do," and he made it his life's business to do that will. "To me to live is Christ" is the faithful Christian's motto.

VIII. That I might Gain the Prize of the High Galling of God in Christ Jesus (Php_3:14). The higher the calling the greater is the reward. To be "called of God," and that "in Christ Jesus," is the greatest honour Heaven can bestow upon a sinful man. What can the prize of this heavenly calling be? It must be perfectly consistent with the glory of the calling. That surely means a perfected character, not only in the world to come, but here and now, as the reward of true-hearted obedience (1 Peter 5:10). "Let us therefore as many as be perfect, be thus minded" (Php_3:15).

For they shall know who follow on to know the Lord (Hosea 6:3). THE BELIEVER'S POSITION, EXPECTATION, AND PREPARATION.

Php_3:20-21; Php_4:5, Php_4:6.

I. Their Position. Their "citizenship is in Heaven" (Php_3:20). They have been born from above, and have their home in the City of God So they have "no continuing city" here, but they look for that city whose "Builder and Maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10). They know that in their Father's house there are many rooms, and that a place is prepared for them there (John 14:1-2). Knowing that they are citizens of a better country, they love not the world nor the things of this world, but are loyal to Him who rules in the "Heavenly Jerusalem."

II. Their Expectation. The expectations of the believer are as great as the promises of God.

1. They expect that Christ will Come Again. "They eagerly look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Php_3:20). They believe that He will appear the second time without a sin-offering unto a perfected salvation (Hebrews 9:28). They are obedient to His Word in waiting for the Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:7; 1 Thessalonians 1:10). Happy are they who hold this "Blessed Hope."

2. They expect a Transfigured Body. "Who shall change our mortal body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body" (Php_3:21). The Lord Jesus showed His disciples a pattern of this new body, when on the mount He was transfigured before them (Luke 9:29). So when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we appear with Him in glory (Colossians 3:4). We are sons of God now, but "it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him" (1 John 3:2). For this corruptible body must be changed for the incorruptible (1 Corinthians 15:53). Then shall "death be swallowed up in victory." "Believe ye that I am able to do this?"

III. Their Preparation. The watchword of the early Christians seem to have been, "The Lord is at hand" (chap 4 5). In view of His appearing, they were exhorted to-

1. Be Careful for Nothing (v. . Php_4:6). Let no harassing care trouble your mind with regard to the seemingly conflicting experiences of this life or the signs of the times. He who is Coming again would have us to cast all our care upon Him, because He careth for us (1 Peter 5:7). He who bore our sins is the same Lord who carries our sorrows. Roll thy burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain thee (Psalms 55:22). "Be careful for nothing."

2. Be Prayerful in Every Thing. "In every thing by prayer let your requests be made known unto God" (chap. Php_4:6). Nothing that troubles us is too trifling to bring to God. Those who have learned this holy practice know what it is to "pray without ceasing." The blessedness of it is unspeakable. In these closing days of this age, with the end of present conditions at hand, "Be ye therefore sober and watch unto prayer" (1 Peter 4:7).

3. Be Thankful for Anything. "In every thing... with thanksgiving" (chap. Php_4:6). For "all things work together for good to them that love God." "This is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you," that ye should in every thing give thanks (1 Thessalonians 5:18). It is easy to thank God when we receive the things we desire and that please us; but when disappointment comes, when our plans are thwarted or friends betray us, it may be easy to forget this: but it is then that we need

the faith that God doeth all things well, that we may still say, "Thanks be to God."

Colossians

THE POWER OF THE GLORIFIED CHRIST.

Colossians 1:9-14.

In this prayer the apostle shows his great faith in the all-sufficiency of his Lord, when he pleaded for the "brethren in Christ," that they might be blessed "according to his glorious power," or rather, His power in glory. Let us remember that we have the same Lord who is rich unto all that call upon Him.

I. What the Lord has Done for Us.

1. He has Redeemed us. "We have redemption through His Blood" (Colossians 1:14). He "gave Himself for us that He might redeem us" (Titus 2:14). Our redemption price is incorruptible (1 Peter 1:18), and so possesses eternal value.

2. He has Forgiven us. "Even the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:14). Yes, God, for Christ's sake, hath done this (Ephesians 4:32), and, for His sake, He is ready and willing to do for them all that His forgiven ones really need.

3. He has Rescued us. "Delivered us from the power of darkness" (Colossians 1:13). Rescued from the grip of sin, from the fear of death, the terrors of darkness, and the dominion and delusions of the Devil.

4. He has Settled us. "Translated into the Kingdom of His dear Son" (Colossians 1:13). We who were strangers and foreigners have, by the grace of God, been taken and settled in a new kingdom, under a new King, and in entirely different conditions. "Passed from death into life."

II. What the Lord is Able to Do for Us. He is able-

1. To "Fill with the Knowledge of His Will" (Colossians 1:9). With regard to God's character and purposes, there is no place for mere speculation. His will for us is clearly revealed in His Word, and the Holy Spirit is ready to teach, giving "wisdom and spiritual understanding." If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth liberally.

2. To make us "Walk Worthy of the Lord" (Colossians 1:10). There are many references in the Word concerning the Christian's "walk," that is the outward and visible expression of their every-day life before men should be pleasing to God. "Walk worthy of Him who hath called you" (1 Timothy 2:12). Walk worthy of your vocation (Ephesians 4:1). Walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4). Walk as the wise (Ephesians 5:15). Enoch had this testimony that he pleased God (Hebrews 11:5). To walk and not faint is a crowning blessing (Isaiah 40:31).

3. To make us "Fruitful in Every Good Work" (Colossians 1:10). What a victory this would mean to many a discouraged worker. This is possible, for it is God-honouring. "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit" (John 15:8). A barren ministry is dishonouring to God, and is a

betrayal of the worker's weakness. Where the Holy Spirit controls the "fruit of the Spirit" will be manifest (Galatians 5:22-23). The Holy Spirit is fruitful in all His work. Abide in Christ, and let His Word abide in you, and your fruit will remain (John 15:16).

4. To "Strengthen with all Might." All the might of our glorified Lord awaits His needy, believing people. The strength referred to here is that they might be "patient and longsuffering with joy fulness" (Colossians 1:11). It needs strong faith to be patient and joyful in the midst of prolonged suffering. Many of God's saints in the past have "out of weakness been made strong" (Hebrews 11:34).

5. To make us Meet for the Inheritance of the Saints in Light (Colossians 1:12). Paul did not believe that the saints were buried in the darkness of the grave, or lost in the abyss of "eternal oblivion." He knew that they had entered into the fuller light of the Presence of His glory, and had found their inheritance in the fellowship of their Redeemer. He longs to be a partaker with them of the "glory that is to follow." This is not the morbid desire of a faint heart, but the longing of a truly loving heart. "Absent from the body, present with the Lord." THE PRE-EMINENCE OF CHRIST.

Colossians 1:15-19

Jesus Christ, as God's Beloved Son, and as the Redeemer of men, has been so honoured by the Father that in all things, in all spheres, in all times, and in all Eternity He should have the Pre-eminence. He has the pre-eminence:

I. In Power "For by Him were all things created." All things in Heaven and on earth, visible and invisible (Colossians 1:16). It pleased God that "by" Him, "through" Him, "in" Him, and "for" Him, were all things brought into existence, and without Him was not anything made that was made (John 1:3). By Him also He made the universe (Hebrews 1:2). Think of it. This is the same Christ by whom, through whom, in whom, and for whom, God is now seeking to save sinners for the glory of His Name.

II. In Birth. "He is the Firstborn of every creation" (Colossians 1:15). He could say: "I am the First: the Beginning and the End" (Revelation 21:6). He is also the "Firstborn from among the dead" (Colossians 1:18). This has been called His "second birth." Christ the firstfruits, afterwards they that are Christ's at His Coining (1 Corinthians 15:23). The firstborn usually becomes the heir. God hath "appointed Him heir of all things" (Hebrews 1:2). And now by His marvellous grace, we who believe in Him are made "heirs together with Him."

III. In Likeness. "He is the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15). Angels are holy, many of His people in every age have been Godly, but Christ alone in His essential character was the express image of His Person (Hebrews 1:3). He could say: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9); also: "I and My Father are One." If the Gospels were read in the light of this glory from the "face of Jesus," surely they would have a deeper meaning, a more humbling, yet more inspiring influence on our hearts and lives. Here we see grace pre-eminent

IV. In Authority. "By Him all things are held together" (Colossians 1:17). The law of gravitation as an ordinance of God has a mighty balancing effect in holding material things together. But this law has no influence over heavenly things. The things invisible, the theories, dominions, principalities, and spiritual powers (Colossians 1:16). Christ upholdeth all things by the Word of His power

(Hebrews 1:3). His wisdom and His will are in constant activity over all the works of His hands. His will is done in Heaven, and the time is coming when it will be done on earth. The enmity of man's free will is meanwhile a perennial obstacle. But all power has been given Him in Heaven and on earth, and He will yet subdue all unto Himself. The Lord shall reign.

V. In the Church. "He is the Head of the Body, the Church" (Colossians 1:18). Here His pre-eminence is generally acknowledged, but does He get His true place as such in the practical life? It is the Head of the body, and not the hands, that does the thinking and the planning. In His Word we have His mind, and will concerning us clearly revealed. The secret of the Church's authority and power lies in obedience to His Word, both in doctrine and in polity. What is displeasing to the Head must be dishonouring to the body. The head takes all the responsibilities of the body, therefore we should cast all our care on Him, both for men and resources. He supplies all the needs of His Body.

VI. In Riches. He is pre-eminently rich, "for it hath pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell" (Colossians 1:19). This is a Divine act of grace, that God should be pleased that in Jesus Christ the world's Redeemer, all fulness should dwell, that all who are in Him by faith may be in touch with all the fulness of God. "He who was rich, for our sakes became poor: that we through His grace may become rich." "And of His fulness have all we received" (John 1:16). All the blessing we have received has come out of His fulness. Our cup may be full, but the oceans of His fulness still remains (Ephesians 1:3). His Name shall be called "Wonderful" (Isaiah 9:6).

COMPLETE IN CHRIST.

Colossians 2:9-15.

I. Where this Completeness is Found. "Ye are complete in Him." In Him in whom "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead in human form" (Colossians 2:9). This fulness is abiding in Him for ever, that all His loved and loving ones may be filled up and eternally perfected. He is made of God unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and deliverance (1 Corinthians 1:30). This is part of His fulness, which we have "all received with grace upon grace" (John 1:16). In Christ we dwell in God's storehouse of infinite grace, and with Him who is "the Head of all principality and power." In Him there is fulness to satisfy and power to protect, to guide, and to keep, to strengthen, to deliver, and to make the life abundantly fruitful. "Ye are complete in Him."

II. How this Completeness is Attained. Simply by being in Christ. But what is implied by this experience? The statements which follow in Colossians 2:11-15 explain.

1. By Being Forgiven. "Having forgiven you all trespasses" (Colossians 2:13). Forgiveness is our first necessity, and God's forgiveness is complete. All trespasses. It is against God that we have sinned, and the reconciliation must begin by His act of grace in not imputing their trespasses unto them (2 Corinthians 5:19)

2. By Having the Bond that was Written Against us Cancelled. Blotting out the handwriting that was against us, and contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His Cross. The law was a bond against us, saying: "Do this and live, disobey this and die." But this bond as the condition of life, Christ hath for us blotted it out by nailing it to His Cross-making it a part of His Cross (Colossians 2:14). Now ye are not under the law, but in the kingdom of His grace. For He hath

abolished in His flesh "even the law of commandments," and by His Cross He hath slain the enmity (Ephesians 2:15-16).

3. By Being Buried with Him. "Buried with Him in baptism" (Colossians 2:12). This is no mere symbol or figure of speech, but a deep and real spiritual experience. Through faith we are baptised into the death of Jesus Christ (Romans 6:3). Now the "old man" is to be thrown off and left in the grave (1 Peter 3:21). Paul refers to this when he says, "I am crucified with Christ." The Cross should be to us the death of the self life.

4. By Being Raised with Him. "Ye are risen with Him through God-given faith" (Colossians 2:12). Having been identified with His death, we have been quickened together with Him (Colossians 2:13) into the new resurrection life. Having been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection (Romans 6:5). The Christian life, then, is a life hid with Christ in God; a life whose birth is "from above;" a life that is the life eternal, for He hath begotten us again unto a living hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:3). Then what doth the Lord now require of us? Surely it is this: "Yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead" (Romans 6:13). The life we now live in the flesh has been given us through Jesus, then surrender it to Him in thankful service.

5. By Having our Enemies Conquered by Him. "He hath spoiled principalities and powers, triumphing over them" (Colossians 2:15). All power is given unto Him, and He is able, and hath made His faithful followers more than conquerors through His own unfailing and inseparable love (Romans 8:37-39). "All the hostile princes and rulers He shook off from Himself, and boldly displayed them as His conquests, when by the Cross He triumphed over them." In Christ "Greater is He that is for us, than all that can be against us." "Ye are complete in Him." "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." THE HIDDEN LIFE.

Colossians 3:1-4.

The essence of Christianity is not a "creed," not a "system of doctrine," not a particular mode of worship, but a life, and that life Christlike. It is-

I. A Life from the Dead. "Ye were dead" (Colossians 3:3) "Dead in trespasses and sin." Dead to God, in that there was no faith in Him, no response to His love, no felt need of His mercy; as insensible to spiritual and heavenly things as the dead in their graves are to the things of earth.

II. A Resurrected Life. "Risen with Christ" (Colossians 3:1). The carnal man, as a corn of wheat, has fallen into the ground and died, and the new life, quickened by the Spirit of God, hath appeared (John 12:24). "For that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die." The dead leaves of the old life fall off in the springtime of the new. If we have been buried with Christ in His death, we are risen with Him in newness of life. This life in Christ is eternal, for He who is our life dieth no more. We have passed from death into "the life everlasting."

III. A Life Supported by Heavenly Things. "Seek those things which are above. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:1-2). This life which is from above can only be fed and nourished with the things that belong to the heavenlies. Material things can never satisfy a quickened spirit. They that are after the Spirit must mind the things of the Spirit (Romans 8:5). The spiritual life is often choked with the riches of this world. Seek ye first the things of God,

and all other things will be added (Matthew 6:33); and by so doing ye shall lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him (1 John 2:15).

IV. A Substitutional Life. "Christ, who is our life" (Colossians 3:4). If His death was a substitute for us, so also is His resurrection and life. "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." "We are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life (1 John 5:20). Truly we "live, and move, and have our being in God." He was judged for us on the Cross. Now we are justified by His life (Romans 5:10). "Because I live, saith the Lord, ye shall live also" (John 14:19).

V. A Secure Life. "Your life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3). In grace God was in Christ reconciling sinners unto Himself. In glory, Christ is in God representing His ransomed people. By faith, "Ye are in Christ as the fruit of His victory, the special treasure which He found in the field of the world (Matthew 13:44). "Hid with Christ in God," ye are as safe as Christ Himself. As Noah was shut up in the ark by God, so has His Church as His Body been shut up and sheltered in the ark of His anointed. "I give unto them eternal life, they shall never perish, neither shall any power be able to pluck them out of My hand" (John 10:28).

VI A Life Yet to be Manifested. "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (Colossians 3:4). "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." "Here we suffer grief and pain," because of the world's sins and sorrows, and because of our own weakness and shortcomings. But when He shall appear we shall be like Him, seeing Him as He is (1 John 3:2). For "He shall change our mortal body, and fashion it like unto His glorious body" (Php_3:21). "What we now suffer, count as nothing in comparison with the glory which is soon to be manifested in us" (Romans 8:18). Christ came and died that we might have life. He rose and ascended that we might have it in abundance (John 10:10). "Fear not, little flock."

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

Colossians 3:8-24.

The believers at Colosse are here reminded that as Christians there are some things they must put off as inconsistent; some things they must put on as absolutely needful; some things to do as a proof of their faith; and how they should be done as an evidence of true-hearted devotion.

I. Some Things to Put Off. Put off-

1. "The Old Man with his deeds" (Colossians 3:9). The old carnal mind which is corrupt, and which lives under the spell of deceitful lusts (Ephesians 4:22). Throw him off.

2. "Anger, Unholy Passion, ill-will, evil-speaking, personal abuse: put off all these" (Colossians 3:8). Why should Christians need to be told to put off things that are more like the Devil than their Redeemer? These are sins that do beset some (Heb. 12).

II. Some Things to Put On. Put on-

1. "The New Man, which is after the image of God" (Colossians 3:10). To put on the new man is to give the Lord Jesus Christ-the Second Man, the Lord from Heaven-His true place in the life. Act as if He is mantling you with His presence.

2. "Tender-heartedness, kindness, lowliness of mind, longsuffering" (Colossians 3:12). Note that these are the features of the Divine image, as seen in the face of Jesus (This is the fruit of the Spirit). "And above all, we are to put on love" (Colossians 3:14). "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him" (1 John 4:12-16). May the love of Christ constrain us to be more like Him.

III. Some Things to Let In.

1. The Peace of God. "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts" (Colossians 3:15). What a blissful kingdom our hearts would be if the peace of God ruled therein (Romans 14:17). "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee" (Isaiah 26:3). We can let this peace rule in our hearts by a trustful submission to the will of Him who is able to say, "Peace, be still."

2. The Word of God. "Let the Word of God dwell in you richly" (Colossians 3:16). "That Word, which is quick and powerful, and a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). "Search the Scriptures, for they are they which testify of Me." It is Himself that our souls need if our character is to be enriched and our testimony made fruitful.

IV. Some Things to Let Out. What we have by faith taken in, should in service be let out. "Freely ye have received, freely give." We are to-

1. Serve Loyally. "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus" (Colossians 3:17). How different life would be if our ordinary duties were done for "Christ's sake. "In His Name" would take the sting of shame but of many a lowly deed. "One is your Master, even Christ."

2. Serve Heartily. "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as unto the Lord" (Colossians 3:23), "not with eye-service, as men-pleasers." Heartless service must be a solemn mockery in His eyes. Formal lip-service is rank hypocrisy.

3. Serve Thankfully. "Do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by Him" (Colossians 3:17). We should give thanks always for all things (Ephesians 5:20). The Lord hath done great things for us, and is still doing them on our behalf, therefore "His praise should be continually in our mouths" (Psalms 34:1). In giving and in taking away, His Name is still to be blessed (Job 1:21).

V. Some Things for which we Look Up. "Ye serve the Lord Christ, and from the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance" (Colossians 3:24). Every good thing done is to be rewarded (Ephesians 6:8). The inheritance as a harvest will be according to our works. He shall render to every man according to his deeds (Romans 2:6). But to see Him, and be made like Him, and to dwell with Him, this is the reward of grace alone.

1 Thessalonians

THE MODEL CHURCH.

1 Thessalonians 1:6-10.

The beauty of this Church did not consist of a gorgeous material building, but of a people who are said to be "In God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 1:1). And that they were ensamples to all believers (1 Thessalonians 1:7). Note their character.

I. They were Saved from Wrath. "They were delivered from the wrath to come" (1 Thessalonians 1:10) It should never be forgotten that there is "wrath to come" (Revelation 6:17) Wrath against all ungodliness. Blessed are they whom "God hath appointed to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5 9). Christ our Refuge. "Flee from the wrath to come."

II. They were Converted to God. "They turned to God from idols" (1 Thessalonians 1:9). Christ is the propitiation for the sin of the world, but that fact in itself does not save the world; there must needs be a personal turning to God from sin and unbelief. The idols of the unconverted are numerous and varied. To turn to God is to forsake everything that would divide our affections or hinder our whole-hearted trust.

III. They were Receivers of the Word of God. "They received the Word in much affliction" (1 Thessalonians 1:6) These were troublous times, as we learn from Acts 17; but the antagonism of the worldly-minded did not hinder them from boldly receiving the Word. It is always a sign of a healthy soul or Church, which gladly drinks in the truth as revealed in God's Word Human philosophies may have their place, but they are the food to build up a model Church. Quickened spirits need the "Word of Life."

IV. They were Devoted to the Service of God. "They turned from idols to serve the living and true God" (1 Thessalonians 1:9). What a change! Serving the Living God, instead of dead things that only mocked their needs with a silent indifference. "To whom, O Lord, can we go but unto Thee?" Thou art worthy of the service of every power and passion, every thought and feeling of the soul, which Thou hast redeemed by Thy Blood. "Serve the Lord with gladness."

V. They were Looking for the Son of God. They had made up their minds to serve, and "to wait for His Son from Heaven" (1 Thessalonians 1:10). They believed Christ would come again, as all the early Christians did, and as He Himself had promised This was called "that blessed hope" (Titus 2:13). The prophets of old looked and waited for the Coming of the Messiah long ages before He came; but in the fulness of the time He did come. The Church may have waited long, so long that many have lost the vision and the hope. But in the fulness of the time He will Come as He said (see John 14:3; Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16 Revelation 1:7).

VI. They were Joyful in the Spirit of God. They had the "joy of the Holy Ghost" (1 Thessalonians 1:6). With the Word of God in their hearts, and this glorious prospect before their eyes, and the power of the Spirit resting on them, their service was not a burdensome task, but a happy privilege

and a growing delight. This was characteristic of the first Church members. "They were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 13:52). "How are the mighty fallen?"

VII. They were Examples to Others. "Ye were ensamples to all that believe" (1 Thessalonians 1:7). This was certainly a prosperous Church, although there is nothing said regarding their financial position, no reference to their "Annual Balance Sheet." But their faith in God was known everywhere (1 Thessalonians 1:8), and the influence of their missionary enthusiasm, in sounding forth the Word of God, had been felt throughout Macedonia and Greece. They honoured Christ as the Head of the Church, and they were honoured by Him in doing things worthy of His great Name. This is what the Church of Christ should do. This is what every Church true to the Word of God is; and this is what every Christian should be-an encouraging example to others. "Believe, and thou shalt see."

COMFORTING WORDS.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

There is much food for thought in these verses, closing with this exhortation: "Wherefore, comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:18). There is comfort here concerning-

I. The Second Advent. "The Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven" (1 Thessalonians 4:16) The Lord does not promise to send death, or any other messenger, to take His Bride home. He is coming Himself for her. It is "this same Jesus which was taken up into Heaven, that is coming in like manner as He was seen to go" (Acts 1:11); and "they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory" (Matthew 24:30). What a comforting hope this is in these "perilous times."

II. Our Departed Friends. We are not to be in ignorance about them, nor to be in sorrow for them, for we believe that Jesus rose again, and that when He comes He will bring them with Him (1 Thessalonians 4:13-14), for in spirit they are with Him now (2 Corinthians 5:8) It is the "dead in Christ" who will rise first (1 Thessalonians 4:16). This rising means the putting on of the incorruptible body, being changed into His resurrection image. They shall lose nothing by being put to sleep before the Coming of the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:52). For we who are alive at the Coming of the Lord shall have no precedence over those who have gone to sleep (1 Thessalonians 4:15). Comforting words indeed.

III. The Living Saints. "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thessalonians 4:17). We are assured, as God's people, that all shall not die before He Comes. "We shall not all sleep (die), but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the sound of His last trump" (1 Cor. 1 51, 52). When all in every age who have been put to sleep in Jesus have been raised and clothed with immortality, and when all the believers who are alive on the earth, when He comes, are changed in a moment and caught up together with them. What a host of ransomed souls. "A multitude whom no man can number" Tell me, will any man say on that day that the Church of God has been a failure? "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." "Comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:18).

IV. The Place of Reunion. "Caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thessalonians 4:17). The air is spoken of as the sphere of Satan's stronghold. He is called "the prince of the power of the air, the spirits that are now at work in the hearts of the sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2). Does it mean that the transfiguration and reunion of all Christ's redeemed ones will take place right in the heart of Satan's territory? What a triumph this would be for "The Lamb that was slain," and for all those who all their lives were warring against the prince of darkness? And what a shameful defeat for the Devil. "I saw Satan fall like lightning from Heaven" (Luke 10:18).

V. Our Final Position. "And so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Saved by Him. Made like Him. Then for ever with Him. He has gone to prepare a place for His Church in the coming Kingdom. He will come again and receive it unto "Himself, that where He is, there shall the Bride be also (John 14:3). Then the Bridegroom's prayer will be gloriously answered. "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am; that They may behold My glory" (John 17:24); and be "for ever with the Lord." Earth's greatest blessing is to find Him. Heaven's greatest honour is to be for ever with Him. This honour have all the saints. "Comfort one another with these words." THE SECOND ADVENT

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6

This is a subject full of vital interest for these latter days. Paul's teaching here is clear and urgent. In every chapter of this epistle he refers to the Lord's Coming. In the portion before us he states several facts that might be looked at separately.

I. That the Lord will Come Again. "The Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven" (1 Thessalonians 4:16). This is not the coming of death, neither is it the coming of the Holy Spirit. It is the coming of "the Lord Himself." It is as much a personal coming as when David anointed himself and changed his apparel and came into the house of the Lord (2 Samuel 12:20).

II. That those who Sleep in Jesus will Come with Him (1 Thessalonians 4:14). All those who have died in the faith have been put to sleep in the grace and presence of Jesus. So when He comes He brings those redeemed spirits with Him, for they are His own peculiar treasure, bought by His own blood, and cannot be separated from Him.

III. That those who are Alive when He comes shall not go Before those who are Asleep (1 Thessalonians 4:15). Neither time nor circumstances can give any precedence on that day. Those who have died in the Lord shall lose nothing by it; those who remain alive at His coming shall be spared the pain of dying, but shall not have any advantage thereby in the way of pre-eminence before Him (2 Corinthians 4:14).

IV. That the Dead in Christ shall Rise First (1 Thessalonians 4:16). All those who have died trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, having been saved by His grace, shall have a part in this "first" resurrection. It will only be "they that are Christ's at His coming" (1 Corinthians 15:23). Blessed and holy is he that hath part in this first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power. The rest of the dead, who have died in their sins, shall not be raised till one thousand years after (Revelation 20:5-6).

V. That all Shall be Caught up Together (1 Thessalonians 4:17). When Christ comes those Christians who are living on the earth shall be "changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," and together with those who have been raised from the dead will be "caught up" to meet the Lord in the air. They are all one in Christ Jesus. One shepherd, one flock.

VI. That we Shall be for Ever with Him (1 Thessalonians 4:17). To be for ever with Him, who is the Wisdom and Fullness of God, for whom all things were made, and by whom all things consist, implies more than tongue can tell or finite minds can grasp. They follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. Then shall Christ's own prayer be answered, "With Me where I am" (John 17:24). Surely we may comfort one another with these words (1 Thessalonians 4:18).

VII. That this will be an Awful Day for the Unbelieving. While they are saying "Peace and safety." He shall come as a thief in the night, then "sudden destruction shall come upon them" (1 Thessalonians 4:1-3). A thief does not give any warning as to the time he will break into the house. He will be careful to choose the most unexpected moment. Sudden and everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord will be the doom of every Christ-rejecter at His coming (2 Thessalonians 1:9). These are terrible words; their terror lies in the fact that they are true, and that this fulfilment may be at any moment. Are you prepared?

VIII. That the Christian should be Looking for His Coming. All who are Christ's are the "Children of light," having been saved from the darkness that is in this world through sin. They are "not of the night," sleeping the sleep of indifference or unbelief, but are those who are expected to "watch and be sober" (1 Thessalonians 4:5-6). It is high time to wake up, for now is your full and final salvation nearer than when ye believed (Romans 13:11).

Chapter 69

2 Thessalonians

THREE FACTS OF UNIVERSAL IMPORTANCE.

2 Thessalonians 1:6-12.

Here are events that are sure to come, and will affect all mankind.

I. A New Revelation. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with His angels of might in flaming fire" (2 Thessalonians 1:7). The same Lord Jesus who was forsaken by His disciples in the time of His greatest sorrow. In the day of His humiliation He could have called "legions of angels" to His assistance, but now the angels of His might came with His burning Presence, to accomplish His long-delayed purpose of gathering out of His kingdom all things that offend and them that do iniquity (Matthew 13:40-42). "The reapers are the angels" (Matthew 13:39), who are waiting now till the "harvest of the earth is ripe" (Revelation 14:15). The Lord has been during this age revealing Himself as the meek and lowly and merciful Christ; but He will yet reveal Himself as a "flaming fire" against all ungodliness. Who shall be able to stand when He so appeareth?

II. An Unfailing Retribution. "Taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1:8) The day of grace has now passed; there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries (Hebrews 10:27). The culprits are those who know not God, because they have not obeyed the good news of Jesus Christ. To obey the call of the Gospel of Christ is the way to know God, whom to know is eternal life. There may be some excuse for ignorance, but there is no excuse for neglect. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" What is the punishment? Everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord and the glory of His power. Not annihilation, but eternal banishment from the Presence of the Lord and the glory of His power. "In His presence there is fulness of joy. At His right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psalms 16:11). Then what will it mean for those who are eternally exiled from the Kingdom of God and the pleasures that are ever flowing from His beneficent Presence? Call this state or condition by whatever name you may. There is an awful atmosphere about it. "Escape for thy life."

III. A Christ-Honouring Reward. "He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe" (2 Thessalonians 1:10). He shall be glorified in glorifying His saints with His own glorious likeness. He shall be "admired" in the work of grace bestowed upon all them that believe. While the reward will be ours, the glory will be His. "Not unto us, O Lord, but unto Thy Name be the glory." "All principalities and powers in heavenly places shall be made to know by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God" (Ephesians 3:10). We shall be satisfied when we shall see Him as He is; and He shall be satisfied when He shall see us as we shall then be. The Church will be His joy and crown of rejoicing at His Coming (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20), and something to be wondered at through all the coming ages. Its presence with the Christ of God in the glory will mean: "Blessing and glory, and wisdom and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, unto our God for ever

and ever" (Revelation 7:12).

"Thou shalt see my glory soon.

When the Work of Grace is done." THE "MAN OF SIN.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

In the above verses we have a prophetic picture drawn by the inspired apostle, which demands serious attention in these days, and which is also a powerful indictment against the popular doctrine that the "world will be converted" before the Coming of the Lord. Paul bases his appeal (2 Thessalonians 2:1-2) on the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is Coming, and that His people will be gathered together unto Him on that day. Then gives the warning against being "shaken in mind" or "troubled" because of false teaching concerning His Coming. But His appearing is certain; so also is the appearing of that "Man of Sin " (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

I. The Time of His Appearing. Two conditions precede "The Day of Christ." First, there will be a "falling away" from the faith, then the revelation of that "Man of Sin." This falling away must mean the apostasy of the Church in the denial of those truths once believed or consented to. No one can fall away from where they have never been. The Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, etc. (1 Timothy 4:1-3). "The mystery of iniquity," or, rather, lawlessness, is always in evidence (2 Thessalonians 2:7). This is the spirit of Antichrist, which even now already is in the world (1 John 4:3), and in these days abundantly manifest in midst of much preaching and Bible distribution. Lawlessness, which is the practical denial of Divine and Spiritual authority, is a congenial moral condition for the appearing and work of this "Man of Sin." The fulness of the time for his manifestation may be near (2 Peter 2:1-2).

II. His Character. He is called "the son of perdition" (2 Thessalonians 2:3). As Jesus, the Son of God, was the embodiment of the Divine character, so the "son of perdition" seems to be the human embodiment of the satanic character, for "His coming will be after the working of Satan" (2 Thessalonians 2:9). He is also called "that wicked one," whom the Lord will consume with the "brightness of His Coming" (2 Thessalonians 2:8). Does this imply that sin and lawlessness will yet find its culmination in a person, a man of the world, energised by satanic power, believed in, and followed by a restless, sceptical, and Christ-defiant populace, making their last united attempt to overthrow the faith that was "once for all delivered unto the saints?"

III. His Purpose. Is to oppose everything that belongs to God, and His Christ and to exalt himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped (2 Thessalonians 2:4). Thus showing himself to be "the Antichrist" "Exalting himself," this was the sin of Satan at the beginning, but by becoming incarnate in the "Man of Sin," will surely be his last device to seduce a gullible humanity. He has always been the "Deceiver of the whole world." If Satan hopes to succeed by this blasphemous pretention of being himself above "all that is called godly," it certainly reveals something of the terrible depths into which humanity has fallen by this departure from the truth. Beware of self-seeking and self-exaltation, it savours of the "Man of Sin." "He that exalteth himself shall be abased." "Not I, but Christ." is the only absolutely safe attitude.

IV. His Methods. They are varied and mighty. "With all power and signs," and "lying wonders," with all "deceivableness of unrighteousness" (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10). That is, with every wicked device agreeable to those who are on their way to perdition. This "Man of Sin" looks like the beast that is to come out of the earth with the power (horns) of a lamb, and the passion and purpose of a dragon; and who is able to make fire come down from heaven in the sight of men (Revelation 13:11-13). We have often thought of the "wiles of the devil" in relation to our individual life, but here is a "Man of Sin," the offspring of perdition (2 Thessalonians 2:3), endued with the power of Satan, worshipped as God, and leading to the eternal abyss the multitudes of those who "have not received the love of the truth that they might be saved" (2 Thessalonians 2:10). The wonders of the truth were rejected for "lying wonders."

V. His Hinderer. There is One who is a Hinderer to his diabolical mission. "He that hindereth will hinder, until He be taken out of the way" (2 Thessalonians 2:7).

1. Who is He? This hinderer is not a system, or party, but a Person. He must be mighty and Divine to resist such powerful and delusive work. Who can He be but the Holy Spirit of God, who is still striving with men, and leading many to Jesus Christ.

2. How Does He Hinder? By opening the blinded eyes of sinners to see their need of a Saviour. By revealing to them the things that are Christ's for their salvation. By guiding them into the truth which satisfies and fortifies against the "wiles of the Devil."

3. When Shall He be "Taken Out of the Way?" Surely when the Church of God is taken away from the world, as in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. The Church, as the Redeemed Body of Christ, is presently the "temple of the Holy Ghost." When He is taken away with the Church, then shall He cease to "strive with men." Then who shall hinder Satan in his work of deception and spiritual destruction? "If the salt lose its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?"

VI. His Temporary Ally. For once we see God adding His influence to crown Satan's efforts with success. What an awful crisis this is. The people have rejected His truth that was given to save them (2 Thessalonians 2:10). "For this cause He sent them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie" (2 Thessalonians 2:11), because they would not believe the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:12). Thus making their condemnation doubly sure. Brethren, what shall we say to these things? God is not to be mocked. When Israel would not hearken to His voice He gave them up to their own hearts' lusts (Psalms 81:11-12). In the reign of the coming "Man of Sin," when men's spiritual indifference has turned into God-defiance, and God's longsuffering mercy turned into loathing and vengeance, then what shall the end be? (1 Thessalonians 1:8)

VII. His Destruction. The Lawless One, "whom the Lord will sweep away with the tempest of His anger, and utterly overwhelm by the awful splendour of His Coming" (2 Thessalonians 2:8). Those who have been dazzled and bewitched, and awe-stricken by the lying wonders of this Satanic "man," will be smitten with terrible confusion before the "brightness of His Coming." "They shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of Heaven, with power and great glory" (Matthew 24:30). The glory of that "Man of Sin" will be discovered as a delusive will-o-the-wisp in the Presence of the glorious effulgence of the Man Christ Jesus. But there will be those at His Coming, who shall say: "Lo, this is our God. We have waited for Him. He will save us, and we will rejoice in His salvation" (Isaiah 25:9). "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

1 Timothy

A PERFECT PATTERN.

1 Timothy 1:11-17.

Here the apostle speaks of himself as a pattern to believers (1 Timothy 1:16). A pattern may be given as a specimen of workmanship for exhibition, or as an example for imitation. Paul's experience was both an exhibition of Divine grace and an example to all them "which should hereafter believe." We shall look at him as a pattern or specimen of-

I. Sin's Delusiveness. He was "a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious" (1 Timothy 1:13). Here is a man so self-deceived that he thought he was doing God service by making havoc of the Church (Acts 26:9-11). History has furnished us with many examples of the same kind of madness, through the pride and prejudice of unbelieving hearts and sin-blinded minds. But what a disillusion came when this "Jesus of Nazareth" whom he was persecuting, met him and smote him to the earth with the brightness of His Presence, and when he, "trembling and astonished," said, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:1-6). Every saved sinner has in some measure made the same discovery.

II. Abundant Grace. "I obtained mercy: the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant" (1 Timothy 1:13-14). The might and the abounding sufficiency of the grace of Christ to subdue and to save a sinner surely was never more manifest Here is a pattern of what the "grace of our Lord" can do. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20). He was thankfully speaking the truth when he said: "By the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Corinthians 15:10). If the "chief of sinners" was saved by grace, none need despair. "By grace are ye saved through faith." But remember that it is the grace of God.

III. Believers' Responsibility. "The Gospel of the glory of the blessed God was committed unto me" (1 Timothy 1:14). If we have been made partakers of this same salvation, are we not also partakers in some measure of this responsibility? The good news has been given to save us, and also as a deposit that we might be a blessing to others. If God, "who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, giving us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," then He has also commanded that we let our light shine. "Ye are as lights in the world" (2 Corinthians 4:6). "Go ye, therefore, preach the Gospel by lip and life."

IV. Christian Testimony. As a brief and perfect pattern of personal testimony, there can be nothing on record more effective than 1 Timothy 1:15. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of the acceptation of all, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." This saying is as faithful as God Himself is, and the blessing offered meets the most urgent need of humanity "to save sinners." No statement more worthily deserves the acceptation of all. Jesus Christ came into the world to save. Where did He come from? What an incidental proof of His pre-existence. Through Him God the Father is commending His love to a rebellious race (Romans 5:8). Do your friends know what great things God hath done for your soul? (Mark 5:19). The

Psalmist said: "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul" (Psalms 66:16). "Let him that heareth say. Come."

V. Praise and Thanksgiving. What a beautiful pattern this is. "Now to the immortal and invisible King of all the ages, who alone is God, be honour and glory to the ages of the ages. Amen" (1 Timothy 1:17). Often the language of mortals cannot express the deep things the heart may feel; but God judgeth the heart, and takes account of every thankful recognition of His mercies. Praise and thanksgiving, adoration and worship, are most fitting when the Majesty of God's goodness becomes overwhelming. "Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness" (Psalms 107:15). In counting your many blessings, do not fail to add your benediction.

INTERCESSORS NEEDED.

1 Timothy 2:1-6.

In Isaiah 59:16 we read that the Lord "wondered that there was no intercessor." He wondered at the folly and unbelief of His people, in neglecting this most effective means of blessing. This is a privilege within the reach of every child of God, a sphere of service open to every believer to make intercession.

I. Its Importance. "I exhort, therefore, that first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions be made" (1 Timothy 2:1). Here this holy exercise gets the first place in his exhortations. It is possible that an intercessor's reward may be greater than a preacher's. Samuel knew how this honoured the Lord when he declared: "As for me, God forbid that I should sin against Jehovah by ceasing to pray for you" (1 Samuel 12:23). Prayerlessness is not only a sin against our own souls, but our fellowmen, and against God.

II. Its Scope. "For all men and for all in authority" (1 Timothy 2:1-2). If ye know not what to pray for as ye ought, here at least is a wide field for its operation. Those of the Captivity were exhorted to "seek the peace of the city wherever they were, and to pray unto the Lord for it" (Jeremiah 29:7). Our modern cities are in desperate need of intercessors, and perhaps our modern Churches not less. In praying for "all men," don't forget the all in your own home, all in your fellowship, city, and nation. Remember the great all for whom Christ died.

III. Its Incentives. As an encouragement for intercession, think of-

1. The Will of God. "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). By His own power God could save all men whether they will or not. But in grace He is willing to save all that come unto the knowledge of the truth. In praying for "all men" we are in line with the Divine will, and helping the fulfilment of His purpose.

2. The Ransom Price. "Christ gave Himself a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:6). There is ample provision in the death of Christ, and in the will of the Father for the salvation of all men. "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

3. The Mediator. "There is one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). What an incentive to prayer this is, when we realise that the Eternal Son of God in the likeness of men is our Mediator before the throne, and He ever liveth to make intercession. Ponder also-

IV. The Examples set before us. Abraham interceded for the doomed city of Sodom (Genesis 18:24), Moses on the hill top with uplifted hands silently pleading for victory (Exod. 17), Elijah praying for a Divine manifestation that the nation might be rescued from idolatry (1 Kings 18:37), Job in midst of his sorrow and sufferings making intercession for his mistaken friends (Job 42:10). Think also of "the Man of Sorrows," who was wounded and bruised for our iniquities, yet He made intercession for the transgressors (Isaiah 53:12), and His last prayer on earth was for His murderers. "Father, forgive them." Well may we pray. "Lord, teach us to pray." The need for intercessors is a great and growing need, for the harvest is plenteous, but the divinely equipped labourers are few. Pray ye therefore (Matthew 9:37-38).

2 Timothy

THE FOUNDATION, THE HOUSE, AND ITS VESSELS.

2 Timothy 2:19-21.

Timothy is being warned against a cankerous error that had overthrown the faith of some; but no amount of error can alter the "foundation of God."

I. The Foundation. It is "the foundation of God" (2 Timothy 2:19).

1. It is Sure. "It standeth sure." This Rock, as a foundation for God's building, is as firmly established as His own Eternal Throne, for that Rock is Christ (Matthew 16:16), and He liveth and abideth for ever (1 Corinthians 3:11).

2. It is Unmistakable. Having this inscription: "The Lord knoweth them that are His." Every individual soul that is trusting in Christ is known personally by Him. This is not true of any other religion under Heaven. Multitudes bow to dead prophets and false gods, but the worshippers are individually unknown by the objects of their adoration. "I know My sheep" (John 10:14).

II. The House. "In a great house there are different vessels" (2 Timothy 2:20). This "great house" doubtless refers to the "Church of God" (1 Timothy 3:15). Which is the biggest and most self-evident concern in the world, because it is the strongest, built on Jesus Christ, who is the embodiment of Eternal Truth. It is great, because it is occupied by a great tenant, the Holy Spirit, who is through Christ's Body, the Church, seeking to fulfil the great purpose of God in the salvation of men. It is a great house, has been abuilding for over 1900 years, and is still being "added to".

III. The Vessels. In every great house there are vessels of different value and design, suited for all useful purposes. "Some gold and silver, some wood and earthenware" (2 Timothy 2:20). Some to honour and some for common use. Those of gold and silver get the position of honour, because of their more perfect character and special fitness for the higher and more conspicuous service. Those servants who may be classed with the "wood and earthenware" types may be just as useful in their own sphere as their more honoured brethren. The gold and silver vessels are not looked for in the lowly but indespensable work of the kitchen. God's servants have all their own place in the great house of God. Some prophets, some apostles, some pastors, some teachers, some evangelists, and some who may be the "wood and earthenware," who are taken no special notice of, but who are waiting and ready to be used for anything that the Master appoints. These vessels, though different in character, all belong to the same great house, and owned by the same Master, and are all needed for the one purpose, the fulfilling of their Lord's will. All have not the same gifts and qualifications, but all are partakers of the same grace. There is no occasion for envy or jealousy. Each one might say: "By the grace of God I am what I am." But the alchemy of Divine grace is suggested here. It is possible for a common vessel to be transformed into a vessel of honour. "If a man purge himself from all that is false and unclean, he shall be made a vessel unto honour, sanctified and made meet for the Master's use, fully equipped unto every good work" (2

Timothy 2:21). "Behold, as the clay is in the hand of the potter, so are ye in Mine" (Jeremiah 18:6). "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Ephesians 2:10). "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" A DYING CHRISTIAN'S TESTIMONY.

2 Timothy 4:6-8.

This joyful testimony was written by Paul the prisoner, while lying in a dungeon at Rome, waiting the hour of his doom. It speaks of- I. A Victorious Past.

1. As a Soldier. He had "Fought a good fight" (2 Timothy 4:7). He had gone through a glorious contest. He had fought "the good fight of faith" against all the principalities and powers of evil, seen and unseen. It was a good fight, because it was for the goodness he had discovered in his God and Saviour.

2. As a Racer. He had "finished his course." His course was specially marked out for him (Acts 9:15-16). The track Divinely ordained for this runner had many obstacles, which proved hard for flesh and blood. "The Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city saying that bonds and afflictions abide me" (Acts 20:23). It is ours "to run in the way of His commandments;" it is His to help us to finish.

3. As a Believer. He had "kept the faith." He had guarded the truth revealed to him, and preached and presented the Gospel of God's grace as revealed in Jesus Christ. If any man "preach any other Gospel let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8).

II. A Peaceful Present. "I am now ready, and the time of my departure is at hand" (2 Timothy 4:6). He was ready, like ripe fruit, to fall into the hand of Him to whom he belonged. Death to him had no sting or terrors; to him the grave had no victory. To depart was to be "with Christ, which is far better" (Php_1:23). "Be ye also ready." Our readiness does not consist in the amount of good works we may have done, or the number of years we have lived, but in that "quietness and confidence" in Jesus Christ which brings the strength of His prevailing peace into the heart, and that calmly whispers: "Father, not my will, but Thine be done. Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord. Into Thy hands I commit my spirit." A Scotsman lay dying in a country home, while a snow storm was on. His daughter said: "Father, will I read to you." He answered: "Na, my lassie, don't trouble. I thatched my house in calm weather."

III. A Blissful Future. "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord will give me" (2 Timothy 4:8). The crown of righteousness is the reward that is kept for and bestowed upon those who have lived the righteous, God-pleasing life. It is not only for an apostle, but for "all them that love His appearing." Does not this imply that loving His appearing has a gracious and inspiring influence on the life? This faith in, and this looking for, the Coming of the Lord is no vain and fruitless imagination, but an holy incentive to a righteous life. "He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself." "When the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Peter 5:4). The Second Coming of Christ is the enlightened believer's perennial expectation and the world's only hope of deliverance (Romans 11:26).

"Behold I come quickly: and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Revelation 22:12).

PAUL'S LAST LETTER

2 Timothy 4:6-18

There is always a special pathos about the last words of loved ones. Such are very frequently a revelation of the inner character and life. It is so with this final message from the pen of our beloved apostle. As we bow our ear to catch this message, as it were from his dying lips, we are not left to faintly guess what he means. There is a telling ring in his voice, his mind is clear, his words are emphatic, and speak out volumes of truth. They speak of-

I. Perfect Resignation. "I am now ready to be offered." He who had poured out his life in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ was now ready to have his blood poured out as a sacrifice for Him. At one time he was in a strait about this (Php_1:23), but now he was ready. He was like one who had everything packed up in readiness to step on board that ship which was to take him to a better country. Be ye also ready.

II. Assured Success. "I have fought the good fight. I have finished the course. I have kept the faith" (r.v.). He was perfectly confident that his life and testimony as a servant of the Lord was no failure, but that the will of God in calling him to His work had been fulfilled in him. As a warrior he had fought and conquered; as a racer he had abode in the course and honourably finished the race; as a custodian he had firmly kept the faith delivered to him. He was faithful unto death (Revelation 2:10).

III. Joyful Hope. "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown," etc. The Lord, who was his righteous Judge, had this crown laid up for him, although Nero, the unrighteous judge, had laid up for him a sword. In view of his crowning day, Paul could joyfully sing: "O death, where is thy sting?" The Lord always lays up treasure and honour for those who faithfully serve Him now in the day of His rejection at the hands of men (James 1:12).

IV. Painful Experiences. It was surely with a deeply grieved soul that the aged apostle told of "Demas," who had forsaken him, "having loved this present world," and of Alexander, the coppersmith, who had done him "much evil," and of how that "no man stood with him" while on his first trial, but "all forsook him." In all this Paul was a sharer of his Master's sorrows (Matthew 26:56). "Only Luke is with me." Love of the world, backbiting, and cowardliness are still the sins that bring sorrow to many a faithful servant of God. In the world he had tribulation, but in Christ he had peace.

V. Forgiving Love. "I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge." He is true to the Spirit of his Master in praying for those who "despitefully used him and persecuted him" (Matthew 5:44). This ought to be the desire of all who have themselves experienced the forgiving grace of God. To overcome the evil actions of others with your good actions is to fight in the armour of God.

VI. Divine Faithfulness. "Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me and strengthened me" (2 Timothy 4:17). While giving his "first answer" before the unrighteous judge, he doubtless experienced the fulfilment of the Lord's promise: "It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which is in you" (Matthew 10:19-20). Paul's last testimony, like that of Joshua, is to the unfailing faithfulness of his God and Saviour (Joshua 23:14). "Lo, I am with you alway!"

VII. Unfailing Confidence. "The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly Kingdom" (2 Timothy 4:18). Come what may, there is no shadow of doubt or

tremor of fear in the heart of this noble man as to his present safety from all evil and his future reward and eternal satisfaction in the coming Kingdom of His glory. He is assured that the sufferings of this present, life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in that day when "He shall appear." Look up, for the day of your redemption draweth near.

Titus

SEVEN WONDERS.

Titus 2:11-14.

The novelty hunters are very numerous; like the Athenians they are always grasping for something new. But the greatest wonder in the world is the Bible. Its origin, teaching, and power are all superhuman.

I. A Wonderful Exhibition. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men hath appeared." This is an exhibition of the grace of God. This means all the attributes of God, flowing out in order to save men. An exposition of the goodness of God. This is seen at the Cross of Calvary, in the Son of God's love, bleeding and dying for guilty men. The great "World's Fair" was only a heap of rubbish compared with this.

II. A Wonderful Character. Jesus is here called "The Great God and our Saviour." You may say Jesus Christ was only a man. Paul declares that He was the Great God. "His Name shall be called Wonderful-the Mighty God." What consolation is here for the Christian! Your Saviour is the Great God-fear not. What encouragement is here for the anxious! The great God is a Saviour- fear not to trust Him. What consternation is here for the self-righteous. You hope to save yourself, how fruitless your effort. It takes the Great God to save a soul.

III. A Wonderful Gift. "He gave Himself for us." For a man to lay down his life for his friend is wonderful. This is man at his best. But while we were yet enemies, Christ died for us. This is Divine. This is the only example the history of the world has ever given us of one willingly dying for his own murderers. He gave Himself for you. What hast thou given for Him? Oh, you say, "I have no time." What, no time to thank thy God for such a Gift.

Room and time now give to Jesus, Soon will pass God's day of Grace;

Soon thy heart be cold and silent, And thy Saviour's pleadings cease.

IV. A Wonderful Work. The work of Christ as here stated was to redeem and to purify, to purchase and to cleanse. When a woman buys a set of china, she does not think them fit for use until they are washed. They are bought, then washed. The Lord uses us, not because we are great and gifted; not because we are clever, but because we are clean. It is not enough that we be redeemed. If God is to be glorified in us we must be cleansed.

V. A Wonderful People. The redeemed and the purified are to be "a peculiar people." Some Christians are afraid of being peculiar, lest they should be talked about. They wish to mar the very works by which they ought to be known. Christians are a peculiar people. They have a peculiar citizenship. Their citizenship is in Heaven, because they have been born from above. Such a birth is not a thing to be ashamed of. They speak a peculiar language. The ungodly don't care about their conversation any more than for one speaking in a foreign tongue.

VI. A Wonderful Life. The life of the redeemed man is to be a resisting life. "A denying of ungodliness." It is to be a sober life, not only a teetotal life. This is implied, but much more. Be sober in your eating, in your clothing, in your speech. It is to be a righteous life. The Christian should be the most punctual business man, the most trustworthy of all men. It is to be a godly life. A life beaming with the gentleness and truthfulness of Jesus, reflecting back on a dark world the image of the invisible God. It is to be an active life, "zealous of good works."

VII. A Wonderful Prospect. "Looking for His glorious appearing." That the sun will rise to-morrow is not more certain than that Christ will come again. It may seem strange that He should say, "Behold, I come quickly," nineteen hundred years ago, and not to have come yet. But we must remember that 1000 years are with the Lord as but one day, so that two days have not yet passed according to His reckoning. He will come. Are you ready for His appearing? God grant that you may be prepared for that great day.

FULL SALVATION.

Titus 3:3-7.

It is easy to say that there is fulness of water in the ocean, fulness of wealth in the earth, and fulness of light in the sun; but can the richness of this fulness be reckoned up? So there is fulness of salvation in the grace of God, but that fulness can only be realised in the ages of the ages. In the above Scripture we see what might be termed seven steps into a full salvation.

I. An Honest Confession. "We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, and slaves of sin" (Titus 3:3). Confession is the opening of the windows of the heart to the light of Heaven: an acknowledgment before God of our guilt and need of His mercy. God is faithful and just to forgive every sincere confessor (1 John 1:9).

II. A Divine Revelation. Of the "kindness and love of God our Saviour toward men" (Titus 3:4). God's kindness and love, as revealed in Christ Jesus, is the greatest and most precious discovery any sinful man ever made. To him it is a fountain opened, where streams of mercy flow for all his sin and uncleanness. When seen and trusted, constraining him to make this other confession: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:9-10).

III. A Complete Justification. "Being justified by His grace" (Titus 3:7). As we have sinned against God, God alone can justify. This He does by His own free, unmerited favour, through Jesus Christ. "It is not by works, lest any man should boast" (Galatians 2:16). When God justifies the believer in Jesus it is an evidence that his forgiveness has been full and complete.

IV. An Entire Regeneration. "He saved us by the washing of regeneration" (Titus 3:5). Suppose it were possible to be justified from all sin, and yet not be changed in heart, or made a new creature How soon this justified one would be like the sow that was washed returning again to the mire. "Whom God justified, them He also glorified" (Romans 8:30). Justification sets us right with God for further blessing. Regeneration makes us like God in character for holy service. It would not be a full salvation without being "born from above."

V. A Daily Renovation. To meet this need there is "the renewing of the Holy Ghost which He shed on us abundantly" (Titus 3:5-6). This is the Divine remedy for spiritual staleness. "Be renewed in

the spirit of your mind" (Ephesians 4:23). Along life's rough path there is much to tear and wear the energy of the soul; but the Holy Spirit can renew our freshness and fitness by His quickening influence. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth." Here the flesh profiteth nothing. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Our Lord said: "He that believeth on Me out of his inner man shall flow rivers of living water: this spake He of the Spirit" (John 7:37). "Believe and thou shalt see."

VI. An Eternal Possession. "Made heirs of the life of the ages" (Titus 3:7). Our Heavenly Father has such vast possessions that every child "born of God" becomes an heir-not merely of eternal existence, that is seen, without being "born again;" but of the abundant life that is in Jesus Christ, throughout all the coming ages. Thus we have fulness of mercy to begin with, fulness of grace to continue in, and at last fulness of life to glory in through all eternity. "He that hath the Son hath life" (1 John 5:11). "He is able to save to the uttermost."

Philemon

Philemon This is the briefest of all Paul's Epistles. It is the only sample of the Apostle's private correspondence that has been preserved. It is known as "The Courteous Epistle." Its object was to persuade Philemon not to punish, but reinstate, his runaway slave, called Onesimus, and as he was now converted, treat him as a brother in the Lord. THE TASK AND ITS ACCOMPLISHMENT.

Philemon.

I. The Task.

Invariably, in those days, runaway slaves were crucified. Paul must try to conciliate the master-Philemon-without humiliating the servant-Onesimus; to commend the repentant wrong-doer, without extenuating his offence; thus he must balance the claims of justice and mercy.

II. Its Solution.

1. Touching Philemon's heart by several times mentioning that he was a prisoner for the Gospel's sake.

2. Frankly and fully recognised Philemon's most excellent Christian character, thus making it difficult for him to refuse to live up to his reputation, and to lead him to deal graciously with the defaulter.

3. Delayed mentioning the name of the penitent until he had paved the way.

4. Referred to Onesimus as his "son," thus establishing the new kinship in Christ.

5. After presenting his request, assumed Philemon would do as he had requested (21).

6. Refused to command with the authority of an apostle, but entreated as a brother, as a bosom friend. See Philemon 1:8-9, Philemon 1:20; especially "Dearly beloved" (Philemon 1:1).

7. Frankly acknowledged the wrong done (11), and promised to make good any loss (18, 19).

8. By a careful choice of words, avoided irritation, as, for example, he says "departed" (15), not fled or runaway, etc., etc.

9. Feels the slave must not encounter his outraged master alone, so arranges for Philemon's friend, Tychicus, to accompany him and act as mediator. It is clear that Tychicus conveyed this letter to Philemon with Onesimus. (See Colossians 4:7-9).

10. Mentions his plans to visit Philemon (22); and how could he meet him if he had refused to carry out his request? A FOURFOLD FELLOWSHIP.

Philemon.

I. Fellow-believer. Trusting (6).

1. "Fellowship of thy faith" is R.V. "This faith which you share with us" (Way.).

2. What a glorious fellowship is this of faith. What an honour to be numbered as a member of the Lord's Household of Faith.

II. Fellow-soldier. Fighting (2).

1. Apphia is called "The Sister" in R.V. Was she Philemon's wife or daughter?

2. It is generally understood that Archippus was Philemon's son.

3. Fighting follows trusting. Soon the young believer discovers this. Fightings without-yes, and fightings within-"Flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh" (Galatians 5:17). Remember it was immediately after God had given water (type of Holy Spirit) to Israel, that Amalek (type of flesh) fought Israel. (See. Exodus 17:1-8). Observe force of "Then" in Philemon 1:8. But in this fight, through our Heavenly Moses on the Mount-our Lord Jesus as Great High Priest-we are more than conquerors.

III. Fellow-labourer. Working (1).

1. Philemon is not mentioned in the Epistle to the Colossians, but Archippus, whom Paul associates (in Philemon 1:2) with Philemon, is mentioned in such a way as to imply that both were office-bearers (Colossians 4:17). "Sharer in our toil" is Way's translation. Philemon was one of Paul's converts.

2. "Our fellow-workman" (J.N.D.).

IV. Fellow-prisoner. Suffering (23).

1. Only Epistle where Paul begins by simply calling himself a "prisoner." Six times does he allude to this (1,9,10,13,22,23).

2. The Epistle begins with Paul in bonds, but leads up to Paul in prayer.

3. Observe, "prisoner for Jesus Christ" (1, R.V.). He does not dwell on this in any spirit of boasting or proud display, but for a benign purpose.

4. Suffering for the Lord falls naturally to the lot of all born-again ones. The lustings of the flesh, for example, cause suffering. Then grace does refine, making us more sensitive to the jeers and taunts of the world, and to the unkind and uncharitable criticisms of fellow-believers.

5. But let us never forget we are not the only sufferers, for this is the common lot of all believers. "Fellow-prisoner."

6. It is generally understood that the prominent brethren took turns in voluntarily sharing the Apostle's imprisonment, so as to minister to him in his bonds, "not being ashamed of his chain" (2 Timothy 1:16). By such a fellowship of suffering they must have refreshed the heart of the Apostle.

7. Epaphras is the shortened or provincial form of Epaphroditus. AN ANALOGY OF OUR SALVATION.

Philemon.

I. Original Position. God created man perfect, and thus man was His property. But in sinning he not only departed from God, as Onesimus had done, but also robbed Him of His rights and just dues.

II. Sad Plight. As Onesimus fled to Rome, and was in a parlous position, so with man. As Roman law gave a slave no right to asylum, so the Law of God affords man no right of asylum, no resting place, no way of escape. The Law says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

III. God has a Partner (17). It is thought by some that Philemon and the Apostle had been partners in some business concern. In Jesus, God has a Partner utterly and entirely one with Him. He interposes on our behalf. Knowing to the full how much we have wronged God, and how much we owe Him, Jesus says, "Put that on Mine account." All our debt is put to Christ's account.

IV. Grace Intervenes. Roman law permitted a slave to flee to his master's friend, who could plead for him. Onesimus sought out his master's friend, Paul the Apostle, and he was born again-"whom I have begotten in my bonds" (10). Sinners fly to the Lord Jesus Christ. In Him, and through Him, they receive pardon, are begotten anew as sons, and find both a Saviour, an Intercessor, and a Father. The sinner returns to God, and is received, not as a runaway slave, but as Christ Himself (16). IN CHRIST JESUS.

Philemon 1:5-8.

There are eleven references to the Lord Jesus by name in this short Epistle of but one chapter. The specially significant phrase, "In Christ Jesus," occurs oftener than in the same number of verses anywhere else in Scripture. The Lord Jesus is referred to in many offices, as follows:

I. The Object of the faith and love of His people (5). "A faith that looks up to our Lord Jesus" (Way).

II. The Channel through which God's grace and peace becomes ours (3, 25).

III. The Source of any good thing in us (6).

IV. The Transforming Power (16). In Philemon 1:11 we have two pictures of one man. Here is a play upon the meaning of the name of Onesimus, which is "Profitable." Profitable by name, he became, through sin, unprofitable to his Master, but through the grace of the Lord, and through Christ's wonderful transforming power, profitable to both Paul and his friend Philemon. The Lord transforms waste into wealth. "In the Lord" (16), that is the explanation of the wonderful transformation in Onesimus.

V. Gives Boldness to His servants (8).

VI. Gives Satisfaction and refreshment to workers, by prompting their converts to generous and praiseworthy actions (20).

VII. Gives Restfulness in the consciousness that He knows all, and that nothing can come to us save by God's permission (1, 9, 23). Observe, Paul calls himself, not a prisoner of the Roman authorities, true though that was, but of Jesus Christ. Behind Rome he saw the Lord, and knew his imprisonment could not have been but for Divine permission.

RECEIVE.

Philemon.

This may be taken as the key-word of the Epistle, and forms both its heart and radiating centre. Observe the gathering emphasis in his repetition of this word, how he strikes each time a louder note and a higher key.

I. The Act. What was he to do? Receive (12).

II. The Manner.-How was he to receive Onesimus?

1. As Philemon would Receive Paul Himself (12, 17). "As my own flesh and blood" (C. & H.). "As a piece of my very heart" (Way). "I send part of myself" (W.). As Dr. Scofield has pointed out,. "Receive him as myself"-reckon to him my merit. "If he hath wronged thee or oweth thee ought, put that to my account" -reckon to me his demerit. Striking illustration of the Divine reckoning in our justification.

2. As a Beloved Brother in the Lord (16). In the flesh, Philemon has his brother-man for his slave; in the Lord Jesus he has the slave for his brother. By conversion, one sinner becomes son to Paul and brother to Philemon, his owner and master.

III. The Period. "Receive him for ever" (15). "For perhaps he therefore departed for an hour (lit.), that thou shouldest receive him for ever." What a contrast we have here. Paul suggests a loving Providence over-ruling.

BESEECH.

Philemon 1:8-10.

Note the intensity of feeling apparent by Paul's use and repetition of the strong word "beseech." But pray also note the Apostle's great wisdom in waiving his authority to command.

I. Paul's Authority (8). "Therefore, though I might with Christ's authority speak very freely and order you to do what is fitting, it is for love's sake that-instead of that- ... I entreat you" (W.). Paul had authority to command Philemon to reinstate Onesimus, because 1st. He was an Apostle.

2nd. He was Philemon's spiritual father.

3rd. Philemon was an office-bearer under Paul.

II. Paul's Wisdom (9). Paul wisely decided, in this case, not to exercise his authority, but to appeal to their mutual love, and to his aged and suffering condition. Elder brethren, and Christian leaders in Churches, would be well advised to more frequently emulate Paul's example, and to take care that their responsible position does not create a permanent, officious, domineering, autocratic, and dictatorial spirit. Such can easily be developed. Note the frequency in Paul's Pastoral Epistles of his commendation of a "gentle" spirit. There is a world of wisdom in that exhortation.

III. Paul's Success (10). There is no doubt whatever that Paul succeeded in his plea. His skill in presenting his case, and, above all, his gentle, loving entreaties were overwhelming. More success would be granted in many difficult Assembly and Church matters if Paul's example were more frequently copied.

Hebrews

Hebrews

Hebrews is an anonymous book. Though no one can dogmatise with regard to its authorship, it does seem to be of Paul's thinking and Luke's composition and writing. It was addressed to the converted Jews living in Judea, who, on account of bitter persecution, were wavering in their allegiance to Christ. It is an epistle of exhortation, comfort, and warning.

HOW TO PRESENT THE GOSPEL TO JEWS.

Hebrews.

Those who are called to evangelise Jews declare that there is no better statement of the Gospel to present to Jews than this Epistle. Let us trace the method of presentation, as seen in this Epistle. We notice first, that the Author here proves to the Jews that the Jesus of Nazareth they put to death on the hated Cross is none other than CHRIST their messiah, the son of God, the Second Person in the blessed Trinity. This is an important point. We cannot but admire the courage and faithfulness of the Apostle, for the Jews then, as now, were prepared to admire much in Jesus', but would not listen to His claim to Deity. Observe how slowly and methodically he declares and proves this.

I. Greater than Prophets. The prophets whom all Jews value, were great, but Jesus was greater than any or all of them (Hebrews 1:1-3). Why? Jesus is the 1. Origin of all things: "By whom also He made the worlds" (2).

2. Sustainer of all things: "Upholding all things" (3).

3. Glory of all things: "Brightness of His glory" (3).

4. Unique amidst all. Here the writer points out the absolute uniqueness of Jesus. However great were the prophets, none shared Deity, none were the "express image of" God.

II. Greater than Angels. Angels are great beings, but Jesus is greater than any or all of them put together (Hebrews 1:4-14), because:

1. Divine Names are given to Him (Hebrews 1:2, Hebrews 1:5, Hebrews 1:8, Hebrews 1:10).

2. Divine Worship was offered Him (Hebrews 1:6).

3. Divine Nature is announced as His (Hebrews 1:8).

4. Divine Majesty is ascribed to Him (Hebrews 1:8).

5. Divine Anointing bestowed upon Him (Hebrews 1:9).

6. Divine Works are assigned to Him (Hebrews 1:10).

7. Divine Attribute of Immutability (or Permanence, of constant continuity) residing in Him (Hebrews 1:11-12).

8. Divine Companionship was His-companion of the Most High (Hebrews 1:13).

9. Divine Rule committed to Him (Hebrews 2:5-8).

10. Divine Redemption worked out by Him (Hebrews 2:9-18).

III. Greater than Moses. Moses was very great, but Jesus was, and is, greater. This must have staggered the Jews. But the writer proves this point thus:

1. Moses was only a servant, whereas Jesus was Son of God, and a son is greater than a mere servant (Hebrews 3:5-6).

2. Moses was "in God's House" (Hebrews 3:5), but Jesus "over" God's House'.

3. Yea, more, Moses was only in God's House, but Jesus "over His Own House" (Hebrews 3:5-6).

IV. Greater than Joshua. Joshua was a great leader, but Jesus far greater (Hebrews 4:1-13). Because Jesus renders a more conspicuous service in the bestowal of a Rest far better than the one Joshua (R.V., Hebrews 1:8) led Israel into. Study Philemon 1:5 and Philemon 1:8 in contrast to Philemon 1:9.

V. Greater than Aaron. Aaron, the first high priest of Israel, was great, but Jesus greater (Hebrews 5:4-8; compare Hebrews 7:10-28). How can this be?

1. His Title. Aaron was High Priest, but Jesus called "Great High Priest" (Hebrews 4:14).

2. His Sonship. No high priest ever was called "The Son of God" (Hebrews 4:14). Note, not "a" Son, but "The Son."

3. His Perfect Sympathy. "Touched with the feeling of our infirmities" in a more perfect fashion than any earthly priest (Hebrews 4:15).

4. His Sinlessness. All priests, or high priests, are only sinful men, but even the bitterest enemies of Christ have had to acknowledge His sinlessness (Hebrews 7:26).

5. His Kingship. Jesus is King and Priest, a combination not permitted to any king of Israel or Judah (Hebrews 7:1). (Study Numbers 16:40; Numbers 18:7; 2 Chronicles 26:18). He was made Priest after the order of Melchisedec, and Abraham acknowledged Melchisedec to be his superior (Hebrews 7:4-10).

6. His Sphere. Jesus ministers in a far better sanctuary than Aaron or any of his successors (Hebrews 8:1-4; Hebrews 9:1-15).

WHY JESUS CHRIST CAME DOWN TO THIS WORLD OF OURS.

Hebrews 1:3.

Much confusion exists in the minds of many men and women as to our Lord's chief errand in coming here to this world of ours. Was He sent into the world

I. To be the Prophet of God? He did come with a message from the Most High, and such a message! It was entirely original and unique. He was and is the (not a) prophet of God, yet that was not His primary mission.

II. To be the Revealer of God? "Shew us the Father and it sufficeth us," said the disciples to our Saviour, thus articulating man's agelong hunger and passionate desire. Now Jesus did reveal the Unseen. He declared "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father"-marvellous statement. Yet that was not His supreme mission.

III. To be the Ruler of God? He was not only born of the tribe of Judah, but of the family of David, thus of the Davidic line. He entered Jerusalem as King after three and a-half years' ministry. He claimed the Throne of David. But He was rejected. Yet He must ascend that throne by and by. The next king of united Israel must present and prove his descent from David. Only one Person can do this-the Man Christ Jesus. For all genealogical registers were burned at the destruction of Jerusalem and the burning of the Temple, a.d. 60, and the only descendant of David who can present his genealogy is Jesus, for that has been preserved in perpetuity in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Yet He came to do something very important, ere He could reign.

IV. To be the Lamb of God? Yes. Hebrews 1:3 declares the primary work He came to do. This was the work for which He came. He came to be a man and die. Seeing He came to purge our sins, why spend so much time in these early chapters of Hebrews to prove His Deity and His Majesty? Ah, the importance of the work performed is proved by the greatness of the Agent. The more important work of the State is entrusted to the most important servants. When the King entrusts a duty to his own firstborn Prince, all are conscious of the importance of the task. THE ETERNAL FRESHNESS OF CHRIST'S SACRIFICE.

Hebrews 10:20; Revelation 5:6.

Dr. Chadwick draws attention to the Greek word rendered "New," stating that it is unknown elsewhere in Scripture, and means "newly slain." Thus is declared the perpetual freshness of the offering of Christ. This is further taught in that pregnant sentence in the Revelation, "A Lamb as it had been slain," as if freshly slain. Luther saw this point, and remarked, "It seems but yesterday that Jesus died on the Cross." A modern poet also saw this truth and crystallised it in that line of poetry:

"Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious Blood

Shall never lose its power." THE ETERNAL COMPLETENESS AND EFFICACY OF CHRIST'S DEATH.

Hebrews 8:12.

This is brought out and emphasised many times in this Epistle (Hebrews 7:27; Hebrews 9:25-26; Hebrews 10:1-3), but particularly in association with Hebrews 8:12. The late James Neill, M. A., has so well pointed out that the New Covenant referred to in chapter Hebrews 8:6-13, begins at a point to which the Old Covenant never for a moment reached. For there was no sacrifice to atone for wilful sin under the Old Covenant, with four exceptions only:

1. Wilful concealment of knowledge as a witness (Leviticus 5:1).

2. A wilful lie (Leviticus 6:2).

3. Perjury (Leviticus 6:2).

4. A sin of uncleanness (Leviticus 19:20, Leviticus 19:22). As to all else, it is said: "The soul that acts presumptuously... that soul shall be cut off" (Numbers 15:30). That shows the force of David's petition, "Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it" (Psalms 51:16). He is referring to his wilful sin, for which no provision had been made. But of this New Covenant, well, it begins at a point where the Old Covenant never reached-the full, free, forgiveness of all sin. Praise the Lord! Hence the force of "The Blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

BETTER.

Hebrews.

This may be taken as the keynote of the Epistle. The Jewish Christians, to whom this Epistle was specifically addressed, owing to the taunts and jeers of their persecutors, were beginning to undervalue their Christian possessions. Therefore the writer rings the changes on the word "better," conceding they had certain things under the Law, but under Grace far "better."

1. Blessings (Hebrews 11:40).

2. Sacrifice (Hebrews 9:23).

3. Blood that Speaks of Better Things (Hebrews 12:24).

4. Hope (Hebrews 7:19).

5. Covenant (Hebrews 8:6; Hebrews 7:22).

6. Promises (Hebrews 8:6).

7. Substance (Hebrews 10:34).

8. Country (Hebrews 11:16).

9. Resurrection (Hebrews 11:35).

"WE HAVE."

Hebrews.

The Jewish Christians were being taunted by their unconverted countrymen that through espousing the cause of Christ they had lost everything. The Apostle proves to them that they have only lost the shadow for the substance. The "We have's" of the Apostle must have greatly impressed them. "We have"

1. A Great High Priest (Hebrews 4:14).

2. Such a High Priest (Hebrews 8:1).

3. A Strong Consolation (Hebrews 6:18).

4. A Cheering Hope (Hebrews 6:19).

5. Boldness (Hebrews 10:19).

6. A Better Substance (Hebrews 10:34).

7. An Altar-Christ (Hebrews 13:10).

SALVATION.

Hebrews.

1. Our Name: Heirs. "Heirs of salvation" (Hebrews 1:14).

2. Our Salvation: Great. "So great salvation" (Hebrews 2:3).

3. Our Peril: How? "How shall we escape? " (Hebrews 2:3). The unanswerable question. What must I do to be lost? Just nothing. No need to reject salvation or treat it with contempt-just neglect it.

4. Our Benefactor: Author. "Captain of their salvation (Hebrews 2:10). Captain means author or originator.

5. Our Destiny: Eternity. "Eternal salvation" (Hebrews 5:9).

6. Our Blessings: Things. "Things that accompany salvation" (Hebrews 6:9).

7. Our Goal: Uttermost. "Saved to the uttermost" (Hebrews 7:25).

8. Our Hope: Without Sin. "Without sin unto salvation" (Hebrews 9:28).

SAVED TO THE VERY END.

Hebrews 7:25.

This verse has been called "The Gospel for Saints." But why saints? Sinners need the Gospel, that is universally admitted. But do saints need a Gospel message? Yes; and when the message of "uttermost" is understood, the force of this word is seen. The meaning of the word in the Greek rendered "uttermost" is really "to the very end." "The end"-not end in time but end in place. It is true His salvation is good for both. But we are endeavouring to penetrate into the meaning of this word before us.

Israel was saved from death in Egypt by the sprinkling of the blood, and saved from the power of their enemy when the waters of the Red Sea drowned the pursuing army. But they were not saved "to the uttermost," i.e., "to the very end" (as Rotherham renders it) until, after the forty years' wanderings expired, they crossed the Jordan and took possession of the Promised Land. This is a great word. If a redeemed soul has not yet fully entered into his possessions in Christ, and in consequence is not living the life of victory and communion of Beulah land, he has not yet been saved "to the uttermost?"

1. His Ability to Save. "He is able."

2. Whom He Saves. "Them that come."

3. Extent of His Salvation. "To the uttermost," right up to Canaan, i.e., the life of fellowship and victory.

4. Period of His Salvation. "To the very end" (r.).

5. Ground of this Salvation. "He ever liveth."

6. Character of His Salvation. "Completely" (J.N.D.).

DWELLING AT COURT.

Hebrews 10:19-22.

The Doctrinal part of the Epistle is now ended, and the important application begins. Here we reach the goal. Here we see the child of God at home. That Home is the Holy Place, the very presence of God. "Christianity is a religion of access."

I. The Privilege. "Having therefore liberty" (19, A.V., marg.). The privilege of dwelling in the Secret Place is the fruit of Christ's death. And this privilege is for to-day, and all our days, for time as well as eternity.

II. The Enablement. "Let us draw near." Observe: "Boldness," associated with "the Blood of Jesus."

III. The Conditions.

1. A True Heart. Heart right with God.

2. "Full Assurance." Faith in full, vigorous, healthy exercise.

3. Good Conscience. Through His Blood we find release from the haunting sense of guilt.

4. Purified Bodies. A dedicated and purified body and a life cleansed from all outward degrading and ignoble habits and practices.

FAITH IN OPERATION.

Hebrews 11.

This chapter has been called the Westminster Abbey of the Bible. Herein are preserved word-portraits of some members of the family of God in relation to the life of faith. Have you ever wondered why mention should be made of their faith and not their sins? Why? Obviously because every believer is seen here in the light of chapter 10. They stand in the Covenant of Grace, and are seen as those who have fully accepted the great sacrificial work of the Redeemer, and that means the pardon and blotting out of their sins, never to be remembered again forever. Praise the Lord!

Let us summarise this chapter: In Hebrews 11:1 we have the Nature of Faith-that it is not a guess, nor an airy nebulous sort of thing, but "substance," "evidence." In the rest of the chapter we have demonstrated the Possibility of Faith to all classes and grades of individuals, women and men, servants and master, the weak and the strong, the educated and the illiterate.

FAITH.

Hebrews 11.

Faith's:

1. Description, Substance and Evidence (1).

2. Report, Elders (2).

3. Credence, Creation (3).

4. Worship, Abel (4).

5. Witness, Enoch (5,6).

6. Work, Noah (7).

7. Walk, Abraham (8).

8. Patience, Abraham (9, 10).

9. Willingness, Sarah (11,12).

10. Welcome, Unknown Heroes (13-16).

11. Sacrifice, Abraham (17-19).

12. Triumph, Isaac (20-22).

13. Preservation, Parents of Moses (23).

14. Renunciation, Moses (24-26).

15. Flight, Moses (27).

16. Contagion, "He" then "Them" (28, 29).

17. Exploit, Israel (30).

18. Salvation, Rahab (31).

19. Manifold Activities, Many Saints (32-40). THE RAGE.

Hebrews 12:1,Hebrews 12:2.

In the Bible there are various views of life. Here is an athletic one, that of a race. This simile is suggestive.

I. The Race. Speaking of 1. Strenuous effort.

2. Run, not loiter.

3. Changeful life implied, with fresh views.

4. A Progressive life, calling for 5. Concentration.

II. The Appointment. "Set before us."

III. The Incentive. A cloud of witnesses. We are being watched, at anyrate by our Blessed Lord.

IV. The Preparation. "Let us lay aside."

"The Weight"-lawful things, yet things not helpful.

"The Sin"-besetting sin.

V. The Speed. "Let us run," not loiter.

VI. The Spirit. "Run with patience."

VII. The Inspiration. Looking unto Jesus.

VIII. The Goal. The Glory.

Note.-For a more detailed study of this Epistle, see the Author's "The Outlined Hebrews," where there are 118 separate and distinct studies in addition to these. OUR GOD A CONSUMING FIRE

Hebrews 12:29

Here are a few striking words used in Scripture to describe the essential character of God. (1) God is Spirit (R.V.., margin). Herein is seen His indivisibility and greatness. (2) God is Love. This reveals His unfathomable and unchangeable goodness. What a privilege to dwell in such an abode (1 John 4:16). (3) God is Light. And this, because He is Love. In Him is no darkness at all. No uncertainty. No unrighteousness. (4) God is Fire. Not in figure, but in reality-a consuming fire. This solemn, dreadful, aspect of God's nature is frequently overlooked. Herein is the death of sin and self; herein is the life of holiness. This is the God with which we as Christians have to do. It was as fire God first appeared to His servant Moses; this made the place holy ground, and although the bush was not consumed, we may be assured that everything unclean within the bush would be burned up. We carry about with us daily the mystery of the burning bush "Know ye not that God dwelleth in you?" Yet the frail bush of our bodies is not consumed. We have this treasure in earthen vessels "that the excellency of the power may be of God.

I. As a Fire our God Consumes. On the altar, the fire, as a symbol of God's presence, was ever burning. On the altar of our heart, as on the throne of our being, there still dwells the Spirit of burning. This holy fire cannot suffer the approach of that which is unclean. The Nadabs and Abihus of pride and self-conceit are instantly devoured (Num. 10). It was a self-crucifying revelation Paul received, when it pleased God to reveal His Son in him (Galatians 1:15-16; Galatians 2:20). The Holy of Holies was such, because the pillar of fire abode there. Hence there was no way of entrance without blood. May the Blood of Jesus so guard the way of access into our inmost soul, where the Holy Spirit dwells, and may this holy fire consume all that would approach without the blood.

II. As a Fire our God Purifies. The presence of God was the purifying and the sanctifying of the Temple. It is true now, that when the Lord the Spirit suddenly comes into the temple of our body He is like a refiner's fire. "Who shall stand when He appeareth?" (Malachi 1:3). There must be no other authority when He appeareth; every power of our being must become subject to Him, and in the submitting they are purified. As every vessel of the Tabernacle was given to God, and claimed and used by Him, so the members of our body are to be yielded to Him as instruments of

righteousness (Romans 6:13).

III. As a Fire our, God Empowers. What a real power fire is. Think of the fire-driven engines that push the mighty ironclads like ploughshares through the deep. Wherever fire is, its power is felt. "Our God is a consuming fire." Can He be in us without a Divine power being seen and felt? When the disciples were baptised with the Holy Ghost and with fire it could not be hid. "These men," they said, "are full of new wine." When the live coal touched the lips of the prophet, how quickly the power was seen in him. "Here am I, send me" (Isa. 6). The indwelling fire is the remedy for all formality and coldness in the Lord's service. It is the eternal enemy of the chilly, freezing breath of unbelief. "He shall baptise you with fire." Are you willing to be baptised with this baptism?

James

James

Or, the Epistle of Jacob, for James is another form of Jacob. This is a letter written primarily for the Jewish Christians. It is the most practical of all the Epistles, and could be called "A Practical Guide to Christian Life and Conduct," or "A Guide-Book for Everyday Religion." Note the vivid and picturesque style. James thinks in figures, and illumines his theme with metaphors. He is often quite dramatic. He frequently states great truths in a form which touches on paradox, so compelling active thought. THE DEITY OF OUR LORD.

James 1:1; James 2:1.

Bondman. That is the real meaning of the word "servant." "James, bondman of," etc. (J.N.D.). Most of the servants of that time were slaves, and the New Testament writers proudly accepted that title as an apt description of their association with God and with Christ.

Observe the humility of James in abstaining from any reference to his earthly relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom he was brother according to the flesh.

Though James mentions the Name of God seventeen times, he repeats the Name of Jesus but twice, here, and in James 2:1, but note how reverently and devoutly he does this; and what a world of significance there is in his deliberate association of the awful Name of God with Jesus. Though James was bitterly opposed to Jesus and His claims prior and up to His death, he was, immediately after the Resurrection, converted by a special and private interview with the Risen One (1 Corinthians 15:7). This adds value to the testimony of James with regard to the Deity of our Lord.

I. An Arresting Fact. James only refers to his own brother Jesus twice, and then in a reverent and devout fashion. Though they knew each other so well, there was no familiarity, for he called Him, Lord and Christ as well as Jesus. This is an arresting fact.

II. An Impressive Fact. The fact that a brother associates his relative in such a way with God as to imply an equality with the Almighty is very impressive. If Jesus were not Deity, then such an association would be blasphemous. Note, "God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ."

III. A Glorious Fact. James calls his brother Jesus "The Lord of Glory" (James 2:1). This is a glorious Old Testament title for God.

IV. A Significant Fact. James calls himself the slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. That implied on his part full surrender of will and life. A slave because:

1. Purchased-by the Blood of Christ.

2. Liberated-from sin's guilt and servitude.

3. Pledged-conscious of blessed freedom, in great thankfulness he pledged life, service, and possessions.

4. Dependent-in conscious utter dependence upon Him.

V. An Interesting Fact. "To the twelve tribes." Then there were not any lost tribes, for he addressed his letters to the twelve, whose location was evidently well known at that time.

TEMPTATIONS.

James 1:2,James 1:12-15.

After the briefest of greetings, James at once plunges into his subject. He begins by telling them how they are to regard their temptations.

I. Nature (13). The temptation dealt with here is not that testing of character so familiar in other parts of the Bible (Genesis 22:1, etc.), but the enticement to sin.

II. Origin (14). We must not lay the blame on wrong shoulders. Whilst testings of character come from God, temptations to evil come not from Him, but from the evil one through our own corrupt nature. "Fall," not "go into" (2).

III. Form. "Manifold" (Young). "Divers temptations" (2). "Hedged in" is the Weymouth rendering.

IV. Estimation. "Count it all joy," etc (2). "Greet it as pure joy" (M.). We usually count it joy when we escape from temptation, sorrow, or loss. Instead, we should count the testing a glorious opportunity of proving our faith.

V. Purpose (3). Why we have to count it joy is not the trial itself, but its purpose. God makes such the instrument of blessing. It is quite possible for trial to work impatience, but He will give grace that the real purpose of it may be accomplished.

VI. Blessedness. The man who does not escape, but survives and conquers temptation, is blessed, and becomes happily conscious of the Lord's benediction (12).

COUNTING.

James 1:2.

Spiritual arithmetic is of value. The arithmetic of the Bible is important, and no Christian believer can afford to ignore it. James, in James 1:2, invites his Christian brethren to "count."

I. God's Counting.

1. His Counting of Identification. As Job, on account of his sickness, was counted an enemy (Job 19:11; Job 33:10), and a stranger and alien (Job 19:15), so God counted the Lord Jesus on the Cross, as we should have been counted-an enemy and an alien.

2. His Counting of Righteousness. As Abraham's faith was counted for righteousness (Genesis 15:6), so with us (Romans 4:3).

3. His Counting of Comfort. He counts: a. Believers as "Seed of Promise" (Romans 9:8). b. All our Steps (Job 31:4). c. All our Hairs (Matthew 10:30). Most of us only see the Lord's care in counting

our hairs; but the late Dr. Pierson saw much more. Said he "Numbered, not simply counted. Every hair has its own number, and if one has disappeared, that number has gone off the list." What a marvellous thought this is! d. Counts the place of our birth as deserving of honour (Psalms 87:6). e. Delights in counting His servants as faithful ones (1 Timothy 1:12). f. And as partners (Philemon 1:17).

II. Believer's Counting.

1. Blood as Precious (1 Peter 1:19), in contrast with some who count that same Blood an unholy thing (Hebrews 10:29).

2. God's Thoughts, as preserved in the Bible, to be Precious (Psalms 139:17-18).

3. Himself as a Sacrifice, and to live, day by day, the sacrificial life (Acts 20:24).

4. All Human Merit as loss for Christ (Php_3:7).

5. Prepared to Undervalue everything, counting it as "dung" in order to gain a more excellent knowledge of Christ (Php_3:8).

6. Count the Cost of loyalty and devotion to our Lord (Luke 14:28).

7. Trials as Profitable (James 1:2).

PATIENCE.

James 1:3-4; James 5:7-8, James 5:11.

What a man James was for the word "patience!" Both J.N.D., W., M., and Young give "endurance" in James 1:3-4, which is one fruit and manifestation of patience.

I. Its Passivity. The Dictionary defines patience as forbearance; longsuffering; endurance. "Patience" in James 1:3 is translated "endurance" in some other versions. Patience is a passive virtue. It enables us "to grin and bear up" under the most trying and testing ordeal.

II. Its Activity (James 1:3-4). Yet patience is not only passivity-it really does work. "Let patience have her perfect work." If patience is allowed full scope and operation in our lives, then we shall speedily mature, and enjoy fulness. "That ye may become perfect and complete, deficient in nothing" (W.).

III. Its Production. The various allotments of Divine Providence come as testings, and these, by God's grace and blessing, will produce patience (James 1:3-4).

IV. Its Exercise (James 1:4). Patience is a grace, for which special grace is given. Its muscles require exercise for development. "Long patience" is suggestive (James 5:7). "Let your endurance be a finished product" (M.), on James 1:4.

V. Its Exemplar (James 5:11). Job is brought before us as an illustration and exhibition of patience. Ponder the phrase, "The end of the Lord," i.e., His purpose in permitting and designing Job's trials. There was an end to Job's patience, but none to the Lord's.

WISDOM.

James 1:5; James 3:13,James 3:15,James 3:17.

Wisdom was a great word amongst the Jews. It is required for every walk of life. The presence of wisdom here in association with temptations is suggestive. It is specially difficult to behave wisely in times of testing, when wronged and insulted. But the wisdom from above will enable us so to do. Let us put together the teaching on wisdom found in this short Epistle.

I. Lack of Wisdom. It is possible to lack wisdom. This is suggested by the sentence: "If any of you lack wisdom." What a sad lack. What a mess such a lack can lead us into.

II. Uniqueness of Wisdom. Does James say, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him sit down and think, or take a course of study?" No. Then the wisdom he has in mind is absolutely unique.

III. Origin of Wisdom. This wisdom is "from above" (James 3:17), from God (James 1:5). We get from the sky, and not from the earth, all those gracious influences without which our world would be only a gigantic, lifeless cinder, rolling through space. Light and heat, sunshine and rain, come from above. Our spiritual life as well as our earthly life is dependent upon what comes from above.

IV. Condition of Wisdom. Its possession follows "asking of God" (James 1:5). Prayer leads to the possession of this wisdom.

V. Counterfeit of Wisdom. This is the point suggested by James 3:15. How sad to be deceived-to imagine oneself to be wise. Yet the wisdom which comes not from God is at the best but "earthly," and possibly "sensual," yea even "devilish."

VI. Proof of Wisdom. "Which of you is a wise and well instructed man? Let him prove it by a right life with conduct guided by a wise and teachable spirit," is W. most excellent translation of James 3:13. The crowning proof of wisdom is in our "conversation" (James 3:13). It is here in tongue, when under trial, we so often fail. Wisdom from above will influence our tongue.

VII. Manifestation of Wisdom. The true wisdom is manifested by the possession and practice of the following most excellent qualities recorded in James 3:17 :

1. Purity.

2. Peaceableness.

3. Gentleness-"Courteous" is W.

4. Easy to be Entreated"-"Not self-willed" is W.

5. "Full of Mercy"-"compassion" is W.

6. "Without Partiality"-"free from favouritism" is W.

7. "Without Hypocrisy"-"free from all insincerity" (W.). THE GIVING GOD.

James 1:5.

Our God is a God who loves to give. Alexander the Great said to one overwhelmed with his generosity, "I give as a King." Jehovah gives as the infinite God. Someone has stated that the sentence here could be translated: "Ask the Giving-God." He loves to give because He is Love,

and love must give and continue giving.

I. What? The Identity of His gifts. He gives many things, but wisdom is mentioned here. How much we need wisdom. God gives that mercy.

II. To Whom? The Recipient of His gifts. God gives "to all," for He is no respector of persons.

III. When? The Date of His giving. "Let him be asking of God," is Rotherham's rendering. We must continue asking, not presenting our petition once only, but again and again.

IV. How? The Spirit of His giving. "Who gives with open hand to all men, and without upbraiding" (W.). Observe:

1. He Gives Liberally. His giving goes beyond our asking.

2. He Gives Ungrudgingly.

3. He Gives without Criticising or Scolding. "And reproaches not." is J.N.D.'s rendering. He does not reprimand our ignorance, nor scold our foolishness. He utters no word of reproach. He casts up nothing of the past.

PRAYING.

James.

In the first few verses of this Epistle, James touches on most of the things he later on elaborates. That is particularly true of the subject of prayer.

Prayer is one of the easiest subjects for speakers to preach, or authors to write upon, but not so easy to practice. After listening to an address on prayer, to ask the speakers how much time they devote to prayer might give them a very bad half-hour.

Now James has much to say on prayer. What about his practice! Ah, he did practice what he preached. The tradition concerning him is that, when on his death, the women came to bestow upon the body the last sad attentions, they found that his knees were worn hard as a camel's through his constant habit of prayer.

I. Necessity. James, in common with other of the New Testament writers, points out the necessity, and extreme value of prayer.

II. For Whom? "For each other" (James 5:16), as well as for ourselves (James 1:5).

III. When? Of course at all times, in the common and everyday affairs of life, but especially when "afflicted" (James 5:13), or sick (James 5:14).

IV. How?

1. Earnestly (James 5:17).

2. Fervently. "The fervent supplication."

V. Requirement?

1. Faith (James 1:6; James 5:15). "Prayer of faith."

2. Energy (James 5:16-17). The energy of the Holy Spirit is required. "The supplication of a righteous man, when it is energised" (R.). "The fervent supplication" (J.N.D.).

3. Righteousness. "Of a righteous man," that is of a man who has discovered the worthlessness of his own righteousness, and the righteousness of God which becomes ours by faith.

4. Wholeheartedly. "The heartfelt supplication of a righteous man" (W.).

VI. Success.

1. "Very Strong is a working supplication of a righteous man " (Y.). Prayer is strong with God.

2. "Much Availeth, the supplication of a righteous man" (R.), 3. "Exerts a Mighty Influence" (W.).

VII. Exponent. Elijah (James 5:17-18). THE RICH AND THE POOR.

James.

James in his Epistle shows characteristic disregard of, yea, almost contempt of, wealth. Whilst there were many poor folk in the early Christian assemblies, there were also the rich. Evidently there was a tendency to exaggerate the importance of wealth, and on the part of some to show undue regard and respect to the wealthy, to the detriment of the poor. James seeks to correct this mistake There is a place for respect in daily life. To show respect for age, for weak, for women, for official position, for authority, is a Christian duty. For subjects to show respect to their King, Emperor, or President, is commended in Scripture. But the respect James denounces is quite different. Respect of persons is not only a breach of good manners, and discourteous to the poor, but sin against God (James 2:9). What James here forbids, the world does every day-worships the successful, strong, and wealthy; and despises the man who is poor. Believers must not follow the example of the world.

I. The Poor:

1. Should rejoice in being heirs of the Kingdom (James 2:5).

2. Should see that they are rich in faith (James 2:5).

3. Should humbly rejoice in any improvement in employment or wealth (James 1:9).

II. The Rich:

1. Should bow humbly to the various adverse allotments of Divine Providence (James 1:10).

2. Should not expect any preferential treatment in the assembly (James 2:2-4).

3. Should humbly remember injustices inflicted by some wealthy folk on the poorer members of Christ's flock (James 2:6-7). ON BEING DECEIVED.

James 1:16, James 1:22, James 1:26.

Three times over in this chapter does James warn God's people upon the possibility and danger of being deceived. Wise are we if we take heed to the warning.

I. About God (James 1:16). "Be not deceived" is the R.V. At first sight we are not sure whether this is a warning against (13) blaming God for our temptations to evil, or imagining changefulness in Him (17). On a second sight we decide that it has to do with James 1:17-21.

1. God's Gifts are:

a. "Good." b. "Perfect." c. "From above" (17) 2. God Himself.

a. Source of all Light-like the sun, the centre and chief of all the glories of the visible universe. b. Free from variableness-is to be relied upon. c. "Free from shadow cast by turning" (R.).

II. About Ourselves (James 1:22).

1. If only a hearer and not a doer of the Word, we shall deceive ourselves (James 1:22).

2. Such are like most of us who have a habit of looking into the mirror in an absent-minded sort of way (James 1:23-24).

III. About Religion (James 1:26).

1. The religion that does not influence the tongue is not a true or vital one.

2. True vital godliness leads to, and includes: a. Control of tongue. b. Purity of life-"Unspotted from the world." c. Usefulness in life-"Visit the fatherless and widows." THE BOOK.

James.

It is both interesting and instructive to trace what James has to say about the Holy Book of God. Putting all together we get a helpful study.

I. Its Names.

1. "Word." Origin of it (James 1:18). Word proves authorship. A word is the result of the mental and vocal exercise of a personal being. Therefore in that simple word of four letters, w-o-r-d, we have taught the origin of the Book-God Himself.

2. "Law." Authority of it (James 1:25). What a paradox we have here. Law imposes restraint. Yet we find here the phrase, "Law of Liberty." Observe a few points: a. Restraint of the Book-"Law." b. Liberty of the Book-"Law of Liberty." c. Perfection of the Book-"Perfect Law." d. Authority of the Book-Law implies the Law-giving God.

3. "Truth"-finality of it (James 1:18). It is the Word of Truth-that suggests its finality. Both Christ, the Living Word, and the Bible, the Written Word, are Truth.

4. Judge. Exercise of it (James 2:12). This verse declares no new thought, but only enforces what our Lord Jesus declared (John 12:48). The Word of God will be our Judge at that Great Day, II. Its Operations.

1. Convinces (James 2:9). The Law convinces of transgression.

2. Begets (James 1:18). We are born of God's Holy Spirit, through the Word. The Word is the great regenerating medium.

3. Implants (James 1:21). "Lay aside all filthiness and abounding of wickedness" is J.N.D. translation. The word "engrafted" is suggestive, teaching that upon the stem of our natural life God engrafts His Word, and so infuses His own life. For "engrafted" J.N.D. gives "implanted," teaching the inwardness of the operation of the Word.

4. Energises (James 1:25). The phrase "Law of Liberty" is suggestive of power, of energy. Law stands for force, power, energy.

III. Our Attitude.

1. Examine (James 1:25). "Looketh into." In this, and also James 1:23, the Word is likened to a Mirror, into which we peer, and the contents of which we are to examine.

2. Hear (James 1:23). "Hearer of the Word." What a privilege it is to hear His Word.

3. Receive (James 1:21). But hearing the Word is not sufficient, we are to "receive" it "with meekness."

4. Do (James 1:23). How practical is James. We must not be satisfied with only "hearing," we must go on doing. THE TONGUE.

James 1:19, James 1:26; James 1:3.

In the early Christian Church there evidently was great freedom of speech, and that liberty was abused. From the severity with which James deals with the tongue it is clear that there had been a great deal of ill-considered, ill-natured, self-assertive and violent speech amongst the Jewish Christians.

Probably this had taken the form of angry debating and bitter strife in the Assembly. At any rate verse I of chapter 3 seems to hint at this. The verse clearly shows that there were many who aspired to leadership and public ministry, without taking in mind the serious responsibilities of that position. In this verse James refers to the danger associated with too great a readiness to put forward one's opinions on matters of religion.

Associated here with warning are bright Gospel lessons, and the reminder that one proof of our justified state is seen in our words; that our speech will reveal what and whose we are. A young man was sent to Socrates to learn oratory. On being introduced to the philosopher he talked so incessantly that Socrates asked for double fees. "Why charge me double?" asked the young fellow. "Because," replied the orator, "I must teach you two sciences, the one how to hold your tongue, the other how to speak."

I. An Awakening Statement (James 3:2). Who is a perfect man? James informs us: "If any man offend not in Word." Having mastery of that difficult member, the tongue, the rest is easy. "Able to curb his whole nature" (W.). "The same is a perfect man" is in W.: "That man has reached maturity of character." This then is the mark of a mature Christian.

II. A Sobering Description. Note the suggestive descriptions James gives of the tongue.

1. A Fire (James 3:6). Setting the whole being on fire as from Hell.

2. "A World of Iniquity" (James 3:6). Defiling the whole being of each individual.

3. "Full of Deadly Poison" (James 3:8).

4. "Unruly Evil" (James 3:8).

III. A Dread Possibility (James 3:9-10). That the same tongue can:

1. Bless and curse (James 3:9-10).

2. A fountain sending forth two kinds of water (James 3:11).

IV. A Wise Admonition (James 1:19; James 3:13-18). Notice how affectionately James addresses his readers. "Swift to hear, slow to speak"-what wise words! A wise man will seek only to produce "Good conversation."

V. A Sad Confession (James 3:7-8). Most living things can be tamed, yet "the tongue can no man tame," save the Man, Christ Jesus.

VI. A Glorious Possibility (James 1:26; James 3:3-6). This point forces itself upon us as we ponder the figures used by James for the tongue.

1. Bit and Bridle (James 3:2-3). To turn the whole body of the horse a firm hand on the bridle is required. The hand of the Man, Christ Jesus, can grip and firmly use the bit and bridle on our tongues.

2. Small Helm (James 3:4). The pierced Hand can firmly control and wisely use the helm of our lives-our tongue. THE ROYAL LAW.

James 2:8.

The Law of Love is here called the Royal Law. This is a lovely and suggestive description, teaching I. Its Origin. This Law comes from Heaven's Royalty, the Triune God.

II. Its Dignity. It is a Royal Law. Nothing petty or mean about it.

III. Its Authority. The fact that it comes from God gives it royal authority, the very authority of Heaven.

IV. Its Breadth. Its Royal sweep, taking in not only myself and my own, but others. "Thy neighbour" with the interpretation of Luke 10:29, Luke 10:36, means any and all.

V. Its Subject. Love, not admire or respect. What a Royal quality.

VI. Its Quality. There is Royalty in Its quality. We are to love "As thyself." But the new commandment (John 13:34) is even of richer quality and a higher standard, "Love one another as I have loved you."

VII. Its Power. Its Royal power. Love is here called a Law, i.e., a. power, a force, a dynamic.

WHAT IS SIN?

James 2:9; James 4:17.

What a simple question! Yet how it floors many. Mark you, the question is not: "What do men say sin is," but, "What saith the Scriptures?" Give the very words of the Bible. There are seven

definitions of sin in the Book- two given by James, two by John, one by Paul, and two by Solomon.

I. Stepping Over, or breaking the Law of God (1 John 3:4).

II. Coming Short of the requirements of the Law (1 John 5:17).

III. Not Living Up to the Light God has already given to us (James 4:17).

IV. We Can Sin in Thought as well as by actions (Proverbs 24:9).

V. We Sin when we do Things we are Doubtful about (Romans 14:23).

VI. Sin Viewed as Pride and Vanity, and the performance of legitimate and indeed essential things, such as ploughing, with a wrong motive (Proverbs 21:4).

VII. Respect of Persons (James 2:9).

SOLIDARITY OF THE LAW.

James 2:10-12.

We are here exhorted ever to keep in mind the fact that we shall be judged by the Law, called here the Law of Liberty (James 2:12), and that the constant remembrance of that fact should influence our speech and conduct. "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the Law of Liberty."

There is another point we shall deal with in our next study, but we must now note the solidarity of the Law.

It is human to gloss over sin. Said a little girl when excusing some questionable act, "I haven't broken the commandment, I've only cracked it." Here in James 2:10 and James 2:11 we are told that if only one commandment be broken, we are "guilty of all," that in the breaking of one we break all. Read Galatians 3:10 which enforces this fact, observing the word "all." We may have a fine chain, but of what use is it if all links are good save one? That one broken link renders it useless. "For whosoever obeys the whole Law, and only makes a single slip, is guilty of everything" (M.).

Another fact. It is clear that the one sin thought of here is that mentioned in Galatians 3:9., viz., respect of persons. And there are few, if left to themselves, who would ever dream of reckoning such behaviour as sin.

These are facts to ponder.

JUDGMENT AND MERCY.

James 2:13.

The point in this verse is that alluded to by our Lord in Matthew 7:1-2, that as we treat others, so shall we be dealt with. "For He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy." But are there not positions in which it is difficult to think of the exercise of mercy? Certainly. What then? For your guidance observe that fine phrase, "Mercy rejoiceth against judgment," or, as Dr. John Kerr remarks: "In the face of it." "It is a fine figure, mercy looking full in the face of judgment,

and not losing a particle of its joy." These are great facts in human history and experience.

I. Judgment Without Mercy. Bad for the sinner (Psalms 1:5). No standing for the ungodly.

II. Judgment With Justice. Bad for the Saviour. Justice and judgment are the habitation of God's throne (Psalms 89:14; Psalms 97:2). He suffered in our stead.

III. Judgment With Righteousness. Good for the sinner (Psalms 33:5). At Calvary, God's mercy and righteousness met in the Person of Christ, and God's judgment was satisfied.

IV. Judgment With Mercy. Good for our neighbours. Such an exercise produces song (Psalms 101:1).

V. Judgment Defied by Mercy. One principle in our treatment of those who have wronged us. Good for our erring brother (James 2:13).

FAITH AND WORKS.

James 2:14-26.

This is the very heart of the Epistle, showing that real living faith is always known by its fruits. Many have imagined that James wrote these verses to combat Paul's teaching concerning justification by faith, as unfolded in the Epistle to the Romans. As a matter of fact, James wrote his Epistle some years before Paul wrote Romans. There is no conflict between the two Epistles, as the one is the complement to the other. Faith and works are inseparable, as the following proves. An old ferryman, a man of much thought and observation, but of few words, a reader of the Bible and a firm believer in its truths, had among his regular passengers two business men, who crossed together on the same day once a week. Their conversation often turned to this matter of faith and works, one of them thinking he could do without works if he had faith, and the other thinking he could do without faith if he had works. The ferryman's patience was so tried by the frequent and fruitless repetition of "faith" and "works," used as they were in a sense so different from their import and so destructive of their Scriptural harmony, that at last he felt that he must intervene. He said nothing, but fell upon the following expedient. On one of his oars he painted the word "Faith," and on the other "Works." When on his next passage across with the two friendly disputants, he reached the most dangerous part, he took in "Faith," and with all his might plied "Works." The boat went round and round, to the annoyance and fear of the two passengers. "Put out the other oar," called one of them in a loud and angry voice."Very well," was the old man's calm reply, as he took in "Works" and put out "Faith," which he used as he had formerly used the other. Of course this produced the same result, and the two men thought he must be out of his mind. The old man, however, continued his practical demonstration for a little, and then called their attention to the names painted on the oars. "I have tried your way," said he, "and yours; and you have seen the result. Now, observe my way." And as he gave a steady pull to each oar the boat at once acknowledged in its forward course the power of their harmonious strokes, and in a few minutes was at the land-place. "Thus it is," he added, "that faith worketh by love." So faith without works, or works without faith, will not suffice to bring us unto our desired haven. But let there be both, and the haven will be safely reached.

I. A Live Faith. Works are an evidence of a real live faith. The possibility of the possession of a dead faith is here declared (14, 15, 17, 18, 20, 26). Just as a live body will manifest its life in

action, so live faith will move.

II. A Profitable Faith. Works make faith profitable (14). "What doth it profit?" is a great question. Here we have profit associated with faith. It is essential that we should have a profitable faith.

III. A Working Faith.

1. Faith Leads to Shuddering (19). Real faith leads us to believe in a living God. But what does such a faith lead to? It makes even devils tremble, or, as it could be rendered, "The devils also believe and shudder" (M. reads, "So do the devils, and they shudder"). Has your faith in the existence of God led to shuddering yet?

2. Faith Leads to Sacrifice (21). Abraham's faith led him to Mount Moriah, and to offering his son. Real faith will lead us to Calvary, and to accept the sacrifice Christ has made.

3. Faith Leads to Justification (24). That is, real, living faith.

IV. Perfection of Faith (22). Faith can mature. The proof of a strong and maturing faith will be seen in a plenitude of works.

FRIEND OF GOD.

James 2:23; James 4:4.

Unworldliness is here shown to be an infallible proof that we stand amongst the justified, that we have real and saving faith in Jesus Christ. Has this phrase, "The friend of God," ever gripped you? God evidently needed a friend, and He found in Abraham just that friendship that His heart craved.

What are the essentials to true friendship with God? This question is answered by noting what are the requirements for earthly friendship.

I. Confidence. There can be no real friendship without confidence, trust. This is its foundation. Confidence is the child of knowledge. The more we know of our friends, the more we trust them. Faith is the beginning of friendship with God.

II. Love. Confidence alone will not make an ideal friendship. Love is essential. This is essential to friendship, true friendship with God.

III. Frankness. Friends have frank, familiar intercourse one with another. A little girl defined a friend as one who knows all about you, and yet loves you in spite of that. A friendship that cannot bear the truth is of no value. Friendship with God welcomes the truth.

IV. Consideration. Friends delight to meet each other's wishes. They consider each other in every sense. We, if friends of God, will give Him every consideration.

V. Sacrifice. Even going to the point of real sacrifice in so doing. And, of course, real friends love to give presents to each other.

VI. Loyalty. True friends will stand up for each other, especially when absent the one from the other.

VII. Perpetuity. A true friendship is not for a time, but will stand the passage of the years. THE CRAZE FOR PLEASURE.

James 3:18; James 4:1-5.

Four times the word "lust" occurs in this section. What is lust? Dr. Pierson defined it as "A natural, normal longing which oversteps the limits God appoints. Passion should be our slave, and not our master." Dr. Jowett denned it as "anything that steams the windows of the soul," and thus blurs our vision.

Instead of the word "lusts," in James 4:1 and James 4:3, the A.V. margin and J.N.D. give "pleasures," and that forms the key to the meaning of these verses, and also the clue to the teaching they contain. Here we have a craze for pleasure, for sinful pleasure, and the results. Over-indulgence in pleasure is sinful. The Work of Pleasure-Mania.

I. Fomentation. "From whence come wars and fighting ("brawlings" in margin) among you? Come they not hence, even of your pleasures" (James 4:1). Inordinate pleasures, the craze for pleasures, fomented trouble in the Church. Compare the "fruit of righteousness" (James 3:18) with the results of sinful pleasures in James 4:1-4.

II. Penetration. "Your pleasures that take the field in your members," or Dr. Young's translation, "that are as soldiers in your members." These renderings are suggestive. If pleasure is allowed to have its own way in us, like soldiers, it takes the field in our members; that is, gets the mastery of us, and the results are saddening.

III. Agitation. "Ye covet" (Rotherham's rendering) and have not." "Ye envy (margin of A.V.) and desire to have. Ye fight and war" (James 4:2). What a state of agitated unrest have we depicted here, as a result of indulgence in sinful pleasures. And we note a further sad result described in one word-

IV. Dissatisfaction. Observe: "Ye covet (R.) and have not" . . . "Desire to have, and cannot obtain." What an unsatisfied and dissatisfied condition have we here.

V. Stagnation. Note: "Ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your pleasures" (James 4:2-3). What a dreadful effect over-indulgence in pleasure has upon the prayer-life, as shown in these verses. What a dreadful picture of spiritual stagnation! First-prayerlessness- "Ye ask not." Secondly-fitfulness-"Ye ask and receive not." Why? Because "ye ask amiss," asking for a wrong purpose, actuated by a wrong motive.

VI. Degeneration. What dreadful backslidings have we expressed in the following: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses"-"Friendship of this world," "Enemy of God" (James 4:4). How these believers had degenerated in their Christian walk, practice, and experience. They were now unfaithful to their God.

VII. Is there a Cure? Yes. Examine closely James 4:5, reading from Dr. Weymouth's translation: "The Scripture saith. . . the Spirit which He has caused to dwell in our hearts yearns jealously over us" (James 4:5). Or, as the late Dr. F. B. Meyer loved to say: "It could be translated, 'The Spirit which He made to dwell in us jealously yearns for our entire devotion.'" No believer who has fallen

a victim to pleasure can ever be satisfied in that sad state. Certainly the Holy Spirit is not. How the Holy Spirit must love us to "yearn jealously over us." The cure is shown in the following verses, viz., getting low before the Lord, and seeking His full deliverance.

HUMBLED OR HUMILIATED-WHICH?

James 4:6-10,James 4:13-17.

What a difference there is between being humbled or humiliated! The first is my act, the second is the act of God; the first is remedial, the second retributive; the former is the beginning of blessing, the latter is the commencement of a curse. There is no escape from either the one or the other. If I do not humble myself under the mighty hand of God, the mighty hand of God will humiliate me.

I. Submit to God (James 4:6-7). Why should we submit ourselves to God?

1. In View of the Sadness of the Past (James 4:1-4). What a sad catalogue of sin and failure we have in James 4:1-4, showing what a mess we ourselves have made of our lives. This comes from the lack of surrender to God.

2. In View of the Present Power of the Evil One. Observe, before we are exhorted to "resist the Devil" we are urged to submit ourselves to God. To attempt to withstand the Evil One without fully surrendering to God, is asking for trouble. When the Devil is resisted by those who previously have fully surrendered to God, he flees.

3. In View of the Uncertainty of Life (James 4:13-15). How easy it is to plan without God, yet how futile. All our plans should first be submitted to God, and even then announced as "If the Lord will."

4. In View of the Surprises of God (James 4:13-15). This is another line of thought suggested by these verses. Life is a series of surprises. By the division of time God isolates us every day, loving to surprise us. Indeed life is a series of surprises. What a wonderful God have we!

II. Draw Nigh to God (James 4:8-9). This is one, and, indeed, the first expression, and proof of submission to God. How must we draw nigh to Him?

1. With Sincerity (8). Seeking cleansed hands and purified hearts.

2. In Penitence (9). With real sorrow for sin.

III. Humbled in the Sight of God (James 4:10). Remembering our sinnership, taking the lowly place. Then- what?

1. God will Lift you Up. As a parent lifts up the sorrowing head of a child.

2. God will give grace (James 4:6).

OPPRESSING THE HIRELING.

James 5:1-11.

Evidently many of the poor amongst the Christian Jews were oppressed by the wealthy, and defrauded of their hard earnings (James 5:4). Faith in Christ and His Coming will lead us to a patient sufferance of evils we cannot avoid. "The Just One" is R.V. of James 5:6."Murdered the

Righteous One" is Rotherham's rendering. The Labourer's:

I. Hire. "Kept back by fraud" (4). Observe- "Crieth." What a striking phrase. Crieth with a voice God can hear.

II. Patience (7, 8, 10, 11). James turns from the oppressors to the oppressed. "Suffer with long patience" is the marginal note. This is wise advice. For agitation sometimes is futile.

III. Hope. But why be patient? How long should patience be exercised? The defrauded labourer who cannot find immediate redress by man, must remember the future Advent of our Lord when all wrongs will be righted. Read in the prophecies of the Old Testament the glowing results of Messiah's reign. Our great hope is the Coming of the Lord. That Coming "draweth nigh." That was true in those days-how much more so in our day. There are impatient folk who desire immediate redress of all wrongs, and who object to the advice here given. This is the ideal, not immediately realizable. What then? Should not patience be allowed to operate until wrongs are swept away. And who will sweep these things off the face of the earth? Man has done his best and failed. Ah, there is one-the Man, Christ Jesus. "He, the Judge, standeth before the door" (James 5:9). In the meantime, let us who cherish ardently this hope be patient, and reveal our patience in-

IV. Silence. That is taught in James 5:9. "Grudge not one against another," is, in the margin, "Groan not one against another," or, as J.N.D., "Complain not one against another," or as Rotherham, "Be not sighing one against another." Surely this means that, counting on the Coming of the One Who will sweep away all abuses and punish the oppressors, we shall cease to complain to one another, or of one another, ceasing to be constantly "dinning" into other people's ears the story of our grievance. Groaning will give place to glorying-glorying in the Lord. Silent to man on our grievances because not silent to the Lord.

V. Prayer (13). Ah, here is the great result of uncomplaining-we pour out into the ears of our loving God our sorrows, and the wrongs inflicted upon us.

PURE SPEECH.

James 5:12.

There is a closer connection between this verse and the subject of the oppression of the hireling already dealt with, than at first sight imagined. Under the galling pressure of injury and oppression one is tempted to the use of expletives, of impure and unwise speech, as one outlet, but this is here forbidden. Is not this verse but an echo of words spoken on the Mount by the illustrious Brother of James, as recorded in Matthew 5:33-37. Our speech, to be golden, must be:

I. Pure. "Swear not."

II. Unadorned. "Let your yea be yea," etc.

III. Dignified. As becometh believers.

IV. Inspired. By and from the right source. "For whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" (Matthew 5:37); or, as Weymouth, "Comes from the evil one," suggesting that the Evil One is the author of impure and undignified speech.

V. Disturbing. Anything else causes us "to fall into condemnation," disturbing our own consciences, and grieving the Lord.

PRAYER AT ALL TIMES.

James 5:13-18.

What James preached he practised, for he himself prayed much. All the way through this Epistle the writer has insisted on the necessity and extreme value of prayer.

I. Pray when Afflicted (13). When a man is suffering he is tempted to forego prayer. This temptation must be resisted.

II. Pray when Sick (14, 15). The afflicted one must pray, but the sick one should call for others to "pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Name of the Lord." Strange, that believing men and women forget to pray when sick! What a gracious promise of answer to such prayers is given here.

III. Pray when Faulty (16). Here we are urged to confess to each other our faults, but not our sins. The latter should be confessed to God only. What should confession lead to? To prayer for each other.

IV. Pray when Merry (13). To sing Psalms means to pray through sacred song, for the best prayer book in the world is the Book of Psalms.

V. Pray when Thriving. M. reads: "Is anyone thriving? let him sing praise." Singing and praying are signs of spiritual health. AN ERRING BROTHER.

James 5:19, James 5:20.

The gracious ministry of restoration is here commended. That is how this Epistle closes. No leave-taking but an abrupt close on a high note.

I. Possibility. Possible for even brethren to err. "Brethren if any of you do err."

II. Defection. Err in what? "Err from the truth."

III. Seriousness. Deflection from the truth creates a multitude of sins.

IV. Peril. Death is the peril. "Save a soul from death." What a dreadful peril!

V. Salvation. Whilst the Holy Trinity operates in salvation, here it is human ministry which is stressed. For usually the Triune God operates through the agency of man.

1 Peter

1 Peter This letter was written by the Apostle Peter towards the close of his life (a.d. 60), whilst staying at Babylon (James 5:13), where a Christian Church had been established. It was intended principally, though not exclusively, for Hebrew Christians. Observe- "Jews" (James 1:1, R.V.); "Gentiles" (James 2:9-10). It was written for two purposes. First, to show that Peter agreed with Paul's teaching. Second, to strengthen and comfort God's people passing through fiery trials. It is a Book of Comfort.

LIVING AS FOREIGNERS.

1 Peter 1:1.

I. Introduction. The writer of this Epistle needs no introduction. In fulfilment of our Saviour's exhortation and commission: "When thou hast once turned again strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:32, R.V.), Peter wrote this Epistle to comfort and strengthen his Christian brethren passing through a time of sore trial and bitter persecution. So richly is it stored with counsel, warning, and consolation, that Luther, the reformer, greatly prized it. The depth of doctrinal insight surprises us. "Whence hath this man this wisdom?" Most assuredly from God the Holy Ghost. Nowhere else in Scripture do we find fuller teaching on the Trinity. You will specially note how Peter seeks to comfort sufferers, by filling their minds with great thoughts of God and His salvation. Would you be skilled in comfort's art? Then take notice of this fact. Place before sufferers great and deep thoughts of God, His salvation and truth.

II. Strangers. There are various opinions held concerning the folk Peter meant when he addressed his letter to "strangers." Some think he simply meant Jews who were scattered in Asia. Yet Paul in Ephesians speaks of the Gentile Christians as "strangers" (Ephesians 2:11-12). Pray note:

1. Our time here is a sojourning (1 Peter 1:17).

2. Once we were strangers to grace and God (Ephesians 2:14).

3. We are now in these matters "no more strangers" (Ephesians 2:19).

4. But so far as the world is concerned, we are "strangers and pilgrims," that is, pilgrims because strangers (1 Peter 2:11).

III. Foreigners. Weymouth gives "foreigners," and Moffatt "exiles" for "strangers." What is the duty of a foreigner? A foreigner's-

1. Absentmindedness. He ever thinks of his native land. Let us "Set our affections on things above." Thus we shall have an absent heart and mind.

2. Separation. A foreigner differs in dress, appearance, and palate, from those amongst whom he is living. As foreigners, we must live the separated life, being moulded not by the world's maxims and laws, and enjoying new food.

3. Detachment. Does not take "root" in a foreign soil. Ever remains detached.

4. Loyalty. Seeks, in a foreign land, to maintain the honour, and advance the interests of his own country. This is an important thought.

5. Literature. An exile loves to browse on literature from his own native land, and to satisfy that craving, makes arrangements with publishing houses in the land of his birth. If we are truly living as foreigners here in this world, we will love to read and study the literature of the Better Land, which we have already provided for us in the Bible.

6. Fellowship. An exile loves to meet for fellowship with fellow-exiles, and will go to no end of trouble to thus meet them. Spiritual foreigners love to have fellowship with kindred spirits.

ELECTION.

1 Peter 1:2.

Due to wordy battles of the past, many of the Lord's people are frightened of the words "elect" and "election." Yet they are Bible words and Bible truths. "Chosen" is the word Weymouth gives. Election in Scripture is employed for three purposes: 1st, Describes an election to, or being chosen for, an office (John 15:16). 2nd, Appointed to certain privileges (Psalms 135:4). 3rd, To salvation. These scattered Christians are called the elect of God. What an honourable title!

I. The Origin of Election. Not sanctification, as some think-that is our sanctification, though in one sense we may say that this election was made possible by Christ's sanctification to the work of salvation and His obedience unto death, for that really and truly was its purpose. The true origin of election is the grace of "God the Father." It is comforting to find that Peter associates (as some consider), the harsh doctrine of election with the softening and comforting doctrine of the Fatherhood of God. The one delightfully blends with the other. Election is the electing love of the Father.

II. The Possibility of Election. Observe here in Psalms 135:2, also Psalms 135:20, and also Acts 2:23; Romans 8:29; Romans 11:2; and 2 Timothy 2:19, the association of God's foreknowledge with God's election. In these verses we are permitted to enter the council chamber of the Most High, and to listen to the Eternal Counsels. This association of foreknowledge with election has been of great assistance to the puny minds of earthly mortals when grappling with this deep, deep truth.

III. The Proof of Election. The infallible proof of our election is of a twofold character.

1. Internal. To feel and constantly foster within us the sanctification of the Holy Spirit.

2. External. To render swift obedience, and to live as exiles, as foreigners in this world.

IV. The Purpose of Election. "Is given that you may learn obedience, and may be sprinkled by blood," is 20th C. rendering. Thus two things are in the purpose of election.

1. "With a view to their obedience," is W. Our obedience.

2. And that we might enjoy the sprinkling of blood.

V. The Privilege of Election.

1. That the Elect should be constantly Sprinkled by the Blood of Christ.

2. Grace and Peace Multiplied. This means more than given. They had been given and received, now they arc to be multiplied. These blessings travel hand in hand. First, Grace, i.e., God's unmerited favour which is ours through Christ. Grace is also a name for blessings that are ours in Christ. These are to be multiplied, now that they have been received.

Peace-peace with God, through our Lord Jesus, and peace of God. Someone has remarked that "grace is the nurture of the Christian life; peace is its character."

Note the phrase, "Sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience." Learn from this that- a. True sanctification is of and by the Holy Spirit. b. The purpose and result of sanctification is a life of obedience, not merely our happiness and comfort. God thinks more of our holiness than of our happiness, though He is not forgetful of that mercy. THE BIRTH OF A DOXOLOGY.

1 Peter 1:3-5.

Probably you have noticed in the New Testament writings the frequency of Doxologies. It is both interesting and profitable to study it, seeking to track it to its source. Here we are able to do that. This Te Deum is sung at the remembrance of redeeming grace in regeneration. How easily these early Christians burst forth into Doxologies. Why? How is it that we are so far behind them in this practice? Has not the Lord done as much for us as He did for them? Is not the reservoir of grace still as full as ever? Yes! Surely the reason is the poverty of our individual Christian experience. The rush of daily life leaves little time for reflection on the wonders and marvels of grace; and so few believers appropriate, as they ought, the riches that are their own in Christ Jesus.

I. The Doxology.

1. A New Theme. "Blessed be the God," etc. The word rendered "Blessed" here has not the same significance as the word used in the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount. Here it is blessing on account of something inherent in the person, whereas in the latter it describes blessing received. "Blessing God," literally means, "Speaking well of Him." It is good when a father blesses his child; it is touching when the child blesses the father. Here we find a child blessing his Heavenly Father.

2. A New Relationship. "Blessed be the God and Father." This is a new relationship. This relationship in the New Testament sense, is unknown in the Old Testament. Note, "God and Father." Note John 20:17. Not "Our Father," but "My Father and your Father." Also, "My God and your God," not "our God."

II. Its Origin.

1. A New Birth. "Hath begotten again." This is one of the unique phrases of the Christian vocabulary, not found in other religious systems. Other systems emphasize culture, training, discipline, education, evolution.

2. A New Life. "Has given us a new life," is the 20th Century New Testament rendering.

3. A New Hope. "A new life of undying hope" (20th C). Before regeneration, there was nothing to which to look forward. Note the connection of hope here with the Resurrection of Christ. Certainly if He had not risen from the dead, then our hope would never have been born. The Christians' hope is a Living, or as we have it here, "a Lively Hope," because Christ is living. The grave is no longer a terminus, but a thoroughfare.

4. A New Inheritance. "To an inheritance" (4). We are born again to an estate. As sons of Adam we have a dread inheritance-heirs of a fallen nature and of the wrath of God. Now, through grace, heirs of "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

5. A New Security. "Who are kept" (5). The R.V. substitutes "guarded" for "kept," thus retaining the military metaphor which is in the text. Guarded by God's power-Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:24), and "in God's power" (R.). The inheritance is preserved for the heirs, and the heirs for the inheritance.

6. A New Salvation. Salvation is a big word, including not only what God has already done for us or is doing for, or in us, but which He will yet do for us-"a salvation which even now stands ready for unveiling" (W.). THE BIRTH OF A PARADOX.

1 Peter 1:6, 1 Peter 1:7.

In our last study we were tracking a doxology to its source; in this we are to watch the birth of a paradox. In 2 Corinthians 6:9-10, we have a cluster of paradoxes. Here is Peter's paradox: "Leaping for joy," and yet "in heaviness."

I. The Paradox.

1. An Exuberant Joy. "Wherein ye greatly rejoice." "Wherein, ye leap for joy" is another rendering. The one thing that amazed the heathen world of that time was the joy the believers enjoyed and exhibited in the midst of suffering. Our Christian faith enables us to face trials with un-diminished and undimmed serenity and cheerfulness. Our salvation is one that leads to great gladness.

2. A Depressing Sadness. But the joy mentioned here is gladness plus sadness. "Though now for a season ("for the passing moment," M.), if need be, ye are in heaviness ("ye are put to grief," R.)." "Though for the passing moment you may need to suffer various trials; that is only to prove your faith is sterling" (M.).

How can an exultant joy and a depressing sadness exist together in our experience. That we have "heaviness" is beyond question-on account of personal trials, and outside pressure; that we "greatly rejoice" is also beyond question.

II. The Explanation. There is a great difference between always and only rejoicing. The joy and the sadness do co-exist. The joy does not deprive the heaviness of all its weight, nor the sorrow of all its sting. There is no artificial stoicism about the Christian faith; nor any attempt to explain things away.

III. The Possibility. What is necessary to make this paradox possible?

1. Contemplation of our Glorious Privileges. That little word "wherein" connects what has gone before with this statement. We are not asked to manufacture spiritual emotion. We are urged to determine what to think about most, and what to look at most. The possibility of this paradox

depends on the object of our contemplation. Are we dwelling on the truths proclaimed in 2 Corinthians 6:3-5? Then this paradox is possible.

2. The Remembrance of the Transciency of Sorrow. "For a season if need be," is the A.V., or, as M., "For the passing moment." How quickly will this moment pass.

3. Recognition of the Purpose and Results of the Trial. "If need be." There is therefore a needs be. Faith is very precious. As a man's faith is, so is the man. Fire tries and refines. The word "prove" in the R.V. means more than test. It really means to reveal, strengthen, confirm.

4. A Remembrance of the Great Reward. "Might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." When suffering, keep your eye on the Coming of the Lord. Keep in mind the joy of hearing His "Well done, good and faithful servant." NOT SEEN, YET TRUSTED AND LOVED.

1 Peter 1:8.

Introduction. Not Seen. Remember Peter is speaking and writing. He had seen the Lord. There seems to be a kind of tender pity in the words. "Whom having not seen." Twice over he repeats the statement that they had not seen Him. "You have never seen Him, and yet you love Him. And though you do not even now see Him, yet you believe in Him, and exult with a triumphant happiness too great for words" (20th Century). "You never knew Him but you love Him; for the moment you do not see Him, but you believe in Him" (M.).

Believe. Surely here we find Peter re-echoing the words of His beloved Master as we have them recorded in John 20:29.

Love at Sight. "Love at first sight" is a well-known phrase. Most human love follows the sight of the eyes. But the love Peter refers to is not love at eye-sight, but love at heart-sight. (For they had never seen the Lord with the eyes of flesh.)

Proof of Love. Do we love Him? How easily one can be mistaken in imagining admiration to be love, which it is not. Here are the proofs of real love.

I. Attachment. Love unites two into one. In "marriages made in Heaven," the marriage ceremony in Church, indispensable according to the law of God, is, after all, only an outward recognition of a union that has already taken place, the union of hearts and minds, of affections and ideals, of purposes and plans. Love, real love, unites two into one.

II. Obedience. Love delights to meet the wishes, and to obey the slightest commands of the loved one. That is pre-eminently true in each individual experience if we really love the Lord. Love will obey His commands (John 14:15), and impel to deeds of sacrifice (2 Corinthians 5:14) in service.

III. Separation. Love will separate us from all other likes and admirations, and unite us in lonely and glorious devotion to the person and interests of the one loved; and 1 John 2:15 is the verse we have in mind in this connection.

IV. Consecration. Love leads us to strip ourselves of our treasures and place them at the disposal of the loved one, becoming utterly devoted to their interests. This we see in the love Jonathan had for David (1 Samuel 18:1-4). If our love to the Lord Jesus has not led us to bow low before the

Lord whom we love, and strip ourselves of all we have, and are, and hope for, in the words of the well-known hymn, then our love is lacking in its essential quality.

"Take my life, and let it be

Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;

Take my moments and my days,

Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

"Take my hands, and let them move

At the impulse of Thy love;

Take my feet, and let them be

Swift and beautiful for Thee.

"Take my voice, and let me sing

Always, only, for my King;

Take my lips, and let them be

Filled with messages from Thee.

"Take my silver and my gold;

Not a mite would I withhold;

Take my intellect and use

Every power as Thou shalt choose;

"Take my will, and make it Thine;

It shall be no longer mine:

Take my heart-it is Thine own.

It shall be Thy royal throne.

"Take my love: my Lord I pour

At Thy feet its treasure-store;

Take myself, and I will be

Ever, only all for Thee."

V. Anticipation. Love lives in anticipation of more blessed fellowship. Love renders each other essential to life. Lovers find a difficulty to live their separate lives, and longingly anticipate the time when they can live under one roof, and never be absent the one from the other only when compulsory for the purpose of earning a living. If we really love the Lord we will ardently look forward to being with Him in the glory, when we shall see Him face to face and be known even as

we are known.

THREE UNSPEAKABLE BLESSINGS.

1 Peter 1:8, with 2 Corinthians 9:15; 2 Corinthians 12:4.

Introduction. George Eliot, in her "Scenes in Clerical Life," speaks of the possibility and danger of having a good religious vocabulary without a corresponding religious experience. A real peril lurks here. It is possible to have a tolerably good grasp of religious truth, to be able to define Christian doctrine, and to express our views in clear language, and yet to be without the experience of those truths. The fact that one can talk fluently on Divine themes is no proof of the possession of a real and vital experience.

There is another peril, that of possessing a religious experience that can be reduced into, and expressed by, a vocabulary. That such an experience is rather common must be admitted. A weak, sickly spiritual life can easily be described. Such has but few if any thrilling experiences. Quite easily words can be found whereby it can be described. Shame on us if this is true concerning us.

Cowper calls speech a "Sacred interpreter of human thought." And what a wonderful interpreter it is to be sure. Yet it is possible for the most skilled interpreter to come prematurely to the end of his resources. We have witnessed the inability of a splendid interpreter to translate some florid phrases. That sacred interpreter of human thought cannot but fail to translate some experience into words. That is true regarding even earthly things. All the deepest and richest things in everyday life are unspeakable. "A mother's love! Who has discovered a symbol by which to express it? It is unspeakable. A profound grief! Where is the speech in which it can be enshrined? It is unspeakable." A glorious sunrise or sunset-who can find words to fully and adequately describe them? The majesty of the mountains, the beauty and fragrance of the lily, and other flowers- where is the language that can tell all?

If that is true regarding earthly things, what about the heavenly? If a mother's love is unspeakable, what shall we say concerning Divine love?

"But what to those who find? Ah! this.

Nor tongue nor pen can show:

The Love of Jesus, what it is.

None but His loved, ones know."

Even inspired apostles found now and again the inadequacy of human language. They then press into service the word "unspeakable," which occurs three times in Holy Writ, and each we shall now notice.

I. Unspeakable Gift. "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift" (2 Corinthians 9:15), or, as Weymouth renders it, His "Unspeakably precious gift," or as another rendering, "Thank God for His unexpected bounty." This is one of Paul's doxologies. With most of them there appears to be no connection between the subject he is dealing with and the doxology. Often, right in the midst of a profound argument, he has to pause for worship. But there happens to be a connection here.

The Apostle has been referring to the generous gifts of the Macedonian Christians, holding them up as an example worthy of copying by the Corinthians, when the thought of the wonderful grace and goodness of God overwhelmed him, and he found relief in this outburst of adoring love and worship.

There is something wrong with us if, now and again, we, too, are not similarly affected. One infallible test of a real growth in grace is a growing appreciation of the love of God in Christ, and of His substitutionary death on the Cross. For God's gift cannot be overestimated, cannot be over-valued. His riches are unsearchable, and His love passeth knowledge. God's gift is a Person. And such a wondrous Being. Have you thanked God to-day for His unspeakable Gift? Is that Gift unspeakably precious to you?

II. Unspeakable Words. "How that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful or possible for a man to utter" (2 Corinthians 12:1-4). It is Paul speaking. He is here disclosing a personal secret he had kept for fourteen years. Just at that time Paul was stoned outside Lystra (Acts 14). No one could be stoned and live. Undoubtedly he was killed, and whilst his poor battered body lay still, he himself went up to Paradise, but as his work was not yet finished, God performed a miracle, and he and his body were re-united. Whilst in Paradise he heard words he could not possibly find human words to describe.

Incidentally this is important, as showing the effect of Christ's death and resurrection on Paradise. Before the Cross, Paradise was beneath (Luke 16:19-31), in the heart of the earth (Matthew 12:40), to which Christ went at His death. When He rose from the dead, He transferred Paradise to the third Heaven, the immediate presence of God (2 Corinthians 12:2, 2 Corinthians 12:4; Ephesians 4:8-10), though leaving the place of the departed ungodly just as before.

What rapturous words are these! And they are applicable to us in this life. Is not this true of prayer and communion with God? Living in communion with Him we shall hear unspeakable words, as the hymn, "In the secret of His Presence" expresses it:

"If I tried, I could not utter

What He says when thus we meet." Our Paradise now is to have beneath us the Everlasting Arms, and hear His words of love; our Paradise by and by will be the immediate presence of the Lord.

III. Unspeakable Joy. "Ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8), or as another version has it, "Ye exult with a triumphant happiness, too great for words!" There are joys that weaken and impair the soul. Not so this-it is crowned with glory. Who were these happy folk to whom Peter addressed himself? A poor, despised, persecuted folk, many of whom had been robbed of their property for the sake of the Name. They were believers in the Lord Jesus. Joy, therefore, depends not upon what we have, but what we are; not on circumstances, but on Communion with Christ.

Observe, this is not an exhortation, but a statement of fact. He was not urging them to rejoice, but simply stating what had already taken place in their own experience. Evidently this was their normal experience. How far short believers of to-day seem to come of an experience of this sort!

Now pray note the order of these three "Unspeakables." Unspeakable Gift first, then Words, and finally Joy. Before the experience must come the reception of the gift. The first act of importance is

the reception of that gift. Then it is our privilege to commence to walk and talk with God in holy blessed Communion. That will mean the possession of a joy that cannot be described. THE GLORY AND GREATNESS OF OUR SALVATION.

1 Peter 1:9-12.

Introduction.

Salvation. It is quite evident that Peter loved to repeat the word "salvation." See how it slips off his pen in 1 Peter 1:5,1 Peter 1:9, and 1 Peter 1:10. Apparently he never thought of it without a thrill. This is brought out in the Moffatt rendering: "And you will thrill with unspeakable and glorious joy to obtain the outcome of your faith in the salvation of your souls." That is to say, the thought of the glory and greatness of our salvation thrilled him with joy, as it most certainly will do so in our experience.

Thrill. Have you ever been thrilled as you have thought of your own personal salvation? Some do not value a thing until they discover others greatly value it. In this study we are to see that our salvation has been, and indeed is, the wonderment of the prophets of the past, and of angels in the past and present.

I. The Description of Salvation. Note the remarkable variety of words and phrases employed here to describe one thing-salvation.

1. Salvation. A great word, pregnant with meaning.

2. Grace. It comes in grace, and it is grace.

3. Glory. What a description of the fruit of grace.

4. Gospel. Great word.

II. The Basis of Salvation. Peter stresses here that the sufferings of Christ form the base or foundation of our salvation. This is the fundamental fact of Christianity. Here you observe that Peter never speaks of the sufferings of Jesus, or of Jesus Christ, but of Christ! He prefers to dwell upon the passion of Christ in its official aspect, and not in its personal sense. Examine the first Epistle and you will be impressed by this fact. He refers to "Jesus Christ" in 1 Peter 1:2-3,1 Peter 1:7,1 Peter 1:13;1 Peter 2:5, and so on. In the following Scriptures he refers to Jesus simply as the Christ: 1 Peter 1:11, 1 Peter 1:19; 1 Peter 2:21; 1 Peter 3:18; 1 Peter 4:1, 1 Peter 4:13-14; 1 Peter 5:1. Peter never forgot that the very day he confessed Jesus as Christ, he took His Lord to task for speaking of His suffering and death (Matthew 16:22-23). The Gospel is not that Jesus died, but that "Christ" died for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:3). "Christ" is Jesus' official title, thus the use of that draws attention to the official aspect of His death. He died, not a martyr's death, but the death of a sacrifice. Observe the Gospel is- 1. Not a speculation.

2. Not a mere theology.

3. Not a morality.

4. Not a declaration of principles.

It is a history of fact, of things done on this earth of ours.

III. The Prophecy of Salvation. It was foretold by the prophets (Luke 1:69-70). Our salvation was the substance of prophecy. The unity of salvation is disclosed in, the fact that the things which the prophets foretold are spoken of as the same as those "which are now reported unto you by them" (1 Peter 1:12).

Some of the people to whom Peter wrote this Epistle- particularly the Jews-had a great veneration for the prophets, and would be tremendously impressed by the fact he emphasises, that they foretold this wondrous salvation now ours. He is great on the theme, as Acts 3:18 proves. Paul also stressed this fact (Acts 26:22-23). Also note John 8:5,John 8:6. The Gospel unlocks the treasures of the Old Testament. The Old Testament creates an attitude of expectancy, pointing onward, with ever increasing distinctness, to Christ. So much was this so, that the pious souls stood, as it were, on the tip-toe of expectancy when the "fulness of the time had come."

IV. The Investigation of Salvation.

1. The Persons who searched. "The prophets."

2. The Object of their search. "Time," "Salvation."

3. The Manner of their search. "Inquired and searched diligently."

4. The Success of their search. What a sublime disappointment was theirs, as is shown in John 8:12. Read Hebrews 11:40.

V. The Angelic Study of Salvation. "Which things the angels desire to look into" (1 Peter 1:12). "Bend aside to see." This is the literal rendering, indicative of a strained attention to something which has caught your eye, something out of your usual line of sight.

Scripture. 1 Corinthians 4:9; Ephesians 3:10; 1 Timothy 3:16.

Ruskin wrote: "There is a mean curiosity, as of a child opening a forbidden door, or a servant prying into his master's business; and a noble curiosity, questioning, in the front of danger, the source of the great river; a nobler curiosity still, which questions the source of the River of Life, and of the space of the Continent of Heaven, things which the angels desire to look into."

Cherubim.

1. The idea in the word, "Look into," is that of eager desire and fixed attention.

2. The outspread wings and bended heads of the brooding Cherubim which sat above the Mercy-seat, gazing down upon the miracle of love that was manifested beneath them there, is here suggested.

Poets. This reference to angelic curiosity has seized the fancy of poets. C. Wesley:

"Ask the Father's Wisdom how

Him that did the means ordain;

Angels round our Altars bow,

To search it out in vain.

"Angels in fixed amazement

Around our Altars hover,

With eager gaze adore the grace

Of our Eternal Lover."

Final Points.

1. "Has the grace come unto you?" (1 Peter 1:10).

2. Does "the Spirit of Christ" in you "point unto anything?" (1 Peter 1:11).

3. Do you know the "testifying" of the Holy Ghost" (1 Peter 1:12).

Subject of Inspiration. The present passage is one of the most striking in the whole of the New Testament regarding the subject of inspiration.

1. Are the prophetic writings, which we now possess, the result of that inquiry? a. Was their knowledge gained as a result of personal effort? If so, how this rebukes the sluggishness and slothfulness of many. Yet this is not so. b. Rather, the prophetic writings were the subject of their inquiry, then God gave the knowledge they possessed. c. They knew they were speaking concerning a salvation but they knew nothing about details.

2. How far were their utterances their own, and how far suggested to them from on High? The prophets found themselves impelled to say and write words which they were conscious of choosing, and using, but which they felt to have a deeper meaning than they themselves were conscious of intending. This is a notable fact.

GIRDING THE MIND.

1 Peter 1:13-16.

Introduction. The modern emphasis on the mind, upon the importance of the thoughts in the realm of good living, is thought to be a new psychological discovery. As a matter of fact it is no new thing at all, so far as the Bible is concerned. For proofs of this note, Genesis 6:5; Genesis 8:21; Proverbs 23:7; Php_4:8. Here in Peter we are to note the close connection there is between the girding mind and a holy life.

"Wherefore." This wee word at once connects this and our last lesson. The last meditation was on the intense and reverent curiosity of the prophets of old, and even of the angels, too, in the wonderfully devised scheme of redemption. The word "wherefore" gathers up all the wealthy results of the previous study. What effect should the result of our previous study have upon us? A girded mind leading to a holy life.

I. The Girded Mind. "Gird up." Is this an echo of John 21:18? It seems likely. The figure of the passage is taken from the flowing garments of the oriental dress. The flapping robes caught the wind and wrapping about the legs, become serious hindrances to easy and progressive movement. The wearer, therefore, lays hold of the hindering garments, tucking them into a girdle which discharges the ministry of a belt.

"A similar disorder may prevail in the realm of thought and affection. Our life may be characterised by mental slovenliness. Our thoughts may trail in loose disorder. How much loose thinking there is concerning Divine things."

Now loose thinking is dangerous. Like the trailing garments, it may trip us up; it might lead us to careless and inconsistent living.

"Brace up" is the 20th Century rendering. The navvy or coal worker tightens the belt to brace himself up for some particular laborious task. So we must "gird up our minds," or "brace up our minds" for the great task before us.

II. The Cool Mind. "Be sober." This is more than an injunction against intemperance. It is a call to serious thought. This is a frivolous, butterfly kind of age. Yet do not confuse gravity with gloom. We have to be grave, yet not sullen. Moffatt's rendering is, "Keep cool." Let sufferers keep their heads when a blow falls, and not make any railing accusation against the Lord. "Let them keep cool." A fevered condition is dangerous.

III. The Controlled Mind. "Exercise the strictest self-control," is the 20th Century rendering. That is really one fruit of girding.

IV. The Obedient Mind. "As obedient children." Obedience in relation, and as one condition, to holiness. We shall return to this subject.

V. The Optimistic Mind. "And hope to the end," or, "Hope perfectly," as in the margin of the R.V. The reference here is not to duration, but to the quality of the Christian hope. Observe:

1. The Object of the Christian Hope. "And hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." "Is being brought" (R.V., margin) ,i.e., is already on its way. It is very remarkable language. The light from fixed stars may take centuries to reach us, but is speeding through space all the while. So the grace that is to be revealed when the Lord comes in on its way.

2. The Quality of the Christian Hope. "Hope perfectly" is the margin. Then there are degrees in hope. Hope may be weak at first, but should develop and strengthen by use.

HOLINESS.

1 Peter 1:14-16.

Undoubtedly the Apostle Peter had Leviticus 11:44 in mind in speaking as he does on holiness. Yet there is a difference. Guided by the Holy Spirit, he changed the imperative command ("Ye shall be holy") into a loving appealing exhortation ("Be ye holy").

I. The Dislike of Holiness. Dr. Stuart Holden writes: "I remember a man who spoke to me, finding fault with something that had been said from the platform because he disagreed with it. He said, 'I do not believe in all this teaching about holiness and Christ conformity. I am quite content to know that I am saved and on my way to Heaven;' and I had to say to him, 'My friend, that is hardly the proper criterion of judgment. You are satisfied to know that you are saved and going to Heaven. But is God satisfied? Is that what Christ died for?' And the man was silent."

Bishop Moule declared: "The fully pardoned must long to be fully holy."

II. The Need of Holiness. Said one concerning a woman for whom he had an admiration, though imperfect knowledge, "She is the salt of the earth!" "Yes," replied one who knew her much better, "Salt! Why, she is mustard and pepper, and the whole cruet!" That is the sad meaning of unlovely goodness. A friend called such folk, "The Lord's acid drops." They have their niche in life, but they are at times a sore trial to others.

III. The Definition of Holiness. In one sense it is undefinable. George Goodman remarks: "No words can describe holiness, for it is known only to those who yield themselves to God." It is well to remember this, and to note that the best definition may be faulty and imperfect. What is holiness? "It is just complete conformity in all things great and small alike, to the Holy Will of God; being at one mind with God in all the judgments of the mind, in all the feelings of the heart, and in all the outgoings of the life, agreeing with God's estimate of things."

Thomas Carlyle stated that "holy," in the German language heilig, also means healthy; our English word "whole," all of one piece, without any hole in it, is the same word. You could not get any better definition of what holy really is than healthy, completely healthy.

"Holiness," says George Goodman, "is to have a conscience clean through the Blood, and a life guided by the Spirit through the Word. It is to have the power of Christ resting upon you, and to be glad in the freedom He gives."

IV. The Condition of Holiness. This is pointed out in 1 Peter 1:14 as obedience-obedience to all known commands and desires of our Lord. Obedience to Him always leads to the Blood (1 John 1:7).

V. The Pattern of Holiness. "As He" (1 Peter 1:15). Our Gracious God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, are our true Pattern.

VI. The Imperative of Holiness. "Ye shall be" (Leviticus 11:44). Law, in his "Serious Call," says, "We may choose a married life or a single life, but it is not left to our choice whether we will make either a state of holiness, humility, devotion, and all other duties of the Christian life. It is our duty to devote ourselves to God in these states."

VII. The Field of Holiness. Holiness in "conversation" (1 Peter 1:15); or conduct (M); or behaviour (R.); holiness even in trifles. One has said: "Whosoever has not a Christianity that sanctifies the trifles, has a Christianity that will not sanctify the crises of life."

VIII. The Possibility of Holiness. The very fact that God here in His Holy Word, urges us to Holiness should be quite sufficient to settle the possibility of holiness. Yet, for your help, note that holiness is wrapped up in Christ. "Christ for us is all our peace before a Holy God; and Christ in us is all our strength in an unholy world." "Holiness is both a gift and a process." It is a good gift from God in Christ; it is also a process to be worked out in daily life.

"PASS YOUR TIME IN AWE."

1 Peter 1:17-21.

This is one of several surprising statements in this section. Further, there are in these verses several extraordinary conjunctions of terms. Fear! I thought the believer was delivered through grace from fear. But what is meant by fear? It does not mean terror or dread. We are not to pass the time of our mortality in paralysing dread, or to go through life cringing like slaves. Both Rotherham and 20th Century New Testament give "reverence" for "fear." "Fear" here really means a wholesome awe, a fear which grows out of love, a fear lest we should grieve One so abundant in mercy.

There is a lamentable lack of reverence amongst the Lord's people. There is a call for more reverence in thought, prayer, and walk. We should cultivate a reverential fear. How? Well, the rest of the verses will show. It all lies in remembrance. We are to remind ourselves of three facts.

I. The Character of the Author of Redemption. "If ye call on Him as Father," is the R.V. "Call," let that word arrest you. It means more than sending a wireless telegram to the Most High, brief, though com-mendably to the point. It means a long telephone call; yea, more, it surely is a long personal interview face to face, though at present we see Him not. He is always "At Home." "Call" means to wait on Him. Remember He "called" upon you first. Return that "call."

Another point. "Father," "Judge." What a surprising conjunction of opposites. Is God both? Verily. But what an amazing union of opposites. "Instead of the friendliness of the fireside, we have the awfulness of the throne; instead of the hearthstone, we have the Great White Throne." Some think all of the Father and forget the Judge; and some conceive of Him only as Judge and forget He is Father also. Do not let filial confidence drive out legitimate fear. Holy sovereignty must be an element in our conception of the Fatherhood of God.

Yet, let us ever keep in mind that our loving Heavenly Father is also the august Judge of all the earth, that His Throne is not only of grace, but of impartial justice. "Who without respect of persons judgeth." Such remembrance will generate reverence and annihilate undue and unbecoming familiarity. Yes, the Author of Redemption is the Father-Judge. Never for one moment forget this.

II. The Cost of Redemption. "Forasmuch as ye know" (1 Peter 1:18). Know what? Why, that we have no cheap redemption. It cost all that God had-His Beloved Son. Oh, let us ever move with breathless steps amidst the mysteries of redemption. Have you ever been gripped by that verse in Psalm 130: "There is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared." Feared? Should it not be loved? Ah, no. When we realise the awful cost of redemption we fear Him with a fear that fears to sin against Him. A cheap redemption might have made us easy, but it would never have made us good. A cheap forgiveness would only have confirmed the sin it forgave. When we fully realise the cost of redemption we will seek to have done with sin.

III. The Purpose of Redemption. It is helpful to note the various renderings which bring out the purpose of redemption here disclosed.

1. "From your vain conversation" (A.V.).

2. "From your aimless life in which you were brought up" (20th C).

3. "From your frivolous habits of life" (W.).

4. "From your vain behaviour" (R.).

PURITY.

1 Peter 1:22.

What fulness of teaching and of truth we have in this first chapter of Peter. Consequently, in our study we are making slow but steady progress. There are two subjects before us in this verse: Purity and Love. We deal with purity in this study. The key words are "in," "through."

I. The Need of Purity. This is purity of the soul and of life that Peter recommends, actual and not merely ceremonial purity. It is personal purity.

II. The Means of Purity. "In" obeying the Truth. Moffat spells truth with a capital "T.," thus suggesting that He who is the Truth is meant here. Certainly in obeying His Word we are obeying Him.

III. The Bestower of Purity. "Through the Spirit." The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Purity, and the source of Purity.

IV. The Issue of Purity. "Unto unfeigned love of the brethren."

LOVE OF THE BRETHREN.

1 Peter 1:22.

There are eleven Commandments-the ten given by God through Moses, and the eleventh, the New Commandment given by the Lord Jesus: "That ye love one another as I have loved you." We love the Lord Whom we have not seen (1 Peter 1:8); we must love our brethren whom we have seen and do see. The latter is indeed the test of the former (1 John 4:20).

I. Its Nature. Now love is more than courtesy, attachment, or affability. It means self-denial, self-giving; it means that we shall check the hasty word, the unkind speech, the damaging criticism. It is a fair and exquisite flower. The flower of love Peter has in mind is a tender exotic. There is a coarser kind more easily grown, common to all, irrespective of creed or belief. But this is a tender plant, yet, oh, so much needed in this weary world!

II. Its Reason. "Being born again." Love possessed, enjoyed, and lived out, is an evidence of the New Birth and a result of the New Birth.

III. Its Soul and Atmosphere. Purity of heart and life is here pointed out as the soul and atmosphere of true love. There is such a thing as impure love. Moffatt renders it "purified your souls for a brotherly love." "From a pure heart fervently" is R.V. and W. "For cherishing sincere brotherly love."

IV. Its Cultivation. "See to it that ye love one another," etc. The mode of its growth is the Word of God loved and indwelling. Love is knowledge of the Word set on fire. The cause of its growth-the maintenance of purity within.

V. Its Guardianship. "See that ye love," etc. We are in charge of that tender exotic. We are its guardians.

VI. Its Quality.

1. Brotherly Love. "Love of the brethren" (22).

2. Unfeigned Love. That is to say, no mere pretence at loving. Often we are tempted to profess more than we feel.

3. Steady Love. Moffatt's rendering: "Love one another heartily and steadily." A love that is steady, whatever its testing or trial.

4. Fervent Love. Not a cold love. "Heartily and fervently" is the W. version. THE WORD OF GOD.

1 Peter 1:23-25; 1 Peter 2:1,1 Peter 2:2.

Introduction.

Why we Should Love. The Apostle Peter introduces the subject of the New Birth as an additional reason why we should love one another. Through the New Birth we have become members of a new family, sharing one life, and for this reason we ought to love. The New Birth. In referring to the New Birth he made two great statements. The first is, how this great change called the New Birth was brought about. In so doing he magnifies the Word of God. That is the principal theme in these verses. Yet we must look at the subject of the New Birth in passing. Is it God or the Word that Liveth and Abideth for Ever? The A.V. states that it is the Word. The R.V. and R. teach it is God. The Word of God Who liveth, etc., is R.V. margin. "Through means of the Word of a living and abiding God," is R., Moffatt reads, "By the living, lasting Word of God." The fact is, you cannot divide the two without great loss. What can we know of God but for His Word? God speaks to us through His Word. Neglect the Bible and your spiritual life will suffer. Note:

1. "All flesh is as grass." Men and women pass away as the successive crops in the meadows.

2. "The glory of man." The very elite, like the flowers of the earth, share the fate of the humble blades of grass.

I. Its Might Like a Hammer (Jeremiah 23:29).

1. The Might of the Word of God. Smashing hard hearts.

2. The Usefulness of the Word of God. How useful in daily life is a hammer.

II. Its Usefulness and Warmth like a Fire. This simile is also found in Jeremiah 23:29, and conveys three thoughts:

1. Its Destructiveness. Fire destroys the consumable and inflammable. The Word of God as fire burns up our tinsel and dross-the wood, hay, and stubble in our lives.

2. Its Warmth. What a comfort is a fire on a cold stormy night. What a comfort is the Word of God when conscious of the coldness of the world, and in times of sorrow and darkness.

3. Its Protection. In wild regions travellers find a fire at night a wonderful protection from the wild and ravenous beasts.

III. Its Fruitfulness likened to Seed.

1. Jeremiah 23:23 answers the question: How to be born anew. It was through the Word of God there was given to us the seed of a regenerated life.

2. The best seed that the world knows of is corruptible, but this is incorruptible.

3. "Through the Word of God" is R.V.

4. Here we have the fruitfulness the Word of God brings into barren and unfruitful lives.

IV. Its Sustenance likened to Milk.

1. Here we are told how to grow (1 Peter 2:1-2).

2. "So off with all malice" is M. rendering. For "guile," F.F. gives "deceit;" and for "malice," F.F. gives "vice."

3. "As new born babes." The metaphor is a very touching one. The world is but the nursery in which the heirs of God are spending the first lisping years of their existence.

4. "As new born babes desire," or as R.V., "long," or M. "thirst."

CHRIST. THE LIVING STONE.

1 Peter 2:4-8.

Was Peter, when he wrote these words, thinking of what the Lord Jesus said to him, long, long ago, up there at Caesarea Philippi? (Matthew 16:17-18; John 1:42). It seems likely. Peter is an old man now. He vividly remembers the past, and here is one echo of his thoughts.

Jacob was the first to think of the Lord as a Stone (Genesis 49:24), to be followed by Moses, David, and others

Peter piles up his metaphors in rich profusion-babes, stones, priests, etc. In the Old Testament the Lord is likened to a Stone, or a Rock. But the New Testament goes further-a Living Stone. Though in nature a living stone is inknown, in the spiritual world it is a fact.

Christ, the Living Stone- I. In His Essential Characteristics.

1. Everlastingness. Rock of Ages-exactly. Rocks and stones seem everlasting. He is the everlasting One.

2. Invincible Strength. How strong stones seem.

3. Ability to Uphold. He upholds the whole weight of the glory of God. The salvation of His people rests upon Him and is safe, solid, and enduring. He is also the foundation stone on which we build.

4. Combination of Opposites. Two ideas, opposite in themselves, are joined in this title "Living Stone," showing how wonderfully all combine in the Lord Jesus. a. Life and death. b. Warmth and immobility. c. Sternness and gentleness. d. Meekness and anger.

II. In God's Estimation and Man's. There is a tradition that during the erection of Solomon's Temple, a stone was brought up by the straining oxen which refused to fit into any of the rising walls. It was cast aside, soon forgotten, and covered by weeds. At last, as the building neared

completion, it was found that a stone of special form would be required to knit the walls and fill a particular corner. The need suggested the forgotten and rejected bit of masonry, which fitted perfectly. Does not this remind us of Psalms 118:22, quoted by our Lord Himself?

Note the rendering:

1. "Rejected indeed by men as worthless" (W.).

2. "But chosen of God and precious" (A.V.), or as F.F., "Distinguished in the Presence of God."

Man's unbelief and lack of appreciation does not depreciate His value (1 Peter 2:7).

III. In His Blessed Ministry to Man.

1. Draws Us by His Love. In the old mythological fancy the stones of Thebes were drawn by the Lyre of Amphion. We do know that the living stones now being built into a spiritual temple-redeemed men and women- have been drawn to the Lord Jesus by the attractive force and power of His love. This Precious Stone attracts men and women to Himself.

2. Communicates His Own Marvellous Characteristics. Coming to Him, we become what He is Himself. A combination of opposites, in blessed harmony. We, who spiritually are as dead as stones, become living stories.

3. Unites the Separate Units into One House or Dwelling for God. He is the "Comer Stone" binding the separate units into one. What wonderful unity amongst people is the result of union with Christ!

4. Provides Essentials: a. A place of safety in danger. b. A sure foundation for building character and hopes. c. A safe foothold for wrestling with the powers of evil. For, as Psalm 40 shows, He not only lifts us out of the pit, but "sets my feet upon a rock." A PECULIAR PEOPLE.

1 Peter 2:9-12

Introduction.

"But." Peter turns from a contemplation of the fate of rejecters of Christ with evident relief to a happier and more pleasant subject. He contrasts the blessed position of the Lord's people with the sad position of the worldly and unsaved people. Yea, more, he contrasts the Church's present glory with the forfeited glory of Israel.

"Ye." The pronoun "ye" is very emphatic. He is drawing a contrast between the disobedient and unbelieving, Jews and Christian people.

I. Our Past. What we Once Were (1 Peter 2:10).

1. "Not a people."

2. "Had not obtained mercy." "Unpitied" in M.

II. Our Present. What we Are (1 Peter 2:9).

1. Elect Race (R.V.). "Select Race" (F.F.). The Jews certainly were God's elect nation. During the present period of their rejection, the Christian Church has been summoned to the glorious work of becoming the channel for the Divine blessing to mankind. They have become a "chosen

generation."

2. A Royal Priesthood. "A spiritual house" (5) were they. Those who were once but as the rubble on the hill sides, are not only constituted part of the spiritual fabric, but by a rapid change in the thought, they are represented as performing priestly functions, "an holy priesthood." The reference is undoubtedly to Exodus 19:6 (when the Chaldee renders "kings, priests"), a character and an office one of the Jewish commentators says will return to the Jews in time to come. In the meantime, it has come to the Church.

"A Royal Priesthood," with the a. "Power of kings," over sin and Satan. b. "Riches of kings." "Unsearchable riches of Christ." c. Apparel of kings. The Robe of Christ. d. Fare of kings. Sitting at the King's table, feeding on royal dainties. e. Retinue of kings. Angels being our servants and life-guard. A priestly people, with direct access to God, and also representing God to man. These two offices were jealously kept apart in Israel. In Christ they blend (Zechariah 6:13).

3. A Holy Nation.

4. A Peculiar People. This word rendered "peculiar" is a difficult word to translate. Authorities say that it was a word in ancient time for the slaves who were allowed to earn and retain their earnings. There are great differences in the Lord's people to people of the world. For "peculiar," M. gives, "the people who belong to Him." Surely in this word we have an echo of Exodus 19:5. Our gracious God bears towards His people- a. A peculiar love. Bestowed. b. Peculiar blessing. Takes. c. Peculiar care of them; and makes them d. His peculiar treasure. The Hebrew word rendered "jewels" in Malachi 3:17, has the same significance as the Greek word rendered "peculiar." The Lord's people are the Lord's "jewels," the Lord's treasure.

III. Our Duty. What we Should Be (11,12).

1. An affectionate title: "Dearly beloved."

2. And an affectionate entreaty: "I beseech you."

3. Note the suggestive title: Pilgrims. Observe the order: not pilgrims and strangers, but "strangers and pilgrims." That is to say, pilgrims because, through grace, we have become strangers to the world and worldly things.

4. "Which war against the soul," or, "which take the field against the soul."

IV. Our Mission. What we should Do (9).

1. Instead of "a peculiar people," F.F. gives "A people for action." Here we have a hint as to service.

2. Our mission is to show forth His praises. How may we show forth His praises? a. By Proclamation. "That you may proclaim the wondrous deeds" is M. rendering of Malachi 3:9. We must publish abroad His praises. b. By Testimony. "Show forth His praises." We must testify to His wondrous grace. c. By Life. Showing forth in our lives His virtues, or His excellencies. THE MINISTRY OF SEEMLY BEHAVIOUR.

1 Peter 2:11-25.

Introduction. The late Dr. Jowett saw in these verses "an appeal for the evangelising influences of a chaste and winsome character. A glorification of the silent witness of saintliness."

We may not all be called to the ministry of the pulpit or platform, yet we may all exercise the ministry of seemly behaviour. "Every man may be an ambassador of life discharging his office through the medium of holiness."

It is instructive to note how literally these precepts were obeyed. Tertullian contrasts the behaviour of the early Christians with the heathen. It was then stated that the holy example of the primitive Churches was one of the principal causes of the conversion to Christianity of the old pagan Roman Empire.

Peter points out that Christ's death was more than an example. 1 Peter 2:24 was written as well as 1 Peter 2:21. Why did He die?

1. That we might live? Yes.

2. That we might be healed? Yes.

3. That we might break with sin? 1 Peter 2:22 and 1 Peter 2:24. "By His stripes." "By His weals." Slaves then knew the meaning, by bitter experience, of stripes and weals. He bore the cruel punishment in our stead. Those stripes were both the price of our redemption, the evidence of our purchase, and the sign-manual of pardon.

Peter and Paul on Death of Christ. Have you ever noticed that, while Peter and Paul both make the Cross of Christ the centre of their teaching, Paul speaks more about His death, while Peter speaks more of His sufferings. The reason is that in Peter we have the eye-witness of a loving Friend's sufferings, which led him to dwell upon the accompaniments of His death. (Study this in connection, 1 Peter 1:2, 1 Peter 1:19; 1 Peter 1:11; 1 Peter 2:21; 1 Peter 3:18; 1 Peter 4:1, 1 Peter 4:13; 1 Peter 5:1.) I. Our Duty as Individuals (1 Peter 2:11-12).

"Abstain." A new kind of abstinence to that which we are usually familiar.

"As." Confess that you are pilgrims by and in your life as well as by speech.

"Having your Conversation." A perfect man is one who offends not in tongue.

II. Our Duty to the State (1 Peter 2:13-17). It was a favourite charge against the early Christians that they were plotting the overthrow of the Empire, and the dethronement of Caesar, in favour of "One, Jesus." Their private meetings were supposed to be convened for unlawful political purposes.

It was, therefore, necessary that men's minds should be disabused of the impression that any violence was contemplated. Peter, therefore, exhorts them to conform, as far as they were able, to the demands and usages of the people amongst whom they sojourned. For the Christian man is one who recognises the necessity of social order. Note how wise were the words of exhortation given by the Apostle.

1. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man"- "any human authority" (M.), "every authority set up by man" (W.), "for the Lord's sake."

2. Here is "the will of God" revealed. "Put to silence" is literally, "muzzled as a dog."

3. Note: a. All men to be honoured. How many are obedient to this command? Are not our eyes too often upon the dress or incidental trappings rather than upon the man himself? b. The Christian brotherhood to be loved. Love is not sentiment, but self-sacrifice. c. God to be reverenced. (See M.). d. The earthly king to be honoured and respected.

III. Our Duty to our Employers (1 Peter 2:18-25). Remembering that "servants" meant mostly "slaves," the exhortation is most touching and forceful. "This is thankworthy" (1 Peter 2:19), is in 20th Century. "This is a beautiful thing." "Live like free men" is M. for "as free" (1 Peter 2:16). "The froward," mentioned in 1 Peter 2:18 describes, as otherwise rendered, "surly," "unreasonable" (W.), "unfair" (20th C.), or "perverse" (F.F.) masters. "With all fear" (1 Peter 2:18) is in M. "with perfect respect." THE IDEAL WIFE AND HUSBAND.

1 Peter 3:1-13.

In the passage before us the Apostle delineates some of the characteristics of the ideal wife and husband. As Christians we not only have to show our Christian faith by Christian actions toward king, country, and neighbours, but in our own homes. In speaking to wives and husbands Peter was qualified by experience. Remember the problems then confronting them because of- 1. Woman's emancipation through the Gospel.

2. The common human tendency to rush to extremes.

3. Many of the wives who had become followers of the Lord Jesus wondered if they ought not to leave their heathen husbands. Observe, "That your prayers be not hindered" (1 Peter 3:7).

I. Concerning Wives (1 Peter 3:1-6). Elements in true feminine adornment- 1. Loyalty to "own husbands" (1 Peter 3:1). The emphasis on "own husbands" is impressive.

2. Subjection (1 Peter 3:1). "Be in subjection." A wise woman knows her rightful place.

3. Robe of Purity in conversation and behaviour (1 Peter 3:2). "When they see how chaste and reverent you are," is M. rendering of 1 Peter 3:2.

4. "Hidden Character Right" (R.) (1 Peter 3:4). "The hidden man" means the hidden character.

5. Gentle. "With the immortal beauty of a gentle and modest spirit" is M. rendering of 1 Peter 3:4.

6. Modest. As M.

7. Respectful (1 Peter 3:5-6).

8. Fearlessness (1 Peter 3:6). "Are not afraid with any amazement" is in M. "Yield to no passion," or as R.V., "Not put in fear by any terror." The rendering of 1 Peter 3:3 in the 20th C. New Testament is very fine. "A woman's attractions should not depend upon such external things as the arrangement of her hair, the jewellery she wears, or the style of her dress; but upon the inner life-the imperishable beauty of a quiet and gentle spirit, for this is very precious in God's sight." This, certainly, was how the holy women of old made themselves attractive.

II. Concerning Husbands (1 Peter 3:7). Husbands are to be- 1. Considerate. "Ye husbands must be considerate" is M.

2. Intelligent. "According to knowledge." Suggests the need of intelligence, of being well-informed.

3. Respectful. "Give honour unto the wife," or paying homage, that is, bowing down in the spirit in the posture of serious and religious regard. Why? For two reasons:

1st. They are the weaker vessels.

2nd. We are "heirs together."

III. Concerning Each Other (1 Peter 3:8-13).

1. To Fellow-Christians there should be a. Oneness of mind (1 Peter 3:8). b. Compassion (1 Peter 3:8). c. Love (1 Peter 3:8).

2. To the Weak and Erring. "Be pitiful," i.e., tenderhearted (1 Peter 3:8).

3. To Equals. Be courteous (1 Peter 3:8-9).

4. To Enemies. Do not retaliate (1 Peter 3:13). THE BEHAVIOUR OF THE PERSECUTED

1 Peter 3:13-17.

Verse 15 is a quotation from the Prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 8:13), with some very significant variations. Isaiah was in danger through faithful preaching, whereupon the Lord sends, or rather gives him, a reassuring message. This Peter quotes, substituting, without any explanation or vindication as if it was a matter of course, the name of Christ in place of Jehovah of the Old Testament. Remembering the reverence the Jews had for the Scriptures, their intense monotheism and dread of putting any creature in place of God, something of the significance of this act will grip you.

Another difference. The Lord is the Sanctuary in Isaiah, whereas in Peter we are the sanctuaries. These are important points. The Persecuted. Peter is still concerned over the persecuted ones. Persecution brings suffering. In all Paul's Epistles the word "Suffer" occurs but seven times, and never twice in the same Epistle, whereas it comes twelve times in one short letter of the Apostle Peter. Don't forget to connect 1 Peter 3:12 with 1 Peter 3:13. The lesson is: If God's eye is upon you, who shall harm you? The Safety of Zeal (13). It may seem a strange sentence, yet it is most certainly true, that our safety depends upon ourselves, as well as upon the Lord. Note the importance of the little word "if." "And who is he that will harm you if"- "if" what? "If ye be zealous of that which is good" (R.V. and R.). Moffatt reads, "All who will wrong you if you have a passion for goodness." It could be rendered, "If ye make yourselves zealous." Our Lord Jesus was clad with zeal as with a cloak (Isaiah 59:17). And so should His followers be donned. The idea of zeal as a cloak is suggestive. A cloak is (1) a protection from the weather, so we are partly secure in our own enthusiasm. (2) a cloak is seemly and becoming. Not to be zealous for the Lord and His cause is very unseemly and unbecoming of us.

SANCTIFYING THE LORD.

1 Peter 3:11-17.

Introduction. A Heart Religion. Note the emphasis here upon a heart religion. This is something that has to take place in the hearts of God's people. "Reverence Christ as Lord in your own hearts" (M.). "In your hearts consecrate Christ as Lord" (W.). "But love the Lord Christ in your hearts" (F.F.).

Man a Shrine. The heart of a Christian man or woman is a shrine. It is a place of worship. There is a large congregation there, consisting of wishes, motives, ambitions, desires, likes, unlikes, passions, wishes, longings. And Christ also is there. He ought to be chief, the One in command. He first comes as Guest, but ought to become supreme Master-Lord, in every sense of that word. This should be our deliberate act-place the Guest on the throne of our being, ask the Passenger to mount the bridge and take command of the vessel. Ask our Companion to take supreme command I. What it Means to Sanctify Christ.

1. Set Him Apart from the Common and Ordinary to Special Use. To sanctify in the Bible means to "set apart," and in consequence to view in a different light, ceasing to use or treat as formerly. What is the common use made of our Lord? A Fire Escape. We first begin to think of Him as Saviour from sin and the wrath to come. He is a Fire Escape. But He is much more. He should become everything to us. Thank God that He has saved you from Hell, but also find out what He has saved you to! If a believer, He is already in your heart as Christ. Now make Him your Lord, Master, Sovereign.

2. Worship. To sanctify the Christ in your heart as Lord means that you do set Him on the pedestal and pinnacle of your being, and that you bow down before Him with adoring love and wonder, and with reverence and submission, worshipping Him.

3. Hallow. Sanctify is the same word in the Lord's Prayer rendered "hallowed be Thy Name." We sanctify or hallow One who is holy already, when we recognise that holiness, and honour in speech, thought and act, what we recognise. It means to hallow Him by lip, thought, and service.

II. What will be the Result of such an Act on our Part?

1. A Good Conscience (1 Peter 3:16). What a boon. A conscience void of offence toward God and man.

2. Purity (1 Peter 3:16). Purity of heart and thought and life, so patent to our persecutors, "they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation (or life) in Christ."

3. Fearlessness and Calmness (1 Peter 3:14). "Be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled." When Christ is Master within our hearts, He calms and steadies, and gives us calmness and courage.

4. Mental Alertness (1 Peter 3:15). "And be ready" of the A.V. is in R.V. "Being ready," that is to say, mental alertness follows the setting apart of Christ as Lord. Mental sloth and inability to grasp spiritual things is a malady only too prevalent, and one which would largely disappear if Christ was made Lord of our being.

5. Gentleness. Being ready always to "answer gently and with reverence" is the M. rendering. Another wonderful and impressive result of sanctifying Christ as Lord. THE SPIRITS IN PRISON.

1 Peter 3:18-22.

What a problem this section is! Regarding it, the late Dr. Jowett wrote: "The concluding passage of this great chapter is like a landscape in the uncertain light of the early mom. Here and there the black shadows still linger and prolong the night. The hollows are filled with mist. A prevailing dimness possesses the scene. From only a few things has the veil dropped, and their lineaments are seen in suggestive outline. On the whole, we are dealing with obscure hints, with partial unveilings, which awaken wonder rather than convey enlightenment." Three separate views of this subject of preaching to the spirits in prison are held, two of which we reject.

I. A Probation After Death. After His death our Lord descended into Hell to preach the Gospel. Some think this probation is only for those who have never heard the Gospel of Christ. Oh, the folly of building such an idea and hope on one solitary vague Scripture. This Scripture does not say there is a probation after death. Our probationary period is now, in life.

II. Jesus Went to the Angels, the Fallen Angels, in prison, to proclaim His triumph on the Cross. There is more in these verses to support this view than the first idea we have noticed. For the word rendered "spirits" by itself, without any qualifying description, is used always of supernatural beings, higher than man, and yet lower than God. By comparing certain passages, such as 2 Peter 2:4-9; 1 Timothy 3:16; Jude, 1 Timothy 3:6 and 1 Timothy 3:7, we learn that prior to the Flood, certain angelic beings sinned. But note this, the word translated "preached" is never used in connection with the preaching of the Gospel. R. renders it "proclaim" or "herald." If we accept this view, then what the passage simply states is that the triumphant completion of Christ's death on the Cross was made known to Hell as well as Heaven. We are not told that any repented, or even could repent.

III. A Preaching which Took Place in the Days of Noah, by Noah Himself. The late Dr. Pierson, who was very level-headed, declared: "These Scriptures do not refer at all to His (Our Lord Jesus) own preaching to them after His death, but in the person of Noah by the Holy Spirit who guided Noah as a preacher of Christ." Noah was a preacher. He preached, for the Lord, by the aid of the Holy Spirit. "By which (Spirit) He went and preached (through Noah) to the spirits (now) in prison" (C.H.M.). Do not let this problem of the "spirits in prison" crowd out the main idea of the verses. Peter is comparing the sufferings of our Lord with the sufferings of His persecuted followers. Are you suffering? Take heart, you are not exceptional. Even our Master was not exempt from suffering, and suffering need not hinder our usefulness.

Important Points.

1. "Once suffered" (18). This overthrows the idea behind the sacrifice of the Mass, of repeated sacrifices.

2. "For." That preposition contains a whole volume of theology. It announces the substitutionary aspect of the death of Christ.

3. "Bring us to God." "Introduces us to God" is the R. rendering.

ARMED.

1 Peter 4:1-6.

Armed with a mighty thought in order that the life might be dominated by the Will of the Spirit of God.

Introduction. There are several arresting phrases in this section.

1. "Arm yourselves" (1 Peter 4:1). "Nerve you" (M.). This is a picturesque metaphor. Life is a battle, a campaign. We must arm ourselves! What with? A thought! And a thought about the death of Christ and its implications and applications.

2. "Cease from Sin" (1 Peter 4:1). "Gets quit of sin" (M.). "Ceased unto sins" (R.V., margin). "Is at rest from sin" (W., margin). What a glorious message we have here!

3. Note the Two Wills. The Will of God (1 Peter 4:2) versus the Will of the Gentiles (1 Peter 4:3).

4. Note the Two "Think it Strange" (1 Peter 4:4, 1 Peter 4:12). They were not only astonished, but also persecuted.

I. Reign of the Flesh. "Appetites " (1 Peter 4:3).

1. There is no harm in any natural appetite, considered in itself. Appetites have been given for the preservation of the race, and for our physical well-being.

2. But our appetites have been spoiled by the Fall. They have been disturbed by sin, so that they do not work as God intended. As the late Dr. F. B. Meyer wrote: "When man fell, appetite broke from the grasp of the will, and began to seek often its own gratification, irrespective of those necessary uses and legitimate bonds which had been assigned by God's love and wisdom."

3. These appetites, these habits, have been strengthened by generations of evil living.

4. Now, here is the problem: These appetites must not be eradicated. This must not be, else the race would perish. Instead, they must be cleansed, sanctified, controlled. Is this possible?

5. The sins in the appalling list given in 1 Peter 4:3 are, most closely connected with the flesh, literal flesh.

II. The Reign of the Spirit. How is 1 Peter 4:2 possible? This is the very purpose of the Gospel (1 Peter 4:6). And how can this be brought about? Arm yourselves with a thought. Thus we see the effect of mind upon character.

Someone has remarked: "Christian morality brought two new things into the world-a new type of life in sharp contrast with the sensuality rife on every side, and a new set of motives, powerfully aiding in its realisation. Both these novelties are presented in this passage."

What Thought? We are to arm ourselves with a thought. What thought? 1st, That suffering in the flesh is not, as the world counts it, an unmixed evil, but often a deep blessing. 2nd, That Christ's sufferings during life were because of the fact that "His life was dominated by a supreme thought; it was controlled by an all-commanding purpose. He rejected the sovereignty of the flesh; He subordinated the temporal! He uncrowned the body, making it a common subject, and compelling it to obeisance to high commands." 3rd, The thought of the Cross of Christ. Drink in the meaning of Christ's death. "The pious contemplation of His death will most powerfully kill the love of sin in the soul, and kindle an ardent hatred of it." 4th, The thought of my death in Christ, of my identification

with His death. Drink in the spirit of Christ's death till it be repeated in you. Dead men do not sin. We are viewed in the Mind and Purpose of God as having died with Christ in His death, and raised in His resurrection. We must regard ourselves as having passed out of this life in which flesh and sense reign supreme.

HELPS TO THE PRAYER LIFE.

1 Peter 4:7.

Introduction. To those who read the signs of the times, two movements are noticed with delight. First, a general expectancy of the Lord's Coming. Second, a general revival of prayer. Is there any connection between the two? Yes. The latter is the result of the former. Read 1 Peter 4:7. The subject of prayer is one of great importance. Prayer is the first evidence of the new life; (Behold he prayeth, Acts 9:11) an elementary condition of the fulness of the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:21-22). One of the first conditions for the hearing of God's Voice is shutting the door (Matthew 6:6 exemplified in John 20:19-23), and for success in Christian work, see what followed Elisha's shutting of the door (2 Kings 4:33, etc.). Of course we must work as well as pray.

1. A ship was overtaken by a storm. The tumult of the wind and the waves was rendered more fearful by the flashes of lightning and the roar of thunder. The captain issued orders, and all but one man ran to their several posts of duty. This one, overcome with terror, fell upon his knees" on the deck, and prayed for mercy and deliverance. Seeing the man on his knees, he ran at him, shook him by the collar, crying, "Say your prayers in fair weather."

2. Two Scottish ministers were once crossing a loch in the Highlands. It was a ferry, and the boat was full of passengers. A sudden storm arose, as often happens in these mountain waters. It seemed a time of peril. One of the passengers exclaimed: "Let the ministers pray, or we'll be drooned!" "Na,na," said the boatman, "the little ane may pray, but the big ane maun tak' an oar and pull while he prays."

I. Self-Control. "Exercise self-restraint and watchfulness, to help you to pray" (20th C). "Therefore, sober-minded and temperate, so that you may give yourselves to prayer" (W.). Let there be a noble self-restraint in respect to every lawful appetite.

II. Sobriety of Thought. "Steady then, keep cool and pray," is the Moffatt rendering of 1 Peter 4:7. The thought of the nearness of the Lord's Coming should not lead to excitement and neglect of common duties, but to sobriety of thought.

R. gives "of sound mind" instead of sober. This is suggestive of health-a healthy mind. Life is to be chastened by reasonableness and sanity. We must avoid panic and giddiness.

III. Alertness. "Watch unto prayer." Note the association elsewhere of alertness and Lord's Coming (Matthew 24:44; Matthew 25:13), and also prayer (Matthew 26:41; Ephesians 6:18; Colossians 4:2).

LOVE.

1 Peter 4:8-11.

Introduction.

Peter's Lesson. We are not surprised to find the Apostle Peter insisting so strenuously on love. Could he ever forget the interview the Lord had with him when the Master thrice reminded him that the supreme qualification for ministry was love. The agreement of the Three. In giving pre-eminence to love as the greatest of Christian virtues, Peter is in perfect harmony with both Paul and John. It is of special interest in this connection to remember the different natures of these three men, and to observe their agreement in this emphasis. Paul was a theologian; Peter a zealot; John the mystic. Yet all are agreed, as is evident by their writings, that love is the distinguishing virtue of Christianity. The Quality of Love.

1. Peter assumes that the charity is there, but insists on the quality.

2. It must be fervent: a. At boiling point. b. A love that is warm, ardent. c. "He did not so much suggest a love that is ardent as a love that is tense. The very word tense is almost the original word" (Jowett).

3. A love that will show itself in many practical ways.

I. Love Covers. "Love throws a veil over a multitude of faults" (1 Peter 4:8).

1. This is a quotation from Proverbs 10:12.

2. Have you ever connected Proverbs 28:13 with this statement in Peter?

3. There is a covering of sin which is allowable, if the sin be another's, and not my own.

4. Love forgets as well as forgives.

5. Love does not keep hinting at past failures and past revolts. Love is willing to hide them in a nameless grave.

6. Few of us are without faults.

II. Love Gives (1 Peter 4:9).

What? Many things, but hospitality is here referred to. How? Without "grudging" or "murmuring" (R.V.).

1. Most of the early Christians were very poor, and living in what we would call hovels. Yet they were exhorted to be hospitable.

2. The need then of hospitality is clearly seen. a. Those who had lost homes for Christ's sake. b. Those who were pilgrim preachers away from their own homes.

III. Love Ministers (1 Peter 4:10).

1. For "gift" M. gives "talent."

2. "Manifold." "Many coloured" was Sir Arthur Blackwood's translation. a. He did not merely mean by manifold, "many." b. "Varied" (M.). Variegated, many coloured, Not a question of quantity, but quality.

3. "Let every man bring his colour, and let all the world see how variegated in charm and love is the total grace or gift of God."

4. "Every man holds his own colour of grace as a steward."

5. Shades of colour only look well in the whole.

6. Other variegated mercies are as follows: a. Wisdom (Ephesians 3:10). b. Mercies (Nehemiah 9:19-20). c. Works (Psalms 104:24). d. Grace (Ephesians 3:7). e. Talents (1 Peter 4:10).

7. "Received." Then we must not take any credit.

IV. Love Dogmatises (1 Peter 4:11). "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." Or, as M., "preach as one who utters the Words of God;" or W., "as uttering God's truth."

Love speaks with no uncertain sound. For love speaks with authority. There is also in this phrase the thought of speaking in the Holy Spirit as the oracles of God were written.

V. Love Glorifies. The master-passion of love is that the loved one-the Lord-should be glorified. "That God in all things may be glorified."

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUFFERING ONES.

1 Peter 4:12-19.

As already pointed out, Peter wrote his Epistle particularly to comfort sufferers. This is a precious section. Let us summarise. His advice to suffering saints is-

I. Don't be Surprised (1 Peter 4:12). Note the depth of his sympathy as expressed in "Beloved." "Do not be surprised at the ordeal that has come to test you, as though some foreign experience befall you. You are sharing what Christ suffered" (M.). Once Peter thought differently. (Study Matthew 16:21-23). Now he thinks it strange that he or anyone could have imagined anything else. To save you from thinking "it strange" that you should be called to pass through fiery trials, remember:

1. What you are. You are a child of God at enmity with Satan and opposed to the world.

2. Where you are. You are passing through enemy territory. You are travelling through what rightly could be called "Emmanuel's Land," but the enemy has invaded and captured it, and has become "the God of this World."

3. Your Destiny. You are marching through enemy territory to "fairer worlds on high." No wonder you are assailed and persecuted.

Observe, "Fiery trial." W. renders it "The scorching flame of persecution." Fire: a. Tests character. b. Purifies lives. c. Unites believers. d. Introduces to a holy and blessed companionship (See Daniel 3:25).

II. Be Sure and Rejoice (1 Peter 4:13). Why? You are sharing suffering with the Lord. He suffers with you. You will, in consequence, share in His triumph. "Ye may be glad also with triumphant gladness" (W.).

III. You are to be Envied (1 Peter 4:14). "If ye be reproached for the Name of Christ you are to be envied." (W.). Why? Several reasons may be given, but Peter gives one-a special gift of the Holy Spirit is bestowed upon sufferers. "Spirit of God Himself resteth upon you" (M.).

IV. Yet be on your Guard (1 Peter 4:15-16). Take great care that you yourself, by misconduct, do not bring suffering down on your head.

V. Be Assured that He will Avenge You (1 Peter 4:17-18). Does not He say elsewhere, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord?"

VI. Let there be a Definite Commitment on your Part (1 Peter 4:19). "According to the will of God" is in 20th C. "Because God wills it, commit your lives."

Commit! Had Peter Jesus' dying commitment in mind? (Luke 23:46). It seems likely. The Lord Jesus did this in the hour of His greatest suffering.

"Saved with Difficulty" is 20th C. rendering for "scarcely be saved." This is very suggestive, and is fully dealt with in another section of this volume of "Handfuls on Purpose"

QUALIFICATIONS FOR SERVICE.

1 Peter 5:1-7.

1 Peter 5:5-7 form a suggestive grouping of helpful and important thoughts on Christian Service. Observe some interesting facts:

1. The simplicity of the constitution of the primitive Church showed in the simile "Flock of God."

2. Word "Feed." "Tend" in the R.V. means more than caring. It means defend, govern, restrain.

3. Was Peter thinking of John 21:16 when he wrote these verses? He certainly was put in charge of the Lord's lambs and sheep. But that is not a Petrine prerogative: it is a duty that devolves upon others.

I. A Witness (1). "A witness of the sufferings of Christ." This is the one qualification for tending the flock of God: beholding, each for himself, the sufferings of Christ with the eye of the soul. This seeing is also a qualification for sharing the glory.

II. A Willingness. "Not by constraint" (2). "Not reluctantly," but eagerly, according "with the will of God," is W. rendering.

III. A Call. "But willingly, according unto God" is R.V. Does this mean a call to the work itself, or as to how to do the work?

IV. Eagerness. "Not reluctantly, but eagerly" is W. This suggests eagerness for service as a fourth essential.

V. Affection. "Not for filthy lucre," but for love's sake.

VI. Cheerfulness. "Of a ready mind" is in W. "Of a cheerful mind."

VII. Humility (1 Peter 5:3-6). "As lords" or "lording it." For "God's heritage," R. V. gives "allotted portion;" not merely God's portion, but the portion He entrusts to you. Instead of "clothed" with humility, M. reads "aprons of humility," that is, put on the slave's apron. Dr. Maclaren has a nice word on this: "The Apostle used here an expression of a remarkable kind, and which never occurs again in Scripture. The word rendered in the A.V. "be clothed," or better in the R.V. as "gird

yourselves with," really implies a little more than either of these renderings suggests. It describes a kind of garment as well as the act of putting it on, and the sort of garment which it describes was a remarkable one. It was a part of a slave's uniform. Some scholars think that it was a white apron or overall, or something of that sort; others think that it was simply a scarf or girdle; but at all events, it was a distinguishing mark of a slave, and he put it on when he meant to work, and, says Peter: "Do you strap round you the slave's apron, and do it for the same reason-to serve." When Peter wrote this sentence, was he thinking of his Master's act, as recorded in John 13:4-5?

VIII. Trustfulness (1 Peter 5:7). What a grand verse! "Let all your anxieties fall upon Him, for His interest is in you" (M.). "Throw all your anxieties upon Him, for He makes you His care" (20th C). "Banish care and welcome glee" is a good motto. When Florence Nightingale had reached the age of ninety, and could no longer follow sustained reading, she still liked to hear familiar hymns. Her biographer says: "A favourite, if one may judge by the frequency with which verses from it appear in her latest written meditation was:

"O, Lord, how happy should we be,

If we could cast our care on Thee,

If we from self could rest."

Once the expression of an aspiration; now, perhaps of attainment."

SOBRIETY.

1 Peter 5:7, 1 Peter 5:8.

Frequently we find in the New Testament exhortations to sobriety, and this means much more than abstinence from intoxicating drink. We can be intoxicated by pride, self-esteem.

I. Commended. Here it is commended in our Scripture.

II. Definitions. Sober has been rendered:

1. Be Watchful.

2. Be Vigilant.

3. Be Sound.

4. Be Moderate. "Curb every passion" (W.).

5. Be Prudent.

6. Be Dignified in Restraint. "Exercise self-control," is 20th C. rendering, instead of sober.

III. An Extra.

1. Add to Holiness (1 Timothy 2:15). With moderation and prudence.

2. Add to Acceptance of Second Advent Truth (1 Peter 1:13).

3. Add to Prayer (1 Peter 4:7-8).

IV. Sober in What?

1. Thoughts (Rom. 12). Sound mind.

2. Words (Acts 26:25). Prudence and moderation.

3. Life (Titus 2:12). Temporately and prudently

4. Mind (2 Corinthians 5:13). Sound and prudent. A mind evenly and well balanced (1 Thessalonians 5:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:8., i.e., Let us be mentally alert or watchful).

V. Why? We are of the day (1 Thessalonians 5:8). Therefore be watchful and alert.

VI. Who?

1. Bishops (Titus 1:8; 1 Timothy 3:2). Be vigilant.

2. Wives (1 Timothy 3:11). Be vigilant.

3. Aged Men (Titus 2:2). Sound-minded.

4. Young Women (Titus 2:4).

5. Young Men (Titus 2:6).

6. Women (1 Timothy 2:9). THE ENEMY.

1 Peter 5:8-14.

Introduction. Is there a personal Devil? Of course there is. "A gang of thieves is never so dangerous as when they have it widely rumoured that they have left the neighbourhood" (Meyer).

I. Our Adversary (1 Peter 5:8).

1. His Identity. Here we are told he is the Devil.

2. His Guises. He has a fairly extensive wardrobe. He is a quick-change artist. He has three common and familiar guises. He assails us more frequently in either of these three guises than any other. Let us take them in their Biblical order: a. Serpent (Revelation 12:9; Genesis 3:14).

(i.) As a Serpent he is more dangerous than a Roaring Lion.

(ii.) This name suggests that he beguiles our senses, perverts our judgments, enchants our imagination. b. Angel of Light (2 Corinthians 11:14).

(i.) Deceiving with false views of spiritual things.

(ii.) As thus, he poses as an evangelist and teacher, all the while undermining the faith he is professing to teach.

(iii.) "If the evil that assails us were as frightful in its aspect as it is in its essence, we could run little danger from its assaults, but often it besets us in fair forms and is dazzlingly coloured, and here lies its peril." c. Roaring Lion (1 Peter 5:8).

(i.) Terror in his threatenings.

(ii.) Exhibited in threatenings and persecutions.

(iii.) In blows and blasphemies of the roaring multitude.

(iv.) Strength-bearing us down.

(v.) Seeking to destroy us by violent oppositions.

II. Our Duty (1 Peter 5:8-9).

1. Keep Cool (M.).

2. Keep Awake (M.).

3. Resist. Also give no place (Ephesians 4:27). Stand against (Ephesians 6:11).

4. "Curb every Passion" (W.). Exercise self-control (20th C.) 8.

III. Our Safety (1 Peter 5:9).

1. "Keep your foothold in the faith" (M.). a. Have you planted your foot upon the faith? b. It provides a firm foothold.

2. Remember your testing is a common experience.

IV. Our Enabling (1 Peter 5:10-11). "But. . .God."

1. Are you fearful at the thought of your adversary?

2. "But God."

3. Beautiful Title: "of all grace."

4. "Himself shall" (R.).

5. Architectural Metaphors. a. Perfect. "Repair" (M.). Put you in joint. b. Stablish. Established. c. Strength. "Firm" (W.). d. Settle. Settling on its foundation.

2 Peter

2 Peter This Epistle the Apostle Peter wrote for an altogether different purpose to First Peter. The latter was intended for encouragement to Believers passing through severe trials and bitter persecutions. On the other hand, Second Peter was written to warn the Lord's people of the presence and propaganda of false teachers and of their corrupt and corrupting doctrines. First Peter was written to console; Second Peter to warn. A GLORIOUS EQUALITY.

2 Peter 1:1-2.

Introduction. As Dr. Jowett pondered over these first two verses, there leapt into his mind the watchwords of the French Revolution, "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity." Certainly these three words sum up admirably the truths here.

I. Liberty.

"A Bondman." Paul (Romans 1:1; Php_1:1; Titus 1:1); James (James 1:1); Peter (2 Peter 1:1); Jude (Jude 1:1).

1. How strangely that sounds! "Simon Peter a bondman!"

2. Knowing what slavery meant then, this is indeed strange.

3. Read on: "a bondman. . . of Jesus Christ." Where Does the Liberty Come In? Ponder over the following quotations:

1. "At the heart of all true freedom there is a certain bondage."

2. "Even anarchist societies are compelled to have some rules; and the making of a rule implies the forging of a chain."

3. "Bondage is the secret of freedom."

4. "The man who will not be bound to anything or anybody, is always the most enslaved."

5. "The greatest triumph of the Gospel is the fact that it leads men from lives of undisciplined freedom into lives of willing bond-service."

6. "Consecration is the entering into a deeper bondage."

7. Note: a. A slave, but not servile. No cringing. b. The slavery of a lover-a lover slaves for loved ones. c. Recognition of his rightful ownership. d. The meaning of this in the life can only be discovered as we go on in the Christian way.

II. Equality. Who are They who are Equal?

1. "To them... with us," "like"

2. We are not superior to you. We are on a Gospel equality.

Equal-What in?

1. Spiritual privileges.

2. There are many inequalities in temporal things.

3. In "Student in Arms," Donald Hankey, in chapter entitled, "An Experiment in Democracy,"writes: "Equality of opportunity had been granted, and the inequality of man had been demonstrated."

"Like Precious Faith."

1. "Equally precious faith" is R.

2. Not that all had an equal amount of faith.

3. But their faith was alike though differing in robustness, as brothers can resemble each other, though differing in health and other things.

Precious. Why?

1. By it we enter into possession of righteousness.

2. Because of the wealth which, through it, comes into the life.

3. "Door of faith." A door is of little value in itself, but if it opens into a palace it is of value.

How Obtained?

1. "Obtained by lot,." i.e., a good gift from God.

2. Greek word implies that they had not won or earned it for themselves, but that it had been allotted to them.

Through the Righteousness of God.

1. This is a great surprise.

2. This is a so-called Pauline word, yet Peter utters it.

3. Instead of "through," read "in."

4. Does the word here mean what it means in Romans? Luther and others think so.

5. Certainly in bestowing righteousness God is no respecter of persons.

"Equity" is the Moffatt rendering, instead of "righteousness." "In the absolute justice and favour of God you have obtained an equally precious faith with us," is another rendering.

How Obtained? You obtain this blessing of faith through faith, yet owing to the righteousness of God.

III. Fraternity.

1. Listen to the wishes of Peter and other sacred writers for one another: "Grace and peace be multiplied."

2. It is encouraging and cheering to receive the well-wishes of others. THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE LORD THE ONLY SOURCE OF BLESSING

2 Peter 1:2, 2 Peter 1:3.

Introduction.

Key Word.

1. In the first Epistle we hear much about suffering; in this second Epistle much about knowledge.

2. Peter knew His Lord so well, therefore speaks much of the necessity and result of knowledge.

Gnostics.

1. Very early in the Primitive days there arose those who laid claim to exclusive knowledge, calling themselves gnostics, i.e., knowing ones.

2. The same tendency to arrogate to ourselves superior wisdom always exists.

3. In this Epistle we are shown the true knowledge.

"In."

1. Instead of "through," read "in"-i.e., sphere.

2. The knowledge of God is the sphere in which all spiritual blessings come to us.

"Personal."

1. "In the personal knowledge " (R.).

2. Not an intellectual knowledge merely, but spiritual and evangelical to the individual.

"Full" (2 Peter 3:18). It must be a growing knowledge.

1. "Full knowledge" is literal rendering.

2. Shallow knowledge makes superficial Christians, 3. How can my knowledge grow?

1st. By coming to Him.

2nd. By living with Him.

3rd. By communing with Him.

4th. By silence before Him. "Be still and know."

5th. By His Word.

"Of God and Jesus." What a wonderful union! A Dread Possibility. Be barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of the Lord (2 Peter 1:8).

Through Growing Knowledge we have:

I. Grace and Peace (2 Peter 1:2).

1. Grace first, peace next. God's favour, then the effects of that favour.

2. You possess these, but they can be multiplied.

3. Others in the New Testament only express the wish, but do not point out the path to that experience.

4. How? Through a growing knowledge of Him.

II. Every Requisite for Life and Piety (2 Peter 1:3).

1. "All things needful" (W.); "necessary" (20th C); "suited" (R.).

2. "Hath." Already in our possession.

3. "All" things.

4. Called us to "glory and excellence." "By" (20th C.) or "through" (R.).

5. "It is impossible to live a holy life," say some. Nay; do not say that. Do you wish to know how? Get to know Him.

III. Purity (2 Peter 2:20).

1. There are awful pollutions in the world to be sure.

2. Is it possible to escape from them every day and all the day? Yes.

3. How? By partaking of the Divine Nature through regeneration.

Application. How can I secure this knowledge, and how may it be deepened?

1. Coming (Matthew 11:27-28).

2. Communing. The more we talk with people, the deeper our knowledge of them.

3. Word. Learn God's heart in God's Word.

4. Stillness. Be still and know (Psalms 46:10).

"SHARERS IN THE VERY NATURE OF GOD."

2 Peter 1:4.

Introduction.

Bold. These are indeed bold words. They are staggering. This was the fondest dream of the Ancients. They thought it a possibility only for Emperors and such exalted personages. But now "Ye," the common crowd, the ordinary folk! Only an original phrase for an old truth. Just another way of speaking of regeneration.

Sharers. Note the W. rendering. "Become sharers in the very nature of God."

Ministry of Wealth. Connect 2 Peter 1:3 with 2 Peter 1:4. This wealth brings blessing. The ministry of this wealth is to effect- a. A Deliverance-from corruption. A wonderful escape. b. A Glorious Adoption into the Family of God.

"Earthly Cravings."

1. Is (W.) for "lust."

2. Thus lust means more than animal appetite; it means an earthly ambition.

1. Note how he piles up the adjectives.

2. Promises a. Size=great. Exceeding great. b. Quality-precious.

3. Isaac Watts lay dying. He observed, in conversation with a friend, that he remembered an aged minister who used to say that the most learned and knowing Christians, when they came to die, have only the same plain promise of the Gospel for their support as the common and unlearned. "And so," he said, "I find it. It is the plain promises that do not require much labour and pains to understand them, for I can do nothing now but look unto my Bible for some promise to support me, and live upon that."

Peter, now that he was old, emphasised the value of the promises of God.

Oh, it is blessed, if the promises become more precious to us the older we become!

Profound and Original Conception. What a profound and original conception is this: Vital participation in His own sacred and glorious nature!

I. The Negative Aspect.

1. No Exclusiveness in God. a. In all human society there is an unhappy tendency to exclusiveness and self-absorption. b. It has been said that "the end of human law is to prevent the dispersion of the benefits which certain groups of men have made their own." c. The end of Divine Law is to diffuse the wealth of God, even to the being and life of God.

2. No Divine Nature in Man. a. What do you mean by saying "there is the Divine in all men?" Are you referring to God's image, or God's Life? b. Oh, the need of care just now. c. His image remains in us, though marred (1 Corinthians 11:7). But not an atom of His Life. We are dead, lifeless, so far as the Life of God is concerned.

3. No Absorption in God. a. Partaking does not mean absorption. b. This is the dream of extravagant mysticism. c. Absorption, as a drop of water which goes back into the ocean and is lost? That can never be. d. For there will always be "I" and "Thou"-two separate and distinct personalities.

4. No Sharing in Essential Attributes. a. Shareholders, not of the essence of God so as to be deified. b. Shareholders, not of the essential, but the moral attributes of God. c. Shareholders, but not as Christ. In Him dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

5. No Absolute, but a Growing Participation. This participation is a growing thing. Therefore not absolute.

II. The Positive Aspect. We become sharers in the Divine Nature by becoming-

1. Partakers of the Promises (2 Peter 1:4, with Ephesians 3:6). Thus we have the ministry of the Word in regeneration (1 Peter 1:23). How? By becoming- 2. Partakers of Christ (Hebrews 3:14). a.

"Companion" (literally) of Christ. b. Shareholders (literal) in Christ. c. How?

3. By Partaking of Bread (1 Corinthians 10:7). a. That is, by taking Christ, who is the Bread of Life. b. This is an act of faith. c. How?

4. By Partaking of Holy Ghost (Hebrews 6:4). a. What a wonderful phrase! b. Surely when the Holy Spirit enters, we become partakers of the Holy Ghost.

III. The Blessed Results.

1. As to Character. Partakers of His holiness (Hebrews 12:10).

2. As to Living. Partakers of His sufferings (1 Peter 4:13).

3. As to Consolation. Partakers of His comfort (2 Corinthians 1:7).

4. As to Service. Partakers of His hope (1 Corinthians 9:10).

SPIRITUAL SHORTSIGHTEDNESS

or, Spiritual Advancement in Grace and Holiness

2 Peter 1:5-9.

Introduction.

"For this very Reason,"

1. Is the M. rendering in place of, "and beside this."

2. This connects our past meditation with this.

3. We are sharers in the very Life of God, therefore we must press on to possess more.

Diligence.

1. Peter was a man of action.

2. This is just like Peter to insist on need of diligence.

3. This is a demand for business vigilance in the realm of the spirit.

4. Original meaning of the word is haste. It is employed to describe the eager swiftness with which the Virgin went to Elizabeth after the angel's salutation and annunciation.

Advance.

1. Peter desires to excite and engage them to advance in grace and holiness.

2. One has said: "Diligence is the panacea for all diseases of the Christian life. Where there is faith all that is needful in order to possess any other grace is diligence."

3. Is this correct?

Limitations.

1. There are limitations in the mastering and possessing of things natural. Example: Musical Attainment, Language, Art.

2. But there is no kind of moral worth which is beyond the attainment of believing diligence.

Choric Dances.

1. Word translated "add," in its primary significance alluded to the Choric Dances, where, with hands joined together, the performers kept up a measured movement to the sound of music.

2. Hand linked in hand, let all the graces advance together, faith giving one hand to courage, courage giving the other hand to knowledge, knowledge holding with free hand to temperance, etc., etc.

3. That is the significance of the R.V.: "In your faith." These are not detachable graces, but faith is the root from which virtue and all other graces grow.

Add.

1. It is not one grace which makes a Christian.

2. These graces will not come without an effort, nor remain without culture.

Let us note separately these graces:

I. Faith.

1. Faith leads the van or chorus. Indeed is the root.

2. No number of excellencies make a Christian unless they be excellencies added to faith.

3. Faith is the foundation grace; but a foundation is of little use if no structure follows.

II. Virtue.

1. What virtue is meant here? "A noble character" is rendering in (W.). "Resolution" (M.).

2. Courage or fortitude is meant, or manliness-the holy courage which enables men to quit themselves as men.

3. "Brave," without "bluster"-fearless without ferocity.

III. Knowledge.

1. Intelligence (M.).

2. General and particular knowledge, of science, and particularly that of the Bible and of Divine things.

IV. Temperance. "Self-control" (W.). A proper and limited use of all enjoyments.

V. Patience. "Power of endurance" (W.). "Steadfastness" (M.).

VI. Godliness. "Piety" (M.).

VII. Brotherly Kindness. "Affection" (W.).

VIII. Charity.

Application. Not to do so means:

1. Spiritual myopia, a word the oculist uses for physical short-sightedness.

2. If a man has these things he has sight.

3. Cannot look back far enough ("Hath forgotten") and cannot look forward as he ought.

SPIRITUAL CERTAINTY.

2 Peter 1:10, 2 Peter 1:11.

Introduction.

"Diligence."

1. Here we have this businesslike word again.

2. 2 Peter 1:5; 2 Peter 3:14.

Connection.

1. He speaks in 2 Peter 3:5 of the need of diligence in acquiring spiritual graces.

2. He that lacks such things suffers from spiritual shortsightedness.

3. Do not let that be so, "but give diligence to make your calling and election sure.

Blessedness of Certainty.

1. Life is full of uncertainty so far as natural things are.

2. The certainty respecting spiritual things is possible and desirable.

I. Spiritual Uncertainty is One Fruit of Spiritual Immaturity.

"Spare no Effort.

1. To put God's call and choice beyond all doubt" (20th C).

2. "Spare no effort": (a) In prayer. (b) In study. (c) In converse with elder Christians.

Peter had No Doubt.

1. Peter thus wrote, not because he entertained any doubt concerning them. See Peter 2 Peter 1:2.

2. Whilst he entertained no doubt, probably they were the prey of doubts.

"Calling and Election."

1. That was how they referred to salvation.

2. This expresses the Divine side of our salvation.

3. Giving diligence to make sure and certain.

4. None can look into the Book of God's Eternal Counsels and Decrees. Yet we have something to do.

5. "Though God has called and elected us in Christ, yet it depends on our own care to make them effectual to salvation" (An Old Bishop).

Some Scriptures.

1. On Predestination (Romans 8:29-30; Ephesians 1:5, Ephesians 1:11).

2. On Election. Israel, God's elect people (Isaiah 45:4). He has an elect to-day (Romans 8:33; Colossians 3:12; 1 Peter 1:2; Romans 9:11; Romans 11:5; 1 Thessalonians 1:4).

How to Make Sure.

1. By examination of our own lives. Are we manifesting the graces of the Spirit.

2. By seeking the witness of the Spirit.

II. Spiritual Certainty Produces Blessed Results.

1. Stability in Grace. "Ye shall never stumble" (R.V). "Never make a slip" (M.). a. Life is full of slippery places. b. Growth in grace means strength to our spiritual ankle bones.

2. Stability in Purpose. "Ye shall never falter" (F.F.). a. No ruinous hesitancy. b. Many a battle has been lost by hesitation. c. To know definitely the mind of God is grand.

3. A Triumphant Entrance into Glory. "A triumphant admission" (20th C). No crawling through the Gate of Heaven. We shall go sweeping through the Gate.

4. Freedom from Shame when Before Him. "Fully equipped" (F.F.). a. In a grand review, how ashamed an ill-equipped soldier would be. b. Anything lacking in the uniform would merit censure. What about the Grand Review at the Reward Seat of Christ?

TWO REASONS FOR MINISTERIAL URGENCY.

2 Peter 1:12-15.

Introduction.

Negligent.

1. Peter has been urging his hearers to diligence.

2. What about himself? I, too, will not be negligent.

3. I will not neglect my duty.

Remembrancer.

1. Peter had a duty to perform-he had been appointed a remembrancer for the Lord.

2. This is the office of all faithful pastors.

3. Note: (1) "Always." (2) "Of these things." (3) Though they knew them. (4) And were established in them. ("Fixed in the truth"). And it was "meet."

4. We need to be put in mind of what we already know to prevent our forgetting it, to improve our knowledge, and reduce all to practice.

Reasons for Ministerial Urgency:

I. A Common Proneness to forgetfulness.

1. Common Malady (see 2 Peter 1:9). a. Forgetfulness is a common malady. More prevalent to-day than in olden times. b. "Memory is such a child of caprice," even in purely secular matters. c. It plays us curious pranks. d. "We remember people's faces but forget their names; we remember a single injury, and forget a multitude of gracious benefits." e. It is more pronounced in things spiritual. f. We find it easier to remember material than spiritual things. g. Note: Israel in the past. "Then they forgot the Lord their God."

2. Need of Remembrancers. a. We feel our need of aids to memory in things material and commercial. b. Humorous are some of the stratagems. (Tying a piece of thread or ribbon on our fingers). c. God has his methods of reminding us, as: (i.) The ministry of the Word (2 Peter 3:1) or, (ii.) The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. "A piece of broken bread recalls the broken body of the Lord;" and also (iii.) The ministry of His servants. Note.

1. A minister's duty is to remind us of truths we already know as well as to bring to our notice new truth.

2. And to do this even to fully established souls.

3. Memory is admitted not to be as good to-day (owing to mind helps), as in Old Testament days, when the memory had more work to do. Therefore the need of being reminded to-day is greater than in past.

II. The Brevity of the Worker's Life (2 Peter 1:14).

1. Note the force of Wycliffe's rendering: "Knowing that swift is the putting off of my tabernacle," i.e., my death will be swift and sudden.

2. Body likened to a tent. "Little tent" (F ,F.).

3. This was a popular metaphor.

4. Stands for: a. A frail, fragile structure. b. A moveable structure. c. The home of a tenant. d. Easily removed-"Exodus." e. Must be put off.

Man-God.

1. Man forgetting God (Deuteronomy 32:18; Isaiah 17:10; Jeremiah 2:32; Jeremiah 3:21; Jeremiah 13:25; Hosea 8:14).

2. God never forgetting man (Isaiah 49:15). THE TRUTH OF OUR CHRISTIAN FAITH.

2 Peter 1:15-21.

Introduction.

"Always in Remembrance."

1. Peter's diligence that they should keep all these things "Always in Remembrance."

2. But are they worthy of an effort to remember?

3. There bursts upon his memory the scene on Mount of Transfiguration.

4. Indeed it must have been often on his mind, for he frequently speaks of his own departure by the very word which the heavenly visitors had used of Christ's departure on the holy mount-Exodus.

Declaration.

1. Yes, they are worthy of all belief.

2. They are not "cunningly devised fables," like other religious beliefs.

3. We made known the- a. Power of our Lord Jesus. b. Presence (R.) (R.V.) of our Lord Jesus. c. Not Second Advent, but Incarnation.

Peter and Paul. One has said: "It is interesting to compare the Epistles of Peter with those of Paul. Peter's Epistles tell of grace-Christ on this earth; Paul's of glory- Christ in the Heavenlies. Peter saw the Transfiguration on the earth; Paul was caught up to the Heavens and saw the God of Glory. Peter tells of the things he saw here; Paul of the revelation and of the word unspeakable.'"

I. The Truth of Christianity Demonstrated.

1. The Testimony of Personal Experience (2 Peter 1:16). a. "Eye-witnesses of His Majesty." b. Such evidence in favour of Christianity has a vast cumulative value for us. c. Put first by Peter. Please do not forget your own experience. d. "What took the kick out of my life?" asked a friend of another.

2. The Testimony of the Divine (2 Peter 1:17). a. Personal experience is not sufficient. b. What an experience that must have been. "When there came such a voice." There was the testimony from above. Here was the testimony of the Divine.

3. The Oral Testimony (2 Peter 1:16). a. 99% of our knowledge comes by hearsay. "When we made known." b. The testimony of others is of value.

4. The Testimony of Scripture (2 Peter 1:19-21). a. "More Permanent."

(i.) Read the forcible (W.) rendering to 19. "And in the written Word of prophecy we have something more permanent."

(ii.) "And thus we have gained fresh confirmation of the prophetic Word" (M.). b. "More Sure." Made more sure because we have received the confirmation of all that the prophets spoke dimly of.

II. Confidence in Scripture Justified.

1. Its Origin (2 Peter 1:20-21). a. From Heaven, "when carried away by the Holy Spirit" (M.). b. Private Interpretation.

(i.) Not the product of the prophet, (ii.) Not the prophet's own interpretation of the vision presented to his mind. c. Definition of Inspiration.

(iii.) All Scripture agrees with Scripture.

(iv.) No Pope or body of men are to limit or dictate what the interpretation of the Scripture is.

(v.) Can only be understood in the Spirit (Read 20th C).

2. Its Design. A Lamp. a. Illuminating. b. Squalid places-exposing the squalor of its time.

3. Its Aim. a. It shines like a guiding lamp. A fuller light of day dawns upon the soul, as the believer, led by the prophetic Word, realises the personal knowledge of the Lord. b. Progress of Revelation-lamp or star. c. The Day.

(i.) Of Christ's fuller revelation to the soul, (ii.) Of Christ's Second Advent. d. Does this mean that we have less use of the Scriptures when living near to God? No.

4. Its Interpretation (2 Peter 1:20.). a. "No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation," i.e., "Its own interpretation." That is, each separate Scripture to be understood clearly must be compared with other Scriptures. b. Ponder over the 20th C. rendering of this verse: "First be clear on this point-There is no prophetic teaching in Scripture that can be interpreted by man's unaided reason." Thus we require the light of the Holy Spirit.

APOSTASY.

2 Peter 2.

I. False Teachers and their Destiny.

1. Character of Chapter. a. "This is a dark and appalling chapter. b. There is no softening of the shade from end to end." c. It is a chapter of unrelieved gloom.

2. Only Another Similar. a. Only one other portion of Scripture like it-Book of Nahum. b. Nineveh was an apostate people. So that Nahum's message was to apostates.

3. Awfulness of Apostasy. a. Apostasy is worse than ignorance. b. Only thing God can do with apostates is to destroy them. c. "Light that is trifled with becomes lightning."

4. Good and Bad. a. In previous lesson we read of good prophets. b. Now we learn of the bad prophets.

5. Accomplished Fact. a. Peter says "shall be"-a prophecy. b. Jude says "are"-an accomplished fact.

6. Crowning Sin and Proof of Apostasy. a. "Denying the Lord that bought them." b. This is the mark by which to test and reject the false teacher. c. That which lowers Him and His redeeming work must be false. d. The force of this-Peter denied His Lord three times. e. This is "a shorthand expression for all sorts of sin." f. How we may deny:

(i.) By speech.

(ii.) By life-an ungodly life (iii.) By doctrinal views.

II. Swift and Certain Punishment upon Past Apostasy. Proved by that of 1. Angels (2 Peter 2:4).

2. The whole world (2 Peter 2:5).

3. Cities of the plain (2 Peter 2:6).

III. God's Power and Willingness to Keep Us if we Desire to be Kept (5-7 to 9).

1. Noah lived and preached righteousness (2 Peter 2:5).

2. Lot lived righteously and never got reconciled to unrighteousness (2 Peter 2:8).

3. "The Lord knoweth"-no one else does (2 Peter 2:9).

IV. Description of Apostasy.

1. Cunning-privily (2 Peter 2:1).

2. Chief Sin and Mark (2 Peter 2:1).

3. End (2 Peter 2:1; 2 Peter 2:3; 2 Peter 2:12-13).

4. Success-"many" (2 Peter 2:2).

5. Immorality-lascivious (2 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 2:10; 2 Peter 2:14; 2 Peter 2:18).

6. Treacherous and Deceitful (2 Peter 2:3).

7. Presumptuous (2 Peter 2:10-11).

8. Beastly (2 Peter 2:12).

9. Mercenary (2 Peter 2:15-16).

10. Empty (2 Peter 2:17).

11. Sad Commentary (2 Peter 2:20-22).

12. Undeterred by Miraculous Effort to Guide Aright (2 Peter 2:16).

13. Popularity (2 Peter 2:18). THE LEISURELINESS OF GOD.

2 Peter 3:1-9.

Introduction.

It may be well to remind ourselves of the difference between the First and Second Epistle. First Epistle written to strengthen those who were passing through trial; the Second to warn of terrible dangers; the First concerned with dangers without, the Second concerned with dangers within. The dangers within are more perilous than those without.

1. Good and Bad Prophets. a. We have noticed Peter's reference to the good and bad prophets. b. He returns to this subject. In effect he says: "I don't want you to be forgetful of what those good prophets said" (2).

2. Writings of Apostles and of Old Prophets (2). a. Note the force of 2 Peter 3:2. b. Peter, without any hesitation, places his own writings and the writings of the other Apostles on a level with Old Testament writings. c By R.V. Peter claims Divine origin for his and their writings.

3. Optimist and Last Days (3). a. This optimistic and energetic writer has much to say concerning the last days, and that the last days would be sad days. b.

(i.) "Scoffers"-"mockers" (R.V.).

(ii). W. suggests that mocking had become a habit, for they mocked at everything.

(iii.) These scoffers were bad living men.

(iv.) The sad fact to-day is that good living men scoff at Advent Truth.

(v.) Oh, the sadness!-making sport of the great Hope of the Church.

4. Why do they Mock? Their arguments amount to the following: a. He is not coming because He has not yet come. b. Nothing will happen out of the usual, because nothing unusual has ever happened.

5. Wilfully Forgetful. They are forgetful deliberately and wilfully: a. Of the Deluge-things have not remained since the Creation unchanged. b. The Deluge.

6. Singular Aptness. There is a singular aptness in the reference to the Deluge as a judgment on sin.

7. Water and Fire. a. Note "stored with fire" (R.V., margin). b. What water failed to accomplish fire will secure.

8. Why His Delay? His slowness-absence of hurry-leisureliness.

I. In Sphere of Nature.

1. How slow, and sure, and splendidly persistent God has been in fashioning the world.

2. God is patient because He is Eternal (Augustine).

3. There are 1000 years within His day.

4. The "Day of Salvation" has lasted 2000 years nearly.

II. In Sphere of Revelation.

1. There is one thing God has never done, and that is to be in a hurry to reveal Himself.

2. To have revealed everything all at once would have been: a. Cruelty, and not kindness, for men would have been blinded by the glare. b. Besides, it would have been worse than useless.

III. In the Sphere of Judgment.

1. Sometimes God is very swift in Judgment.

2. At other times inexorably slow.

IV. In the Sphere of Christian Living.

1. In the Revelation of His Will to Us. a. Not all in a moment, but step by step does God reveal the pathway of our duty. b. Paul wished to go southward to Galatia, and wished to turn northward to Bithynia. But the Lord directed otherwise.

2. In Answer to our Prayers. Not all at once does He answer.

3. In the Bestowal of Some of His Gifts (Galatians 4:4).

4. Lesson. Be patient.

HURRYING UP THE GLORIOUS TIME.

2 Peter 3:10-14.

Introduction. Why doth He tarry, the absent Lord? Oh, why? At Burial Service we pray that "Thou mayest shortly accomplish the number of Thine elect." Here in our lesson we have one important thought.

1. Two Days (2 Peter 3:10; 2 Peter 3:12). a. In the verses we have two distinct days mentioned. b. "The Day of the Lord" and "Day of God" are not the same. c. The four days:

(i.) Man's Day (1 Corinthians 4:3, marg.) is the Day of Salvation.

(ii.) Christ's Day (2 Thessalonians 2:2) is the Day of Glorification.

(iii.) Lord's Day is the Day of Tribulation.

(iv.) God's Day is the Day of Realization.

2. Peter on Day of Lord. a. He says it will come as a thief-silently, stealthily, unexpectedly, so far as the world is concerned. b. "Heavens vanish with crackling roar" (M.). c. "The stars will be set ablaze and melt" (M.). d. "Works of man. . . shall be burned up" (W.).

3. Peter on Day of God. a. The terrors in heaven and earth usher in the Day of God, concluding the Day of the Lord (2 Peter 3:12). b. New heavens and new earth (2 Peter 3:13). c. Righteousness in heaven and earth.

I. Our Expectation.

1. "Looking for." "Unto you that look for Him" (Hebrews 9:28).

2. "Expecting" (R.)-that is what "looking for" means. We look not merely out of curiosity, but with great expectancy.

3. What expectations have you?

II. Our Preparation 1. Hurrying up the grand Day of God.

2. Accelerating it by our repentance, prayers, and effort.

3. How we May Hasten. a. By Holy Living (W, 2 Peter 3:11). "All holy living." b. By Godly Conduct (W., 2 Peter 3:11). "And godly conduct). c. By Holy Conversation (R.V.). Take care of your speech. d. By Eagerly Looking (W., 2 Peter 3:12). "Eagerly looking forward." e. By a Godly Aim (M.). "You who expect and hasten the advent of the Day of God." Note (1) Diligence-we shall never be holy without diligence. (2) "Found of Him" (2 Peter 3:14).

III. Our Becoming Attitude (2 Peter 3:14).

1. All this is becoming of those looking for the Lord's Coming.

2. Are you looking forward for His Coming? What effect has that hope had upon you?

GROWTH

2 Peter 3:15-18.

Introduction.

1. How differently Peter ends Second Peter to First Peter, and how differently it ends to other Epistles.

2. He is dwelling upon a solemn subject, and is so full of the subject that he ends abruptly.

3. Meaning of His longsuffering: (1) Not slackness. (2) "Means salvation"-in His longsuffering He has purposes of salvation.

4. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend." "Our beloved brother Paul," though he had withstood him to his face" (Galatians 2:11). "Beloved brother Paul."

5. "If any lack wisdom," etc. "Wisdom given unto him."

6. Wisdom from above required for letter writing. "Hath written unto you."

7. Brain sweat (2 Peter 3:16). "Hard to understand."

8. Paul's writings placed on a level with other Scriptures (2 Peter 3:16).

9. Sad misuses of Scripture (2 Peter 3:16).

10. "Ye. . . know. . . Beware" (2 Peter 3:17). Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

11. "Beloved." (1) Not like Jews "For the Father's sake," but for Jesus' sake.

Unusual. You would never think of telling a child to grow any more than you would tell a plant to grow. But Peter does tell Christian men and women to grow. Why? Because they are not plants, but men and women with wills, which can resist, and can either further or hinder their progress.

I. An Environment Essential to Growth.

1. Significance of "The" in the R.V. and other versions.

2. No growth out of grace and personal knowledge.

3. You cannot "grow" into grace.

4. Here are conditions for growth.

II. The Nature of that Growth.

1. "Grace" Grace stands for one of three things. a. "Favour" (Luke 2:52, R.). b. Gifts. c. Graciousness.

2. "Knowledge." a. Increase your acquaintance with Him. b. In the possibilities of His Saviourhood (fully saved). c. In the possibilities of His Lordship. d. In His Jesus (Joshua) nature-Leadership. e. In His Christhood-the Anointing-One who anoints.

III. The Necessity for Growth.

1. Growth is necessary for steadfastness.

2. No standing still in Christian life.

3. Each going on or getting off.

4. "Be always" (W.).

1 John

1 John This Epistle, written about a.d. 90, was produced for a fourfold purpose, as John himself declares: First, that they might be happy (1 Chronicles 1:4); second, that they might be holy (1 Chronicles 2:1); third, that they might be safe (1 Chronicles 2:26, R.V.). Finally, that they might be sure- "know" Its key-words are "know" and "fellowship." THE JOYFUL LIFE.

1 John 1:4.

"These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full."

I. The Joy of Forgiveness is the Beginning of Joy. We can know we are forgiven (1 John 2:12). Observe "are" forgiven."

II. The Joy of Fellowship is the Fulness of Joy. John points out that the fulness of joy is the outcome of fellowship with the Father, with the Lord Jesus Christ, and with our fellow-believers. This fulness of joy, because of close and blessed fellowship, follows:

1. Walking in the light.

2. Confession of sin.

3. Forgiveness of sin.

4. Cleansing from sin. THE FIRM FOUNDATION UPON WHICH RESTS THE DIVINE FORGIVENESS.

1 John 1:9

Introduction.

One of Wesley's preachers, who had seven children dependent upon him, was thrust into prison. One of his persecutors said in Court: "The man is well enough in other things, but the gentlemen cannot stand his impudence. Why, sirs, he says he knows that his sins are forgiven him!" What was considered impertinence in this case is our great privilege and birthright. It is our joy not only to ask for His forgiveness, but to enjoy the consciousness of His pardoning grace. With the Psalmist we may look up into His face and say, "With Thee there is forgiveness" (Psalms 130:4), and "Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Psalms 32:5). This is a word for all-the old saint as well as the young believer, because forgiveness is the grace to which more than all others, we have continually to appeal. Day by day we need to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses." Is there any Danger of its Withdrawal? That God forgives is recognised. But is there any conceivable reason for its withdrawal? A woman had a long and bitter quarrel with a sister Christian. For months they had not spoken to each other. The injured woman was laid low by serious illness. She thought she was dying, and the thought of the estrangement through the quarrel made her afraid to die. She sent for her friend, and they sought each other's forgiveness, following which they had a pleasant time together.

Just as she was passing out of the room, the sick woman called her friend back, saying, "I have truly forgiven you, because I feel it is my duty to do so, and I could not die in peace otherwise. I do not expect to get well; but in case I should, I want it distinctly understood that this old matter remains just as it was before I sent for you." When God forgives, is there any danger of its withdrawal? We feel for our peace we need the constant assurance of God's loving mercy to us all through our lives, and indeed right through Eternity.

Blessed be His Name, there is no fickleness or change-ableness in Him. He has left on record in His blessed Book abundant assurance of His lasting forgiveness. His forgiveness rests upon a threefold, impregnable, immovable basis.

I. Divine Justice. His forgiveness rests on a foundation of Divine justice. A very young girl came one day, and throwing herself at the feet of Napoleon, exclaimed: "Mercy, sire; have mercy on my father!"

"Who is your father, my child?" the Emperor asked, graciously. "He is in prison," she replied; "he has been condemned to death." When Napoleon got from her an account of the crime, he said, "Poor child, this is the third time your father has conspired against the State. I must do justice!" "Ah, sir, O know it! But it is not justice I demand, but mercy!" The lips of Napoleon trembled, and grasping the hands of the young girl, he said: "Rise up; I pardon your father for your sake!" This story has often been quoted as an ideal one for us to copy in our approaches to God, and we have been asked and urged to ask Him for mercy, and not for justice. Yet the amazing and marvellous fact about the Divine forgiveness of sin is this, whilst it is granted for the sake of Another, the Lord Jesus, and in compassion, too, for it is written, "He being full of compassion forgave their iniquity" (Psalms 78:38), yet it is also granted on the solid foundation of Divine Justice! Observe, "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins."

There is such a thing as a forgiveness arising out of mere paternal love or a good natured indifference to sin. If God's forgiveness was of this nature, what would happen? Suppose that He should, without requisite satisfaction, pass over my offences, and forgive me for what my own conscience condemns me, what would be the consequences of this clemency? I could no longer reverence or esteem Him. Ceasing to be just (for remember the poet Cowper's phrase, "A God all mercy were a God unjust"), He would cease to be God in my eyes. The only kind of forgiveness that satisfies is one that proceeds not from love alone, but from law, not from pity alone, but from holiness and justice. The Cross has made this seemingly impossible benefit gloriously simple. Because the penalty of sins had already been borne, to punish the penitent would be to punish a second time; to do that would be a breach of faith with the vicarious Sufferer, and an injustice to the sinner himself, who, in the person of his Substitute has met the penalty of the broken law-death. That God will never do, for He is just. "Faithful and just to forgive us our sins." Glory be to His Name!

II. Divine Faithfulness. His forgiveness rests also on a foundation of Divine faithfulness.

"Faithful and just to forgive us our sins." In the annals of warfare we have heard of a promise of pardon offered only to catch the offenders in hiding. Not so with the Lord. He means what He says. God is faithful to His promises, and to His covenant engagements.

III. Divine Supervision. His forgiveness rests also upon the foundation of Divine supervision.

What we mean by this sentence can best be explained by an incident from the life of Richard I, the favourite king of our childhood days. Coeur-de-Lion was not only a brave man, but was generous and able to forgive wrongs. When he had reigned ten years, one of his French vassals rebelled. Richard at once marched his army and besieged the rebel in his castle. During the last and successful attack, a young man, Bertrand de Gurden, shot an arrow, which mortally wounded the king! The castle fell, and Bertrand was brought before the dying monarch. To the chagrin of his men, Richard said, "Youth, I forgive you my death," and turning to his officers commanded, "Let him go free, and give him a hundred shillings." Richard died, and Bertrand, having been recaptured, was executed. Richard was unable to see that his commands were carried out. The Lord Jesus died to set us free, and to enrich us. But He lives to see that His wishes and commands and covenant agreements are carried out. If He forgives, it is for ever. The proof of forgiveness is seen in a cleansed life: "And to cleanse us." Forgiveness and cleansing are inseparable. Sin is in the soul in two forms-in guilt, which requires forgiveness; and in pollution, which requires cleansing.

"If." The whole verse turns on this first word. There can be no forgiveness without confession. And confession implies forsaking (Proverbs 28:13). THE VICTORIOUS LIFE.

1 John 2:1.

"My little children, these things write I unto you that ye may not sin."

1. This is a message to "My dear children," to those who had become so through Christ Jesus.

2. Being God's children through faith in Christ Jesus, the victorious life should be their own possession and enjoyment. "I write. . . because ye have overcome the wicked one" (1 John 2:13).

3. Alas, we do sin. For sinners there is an Advocate.

4. "Advocacy is that work of Jesus Christ for sinning saints which He carries on with the Father whereby, because of the eternal efficacy of His Own Sacrifice, He restores them to fellowship" (Scofield).

5. The late Dr. Griffith Thomas has a nice and helpful word on this subject: "There is a perfect propitiation provided: 'If any man sin, we have an Advocate.' There is no allowance for sin, but a perfect provision in case we do sin: no need to sin, no right to sin, no compromise with sin, no license, but a provision in case we, do. On board ship the provision of life-belts is not associated with any intention to have a shipwreck, but they are there in case of need. When it is said, 'If any man sin, we have an Advocate,' it is the provision in case of need. As you know, there are two Advocates. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Advocate with the Father; and the same word is used of the Holy Spirit in John's Gospel-He is the Advocate within. There is Christ's perfect provision for us, and there is the Holy Spirit's perfect provision in us." THE SAFE LIFE.

1 John 2:26.

"These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you," or, "would lead you astray" (R.V.).

1. Heresy already at work (1 John 2:18-19). "We know that it is the last hour" is R.V. rendering. These had gone astray doctrinally.

2. Yet believers are safe-guarded by the Holy Anointing (1 John 2:20-27).

3. That unction illuminates our minds, conveying knowledge (1 John 2:20). THE KNOWING LIFE.

1 John 5:13.

"These things have I written unto you that believe. . . that ye may know." "Know" is one of the key-words of this Epistle. Let us examine some of them.

1. How can we be sure that "we know Him? " "If we keep His commandments" (1 John 2:3, 1 John 2:5).

2. A constantly growing knowledge of God, His ways, and Word, is one sign of spiritual maturity (1 John 2:13).

3. The Holy Spirit so teaches us that "ye know all things" (1 John 2:20).

4. "We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him" (1 John 3:2).

5. We are certain "we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (1 John 3:14).

6. The Holy Spirit with us advises us as to abiding in Him (1 John 3:24; 1 John 4:13).

7. One infallible test of knowledge (1 John 4:1-3).

8. The consciousness that we have eternal life comes through belief in God's Word (1 John 5:13).

LOVES FOUR PREPOSITIONS.

1 John 4:16, 1 John 4:9,1 John 4:12, 1 John 4:17.

I. "Toward us"-the Direction of love (1 John 4:9).

II. "To us"-the Intention of love (1 John 4:16).

III. "In us"-the Habitation of love (1 John 2:15; 1 John 3:17; 1 John 4:12).

IV. "With us"-the Perfection of love (1 John 4:17, margin). "Herein hath love been perfected with us" (A. V., margin). Suggesting a greater measure of the love of God dwelling within us, and a greater realisation, by mind and heart, of the greatness of His love. THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF LOVE.

1 John 4:8-9, 1 John 4:17; 1 John 2:5.

I. The Essence of His Love-God Himself-"God is Love" (1 John 4:8).

II. The Cause of His Love-not in us. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us" (1 John 4:10).

III. The Activity of His Love-Sending His Son to die for us (1 John 4:8-9).

IV. The Manner of His Love. The outcome of that love is our adoption as children (1 John 3:1-2).

V. The Perfecting of His Love. That is, the increasing discovery on our part of the assurance and perfection of His love. This gives us boldness (1 John 4:17).

VI. The Maturing of His Love. That is, what we must do in order to liberate the love of God shed abroad in our hearts and lives in holy action (1 John 2:5).

LOVE.

1 John 4:7-9, 1 John 4:11.

I. Love's Home.

1. "Love is of God" (1 John 4:7).

2. Love is God, or better: "God is Love" (1 John 4:8).

II. Love's Apprehension. "We have known and believed the love" (1 John 4:16). Knowledge following faith.

III. Love's Manifestation. The proof of God's love was the sending of His Son (1 John 4:9).

IV. Love's Overflowing. Leads us to love one another (1 John 4:7, 1 John 4:11). Surely 1 John 4:7 teaches that there is no Divine love in the heart of any unregenerate person. Divine love is a far higher thing than mere natural affection.

WHY BELIEVERS SHOULD LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

1 John 4:19.

I. Because He First Loved Us (1 John 4:19, R.V.). In the R.V. it reads: "We love because He first loved us." This dropped word means that we love not only God, but also one another.

II. Because He Still Loves Us (1 John 4:11).

III. Because He Commands Us (1 John 3:23).

IV. Because He has Come to Dwell Within Us (1 John 4:12).

V. Because We have Passed from Death to Life (1 John 3:14).

VI. Because We are no Longer Children of the Devil as Formerly (1 John 3:10).

GOD.

John 4:24; 1 John 1:5; 1 John 4:8, 1 John 4:16.

How simple is the language of the Book. Some of the greatest possible Biblical truths God has written in monosyllables. The simplicity of Holy Writ is so appealing and satisfying. On the mysteries connected with the Being of God we have three profound monosyllables. These contain more information about God than all the sacred books of the East put together.

I. "God is a Spirit." The Spirituality of His Being (John 4:24).

1. This is one of the most sublime revelations in the Bible of the nature of God.

2. It really could be written: "God is Spirit," not a, nor the, but Spirit.

II. "God is Light." The Brilliancy of His Being (1 John 1:5).

1. Not a light, nor even the light, but Light.

2. Strictly speaking, white is no colour, but combination of all colours. When the Apostle wrote, "God is Light," he meant that God is not a hue, nor a colour, not a tone, nor a shade. He is the combination of all colours, all shades, all hues.

III. "God is Love." The Warmth and Attractiveness of His Being (1 John 4:8, 1 John 4:16).

1. Not "God loves," though of course He does. Not that He shows love, but that He is love.

2. We usually say that Love is one of the Divine attributes. Strictly speaking, this is hardly correct. He is Love. Love is His very Being.

3. He is Love to us because He is essentially and eternally Love in Himself.

SIN.

1 John.

I. Its Definition. John gives two of the seven definitions of sin in the Bible, viz:

1. Transgression. Stepping over the Law., i.e., lawlessness. Sin is lawlessness, i.e., the absence of all authority, and the denial of all obligation to God.

2. Unrighteousness. Not coming up to the Law (1 John 3:4; 1 John 5:17).

II. Its Universality (1 John 1:8, 1 John 1:10). What plain language.

III. Its Destruction. Why the Lord Jesus came? To "take away" sin (1 John 2:2; 1 John 3:5; 1 John 4:10). This means more than to cover sin-it is putting it away, taking it away, blotting it out.

IV. Its Confession (1 John 1:9).

V. Its Cleansing (1 John 1:7).

VI. Its Victory (1 John 2:1; 1 John 3:8-9). "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye may not sin" (R.V.) "In order that ye may not sin" (Wey). 1 John 3:8-9 have troubled many of the Lord's dear children. But observe the following rendering: "He who is habitually guilty of sin is a child of the Devil" (W.). "Whosoever is born of God doth not practice sin," i.e., doth not continue sinning. It is God's good will that we be daily more than conquerors over sin, over the world, the flesh, and the Devil.

VII. Its Secret. The secret of constant victory over sin is abiding in Christ (1 John 3:6), and "being kept" (1 John 5:18, R.V.). THE NEW BIRTH: ITS EVIDENCES AND RESULTS.

1 John.

The Apostle John does not point out in this Epistle how regeneration can take place, because that he had already done in his Gospel, particularly John 1:12-13, and the whole of chapter 3. Here in his Epistle he points out the proofs whereby we may know we are born from above.

I. Faith is both the condition and the proof of regeneration. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" (1 John 5:1).

II. Love. "Every one that loveth is born of God" (1 John 4:7).

III. Life. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit (margin, "practice") sin; or as W., "No one who is a child of God is habitually guilty of sin" (1 John 3:9). This is to say, one of the clearest proofs of the new birth is to be found in the fact that a new life is begun. Not a life of sin as before, but a life of victory-there may be, there usually is, especially in the early days, lapses into sin, but not a life of sin. By and by we learn the secret of full victory.

IV. Overcomes. "For whosoever is born of God overcometh the world" (1 John 5:4).

V. Kept. "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not, but He that was begotten of God (i.e., the Lord Jesus) keepeth him" (1 John 5:18, R.V.). The begotten one is kept by the only Begotten of the Father. And the result?

VI. Holiness. Personal holiness. "Every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him" (1 John 2:29).

ABIDING IN CHRIST.

1 John.

I. Conditions.

1. Abiding in Christ follows the Word of God abiding in us (1 John 2:14,1 John 2:24).

2. Abiding in Christ follows the anointing of the Holy Spirit (1 John 2:27).

3. Abiding in Christ follows obedience to Christ (1 John 3:24).

II. Knowledge. We know that He abides in us and we in Him "by the Spirit which He hath given us" (1 John 3:24).

III. Results.

1. Walk becomes wonderfully different (1 John 2:6).

2. We love others (1 John 2:10).

3. Fearlessness in the day of the Lord's Coming, when we shall be ushered before Him (1 John 2:28).

4. A life of victory (1 John 3:6).

ETERNAL LIFE.

1 John

I. Its Definition. Eternal Life is a living relationship to a living Personality (1 John 5:11-12).

II. Its Location. "This life is in His Son" (1 John 5:11).

III. Its Personification. At the Incarnation the life was manifested. It is personified in Christ (1 John 1:1-2).

Note. We only live; He is the Life.

IV. Its Pre-eminence. "He that hath the Son hath the life" (1 John 5:12, R.V.). There are lives and lives. But this is the life of all lives.

V. Its Possession.

1. Negative. a. Those who have not the Son have not life (1 John 5:12). b. We are by nature dead. "We pass from death unto life" (1 John 3:14). Wondrous journey! c. One who hates his brethren hath not Eternal Life (1 John 3:16).

2. Positive. a. Eternal Life is a promise to be prized (1 John 2:25). b. Eternal Life is a gift to be received (1 John 5:11). c. In receiving the Lord Jesus we receive Eternal Life (1 John 5:11-12). d. We may know for a fact when we have Eternal Life (1 John 5:13). e. Faith leads to possession of Eternal Life (1 John 5:10-11).

MANIFESTED.

1 John.

This is a great word. The Apostle John seems fond of it. Never a word so rich in meaning. "It condenses in a vocable the history of the long descent" of Jesus from the Glory, to the manger, the cross, and from the sepulchre to the Throne. The Dictionary states that "to manifest" means to make plain to sight or understanding; and that "a manifest" is an invoice of a cargo for customhouse purposes. In and through Him is manifested:

I. Life Manifested (1 John 1:2). Life resides in the Lord Jesus, and by His Incarnation "was manifested unto us."

II. Love Manifested (1 John 4:9). By His Incarnation God's love was manifested and is being manifested to-day by the Holy Spirit, and through the lives of redeemed men and women.

III. Salvation: Purpose of His Manifestation (1 John 3:5). "To take away our sins." Wonderful fact! This is more than covering sin. The latter was all that could be done in the Old Testament.

IV. Reformation, or Sanctification. The result of His manifestation (1 John 3:8). "The devil sinneth from the beginning," i.e., Satan is the original sinner. He was created perfect, but deliberately rebelled against God. Thus through him sin came into the world, and all its woe. But the Lord Jesus "was manifested that He might destroy (undo) the works of the Devil." This means in the long run, not only a new man, but a new Heaven and a new earth.

FEAR.

1 John 4:18.

1. When, by God's gracious Holy Spirit, the love of God is made personal to me, and when that love comes sweeping into my heart by the Spirit, it casts out the fear that hath torments, but deepens reverence!

2. "Godly fear is not a shrinking apprehension; it is love upon its knees" (late Dr. Moule). THE POWER OF FAITH

1 John 5:4.

An old writer says, "Faith is the foot of the soul; so it comes to Christ. Faith is the hand of the soul; so it receives Christ. Faith is the arm of the soul; so it embraces Christ. Faith is the eye of the soul; so it looks upon Christ. Faith is the mouth of the soul; so it feeds on Christ. Faith is the lips of the soul; so it kisses Christ."

I. Faith is Precious. It is infinitely precious, because of its own infinite possibilities. With it, nothing needful is impossible. It is the hand that takes with firm, unfailing grip the faithful promises of the God of salvation. The fruits of faith are precious. By it we are justified (Romans 5:1), sanctified (Acts 26:18). It is by faith we "live" (Romans 1:17), "stand" (Romans 11:20), "walk" (2 Corinthians 5:7), "wait" (Galatians 5:5, R.V.). It is a soul-revolutionising grace, because it involves the surrender of the will to the living, transforming Word of God. "To take up half on trust, and half on try, is not faith, but bungling bigotry." God glorifies faith, because faith glorifies God. Without faith it is impossible to please him.

II. Faith should be Progressive. Paul commended the Thessalonians because their "faith grew exceedingly." Faith cannot but grow when there is a growing knowledge of God, and of the fullness and faithfulness of His Word. Faith, like love, will not be driven or forced, it must needs be fed and inspired. The manner of its growth is "from faith to faith" (Romans 1:17). Not from "one confession of faith to another, but it may be from little faith to great faith, from great faith to greater faith, from the greater human faith into the absolute and perfect "faith of God" (Mark 9:22, margin). The "faith of God" is God's faith in His own Word and work. He shall not be discouraged, His Word shall not return to Him as having missed the mark. Lord, increase our faith, and let it grow up and out, into the faith that Thou Thyself hast in Thine own Spirit-breathed Word and blood-sprinkled work.

III. Faith shall be Triumphant. Faith lays hold of the mightiest of all weapons, when it grips the Word of God, which is the Sword of the Spirit. The victories mentioned in Hebrews 11 were all achieved by the weapon of faith. The world's truly mighty ones have all been men of faith. The hands of Christ were omnipotent, because they were the hands of faith. This is the victory that overcometh the world even our faith (1 John 5:4). By faith we overcome the world- 1. Like ENOCH, by being translated out of it into the Kingdom of God's dear Son (Hebrews 11:4).

2. Like NOAH, by accepting God's warning, and entering the ark of God's salvation (Hebrews 11:7).

3. Like ABRAHAM, by obeying God's call, and stepping out into the unknown (Hebrews 11:8).

4. Like MOSES, by refusing to be called the son of the world; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God (Hebrews 11:24-27).

5. Like JOSHUA, by marching round the walls, and expecting their downfall (Hebrews 11:30).

6. Like GIDEON and DAVID, by subduing kingdoms... and obtaining promises (Hebrews 11:32-33). These all obtained a good report through faith. "Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God."

"LIETH IN THE WICKED ONE."

1 John 5:19 (R.V.).

In this passage there are two startling statements.

I. The Word "In." This is the same word used of the believer when he is said to be in Christ, as branches in the Vine. This is a staggering word. It teaches us that just as believers in Christ are united to Christ, drawing from Him life and blessing, so the ungodly are united to Satan, and are being energised by him.

II. The Word "Lieth." Literally "Lieth asleep," depicting a state of unconsciousness. The saved are in the Father's hand, and have beneath them the Everlasting Arms; but the great mass of humanity is in the arms of Satan, and by his subtility lulled to sleep, therefore unconscious of their dread position.

2 John

2 John This is a private personal letter from the aged Apostle John, addressed to an unknown Christian woman, and her pious family. This is the only Epistle in the New Testament addressed exclusively to a lady. There is a tradition that the lady addressed was Martha of Bethany. "The Greek Hyria (Lady, 1 John 1:1), answers to the Hebrew Martha," wrote Bengel. If this be true, the "sister" referred to in 2 John 1:13 would be Mary. It was written specifically to warn this lady and her family of some false teachers (1 John 1:10).

LOVE AND TRUTH.

2 John 1:1, 2 John 1:2.

The word "truth" is met with five times in this short Epistle of but thirteen verses, and forms its key-word.

I. The Source of Love. Truth. Most versions print truth with a capital "T," Truth. Certainly this is one of the Lord's Names, and He is the source of all true love.

II. The Reality of Love. That is, the nature of love commended here is true love, love that is no mere pretence or make-believe.

III. The Breadth of Love. Love cannot be confined to one. The Elder (John must have been about 90 years old when he wrote this Epistle) not only loved "The elect lady," but also "her children," and this pious family was not only loved by the aged apostle, but also by "all they that have known the truth."

IV. The Realisation of Love. R. gives "understand" for "known" in 2 John 1:1. This is to say, those who have realised truth and the love of God in Christ to themseves love others.

V. The Inwardness of Love. "Which dwelleth in us," God's love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Is it truth or love that is meant here? Well, He is both Truth and Love, and as both dwells within us and with us.

GRACE, MERCY, PEACE.

2 John 1:3.

This is a very unusual form of the apostolic salutation in the New Testament, only found in the Pastoral Epistles and here (1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:4). You will observe that "Mercy" is added to the usual salutation, "Grace-Peace." What is the significance, and what is the teaching?

Well, read Luke 10:37 with Genesis 39:21. Who showed mercy? The Good Samaritan. What is showing mercy? Binding up wounds and bruises, etc. But what had "mercy" to do with Joseph in prison? Ah, there are more dangerous wounds than those of the body-there are wounds and

bruises of the spirit. Joseph's reputation had been challenged; he had been cast into prison on a false charge. His spirit was bruised and bleeding. But the Good Samaritan came when all doors were shut, barred, and bolted, and ministered comfort and consolation to the distressed one. The Lord's servants frequently require the Lord's gracious Good Samaritan ministry.

TRUTH.

2 John 1:4.

1. Is given to walk in (2 John 1:4), not merely to admire.

2. This is one proof of our love to God (2 John 1:6), for love manifests itself in ready obedience.
THE TEST OF TRUTH.

2 John 1:7, 2 John 1:11.

False teachers were travelling (2 John 1:7-11) amongst the churches, and John warns this lady against even entertaining them (2 John 1:10-11), much less their false doctrines. Then the aged Apostle gives an infallible test of truth.

1. The reality of the humanity of our Lord in His earthly life. "That Jesus Christ is come in the flesh."

2. The reality of the humanity of our Lord in His second advent. "Cometh in the flesh" (R.V.).

Apply this test to some popular religious movements of our day, and the result is startling. Christian Science, Spiritism, Russellism, and other similar movements are unmasked, and shown to be against Christ, and utterly wrong-of the Devil.

3 John

3 John This is another sample of the Apostle John's private correspondence. This letter was written to a generous and warm-hearted friend called Gaius, noted for loving hospitality, urging him to continue entertaining the travelling preachers, in spite of the bitter opposition of an autocratic and blustering Church official called Diotrephes.

INTERESTING QUESTIONS.

3 John 1:2, 3 John 1:4-5, 3 John 1:11.

1. Was Gaius ill? (2).

2. Was Gaius one of Paul's converts? Note: "My children" (4).

3. Did Paul love Gaius very ardently? The word "Beloved" is repeated in this short letter, indicating ardent affection (1, 2, 5, 11).

4. Was Gaius prospering spiritually in the things of God? (2).

VARIOUS ASPECTS OF TRUTH.

3 John 1:1, 3 John 1:3-4,3 John 1:8.

As in his previous writings, John has much to say about Truth. Note the various aspects of Truth.

I. An Indwelling. Truth is first regarded as being in the man. "The truth that is in thee" (3).

II. A Road. Truth is then viewed as a road on which, and within whose limits, the man walks. "Even as thou walkest in the truth" (3).

III. An Atmosphere. Truth is now considered as an atmosphere in which the man moves. "Walk in truth" (4).

IV. A Soil, in which love is rooted (1). "I love in the truth."

V. A Weapon (8). "Fellow-workers with truth" (R.V.). Suggesting truth as their powerful weapon in Christian Service.

VI. A Companion. "Fellow-helpers to the truth" (8), suggesting that in our pilgrimage we should make truth our companion.

VII. Referee. Giving testimony in favour of these who walk in truth. "Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself."

Jude

Jude

Like James, Jude was not an apostle, but just an ordinary disciple. James, his brother, had been martyred a few years before Jude wrote this letter. He laid himself out to write a great treatise on (verse 3), Salvation, but abandoned it under the constraint of the Holy Spirit, to write a half-page letter giving a history of Apostasy, from the very beginning, and to warn his readers of that peril.

KEPT

(Jude.)

The words "keep" and "kept" are mentioned five times, and form a helpful study.

I. The Lord's People are Kept Ones. Kept by God from sin for the Lord Jesus. "Preserved in Jesus Christ" (1) is the R.V. "Kept for Jesus Christ."

II. Some Angels "Kept Not their First Estate" (Jude 1:6), so are "kept" (R.V., instead of Reserved) in chains.

III. We Must Keep Ourselves in the full constant assurance that God loves us (Jude 1:21).

IV. He is Able to Keep Us, not merely from "falling," but as R.V., from "stumbling," for it is stumbling which precedes falling (Jude 1:24).

ETERNAL THINGS

(Jude 1:6-7; Jude 1:21).

Three eternal things are mentioned in this letter.

1. Life (Jude 1:21).

2. Chains (Jude 1:6).

3. Fire (Jude 1:7).

COMMON SALVATION

(Jude 1:3).

Salvation is called "common," not because it is cheap and worth little, but because:

I. It comes from a Common Source-God, the Love of God.

II. It is Offered to All Classes. "Commons" are open spaces belonging to the public, and held by Corporations or Councils for all to share and enjoy alike. So salvation is for all.

III. It Supplies a Common or General Need.

IV. It is the Common Theme of all the sacred writers.

Chapter 82

Revelation

The Revelation A well-known Methodist minister and Cliff College Principal, the late Samuel Chadwick, confessed that in his early ministerial days the Revelation was an enigma to him. He then set himself to solve it by reading the book through at a sitting, every day for a month. No wonder the book began to sing and preach to him, and that he discovered it to be a precious treasure-house of instruction, and a sanctuary for worship.

We neglect this book at our great loss and peril. Even in the dark days it acts as a comforter. Someone has remarked that "without tears the Revelation was not written, neither without tears can it be understood" (Revelation 5:4). As aids to its right understanding note:

1st. We should come to this book primarily to find out what it says about the Lord Jesus, and not what it has to say about the future. Its key-phrase is its first five words, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ" It unveils the Lord Jesus. It is simply full of Him. No less than twenty-six times do we find in it Christ's sacrificial title, "Lamb."

2nd. After the end of Revelation 3 the Church is never represented as on the earth. Between Revelation 3 and Revelation 4 the removal of the Church must have taken place.

3rd. Revelation 4 and onward have to do with the Tribulation and last things.

Revelation 1:19, gives its correct threefold division, the last again falling into three sub-sections. THE UNIQUENESS OF THIS BOOK.

Revelation 1:1-9, Revelation 1:19.

I. The Unique Character of the Book (1-3).

1. What is it? A "revelation," i.e., unveiling of Jesus Christ-not a mystery. If the book is a mystery to you, that is a proof that you are reading it wrongly.

2. Whence came it? By revelation. Given by God to His Son (1), the Son gave it to His angel (note, His Angel-an angel specially set apart to look after Jesus- probably the one who ministered to him in Gethsemane), the Angel giving it to John (Revelation 22:16).

3. Why was it given? To show them things that were to come to pass.

4. For whom was it given? His servant, therefore specially for workers.

5. What does it contain? (2). Christ's testimony, i.e., either testimony concerning Him, or which comes from Him.

6. Why should it be Read? (3).

7. When should it be read? Now, for the time is at hand.

8. Special blessing to readers, hearers, lovers of the book ("lay to heart," W.), meditators ("keep in mind," Bullinger), obedient (keep).

II. The Unique Order in the Book (Revelation 1:19).

1. "The things which thou hast seen." The Lord Jesus as the Glorified One (1).

2. "The things which are." The Lord Jesus as Head over the Church (2 and 3).

3. "The things which shall be hereafter." The Lord Jesus as the Triumphant One (4 to 22).

III. The Unique Introduction to the Book (4 to 9).

1. Salutation (4). John alone was left of the Apostles.

2. Benediction (4). Grace first then peace.

3. Doxology (5, 6).

4. Anticipation (7).

5. Self-revelation (8). The voice of the Son of God.

6. Explanation (9). He writes as a brother, not as a lord over God's heritage.

Note. "Seven Spirits," or sevenfold Spirit. Not so much the Spirit viewed in His individual personality, as the Spirit in the manifestation of His operation in the Church. Seven is the Bible number for perfection, therefore the Holy Spirit in His sevenfold completeness. OUR GLORIFIED LORD.

Revelation 1:9-20.

A Glowing Word-Picture of our Glorified Lord.

Introduction.

1. Significance of this Vision. a. Before John could be the messenger to others of the unveiling of Jesus Christ, he himself must look on the Lord in His glory. b. Before he could see God the Father (Revelation 1:4) he must see God the Son. c. The Holy Spirit revealed the Lord Jesus (Revelation 1:10). d. This vision given to him in loneliness. One of the Lord's blessed compensations. e. And to one who was suffering for Christ's sake. Life is full of compensations.

2. John Heard before he Saw-the value of the Word of God. What right have we to ask God to reveal Himself if we neglect the Bible?

I. The Lord (Revelation 1:9-18).

1. What we Know of the Lord Through this Vision. The Lord shown in kingly and priestly dignity: a. Voice (Revelation 1:10; Revelation 1:15), clearness; musical; significant of great majesty. b. Priestly garb. c. Girded. Active service; breast, not loins. Royal repose and priestly calm. d. Girdle. Golden. Kingly dignity. e. Head and hairs (Revelation 1:14). Eternity and Divinity (see Daniel 7:9). Sometimes white hair is one result of great sorrows. None ever suffered as He. f. Eyes. Searching, penetrating. g. Feet. Hot to burn, heavy to tread. h. Hand (Revelation 1:16), mouth. Power of His

Word.

2. What we Know of the Lord Through His Titles. a. He is Jehovah (Revelation 1:4). The Jehovah of the Old Testament is the Jesus of the New. b. Faithful witness (Revelation 1:5). Oh, so faithful! c. "First begotten" (Revelation 1:5). A title of dignity and honour. d. Prince (Revelation 1:5). e. Alpha and Omega (Revelation 1:8; Revelation 1:11; Revelation 1:17). f. Almighty (Revelation 1:8). g. Son of Man (Revelation 1:13). h. The Living One (Revelation 1:18).

3. What we Know of the Lord Through His Action. This grand vision gives us indeed the Lord Jesus clothed with majesty, and wielding supreme power, but it also shows us the old love and tenderness (Revelation 1:17), the very same Jesus.

II. The Church (Revelation 1:12).

1. Golden. Matchless Value. Cannot rust.

2. Lampstands. No light in themselves. How dependent upon Him.

3. Seven. a. Emblem of a unity not formal, but real. b. Not uniformity, but oneness in diversity. c. Oneness not by any external connection.

4. Lord in the Midst: a. Not indifferent. b. Not forsaking his unfaithful Church.

III. The Officials (Revelation 1:16). Stars.

1. Symbol of Authority.

2. Symbol of Talent. Having star-like gifts.

3. Stars are for the Darkness. Stars, like men, are for the dark days.

4. Held in the Hand of Christ. Prominence in Christian work exposes to special temptation, but special privilege is granted. He holds us up.

Notes.

Alpha and Omega. In 1893 Moody conducted a great Gospel Campaign at the Chicago Exhibition. Dr. A. J. Gordon lodged in the same house as Rabinowitz of Russia, who one day said: "Do you know what questionings and controversies the Jews have kept up over Zechariah 12:10? 'They shall look upon Me (Aleph-Tev in the Hebrew) whom they have pierced.' They will not admit that it is Jehovah whom they pierced. Hence the dispute about the Whom. But do you notice that this word is simply the first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Do you wonder, then that I was filled with awe and astonishment when I opened Revelation 1:7-8, and read these words of Zechariah, now quoted by John. Jesus seemed to say to me, 'Do you doubt who it is whom you pierced? I, Jesus, am the Aleph-Tev, the Alpha Omega, Jehovah Almighty.'"

Threefold Portrait of Jesus. In Rev. 1 we have a threefold portrait of Jesus:

1st. Prophet. His prediction (Revelation 1:1).

2nd. Priest. His garment down to foot (Revelation 1:13).

3rd. King. His golden girdle (Revelation 1:13).

"Fell at His Feet as Dead" (Revelation 1:17). Any drawing near to God which does not bring us down to the earth in deepest abasement and self-emptying must be mere imagination. THE MESSAGES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES.

Revelation 2 and 3.

Introduction.

Angel means Messenger. The Angel of the Church is a title borrowed from the Jewish Synagogue, and was the name given to the prominent official there. The Angel of the Church was the one in charge. In addressing in the first instance the Angel of the Church, we have the Lord's wonderful courtesy to the responsible official.

I. Ephesus. The Serving Church (Revelation 2:1-7). Fault: Decaying love.

1. Introduction (Revelation 2:1).

2. Recognition (Revelation 2:2-3). Their service, character and doctrine seemed right. Good discipline and loyalty.

3. Warning (Revelation 2:4-5). Language of wounded friendship. He finds a servant where He looks for a bride.

4. Commendation (Revelation 2:6).

5. Promise (Revelation 2:7).

II. Smyrna. The Suffering Church (Revelation 2:8-11). No fault; all praise.

1. The briefest of these addresses is to Smyrna.

2. Proud of their antiquity, He declared He was of greater antiquity: "First and last" (Revelation 2:8).

3. They were suffering, but He had plumbed to the depths of suffering: "Was dead, and is alive" (Revelation 2:8).

4. He was the All-knowing One (Revelation 2:9).

5. He was One whose standards of valuation differed from that of the world's: "Thou art rich" (Revelation 2:9).

6. He warns of worse times to follow (Revelation 2:10).

7. He encourages to loyalty, even to death (Revelation 2:10).

III. Pergamos. The Compromising Church (Revelation 2:12-17). Tolerating evil in their midst.

1. Introduced Himself in His Judicial character (Revelation 2:12).

2. He recognised their special sinful environment (Revelation 2:13). Pergamos was a special centre of Heathen Worship.

3. He praised them for their loyalty (Revelation 2:13).

4. He warned them of the presence of sinful men in their midst (Revelation 2:14-15).

5. He urges to repentance (Revelation 2:16), warning of the result of non-repentance.

6. He promises: a. Special sustenance, and b. Special friendship (Revelation 2:17).

7. Sharp Sword. At Pergamos dwelt the Roman Governor of that province, who alone had the right of wielding the sword. But Jesus has a unique sword (Revelation 2:16).

IV. Thyatira. The Church in Peril (Revelation 2:18-29). Permitted a false teacher to occupy an honoured position. At Thyatira we find a Church which, along with much faithfulness and energy of service, is most seriously affected with false teaching. And one of these false teachers was allowed to occupy an important official position in the Church.

1. Place of little importance.

2. To this obscure and unimportant Church the Risen Lord describes Himself in terms of the most exalted majesty, and conveys a promise of the most exalted power.

3. "Thy wife, Jezebel" (R.V.).

4. Only letter in which a woman is mentioned.

5. And in which the Lord declares so clearly his Sonship. a. The Introduction (Revelation 2:18). b. The Commendation (Revelation 2:19). "You have toiled harder than you did at first" (Weymouth). c. The Warning (Revelation 2:20-23). i. Identity of false teaching, ii. Judgment on false teaching. d. Admonition (Revelation 2:24-25). e. Blessings for overcomers (Revelation 2:26-29).

V. Sardis. The Church in Death (Revelation 3:1-6). Fault: Lost their hold of Christ.

1. Sad condition (Revelation 3:1).

2. Steps that led to that sad condition: a. Defiled garments (Revelation 3:4). b. Fell asleep. "Waken up!" c. Dead minister.

3. Penalty on such (Revelation 3:3).

4. Steps to Recovery: a. Rouse yourselves. b. Look after the dying things. c. Remember. d. There is a Spirit. e. Glorious reward (Revelation 3:5). i. Not blot out. ii. Name confessed. Mentioned in Despatches, iii. Walk with Him in white.

VI. Philadelphia. The Church of the One Talent (Revelation 3:7-13). Characteristic: Faithfulness to God's Word. There were only two of the seven Churches which received no censure or rebuke from the Lord-Smyrna and Philadelphia. The former receives but little praise, though much sympathy; the latter stands alone in the abundance and unalloyed character of the eulogium which Christ passes upon it.

(1) Not that they were perfect; only "a little strength" (Revelation 3:8).

(2) Not that they were beyond need of warning.

1. The Eulogiser (Revelation 3:7). a. Character. Perfect holiness and perfect truth. b. Authority. Keys of David.

2. The Eulogised. Why? a. A little strength (Revelation 3:8). b. Guarded and loved His Word (Revelation 3:8; Revelation 3:10). c. Confessed name (Revelation 3:8).

3. The Promise. a. Opened door. b. Respect of others. c. Kept.

VII. Laodicea. The Lukewarm Church (Revelation 3:14-22). Characteristic: Self-centred and self-satisfied.

Note. Remarkable that the first and last Church suffered from the same disease of spiritual declension, only the former was in the germ, and the latter fully developed.

1. The Lord's Character (Revelation 3:14). Amen. Witness. Originator.

2. The Lord's Diagnosis (Revelation 3:15; Revelation 3:17).

3. The Lord's Preference (Revelation 3:15).

4. The Lord's Threat (Revelation 3:16).

5. The Lord's Counsel (Revelation 3:18).

6. The Lord's Appeal (Revelation 3:19).

7. The Lord's Attitude (Revelation 3:20).

8. The Lord's Reward (Revelation 3:20-21). THE HEAVENLY COURT OF THE KING OF KINGS.

Revelation 4.

Introduction.

1. The Fact of Christ's Sovereignty and Power a great comfort. This is revealed here. a. Dr. Dale mentions in one of his works that, in a time of great bodily weakness and depression, when suffering from a serious illness, he sought to stay his soul on Scripture promises that reminded him of our Lord's love and tenderness, but they failed to comfort him. b. Then, trying to dwell on the fact of Christ's Power and Sovereignty, he found a strange support on which he could rest. c. When the Boxer Riots broke out in China, and the leaders of the China Inland Mission came to their office one morning, dreading at any moment to receive tidings of disaster, some one discovered that the day text on the wall was a promise based on the fact that the Lord is King. The words brought the needed sense of reassurance and strength, and they were able to turn to their usual work, sure that all would be overruled for good. d. The fact of the Divine Sovereignty steadies. e. That is the view Revelation gives of the Lord. f. This is the thought we need for dark days. g. Also the assurance of the ultimate victory of good over evil.

2. Also in this section of Revelation (Rev 4 to end) we have the assurance of the ultimate victory of good-God.

3. This chapter begins the third great section of Revelation.

4. The scene shifts from earth to Heaven.

5. We are introduced to the glorious Audience Chamber of the Great King.

6. Everything speaks of Royalty.

I. The Opened Heaven (Revelation 4:1).

1. There are Five Openings mentioned in Bible: An opened Heaven: a. In Judgment (Genesis 7:11). b. In Blessing (Malachi 3:10). c. For the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:21). d. For a sight of Jesus (Acts 7:56). e. Lord as Conqueror (Revelation 4:1; Revelation 19:11).

2. "Come Up." We cannot apprehend the highest truth if we live on a low plane of thought and conduct.

II. The One on the Throne (Revelation 4:2-3). "He saw the Almighty high and lifted up, throned above all worlds, veiled in light unapproachable, yet known, His presence scintillating with the brilliance of the diamond, glowing like a cornelian, with the concentrated redness of a furnace, and yet over-arched with fresh and living green, as of an emerald. Blinding brilliancy; the glow of a consuming fire; the soft radiance of rainbow promise; these were the contrasted elements in the impression made upon the seer by the vision of Him who sat upon the throne."

Note.

1. "Rapt in the Spirit" (M.).

2. The two opposites in Him. a. He who was Sardine under the Law has ended as Jasper by the Revelation of His Son. b. Holiness and wrath. c. Sardine as well as Jasper. Never know all of Him.

3. Rainbow: a. Complete circle. Covenant sign. b. Green.

III. The Ones Before the Throne (Revelation 4:4-8).

1. The Elders (Revelation 4:4-5), heads of angelic ranks.

2. The Living Ones (Revelation 4:6-8). a. A sea of crystal, not water. No cleansing in Heaven. b. A combination of Seraphim and Cherubim, combining: i. Royalty and boldness of lion, ii. Usefulness of calf, iii. Intelligence of man, iv. Spirituality and soaring quality of eagle.

IV. The Song of Creation (Revelation 4:8-11).

1. The Holiness of God.

2. The Sovereignty of God.

3. The Almightiness of God.

4. The Timelessness of God, THE RAINBOW IN HEAVEN.

Revelation 4:3.

Introduction.

1. Murray M'Cheyne, but a while after he began his ministry, had a most serious illness. When convalescent he wrote: "Ah, there is nothing like a calm look into the Eternal World to teach us the emptiness of self-seeking and vain-glory, to teach us the preciousness of Christ who is called the Tried Stone."

2. Many can bear similar testimony. The world, with all its pomp, ambition, strife, pride, and vain-glory, has never been the same to you, indeed has lost its charm since that serious illness when you had a near look into the Eternal.

3. We believe it to be the Lord's mind that, assisted by God's Word here and God's Spirit, we should have a calm look into the opened Heaven.

4. It seems out of fashion to meditate about Heaven. But we are quite willing for the time being, to be out of the fashion. For some years Heaven seems very near and very real. For we could say with Samuel Rutherford: "Christ hath come and run away to Heaven with my heart and my love, so that neither heart nor love is mine." One by one our best treasures are being taken there.

5. What a thrilling description does John give here. He has had an interview with the Son of God; now the Seer is introduced to the Audience Chamber of the Great King. He saw the Heavenly Court of the King of kings, in the centre the Almighty, "high and lifted up, throned above all worlds, veiled in light unapproachable yet known, His Presence scintillating with the brilliance of the diamond, glowing like a cornelian, with the concentrated redness of a furnace, and yet overarched with fresh and living green as of an emerald. Blinding brilliancy, the glow of a consuming fire, the soft radiance of rainbow promise, these were the contrasted elements in the impression made upon the Seer by the vision of 'Him who sat upon the Throne.'"

6. As we gaze at that marvellous scene so realistically portrayed to us, let our eyes rest for a moment on the rainbow. Have you ever seen the like?

7. The rainbow we are familiar with is indeed one of the most beautiful things in nature. It usually appears when a storm of rain is about to cease, and is caused by drops of water in a cloud breaking up the rays of light.

8. We were at sea. On every side save one, naught was to be seen save sea and sky meeting in loving embrace. On our left could just be discerned in dim outline some of the Welsh mountains. Suddenly the sky became black and lowering and rain fell copiously. But all at once from the dark bosom of the thundercloud a rainbow-that Heavenly flower of light, opened its seven leaves of coloured light. It was a ravishing sight.

9. But whilst our eyes were fastened on that lovely thing, this text came into mind. Ah, no earthly rainbow in spite of all its glory, was ever arrayed like this.

10. Note some of the distinguishing points of difference.

11. But, before doing so, let us look:

1st. At the Rainbow in Genesis-in sky, on earth (Genesis 9:9-17).

2nd. At the Rainbow in Ezekiel-in wilderness (Ezekiel 1:26-28).

3rd. At the Rainbow in Revelation-in Heaven (Revelation 4:3).

I. It Appears In Heaven as a Prelude to the Storm.

1. Not so the rainbow we are familiar with. That appeared for the first time after the awful deluge, as a token or pledge of the promise of God never again to drown all the earth by a flood of water.

2. By a study of God's Word we see that there is an awful time ahead, a time of fiery judgment. The prophets refer to it with bated breath as that great and dreadful day of the Lord.

"Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him" (Revelation 1:7). "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power" (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

3. Well might we cry in trumpet tones: "Flee from the wrath to come."

II. In Heaven the Rainbow is Green.

1. Ours consists of the seven prismatic colours, but in Heaven all colours are blended into one, its emerald greenness absorbing, or at least throwing into shade, its other and varied hues.

2. Yes, all the colours are blended into one, and that the softest and most refreshing of all hues to the eyes. For there is in green something on which the eye does not fear but loves to rest.

3. You have been hard at work all day, your eyes are weary, and your brain tired, and you take a short walk in the park. As your eyes rest upon the green grass and foliage they are rested and renewed and refreshed.

4. And so, as the eyes of the believer rests upon the Throne of God he finds rest and comfort there, for though it be a Throne of Judgment, it is arched by the emerald rainbow, a pledge that God in judgment will remember His covenant promise.

5. In the first chapter of his book, Ezekiel describes to us a vision he had of the Throne of God. He, too, saw a rainbow encircling that Throne, but it was of a fiery bloodied colour. And why? God was angry with His people.

6. What colour is the rainbow around the Throne to you? a.. If you cannot say, "Though Thou wast angry with me," it will be blood-red-a thing of terror, of awful dread and fear. b. But if, like John, you know the Lord, then your eyes will fall with delight on the sight, you will find rest there, your spirit will be refreshed. For you will remember if Noah's rainbow is a sign of the great world covenant, telling us that God is a faithful Creator, this speaks to me of a Faithful Redeemer 7. Besides that, the August Person on the Throne is, through Christ, my Father.

III. In Heaven the Rainbow is a Full Circle.

1. On earth it is only half a circle-sometimes not that-at the best it is imperfect and incomplete. Indeed everything down here is imperfect and incomplete. Read Ecclesiastes to see the result of the most diligent and painstaking search after happiness and rest in things down here ever prosecuted. Result-weariness and disappointment.

2. But in Heaven everything is complete and perfect. The rainbow is full circle. Everything is perfect. Heaven meets all our needs. Whatever be the longings of your soul, Heaven will meet. a. A fisherwoman, who had lost her husband and two sons at sea, was asked what she most liked to think about when she thought about the land beyond, and she said: "And there shall be no more

sea." b. Ask the mourners what they like to think about concerning Heaven: "And there shall be no more death;" that sufferer racked with pain: c. "Neither shall there be any more pain;" to that one struggling with poverty: "They shall hunger no more;" to the lover of nature: "Eternal Spring." There, everlasting spring abides, and never withering flowers.

IV. In Heaven it Endures.

1. On earth it is only fleeting, a sign of a changing state of things.

2. But in Heaven it abides, remains.

3. We smile when a tradesman declares that a cloth or garment "is everlasting wear." This rainbow abides.

V. Final Word.

1. Please note, "after this." After what? After vision of Son, vision of Father.

2. John met with Christ on earth, and then saw the Father on the Throne.

3. God out of Christ is a consuming fire. THE LAMB AND THE BOOK.

Revelation 5.

I. The Book (Revelation 5:1-4). Note a. Not the book of life-that is already the Lamb's. b. It is the Book of Judgment-the book of the secret acts of God. c. Note.

1. It is a Sealed Book. Its secrets known only to God. a. In Daniel 12:1-3 we read of the Great Tribulation. But Daniel is not permitted to do more than make known that fact, not the particulars. Hence Daniel 12:4. b. The Book is about to be unsealed and particulars made known. c. But even John is not allowed to reveal all he saw (Revelation 10:4).

2. It is A Completed, Filled up Book. a. It was written on both sides. b. Therefore no space for further writing. c. It contained the whole counsel of God. d. The designs and methods of God during the Great Tribulation are fixed and made a matter of record, and this record is known to none but Himself.

3. It is a Book to be only Opened by One Worthy. a. The possession of God's secrets is a privilege conditional on personal worthiness. b. No one was found worthy either in Heaven or earth. c. Does the fact of the unworthiness of man cause us to weep?

4. The Book- a. Of Life. A register of names (Revelation 3:5). b. Of Works. A register of works (Revelation 20:12). c. Of God's Judgments. A register of God's punishments (Rev. 5.).

II. The Lamb (Revelation 5:5-6).

1. The Supremacy of the Lord Jesus. "In midst."

2. The Pre-eminence of the Lord Jesus.

3. The Power of the Lord Jesus.

4. The Wisdom of the Lord Jesus.

Seven Horns. Completeness of strength. Seven Eyes. Completeness of wisdom.

5. The Ministry of the Lord Jesus.

6. The Kingliness of the Lord Jesus.

7. The Uniqueness of the Lord Jesus.

"Root of David" (a son father of his father).

8. The Worship of the Lord Jesus.

III. The New Song. Song of Redemption.

1. Price. Blood.

2. Objects. "Men of every," etc.

3. Purpose. "For God."

4. Result. Kings and priests.

5. Glory. Only to Lord. THE PRIESTHOOD OF BELIEVERS

Revelation 5:9-10

It is well for us to keep in mind the difference between priesthood and apostleship. The priest represented the people before God, the apostle represents God before the people. Jesus Christ was both Apostle and High Priest. God's purpose in grace was to manifest Himself to man; this He might have done without any human medium, but it pleased Him to call Aaron and his sons, that they might, through sacrifice, act as mediators between Him and the people, thus shadowing forth Him who was to be the great High Priest and only Mediator between God and man. Christ was a Priest after the order of Melchisedec- royal priesthood-having no predecessor and no successor. By His birth He set aside the Aaronic priesthood, by His death the veil of the temple was rent in twain. He offered Himself a sacrifice, and entered "by His own blood." Now we who believe have been redeemed to God by His blood and made unto God kings and priests.

I. Our Calling. No man taketh this honour unto himself but he that, is called of God, as was Aaron (Hebrews 5:4). Aaron was chosen of God, and his sons were chosen with him (Leviticus 8:2). We are chosen in Christ--and what a mystery-before the foundation of the world. The sons of Aaron were priests by birth. There is no other way of getting into the priesthood that God accepts and owns but by being "born from above." Neither a priestly robe nor a priestly profession constituted' a priest; the sons of Aaron were priests independently of these. In these days it is to be feared that many are substituting the robe and the profession for the call of God.

II. Our Character.

1. WE ARE CLEANSED. "Aaron and his sons were washed with water" (Leviticus 8:6). Whom He calls, them He also justifies. The call of God implies cleansing from all sin. Called to be holy. There can be no fitness for service till the question of sin has been settled and guilt put away. "Except I wash thee thou hast no part with Me."

2. WE ARE CLOTHED. "And Moses brought Aaron's sons, and put coats upon them" (Revelation 5:12). Aaron, as a type of our great High Priest, wears the "breastplate," and is clothed with robes of "glory and beauty;" the sons, as representing believers, put on the "pure linen," which speaks of the righteousness of the saints, which is the righteousness of God unto all, and upon all them that believe.

3. WE ARE CLAIMED. "The blood was put upon their ear, hand, and foot" (Leviticus 8:24). The blood speaks of redemption, redeemed to God, and claimed by God- "priests unto God" (Revelation 5:10). The blood-sprinkled foot, hand, and ear may remind us of a blood-purchased body, soul, and spirit. Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your bodies and spirits, which are His.

4. WE ARE SANCTIFIED. The anointing oil was sprinkled upon them and upon their garments (Leviticus 8:30). This holy anointing shadows forth the blessing of Pentecost. The precious ointment flowed from the head of Aaron, the high priest, down to the skirts of his garments. This was fulfilled at Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit, typified by the oil, was poured out over the head of Him who is our great High Priest, down to "your sons and daughters" (Acts 2:17), who are as the skirts of His garments. No priest was allowed to officiate without this anointing; before we can be "priests unto God" we must be anointed with this heavenly oil. For what is called "Divine service" there must needs be a Divine fitness.

III. Our Privilege.

1. WE ARE PRIESTS UNTO GOD. As ambassadors, we are sent forth for God. It is to be lamented that these offices are so largely confounded among men in their Christian practice. Before God, we should ever come with solemn, sacred, humble, heart-felt awe. As priests, there must be no frivolity, no pretence nor unreality. Before men, as witnesses, there must be no flinching, no wavering, or cowardliness; the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, must be told out. Alas, when men invert this order, and bring the brazen face to God and the velvet tongue to the ungodly.

2. AS PRIESTS, WE HAVE LIBERTY OF ACCESS. Only the priest was allowed to pass through the veil into the presence of God. Oh, what grace to be permitted to stand before God! By Him-who was sacrificed for Us-we also have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God (Romans 5:2). Liberty of access surely implies liberty of success.

3. AS PRIESTS, WE OFFER SPIRITUAL SACRIFICES (1 Peter 2:5). The world sets little value on a humble "broken spirit," but it is a sacrifice of sweet savour unto God (Psalms 51:17). May we so be saved from all pride and self-will, that the incense of a "broken spirit" may ever ascend. If this is our character and condition We shall be well fitted to offer the sacrifice of praise which shall glorify God.

4. AS PRIESTS, WE MAKE INTERCESSION. Abraham acted the priest when he pleaded for Sodom; Moses, when he interceded for the people; Paul, when he prayed for Israel. What a privilege and power prayer is! And it is within the reach of every Christian. Many may not be able to sing or preach, but all can "make intercession." If as priests we were more frequently in the secret place of the closet, we would prevail more as princes with God and with man. The people of

Israel were blessed after the priest had been in the presence of God. So our Father will not reward us openly as witnesses unless we have been much with Him secretly as priests (Matthew 6:6). Believer, are you using this privilege as you ought?

SEVERE JUDGMENTS ON THE EARTH.

Revelation 6.

Introduction.

1. Our warships sometimes sail under sealed orders. Only in midst of ocean have the seals to be broken. The Roll of Judgment containing the deep secret purposes of God is sealed with seven seals, i.e., perfectly seated.

2. It is the Lamb who opens the Sealed Book containing the deep, hidden, and sealed purposes of God. The key of the future is in the hands of Christ.

3. The Day of Tribulation begins with the opening of the First Seal.

4. The judgments increase in intensity and severity as they proceed.

I. First Seal: Invasion-by Antichrist (Revelation 6:1-2).

1. "A bow," but no arrows, hinting at bloodless victories.

2. A great conqueror, and a great conquest.

II. Second Seal: Civil War (Revelation 6:3-4).

III. Third Seal: Famine. Food 16 times more costly than ordinarily. In the reign of Tragan one penny bought twenty measures.

IV. Fourth Seal: Pestilence and Death. (Revelation 6:7-8). "Death appears mounted on a horse, not on a throne; he arrives, he passes by" (C. G. Rossetti).

V. Fifth Seal: Jewish Martyrs (Revelation 6:9-11). This fifth seal is marked off and separated from all the others.

1. Their Identity.

2. Their Loyalty to God's Word.

3. Their Prayers.

4. The Departed: a. Are not non-existent. b. Are not unconscious. c. Retain a consciousness of their former life on earth. d. Retain the power of prayer. e. Are capable of receiving knowledge. f. Are capable of receiving additional comfort and glory. g. These were impatient for the hour of justice and recompence to strike.

VI. Sixth Seal: Signs in Heaven Above and In Earth Beneath (Revelation 6:12-17).

1. A great earthquake.

2. A great hiding.

3. They wanted to be hidden from the face of the Lord. We mourn when He hides His face.

4. Question in Revelation 6:17 : "Who shall be able to stand," is answered in Revelation 7:9.

5. "Moved out of their places" (Revelation 6:14) foretold Matthew 24:35; Isaiah 34:4; Isaiah 13:6-13). THE SEALED ISRAELITES AND THE REDEEMED GENTILES.

Revelation 7.

Note.

1. This is the first of several parenthesis in Revelation.

2. It is given to show us that a great work of grace will be wrought during the Great Tribulation.

I. The Sealing (Revelation 7:1-8).

1. Preparation. a. Revelation 7:1. No influence from East, West, North, or South, can be allowed to hinder what God is now about to do. b. Revelation 7:2. They are marked as God's, not by a man out of the City, as in Ezek. 9, but by an angel. (You will note that the Beast, too, has his seal for his followers. See Revelation 13:16-18; Revelation 14:9-11; Revelation 16:2; Revelation 19:20; Revelation 20:4). c. Ezekiel 9:3. A visible sealing. The Romans marked their soldiers on their hands, but their slaves on their foreheads.

2. Subjects. a. A change of Dispensation. Israel now taken up. b. Note: Levi included, but Dan omitted. Why? (See Deuteronomy 29:18-21). c. Lessons: i. By association with the Lord Jesus we shall be exalted. ii. "Be sure your sin will find you out." iii. The preserving character of present-day sealing. iv. We do not know what this seal will be. v. Success of this sealing (Revelation 14:1-5).

II. The Great Multitude (Revelation 7:9-17).

1. Comforting. To distressed workers and tried Christians.

2. Who are they? a. Not the Church. They have been translated. b. Not the Bride, for she is in, not before the Throne. c. Redeemed ones who have passed through "The Great Tribulation."

3. Their Position. a. Before the Throne. b. Serve Him constantly. c. Indwelt by God. d. No more hunger, etc. e. No more tears.

SILENCE IN HEAVEN.

Revelation 8, 9.

I. Silence (Revelation 8:1-6).

1. Strange that silence should be the first result of the opening of the Seventh Seal.

2. The need of silence in our own spiritual lives.

3. This is the silence before the storm.

4. It is a silence that prayer might be heard.

5. How our prayers are offered (Revelation 8:3-4).

6. The direct result of the offering of the prayers was awful judgment.

7. The prayers in Revelation 6:10 are presented (Revelation 8:3-4) and answered (Revelation 8:5).

II. The Trumpet Judgments (Revelation 8:7-13; Revelation 9:1-21). a. This Seventh Seal is remarkable as that which discloses the judgment of deepest woe. b. These plagues correspond very closely with the plagues of Egypt, only these are universal and horrible.

1. Judgment which Affected Land (Revelation 8:7). Trees well-known symbol of human greatness (Daniel 4:4-27).

2. Judgment on Sea. One-third of fish and shipping destroyed. (Revelation 8:8-9). A mountain in Scripture language represents a kingdom (Isaiah 11:9; Zechariah 4:7; Jeremiah 51:25).

3. Judgment Affecting Drinking Water (Revelation 8:10-11). Note, not a mountain, but like one, "as it were."

4. Judgment Obscuring Sun, Moon, and Stars (Revelation 8:12-13).

5. Strange Locust Judgment (Revelation 9:1-12). Locusts have no king (Proverbs 30:27), but these have, and his name is given (Revelation 9:11).

(a) Opened Heaven in Revelation 4:1; now opened Hell (Revelation 9:2).

(b) The Star fallen from Heaven-the Prince of the Power of the Air. c. Hellish origin of this plague. d. Not to kill, but torment (Revelation 9:5). e. Not able to die (Revelation 9:6). f. The locust army is a symbolical representation of judgment of a superhuman kind.

6. An Army of Cavalry, Two Hundred Million in Number (Revelation 9:13-21). a. The Sixth Trumpet summons a swift overwhelming, and destructive host from the East to stay men of the Western Empire. b. Dreadful picture of human perversity (Revelation 9:20-21).

VICTORY AT LAST.

Revelation 10:1-11 and Revelation 11:1-18.

Note.

1. Instead of the Seventh Trumpet sounding, we have another parenthesis. Why? It is that we may turn from these scenes of terror to get another glimpse of the Lord.

2. Before the Seventh Seal was opened a sealing took place (see Revelation 10:7); before the Seventh Trumpet is sounded we have another sealing (Revelation 10:4).

3. We come to the close of the first section of this third great division (Revelation 4:1-11:18).

I. The Angel (Revelation 10:1-7). (The Lord Jesus). He comes down from Heaven as the great Antagonist of the "Angel of the Abyss," who comes up from below, and is enveloped in the cloud of the smoke of the Pit.

1. His Might.

2. His Descent.

3. His Majesty. Clothed with a cloud. Special sign of Jehovah's majesty (Isaiah 19:1). The drapery of the sky floats upon His shoulders; the rainbow forms His diadem.

4. His Act of Possession.

5. His Shout of Victory (Revelation 10:3).

6. His Declaration ("Delay no longer," Revelation 10:6).

"The description of this Angel has been admired by every classical scholar. Considered merely as a literary production, it stands unrivalled by anything we meet with in all the pages of Grecian and Roman literature."

II. The Little Book (Revelation 10:8-11).

1. There are many things sweet to know, but bitter to realise.

2. It is sweet to be in the service of the Lord, yet there is bitterness also.

3. The servant of the Lord, to be a true witness, must first assimilate the message.

III. The Measuring (Revelation 11:1-2).

1. The Temple is to be rebuilt (see 2 Thessalonians 2:4).

2. The Lord taking under His special care: a. Holy Place. b. Brazen Altar. c. The Worshippers.

IV. The Two Witnesses (Revelation 11:3-12).

1. Who are they? Are they Enoch and Elijah? Or Elijah and Moses? (See Malachi 4:5-6; Matthew 11:14).

2. Note, they: a. Are empowered by the Lord (Revelation 11:3). b. Preach 3-1/2 years. c. Exercise their ministry on Old Testament lines (Revelation 11:5-6). d. Killed when work is finished (Revelation 11:7-8). e. Their dead bodies maltreated (Revelation 11:8). f. Rejoicing of enemies cut short by their resurrection and glorification (Revelation 11:11-12).

3. Note the first mention of the Beast (Revelation 11:7).

V. The Great Earthquake (Revelation 11:13-14).

VI. The Seventh Trumpet of Victory (Revelation 11:15).

VII. The Song of the Messiah (Revelation 11:16-18). This is the fourth great song in the Book. 1st, was the Song of Creation (Revelation 4:9-11). 2nd, was the Song of Redemption (Revelation 5:9-14). 3rd, was the Song of Victory (Revelation 7:9-12). 4th, was the Song of Messiah (Revelation 11:17-18).

SATANIC POWERS.

Revelation 11:19; Revelation 12:1-17; Revelation 13:1-18

The Satanic Powers Operating During the Great Tribulation.

Introduction.

1. We begin a study of the 2nd Section of this 3rd Division of the Book of the Revelation.

2. The former division (Revelation 4:1 to Revelation 11:18 of chap. 11) had more do do with secular wickedness, and its standpoint is the Throne; this division has more to do with religious wickedness, and its standpoint is the Temple.

3. The other section began with Christ glorified (Revelation 4:5) and ended with Christ triumphant (Revelation 10:11); this section takes us further back still, to the Birth of Christ, and back to events further still, giving us many additional details.

4. We get in this section the inner view of events, the mighty evil personalities behind all the terrible apostasy and wickedness of the last days.

5. Note: Sign (Revelation 12:1, margin).

I. The Woman (Revelation 12:1-2).

1. Not Christ; nor Church; not Mrs. Baker Eddy (as Christian Scientists declare); nor Virgin Mary (as some Roman Catholics assert).

2. The Woman is Israel, whose glory is described with unimaginable splendour.

3. Note, might and borrowed light under her feet.

II. The Dragon (Revelation 12:3-4).

1. Another wonder, not a great wonder.

2. Only ten horns.

3. "The tail"-meaning his influence. He led to ruin many of the Heavenly beings.

III. The Man Child (Revelation 12:5).

1. No difficulty in recognising who is meant by Man Child, when Revelation 13:5 is compared with Psalms 2:9. It is Christ.

2. His life and death passed over, as this is emphasised elsewhere.

IV. The War in Heaven (12:7-9, 12).

1. At present Satan is "prince of the power of the air."

2. He has yet to be cast from thence by Michael the Archangel.

V. The Wilderness (12:6).

1. Dragon is first described as the enemy of the Child, but presently becomes the enemy of the woman.

2. He has always persecuted the true Israel.

3. Israel under Moses spent 40 years in the wilderness; they are yet to spend 3-1/2 years there.

VI. The Dragon Standing on a Sea-shore (Revelation 13:1, R.V.). Significance of calling them Beasts.

1. The First Beast (Revelation 13:1-10). a. This is not only the Imperial system of Rome revived, a great political power, but a person-Antichrist. b. A caricature of the resurrection (Revelation 13:3). c. His work (Revelation 13:5-10).

2. The Second Beast (Revelation 13:11-18). a. Coming up "out of the earth" is out of a settled order of things. b. He is the False Prophet (Revelation 16:13; Revelation 19:20; Revelation 20:10). A great ecclesiastical power. c. Our Lord spoke of false prophets as well as false Christs (Matthew 24:5, Matthew 24:11, Matthew 24:24; Mark 13:22). d. His speech betrayed him (13, Revelation 11:11).

Finis. Three great requisites for these times (Revelation 13:10).

1. Flight (Matthew 24:15-28; Mark 13:14-23; Revelation 12:14).

2. Patience (Revelation 1:9; Revelation 2:19; Revelation 3:10; Revelation 14:9-12).

3. Faith (Revelation 2:10, Revelation 2:13, Revelation 2:17; Revelation 17:14). THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN.

Revelation 14:1-20; Revelation 15:1-8; Revelation 16:1-21.

Introduction.

1. The last chapter (Rev 13) is the darkest chapter in this Book.

2. What a relief to turn away from the awesome sight of the dread Trinity of Evil to get another glimpse of the Lord.

3. In last chapter we saw the Devil and his associates busy; but what is God doing with and for His own? In this study we see the result of the Lord's working.

I. The Lamb and the Sealed (Revelation 14:1-5).

1. Mount Zion, Jerusalem-there to take possession of the city (Revelation 14:1).

2. Lamb standing, not sitting.

3. With Him are those who were sealed in chapter 7, only since then they have passed through the Tribulation.

4. Their appearance on Mount Sion with the Lamb is the occasion of great rejoicing among their brethren, the martyred saints of the Tribulation, now risen and in Heaven (Revelation 14:2).

5. The Character of the Sealed AND Redeemed. a. Purity (Revelation 14:4). Free from the awful moral impurity associated with idolatry; free from spiritual impurities in worship and practice. (Newman erroneously took this as eulogising celibacy). b. Obedience and Discipleship. "Follow the Lamb" (Revelation 14:4). c. Truthfulness (Revelation 14:5). "The lie." d. Blamelessness (Revelation 14:5).

II. The Preaching of the Everlasting Gospel (Revelation 14:6-7).

1. Not the Gospel preached to-day.

2. Note: a. No sound of mercy nor story of love. No mention of the Name of Jesus. b. It speaks of fearing God: of Judgment. c. It is the Gospel of God as Creator.

III. A Terrible Picture of Fate of Ungodly (14:8-13). Most terrible picture of the fate of ungodly to be found in Scripture. The eye shrinks from the spectacle. It is given as a warning against worshipping the Beast.

1. Four Pourings Out. a. Blood (Leviticus 4:7). b. Blessing (Malachi 3:10). c. Holy Spirit (Acts 2:17-18). d. Wrath (Revelation 14:10).

2. No Rest-For a. The Redeemed (Revelation 4:8; Revelation 14:13). b. The Ungodly (Revelation 14:11).

Rest from works, but not rest from worship.

IV. Christ as Judge Coming in the Clouds of Heaven (Revelation 14:14-20). "White cloud"-symbol of the Divine Presence.

V. The Completion of God's Wrath (Revelation 15:1-8; Revelation 16:1-21).

1. Seven angels with the seven last plagues (Revelation 15:1).

2. The victorious martyred company of Judah (Revelation 15:2-4).

3. The ministers of God's wrath equipped for judgment (Revelation 15:5-6).

4. The Plagues (Revelation 16:1-21).

Conclusion.

Note two statements concerning the Head of the Son of Man. First time His Head referred to in New Testament, Luke 9:58. Last time His Head referred to in New Testament, Revelation 14:14.

BABYLON THE GREAT.

Revelation 17:1-18; Revelation 18:1-24; Revelation 19:1-16.

Introduction.

Law of Recurrence. This law is seen in operation in connection with Babylon. It was mentioned in Revelation for the first time in Revelation 14:8, and again in Revelation 16:19. The writer returns to this subject to give additional particulars.

Notable Fact. Here is a most notable fact, that no event, save the death of the Lord Jesus, has been so much made of in the Word of God as giving such intense satisfaction, as the fall of Babylon. Why is this?

History of Babylon. Satan is an imitator. God's Holy City is Jerusalem. God having His City, Satan must have one, too and Babylon is Satan's capital. It was founded by the Lord's opponent (Genesis 10:9). It was built as is recorded in Gen. 11. This eleventh chapter of Genesis records two facts, the building of Babel and call of Abraham, that is, man's attempt to establish himself

upon the earth, and God calling a man out of it, to find his portion and home in Heaven.

What is Meant by Babylon? Is this Babylon or Rome? There is Babylon mystical and Babylon literal (see Revelation 17:18). The Woman.

1. We have read of a woman before (see Rev 12).

2. But there are striking differences. a. The other clothed with light-all the adorning of this one is counterfeit (for "decked" read "gilded."). b. The sun-clothed woman had no name-this one has (Revelation 17:3; Revelation 17:5). c. The first one stood on the moon; this one is seen sitting on a beast (Revelation 17:3), i.e., upheld by Satan and Antichrist. Who is this Woman?

1. Roman Catholics say the woman was Pagan Rome.

2. Protestants say it is Papal Rome. The officials of the Roman Catholic Church array themselves in those colours.

3. A City? Yes (Revelation 17:18). It is both. It is a City, the seat of a false religious system, supported by Antichrist.

I. The Vision (Revelation 17:1-6).

1. One of the Seven Vial angels.

2. "The Great Whore"-City (Revelation 17:18).

3. Scarlet Coloured Beast-Papal Rome.

4. Seven Heads-Forms of Government.

5. Ten Horns-Royal personages.

6. Names of Blasphemy-Many and varied forms of self-will and rebellion against God.

7. "Decked"-Having a wondrous and attractive idolatrous system full of abominations.

8. Drunken with Blood-Guilty of many deaths.

II. The Interpretation (Revelation 17:7-18).

1. "Was"-Past; "is not;" at present; "shall ascend," that is, shall be resurrected (Revelation 17:8).

2. "Seven Mountains"-The Seven Hilled" City of Rome.

3. Make War with the Lamb.

III. The Fulfilment (Revelation 18:1-24).

1. "Habitation of devils"-Headquarters of Spiritism.

2. Call to separation (Revelation 18:4).

3. Her wickedness (Revelation 18:5).

4. The merchandise.

5. "In one hour," "In one day" (Revelation 18:8; Revelation 18:10; Revelation 18:17; Revelation 18:19).

IV. The Rejoicing (Revelation 19:1-16). The Amens.

1. Amen to the Curses (Deuteronomy 27:15).

2. Amen to St. John's strange command (1 John 5:21).

3. Amen to His Presence (Matthew 28:20).

4. Amen to the Lord's Working (Mark 16:20).

5. Amen to His Coming (Revelation 22:20).

6. Amen with the Alleluia (Revelation 19:4).

SOME OF THE LAST THINGS.

Revelation 19:1-21; Revelation 20:1-15.

How significant are the words of our Lord in Matthew 26:63-64. On the right hand of power He has been sitting ever since His Ascension, while He has gathered His beloved Church to Himself, Now the second part of the statement is to be fulfilled, "Coming in the clouds of Heaven."

I. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:1-10).

1. Note the Four Hallelujahs (Revelation 19:1-6).

2. This is the first occurrence of this word in the New Testament.

3. The first occurrence of this word, Alleluia, in the Old Testament corresponds in a marked manner with its first occurrence in the New Testament. We first find it in Psalms 104:35. What the people of the world lament over ("woe" or "alas", Revelation 18:9-10), these say, Alleluia!

4. On Psalms 104:3, Tennyson the poet, wrote: "Magnificent conception, darkness and fire rolling together for ever and ever."

5. Then in Psalms 104:7-10 we have the Marriage of the Lamb. The Bride is the Church. Blessed are they who are "called" (Revelation 19:9), yet more blessed are they who call- the Bride. Note the folly of the adoration of angels and saints (Revelation 19:10).

II. The Great Supper of God (Revelation 19:11-21).

1. The Second Advent of the Word of God (Revelation 19:11-16). Heaven opened, not a door in Heaven as formerly ((Revelation 19:14). Observe the Lord's three names ((Revelation 19:12-13; Revelation 19:16). Note, an army without weapons.

2. The Battle of Armageddon (Revelation 19:17-21). This will be the last battle. "War against Him." Who? The Lord. Observe, "Cast alive."

III. The Millennium (Revelation 20:1-6).

1. Observe: Chains that can bind spirits (Revelation 20:3). There are chains that can bind flesh and blood, and there are chains that can bind spirits. Thrones (Revelation 20:4).

2. "Laid hold on the dragon" (Revelation 20:2). He who has planned all and used 'all for the accomplishment of his own sinful purposes, must now be dealt with.

3. The first Resurrection we have recorded in Psalms 104:5 and Psalms 104:6.

IV. After the Thousand Years (Revelation 20:7-15).

1. After the Millennium Satan must be loosed (Revelation 20:7). Observe the "must" of Divine necessity in Psalms 104:3.

2. Satan's going out himself to deceive (Revelation 20:8). So here he does not leave this to others. His special tool at this time will be Gog, prince of Rosh, Mesech, and Tubal.

3. Gog and Magog. Gog and Magog denote the nations as a whole. Magog is mentioned in Genesis 10:2, as the first son of Japhet. Josephus renders the word Magog, Scythians. The two words combine the nations North and East of Palestine. The word Magog is found only in Genesis 10:2, as a son of Japhet; in Ezekiel where it means a land or country of which Gog is the prince; and in Revelation 20:8, where Gog and Magog appears to be an inclusive term for the Gentile nations. Ezekiel 38 and 39 must be distinguished from Rev. 20. Ezekiel records the war referred to in Revelation 16:14; Revelation 17:4; Revelation 19:17-21, which takes place before the Millennium, while Rev. 20 takes place after it.

4. "Compassed the camp of the saints" (Revelation 20:9). Ezekiel 38:18-22. So terrific will be the slaughter, that it will take seven months to bury the dead, and for seven years the children of Israel will have fuel enough for their use from the wood of the weapons left behind upon the field.

5. "Great White Throne" (Revelation 20:11).

Note.

a. "Great," indicating the greatness of the occasion. b. "White"-purity, holiness, righteousness. c. No name and no rainbow given, no form described- only an awful mysterious presence. d. "Small and great"-all classes. e. "Stand"-past kneeling, past praying. f. "Books"-vouchers for the Book of Life. g. "According to their works." THE HOLY CITY.

Revelation 21:1-27; Revelation 22:1-5.

Introduction.

1. Three Jerusalems: a. Present City now existing. b. Heavenly City-a literal City in Heaven. c. Mystical City-both a people and a city here in Revelation.

2. Is the City of Verse 2 same as Verse 10? a. Walter Scott says: "The 'coming down' in Revelation 21:2 is a thousand years after the 'coming down' of Revelation 21:10. The former is in Eternity, the latter is at the commencement of the Millennial Age; the former the Church comes down to the eternal earth, in the latter she rests over the Millennial earth." b. The Law of Recurrence explains.

3. This chapter and next deal with eternal events. The Eternal times and events are described more fully in the first eight verses of 21 (Revelation 21:1-8), than in any other portion of the inspired Word.

I. New Heaven and a New Earth (Revelation 21:1).

1. The Divine declaration in Revelation 21:5 (present tense).

2. The Fulfilment (in Revelation 21:1).

3. The Agent-First (2 Peter 3:10).

(Holy Land given to Israel for an everlasting possession).

Note.

1. A "new earth" does not necessarily mean another earth.

2. To make all things new is different to making new things, e.g., make a new garment out of an old one.

3. Two words translated "new" in New Testament: a. That which has recently been brought into existence. b. A fresh aspect, given to what has previously existed, but being outward. The latter is the meaning here.

4. No More Sea. a. Literally true then. b. Spiritually true, too. No more mystery, lawlessness, unrest.

5. Everlasting distinction even in Heaven of earthly and heavenly people.

II. The New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:2-27; Revelation 22:1-5).

1. What was Necessary before John Saw (Revelation 21:2; Revelation 21:9-10). John was led into the wilderness that he might see Babylon (Revelation 17:1), the false Church and City; he must be placed on high ground that he might see the true Church and City.

2. What he Saw. A city and a people (Revelation 21:2; Revelation 21:9).

3. The City: a. Expected. Looked for (Hebrews 11:13-16). b. Origin. Like Jesus and Holy Spirit, it descended out of heaven (Revelation 21:2-10). c. Character. Holy (Revelation 21:2; Revelation 21:10). A Holy City must come from above.

4. Beauty (Revelation 21:2; Revelation 21:11; Revelation 21:18-21). a. Glory of God. Not like Babylon, glory of man. b. Pure gold, yet transparent (Revelation 21:18). c. Authorities in precious stones marvel at the amazing skill here displayed in the harmonising and arrangements of the colours.

5. Its Lack. No Temple (Revelation 21:22). Therefore far beyond the Millennium.

6. Its Size. Greatness, 1500 miles in length, breadth, and height (Revelation 21:16).

7. Its Ample Protection. a. Strong City surrounded by a wall (12) 216 feet high. b. See Revelation 21:27.

8. Its Popularity (24).

9. Its Light (23).

10. Its Life (Revelation 22:1).

11. Its Glorious Inhabitants (Revelation 21:3, Revelation 21:22).

12. A Splendid Array of Negatives. Tears (Revelation 22:3).

13. Three Elements of the Perfect State of Man: a. Service. b. Contemplative. c. Likeness.

14. Freely (Revelation 21:6). THE COMING OF CHRIST.

Revelation 22:6-21.

Introduction.

1. Affirmations concerning the truth of the Book of the Revelation. a. By God Himself (Revelation 21:5). b. An an Angel (Revelation 22:6). c. By the Lord Jesus (Revelation 22:16, Revelation 22:18-19).

2. The Imminence of His Second Advent. a. By Angel (Revelation 22:6; Revelation 22:10). b. By Lord Jesus (Revelation 22:7; Revelation 22:12; Revelation 22:20).

3. Reaffirmed blessing for readers and keepers of this book (Revelation 22:7). "He," not "they," as in Revelation 1:3.

4. The second time John failed in the presence of these glorious scenes (Revelation 22:8-9). "Worship God" (note John 5:23).

5. Obedience to commands is not the ground on which Eternal Life is bestowed (14. Note R.V. and John 5:24).

6. Daniel has to "seal the Book" (Daniel 12:4) for the time of the end was far off; here "Seal not the sayings. . for the time is at hand."

7. In eternity no further offer of mercy (Revelation 22:11; Revelation 22:15).

8. Note the significance of Revelation 1:16. Source, yet offshoot of David.

9. The last of the "Gospel 'Comes' of the Bible" (Revelation 22:17).

10. Old Testament ends with a "curse" (Malachi 4:6); New Testament ends with a blessing (Revelation 22:21).

I. Imminent. Can you say, "Even so Come?"

1. Significance of Current Movements.

III. Why is the Second Advent Never Mentioned in New Testament except in a casual kind of way? Because the primitive believers were so well-instructed in Second Advent truth.

IV. The Most Prominent Theme in the Bible.

V. The Progress of the Divine Revelation concerning the Lord's Coming in the Bible.

VI. The Lord's Promise (John 14:3).

VII. Each Apostle Emphasises a Different Phase of the Lord's Return.

1. With James it was Justice (James 5:1-7).

2. With Jude it was Judgment (Jude 1:14-15).

3. With Peter it was Majesty (2 Peter 1:16).

4. With Paul it was Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13-14).

5. With Hebrews it was Fulfilment (Hebrews 9:28).

6. With John it was Purity (1 John 3:3).

VIII. The Lord's Coming.

1. Testimony of the Angels (Acts 1:9-11). a. Certainty. "Shall." b. Identity. "This same Jesus." c. Manner. "So come." d. Pre-millennial. e. Time. f. Fruit.

2. Testimony of the Apostles. a. Why observe Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:26). b. We shall not all die (1 Corinthians 15:51-52). c. Of Paul when Old (Titus 2:11-14). d. Three Appearances. i. Past (Hebrews 9:26). ii. Present (Hebrews 9:24). iii. Future (Hebrews 9:28). e. Three Shepherds. i. Good (John 10:11). ii. Great (Hebrews 13:20). iii. Chief (1 Peter 5:4). f. Three Comings. i. He came first to die. ii. Next time He will come for His own (1 Thessalonians 4:17). iii. Finally He will come with His own (2 Thessalonians 1:7).

IX. General Outline of Events at and succeeding His Coming. The Four Judgments.

1. Judgment at the Reward Seat (2 Corinthians 5:10). In the air. (Immediately.) 2. Judgment of Living Nations, on the earth (Matthew 25:31). (Seven years afterwards.) 3. Judgment of the Unconverted Dead at the Great White Throne (1000 years after). (Revelation 20:11-12).

4. Judgment of Angels (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 1:6; 1 Corinthians 6:3).

X. To be More than a Mere Doctrine. "Love." (2 Timothy 4:8).

Chapter 83

Expository Studies

Expository Studies

Chapter 84

The Penitential Psalm

The Penitential Psalm A THREEFOLD VIEW OF SIN.

Psalms 51:1-5.

INTRODUCTION.

1. The 51st Psalm is one of the great Penitential Psalms.

2. It has been called "The Sinner's Guide."

3. Have you ever read it on your knees? For years the Author has read this Psalm on his knees every Lord's Day morning.

4. Remember it was the prayer of "a man after God's own heart," who had gone astray.

5. It is thus the prayer of a sinning saint.

6. A whole year had elapsed between David's crime and David's penitence (Far, far too long).

7. It had been a year of misery, as Psalm 32 shows. (Psalm 32 is David's account of his experiences during that year.) 8. In mercy came Nathan the Prophet.

9. The cold frost that had bound his soul melted away, and he confessed his sin.

10. Though forgiven immediately, yet he comes into the sanctuary and wails out this hymn of agony and sorrow.

11. This Psalm repays careful study.

12. First, let us study David's view of sin.

13. Here we see how David viewed his sin after (not before) his restoration. No one can have a right view of sin until forgiven.

14. There is a threefold repetition that is very impressive. "It is not a mere piece of Hebrew parallelism. It is more than the requirements of poetical form. It is the earnestness of a soul that cannot be content with once asking for the blessing, but dwells upon them with repeated supplication."

What a Man Thought of Sin who had Sinned.

1. The very hard things that are said in this Psalm about sin, are said by this man about himself.

2. Pray remember, we have here not merely what a man thought of sin, but what a man thought who had sinned.

3. We have something more than a theological treatise.

Tread Softly.

1. And because of that we must tread softly.

2. We must handle the words with the reverent sadness with which we enter the house of mourning.

Why have we Largely Lost the Sense of Sin?

1. A young minister put this question to an eminent Christian Judge, and he replied: "Because the world is losing its consciousness of God, and when men lose the consciousness of God's existence they lose their fear of sin."

2. Fear is a very wholesome preventative in our civic and national life.

3. Men fear to break the laws of the country because of punishment for so doing.

4. When I am possessed of a consciousness of God I not only fear to sin, but fear because of sin.

I. HE VIEWED HIS GRIME AS TRANSGRESSION (Psalms 51:1; Psalms 51:3).

1. The startling fact discovered from a study of the word "sin" is that it means much more than stepping over a mark, the interpretation usually given.

2. For it is the English translation of the Hebrew word "pesha"-rebellion.

3. By Young's Concordance we find the word "transgress" in our English Bibles is the translation of several different Hebrew and Greek words. a. Deceive-to deal treacherously-"Bagad." b. Trespass-"Maal." c. Passover-"Abar." d. Rebel-"Pasha."

4. In the New Testament the words there carry all these meanings: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth (does lawlessness) the law."

5. That is the root idea in the word transgression.

6. It really means rebellion, a breaking away from, and a setting of oneself against lawful authority.

7. Transgression is rebellion against a rightful sovereign.

8. In this word we get the outward aspect of sin.

9. And this is the first view of sin in the Psalm.

II. HE VIEWED HIS GRIME AS INIQUITY (Psalms 51:2; Psalms 51:5).

1. Observe, he first used the plural, now the singular.

2. This is the inward aspect of sin.

3. Young gives "perversity" as the meaning of "avon," the Hebrew word here.

4. This indicates that iniquity means that which is twisted, bent, wrung, or warped from the straight line of right.

5. To that line, drawn by God's law, our lives should run parallel, bending neither to the right hand nor to the left.

6. "I was shapen in iniquity." This does not mean that motherhood is a sin, and maidenhood more holy and blessed, bat that the twist in our natures is inherited from our parents.

7. Sin consists not only in wrong doing, but in wrong being.

8. It also consists not only in actual wrong committed, but in the intention, the will, the wrong attitude of the soul. An aged and wealthy physician in Prussia was found dead in his bed, with finger marks around his throat, and a knife wound in his chest. His house had been plundered. Soon after an upholsterer was arrested in a neighbouring town with some of the stolen property in his possession. He made a full confession, telling how he had killed the aged physician in his sleep. But the Doctor who had performed the post-mortem examination declared that the man had died of apoplexy, and must have been dead before the burglar had broken into the house. The prisoner, in spite of his murderous intent was only punished for burglary. Under human law he was a burglar; under Divine law he was a murderer.

III. HE VIEWS HIS GRIME AS SIN (Psalms 51:3-5).

1. Young gives the Hebrew word to be "chata," i.e., missing the mark.

2. Sin is coming short of God's mark.

3. It seems to point out that every sin is a blunder as well as a crime.

4. "Thee only." What is the meaning of this? Has not David made a mistake? Had he not wronged man as well as God? Answer: a. Here we have the language of a thoroughly penitent man. The half repentant man fixes his eye on the humiliation and shame, on the opinion of his fellows, on the disgrace it will mean to him. But the man who has got to the heart of the matter puts men and reputation out of view, forgetting every one but God. b. Strictly speaking, sin can only be against God. c. The returned prodigal in Luke 15 put Heaven first, then his parent: "I have sinned against Heaven and in thy sight." A sure and convincing proof of his genuine repentance. And how this prayer was answered we shall see in our next study. A TRIPLE BLESSING.

"Blot"-"Wash"-"Cleanse" (Psalms 51:1-2)

INTRODUCTION.

Opinions.

1. "The 51st Psalm is theology made luminous" (Prof. Elmslie).

2. "The 51st Psalm is the noblest expression of Penitence."

What it Follows.

1. It is well to remember that this Psalm followed Nathan's declaration of the Divine forgiveness toward David.

2. This teaches: a. The revelation of God's love and wonderful grace precedes and is the cause of the truest penitence. b. The assurance of pardon, so far from making a man think lightly of his sin,

is the thing that drives it home to his conscience, and teaches him what it really is. c. Here is the true reason of Psalms 51:4. Pardoned, you think less of the consequence of sin, and more of the act (see Ezekiel 16:60-63),

Mercy.

1. He appeals at once to the mercy of God before he mentions his sin.

2. Mercy is a foremost attribute of God. The Lord passed by before Moses and proclaimed: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful" (Exodus 34:6).

3. The word "merciful" in Latin is very expressive- it is"misericordia," "miseria"-misery, and "cor" heart, i.e., a heart touched and pained at the misery of another.

"According to," i.e., in proportion to.

1. Note how he heaps up these phrases.

2. "Love-in-kindness;" "multitude of Thy tender mercies."

3. His whole hope rests upon God's own character as revealed in His Word and in the endless continuance of His acts of love.

Triple Blessing. As he spoke of sin in a threefold fashion, so he asks for a triple blessing. A Query.

1. Have we here David's cry for pardon?

2. Have we here how David thinks of forgiveness?

3. Why he was forgiven already!

4. We know that he knew very well that he was already forgiven (Psalms 32:5), and certainly he would not ask for what he already possessed.

5. We shall see in our study that he was asking for three further blessings: a. God's forgetfulness of His crime. b. God's sanctification of his soul. c. Fellowship with God and His people.

I. "BLOT OUT"-FORGETFULNESS OF SIN (Psalms 51:1; Psalms 51:9).

1. Young gives meaning of original as "To rub or wipe off."

2. He deserved to be blotted out of God's Book (Exodus 32:32), instead he asks for his sin to be blotted out.

3. I wonder if the Psalmist had Numbers 5:23 in mind- the blotting out of the curse from a scroll?

4. Here David asks the Lord to deal with his sin as an erasure of a writing or indictment, as the wiping out of a record of rebellion.

5. Is this possible? We know from Isaiah 43:25 and Isaiah 44:22 that it is.

6. Praise God, He not only forgives but forgets.

7. And it is done because of the Cross (Colossians 2:14).

II. "WASH "-DESIRE FOR PURITY (Psalms 51:2).

1. An examination of Young's Concordance shows that the Hebrew word "Kabas" (met with 37 times) is always used in relation to the cleansing of a garment. Another word is used for cleansing of hands and feet and body.

2. He recognises that sin, though pardoned, has defiled his soul, and now, being forgiven, he requires cleansing.

3. The garments of the soul require purity.

4. Note "Wash me throughly," literally "again and again."

5. He is praying for purity.

III. "CLEANSE"-ADMISSION INTO FELLOWSHIP (Psalms 51:2).

1. This is ceremonial cleansing.

2. It is the technical word for the priestly act of declaring ceremonial cleansing from the stain of leprosy (Leviticus 13:6-34).

3. Observe, the leper already was clean from his leprosy, but he had to be pronounced ceremonially clean before being allowed fellowship with God and Israel in Tabernacle or Temple worship.

4. David recognised that sin cut him off from fellowship with God; he is craving for restored fellowship. THE JUSTIFICATION OF GOD.

Psalms 51:4.

INTRODUCTION.

Uncommon.

1. This certainly is an uncommon subject.

2. The justification of the sinner is a well-known topic.

3. Not so the justification of God.

Important.

1. Yet one can easily see its importance.

2. Can God be justified in all His dealings with mankind?

3. You see, His very character is at stake.

True Meaning.

1. I don't think anyone will doubt that here David is anxious for the justification of God.

2. Bishop Patrick's paraphrase makes it clear: "If Thou shouldest pronounce the heaviest sentence upon me for my crimes, and execute it with the greatest severity, I could not accuse Thee of too

much rigour, but must still justify Thee in Thy proceedings, and clear Thee from all such unjust imputations."

Unique.

1. This is a unique illustration, and proof of a great desire for the glory of God.

2. More than desire-a consuming passion.

3. Contrast this with other illustrations: a. Adam and Eve-Silent at the judgments of God. b. Cain (Genesis 4:13). Here is a puzzle. Was he complaining at the severity of the judgment? Or was he admitting his case as hopeless? c. Eli (1 Samuel 3:18). Resignation, but that alone. d. Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:19).

I. MAN JUSTIFYING GOD BY REPENTANCE AND A TURNING TO CHRIST (Luke 7:29).

1. These were the words of the Lord Jesus Himself.

2. This is a very unusual way of putting the truth.

3. In what way did these people justify God? a. They believed and accepted the message God had sent to them by John. b. That message contained much that was stern. It foretold judgment to the unrepentant. c. They admitted the justice of God's condemnation and accepted His offer of mercy.

4. At the proclamation of the doom of the impenitent many charge God with injustice.

5. But we justify God.

II. MAN JUSTIFYING GOD IN THE JUSTIFICATION OF THE SINNER (Romans 3:26).

1. What is the message of the Epistle to the Romans? Justification of repentant sinners?

2. No; not the justification of the sinner, but the justification of God in justifying the sinner.

3. Remember it is more important that God be justified in this act of mercy than that sinners be justified.

4. If in the justifying of the sinner God became unjust, then the whole scheme of salvation falls to the ground.

5. But the Divine plan of Redemption is so wonderful that God is justified in justifying the sinner.

III. MAN JUSTIFYING GOD IN HIS DEALINGS WITH JEWISH NATION (Romans 3:4).

1. This is part of one great argument.

2. Here Paul is dealing with objections to the levelling of the Jew to the plane of the Gentile.

3. In doing this, does not God prove faithless to His promises to the covenant people?

4. No; and then Paul quotes the LXX rendering of Psalms 51:4.

IV. MAN JUSTIFYING GOD IN THE SEVERE JUDGMENTS AND CHASTISEMENTS HE HAS TO BEAR (Psalms 51:4).

1. And for this David provides by a frank acknowledgment of his sin, and by confessed meriting of all God's severities.

2. What an example here for all to copy: a. For the saved sinner, suffering physically as a result of a life of vice and sin in the unregenerate days. b. For the saint suffering through the breaking of some of nature's laws. THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Psalms 51:10-11, Psalms 51:12.

INTRODUCTION.

1. Three Petitions. Connected with the word Spirit, we have in the great Penitential Psalm three separate petitions.

2. Though we have the same word three times, we have not the same thought.

3. The first one most certainly stands for disposition or character; the second word stands for the Third Person in the blessed Trinity; the last some think is like the first, standing for disposition or character; but surely it stands like the middle one, for the Holy Spirit, only it gives another view of His character.

4. Shall we take them in the order in which they occur?

I. "RENEW A RIGHT SPIRIT WITHIN ME" (Psalms 51:10).

Introduction.

1. He desired an inward work.

2. "Renew," once it had been there.

3. What is a right spirit? Best answer to that question is the other renderings.

Renderings.

1. R.V., "Steadfast."

2. A.V., margin, "Constant."

3. F.F., "Put a new mind in my breast."

Significance of "Steadfast" Rendering.

1. I have so easily yielded to temptation.

2. Renew within me a steadfast mind, a mind steady in following the path of duty, an unyielding spirit.

3. John Bunyan, in his immortal allegory, has a Mr. Standfast, a most attractive character.

Meaning of Rendering "Constant."

1. Think of a mariner's compass or a clock.

2. A compass or a clock, always right and dependable, are to be prized and valued.

3. Oh, to have a mind always set on God!

Right Spirit. A wrong spirit can take possession of us.

Renew.

1. It was once there.

2. Lord, put it there again!

"Within."

Here he desired an inward work of grace.

How Often should we Offer this Prayer?

1. More frequently than we imagine we should.

2. For our dispositions seem mercurial, as changeable as the weather.

3. The ideal is: "The same yesterday, to-day, and forever."

4. The same, without sameness.

5. God alone can accomplish this work.

6. Let us present this prayer daily.

II. "TAKE NOT THY HOLY SPIRIT FROM ME" (Psalms 51:11).

He Possessed.

1. David regards himself as still possessing the Spirit.

2. We know when the Spirit first possessed him (1 Samuel 16:13).

3. What longsuffering on the part of the Spirit to remain in an unclean life.

Saul.

1. Had David Saul in mind when he prayed thus? (1 Samuel 16:14).

Dispensation.

1. Is this a prayer for this dispensation?

2. Scofield's valuable note: "No believer in this dispensation aware of the promise of His abiding (John 14:16) should pray, 'Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me' (Ephesians 4:30); but, while Christian position is not bound here, Christian experience in essence is."

3. Observe the force of John 14:16.

What can be taken away?

1. The Consciousness of that Holy Presence. a. This is our Heaven below. b. We may live in the regular enjoyment of that presence. c. The manifestation of the Spirit is the fruit of loving

obedience and watchfulness.

2. The Power of that Almighty Presence, though not the presence. a. When we lose that power we become "weak as other men," as in Samson's experience. b. It is the power of the Holy Spirit that makes all the difference between preachers and workers.

III. UPHOLD ME WITH THY FREE SPIRIT (Psalms 51:12).

Introduction.

1. Two facts attract one in this prayer-the desire to be upheld, and the adjectives describing the character of the Spirit.

2. This is the prayer of conscious weakness.

Renderings.

1. "Willing." R.V., margin, "Thy willing Spirit."

2. "Princely." Lit., "Thy princely Spirit."

3. "Free." Spirit has wonderful freedom. "Thy free Spirit." A Wonderful Description of God's Holy Spirit.

1. God's Spirit is Royal and Princely in character, and communicates a Holy, and Royal, and Princely dignity to us.

2. God's Spirit is a "Willing Spirit," willing to work for and in us, and will communicate to us a willingness and an ability to do God's will.

3. God's Spirit is a "free" Spirit, imparting wonderful freedom.

Uphold. Oh, keep me! Hold me up!

Application. Thos. Waugh discovered "though he had the Spirit, he was not filled with the Spirit; though he had welcomed the Spirit as Guest, he had not welcomed him as Host." Let the Guest become Host, i.e.. Lord. Instead of, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty," Rotherham has, "Where the Spirit is Lord, there is liberty."

WHITE, THEN WHITER THAN SNOW.

Isaiah 1:18; Psalms 51:7.

(This study appears also in Scripture Couplets in Vol. XII, only here there are additional thoughts in harmony with the Penitential Psalm Studies.) NOT SYNONYMOUS.

1. These are not statements that mean one and the same thing.

2. Points of difference are easily noted: a. One was the Word of the Lord to Israel, the other a prayer by a king to the Lord. b. The first is the Lord's promise, the second a penitent's plea. c. At least 300 years separate the two utterances. d. The first describes the work of God when He pardons and justifies the sinner; the second describes a deeper and an inward work of grace desired by the restored sinner. e. This order is always observed: White as snow, then whiter. f.

The one is righteousness imputed, the second is righteousness imparted.

3. This does not mean that the first work was imperfect. No. It was a perfect work of justification.

I. WHITE AS SNOW. How familiar is this statement in Isaiah 1:18. It is:

1. A Word of Authority: "Come now." a. Therefore it is a word that cannot be treated lightly. b. What is behind a command is of importance. c. If I say, "Move on," to loiterers in the street, they can afford to treat it lightly; if a policeman says the same, they will either have to "Move on" or "Move in!"

2. An Appeal to Reason. God appeals to reason as well as to affections, to our heads as well as to the heart.

3. An Importunate Word: "Now." It brooks no delay.

4. A Word for All. And that is so because it concerns sin.

5. A Word for the Double-dyed Sinner. a. Those who understand the original declare that the word translated "scarlet" here really means the double-dyed-the twice dipped. b. For the scarlet colour in ancient times was the result of two dippings. c. "But I am not a double-dyed sinner," do you say? But you are. d. We are all twice-dipped sinners-first in the vile pool of original corruption, then in the bath of actual transgressions. e. In other words, we are sinners twice over-by birth and by choice.

6. A Word Teaching the Permanency of Sin. a. Scarlet is a fast colour, fixed and permanent. b. It is the Bible colour for sin, not black. c. There is no power in chemistry that can take the scarlet colour out without destroying the fabric. d. But what is impossible in chemistry is possible in grace.

II. WHITER THAN SNOW.

Arctic Grave. Away in the far North, on the brow of a hill covered with snow, illuminated by the light of the Polar Star, a member of an arctic expedition lies buried. A large stone covers the dead, and, on a copper tablet at the head of the grave, this text is inscribed: "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." There, amidst the eternal snows, man's passionate longing for purity finds a voice.

David's Mistake.

1. But did David not make a mistake when he prayed thus?

2. Surely nothing can be whiter than snow.

3. The fact is that the snowflake is not pure.

4. It seems that everything that touches this sin cursed earth is contaminated.

5. Elements of earthliness are wrapped up in the bosom of every snowflake that falls upon the earth.

6. It has been calculated that a slight fall of snow carries to the surface of the county of London alone 343 tons of solids in the following parts: 75 tons of dissolved solids, 142 tons of suspended matter, 100 tons of coal, 25 tons of salt, 1 ton of ammonia.

7. So this is a passionate longing after a deeper purity. Oh, for a purity as God counts purity! He who imparts the longing and inspires the prayer will grant the desire. A THREEFOLD JOY.

Psalms 51:8, Psalms 51:14, Psalms 51:15.

INTRODUCTION. In this Penitential Psalm we not only have a threefold view of sin, a threefold blessing, and a threefold reference to the Spirit, but also a threefold view of joy and gladness.

Songless Birds.

1. The Psalmist had been for a year songless.

2. No Psalms had he composed and sung, and no song could be found in his heart.

3. "When I kept silence"-suggestive phrase. He had been silent. "My bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long"-strange paradox. Silent in praise, but conscience roaring-that is the meaning.

Longing for Old-Time Joy.

1. Here he longs for the old-time joy.

2. Here he longs and asks for double joy-joy and gladness.

3. Read Psalms 51:12 : "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation."

4. Observe: a. He wanted and longed for God's joy. b. The joy associated with His salvation. c. A joy that deepens as our salvation becomes more thorough.

Three Organs.

1. David refers to three important organs-ear, tongue, and lips.

2. Each of which have to do with joy and gladness.

3. Let us take them in the order in which they are found.

I. CONCERNING THE EAR (Psalms 51:8).

Introduction.

1. It is notable that he begins with the ear.

2. Deafness and dumbness are associated.

Sin has a Sad Effect upon our Spiritual Hearing.

1. The unforgiven one has no ear for joy and gladness. He feels out of harmony with heavenly melody, for the great discord has entered his soul. He cannot bear or tolerate joy in others when in that sad mood.

2. How could he be expected to enjoy music when he was as a wretch with every bone broken. a. For he likens himself to one whose bones are crushed. b. And crushed by no ordinary means. c. He groaned under no mere flesh wounds. Like some poor sufferer, he is swallowed up of himself.

3. Then sin had made him hard of hearing. Sin always does. He prays for the recovery of hearing.

4. Before joy and gladness there must come: a. Forgiveness and cleansing. The sense of forgiveness is like a glad morning to song birds. b. The recovery of hearing. c. The mood to enjoy music.

5. Another rendering: "If you hear me I joy and am glad" (F.F.). Joy and gladness the result of the assurance of God hearing and answering prayer. What a joy that brings!

II. CONCERNING THE TONGUE (Psalms 51:14). Literal.

1. It is clear that David has in mind the guilt of Uriah's death.

2. Uriah's blood weighed upon his soul.

3. Is there a condition of soul more awful than this, to have another man's blood resting on us!

4. Well might he be songless.

Spiritual.

1. But there is such a thing as spiritual blood-guiltiness.

2. Read Acts 20:26.

3. Without doubt Paul had Ezekiel in mind. Read Ezekiel 3:17-21; Ezekiel 33:1-9.

4. What a serious view this is of pastoral responsibility.

5. Watchmen were the police of the East, or rather, a combination of police, soldier, and sentinel.

6. Note, the watchman's: a. Commissioner-God (Ezekiel 3:17). Usually the people appointed a watchman, but God appointed this Watchman. b. Privilege. Friendship with God. Hear the Lord's voice "at my mouth." c. Self-sacrifice. Self-denial; awake when others were asleep. Self-sacrifice-sometimes to die for others. d. Chief Duty. "Give them warnings."

How to be Free from Blood-Guiltiness.

1. Unwearied labour. In rules drawn up by John Wesley for the guidance of his young preachers, we have this: "Only through unwearied labour and perseverance can we really be 'free from the blood of all men.' Go into every house and teach every one therein, young and old." (He meant the house of all members of the Wesleyan Society.) 2. Declaring the whole counsel of God.

3. Warning.

III. CONCERNING THE LIPS (Psalms 51:15).

1. Praise is not easy. It is spoken of as sacrifice.

2. Only God can make praise possible.

3. How does God unlock the lips? By way of the heart. For praise is the employment of happy and thankful hearts.

4. It was sin that closed his lips; God would open them by dealing satisfactorily with his sin.

CONCLUSION.

1. Sometimes it happens that the older we get the more songless we become.

2. Should this be so? THE PROBLEM IN THE PENITENTIAL PSALM.

Psalms 51:16-19.

INTRODUCTION. A Problem.

1. These verses present several problems for solution.

2. What affinity has Psalms 51:18 and Psalms 51:19 with the rest of the Psalm? Have they never grated upon your spiritual senses? Have you never felt a jar upon your spiritual sensibilities when you reached them? You are confessing sin and unworthiness and pleading with the Heavenly Father for soul fitness and spiritual equipment, when you come smack up against Zion and bricks and mortar. What has the blotting out of sin and sanctification of the soul to do with the Walls of Jerusalem? Why, this sentence seems an alien, a stranger, in this torrent of confession.

3. Then again, are not Psalms 51:16 and Psalms 51:17 in flat contradiction to the evangelical teaching concerning the Atonement. Is not salvation by blood repudiated? Does not David try to saddle God with those heterodoxical views? An Attempt. Feeling the sentence to be alien, several solutions have been suggested, some of whom are very drastic, more in the nature of the surgeon's knife.

1. F.F. makes another Psalm of them.

2. Prof. Blaikie says they are a "Later Addition."

3. Dr. B. says "probably added by Hezekiah."

4. Dr. Adam Clarke: "A Psalm of themselves, a kind of ejaculatory prayer for the redemption of the captives from Babylon, the re-building of Jerusalem, and the restoration of the Temple worship."

Reject. I am not afraid to say that I reject those views. Rightly considered, we shall find they are an essential part to and complement of the rest of the Psalm. Instead of being alien, we shall find they are of the same blood and ancestry.

I. DAVID'S SIN was so heinous that no provision was made for it in the Mosaic economy (Psalms 51:16-17).

1. "Murder and adultery were by law punishable by death; and therefore no sacrifices were appointed to be offered by those who were guilty of them."

2. Now read Psalms 51:16 and Psalms 51:17 with that fact in mind.

3. A murderer could only appeal to the mercy of God, as in Psalms 51:1 of this Psalm.

4. Here is an interesting Dispensational fact-the taking of life is God's prerogative which He reserved for Himself in the Adamic dispensation (Genesis 4:15), but handed over to magistrates in the antediluvian (Gen. 5 and 6).

5. Let us remember that that last decree has never been repealed, so that the agitation for the abolition of capital punishment is wrong and unscriptural.

6. If I was asked to visit a murderer in his cell, I should direct him to Luke 23:34-43, and the story of David with the 51st Psalm.

II. THE GREAT VALUE OF REAL REPENTANCE, plus the Sacrifice of the Cross (Psalms 51:17; Psalms 51:19).

1. Oh the importance of that little word "Then" in Psalms 51:19.

2. What a fine description of true penitence we have in Luke 23:17.

3. Penitence alone has no saving element in it.

4. Yet only the true penitent can enter into the benefits of Christ's death.

5. God has no delight in sacrifices and burnt-offerings for their own sake; but merely as shadows of the true atonement and expression of a penitent and believing heart.

6. An impenitent spirit bolts and bars the door against the mercy and grace of God, and makes of no value the death of Christ.

7. Of what value is the repetition of the General Confession without true penitence?

III. THE GREAT BULWARK OF A NATION consists primarily in spiritual fitness and qualification (Psalms 51:18).

1. What, think you, is the great bulwark of a nation? Not warriors and warships, but godly men and women. "Sin is a disgrace to any people, but righteousness exalteth a nation."

2. David's sin had exposed the whole nation to disaster.

3. David feared lest his guilt should render him as an Achan in the congregation of Israel, and therefore he concluded his penitential prayer with entreating God to protect and prosper Zion.

4. His sin had, as it were, broken down the walls of Jerusalem. Grace alone could rebuild.

5. I doubt whether our City Missions would be reckoned by many as a national asset; rather they would be estimated as a non-producing class, therefore parasites. But the fact is, they are re-building and strengthening the national wall of defence against our foes.

6. The workers are under-masons, working under the great Master-mason and Architect of the Universe. Let us build well, for we are building for eternity.

SOUL-WINNING.

Psalms 51:13.

INTRODUCTION.

Final.

1. This, our eighth study, must for the present be our concluding study of Psalm 51.

2. And from the standpoint of workers, what a fine conclusion this is to be sure.

"Then."

1. How important some little words are.

2. The first word of this verse is of supreme value.

Soul-Winners.

1. All believers should be professional soul-winners, carrying on soul-winning on non-professional lines.

2. Here are several important points:

I. IT'S QUALIFICATION.

1. In his Presidential Address at a Wesleyan Conference, Dr. Ritson made this statement: "The Christian ministry is the only profession in the world in which the message and the messenger are inseparable."

2. The success of our message depends very largely upon the success of the message with and in us.

3. In order that the right quality might be behind the work, there must be soul adjustment with God.

4. "Then." When? a. Be converted (Luke 22:31-32). The Lord might at times use unconverted people, but that is not His usual rule. b. Be converted again i.e., restored. c. In the enjoyment of pardon, assurance, fellowship, purity, gladness. d. In the possession of Pentecostal fulness. e. In the practice of prayer.

II. ITS MOTIVE.

1. "Then." When? When additionally indebted to God for wondrous grace.

2. An expression of gratitude for abounding mercies received personally.

3. As a great longing for others to share in the same blessed experience.

III. ITS USUAL PRELIMINARY.

Teaching God's Ways. And what a wondrous teacher David would become. From bitter experience he could discourse on:

1. The evil nature and bitterness of sin itself.

2. The nature of true repentance.

3. The requirement in order that sin might be forgiven, i.e., Cross.

4. Encourage them to come by relating own experience.

How we May Teach God's Ways.

1. Through the Word, noting God's ways with others.

2. Through a relation of our own personal experiences.

IV. ITS ULTIMATE END. "And sinners shall be converted unto Thee."

1. Not unto a Church, or denomination, or Assembly, or system of belief, good and essential as these are.

2. "Unto Thee."

BOASTING.

Negative: "No flesh shall glory" (1 Corinthians 1:29).

Positive: "Let him glory in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:31). Boasting seems part and parcel of our make-up. All glory in something. God has prepared a cure, not by repressing the instinct, but by giving it a worthy subject and object. Boasting is therefore quite legitimate if the right theme be adopted. And the theme? Jeremiah 9:23-24. Paul gloried in:

I. The Cross, Galatians 6:14 II. The Lord, 1 Corinthians 1:31 III. Tribulation, Romans 5:3 IV. Infirmities, 2 Corinthians 12:9

Chapter 85

The Golden Passional Of The Old Testament

The Golden Passional of the Old Testament

Isaiah 53. No subject more important than the substitutionary death of Christ. Burdened with that thought, the author prepared for "Threshed Wheat" a series of studies in defence of the old interpretation of Isaiah 53, and as an exposition of that Golden Passional. Conscious of the timeliness of these studies, by the courtesy of the Editor, they are here reproduced. The Hall-mark of Our Saviour. Dr. J. R. Miller tells a story of a Scottish mother who once accidentally wounded her child's wrist with a knife. To comfort him in his grief, she said: "Never mind, my bonnie bairn; your mither will ken you by that when you are a man." They had been separated for years, and when one day a fine-looking man called on the old woman and announced himself as her son, she was sceptical until he drew up his sleeve, and cried, "Mither, mither, dinna ye ken that?" In a moment the old woman had her boy in her arms. She knew him by the scar. The scars are the hall-mark of Christ. So though we have never seen Him as we see each other, some day we shall, and then "We shall know Him By the print of the nails in His hands."

We fail to recognise in much of the preaching of to-day the true Saviour of sinners. Men paint sometimes very sweet and winning pictures of the Christ. They picture the poetry of His actions, the unsullied whiteness of His thoughts, the moral stainlessness of His conduct, the sweetness of His words; but in all their portraits there is no trace of His sacred wounds, no vision of His atoning death. There cannot be a Saviour without the Cross. We fail to recognise the kind of Saviour for the lost many modern preachers proclaim.

Eulogies.

1. Ever since this wonderful chapter we know of as the 53rd of Isaiah was written, it has been considered as peculiarly sacred and pregnant with meaning.

2. "It looks as if it had been written beneath the Cross of Golgotha," writes a great German scholar.

3. As far back as Apostolic days we find it was treasured. Polycarp, the disciple of John, called it "the Golden Passional of the Old Testament."

4. Luther said that every Christian ought to be able to repeat it by heart. (Can the reader do this? If not, will the reader set about to memorise it?)

5. Augustine considered the whole of Isaiah, and, of course, particularly the 53rd chapter, as "not a prophecy but a Gospel."

6. Dr. Culross has suggestively written: "It is a prelude to much that is most distinctive in New Testament doctrine, and is the root from which not a little of the thinking of Christian ages has grown. Its phraseology has entered largely into Christian speech, and it has supplied more texts to the Gospel preacher than any other portion of the Old Testament. There are individual phrases in it resembling peaks, from which we faintly descry vast realms of truth which we cannot yet explore,

but which shine with a mystic light whose summit is Divine."

Heart of Consolation.

1. The Rabbis call this second section of Isaiah "The wonderful book of consolations," and 2. Isaiah 53 forms the very centre of that second section, and of course 3. Is the very heart of all true consolation.

History. So realistic is it that, as my old and valued friend, the late David Baron says "Instead of a prophecy uttered centuries in advance, it reads like an historic summary of the Gospel narrative of the sufferings of the Christ and the glory that should follow."

I. ITS JEWISH CRITICS.

Torture. This has been called "The Torture Chamber of the Rabbis," and "the bad conscience of the Synagogue," and no Jew is allowed, on pain of severe penalties, to study it until of age.

Conversion. The fact is that no portion of Scripture has been used more than this in the conversion of Jews.

Puzzle. It certainly was a puzzling chapter to all Jews before and since Christ. The portrait it gives of a suffering Messiah was utterly at variance with the popular conception.

Fact. Yet until nearly in the eleventh century the Messianic interpretation of this chapter was almost universally accepted and adopted by the Jews. A Sample. Here is a sample of Jewish interpretation as evidence of this. Jonathan ben Uzziel (first century) begins his Targum (i.e., paraphrase or commentary) with, "Behold My Servant Messiah shall prosper" (Isaiah 52:13). An Important Date. Rabbi Solomon Yirchaki (or Rashi) 1040-1105, was the first to apply it to the Jewish nation. Right up to his time it was almost universally adopted by Jews that this had to do with the Messiah.

Synagogue. In the Jewish Synagogue on the Day of Atonement, in the Liturgy for that day is the following sentence: "We are shrunk up in our misery, even until now, our Rock hath not come nigh us; Messiah our Righteousness has departed from us. Horror hath seized upon us, and we have none to justify us. He hath borne the yoke of our iniquities and our transgressions, and is wounded because of our transgression. He beareth our sins on His shoulders, that He may find pardon for our iniquities. We shall be healed of our wounds at the time the Eternal will create Him (Messiah) as a new creature."

Other Jewish Interpretations. Several other interpretations and identifications have been given of the Servant, such as Jeremiah; others say Isaiah was meant; and Hezekiah, Joshua, or Job have also been suggested.

II. ITS GENTILE CRITICS.

Past. If for seventeen hundred years the Jews beheld the Messiah in Isaiah's portrait, so also the Christian Church for eighteen centuries has identified this portrait with Christ.

Present. To the amazement and disgust of loyal Bible students there has arisen a school of Gentile modern thinkers who deny that Isaiah 53 has anything to do with Christ. To our sorrow

hosts of ministers of religion take that view. This is alarming!

Seriousness.

1. We see in this modern attack on Isaiah 53 an attempt against the Atonement.

2. Of course the truth of the Atonement does not depend completely on Isaiah 53.

III. WHY WE HOLD TO THE ORTHODOX VIEW.

1. Our Lord Himself recognised and taught that Isaiah 53 was a prophecy concerning Himself (see Luke 22:37. Note "In Me," "Concerning Me).

2. Paul recognised the message of the Servant sent to ignorant nations as the good news concerning Christ. (See how Paul refers to Isaiah 52:15 in Romans 15:21.)

3. John finds in Israel's refusal of Jesus the direct fulfilment of the prophet's heart-broken cry concerning unbelief. (John quotes Isaiah 53:1, in John 12:38.)

4. Matthew recognised in Christ's healing miracles the Servant who was to carry our sicknesses and to exhaust Himself with our healing. (He quotes Isaiah 53:4, in Matthew 8:17.)

5. Mark recognises in the two robbers the transgressors with whom Isaiah's Servant was to be catalogued. (Isaiah 53:12 in Mark 15:28.)

6. Philip, when filled with the Holy Spirit, and speaking under His command, answers the Eunuch's question on the identity of the Servant by preaching to him Jesus (Acts 8:2).

7. Israel is sometimes called the Servant of Jehovah, but never as here in Isaiah 53:11, "My Righteous Servant" (Isaiah 41:8; Isaiah 43:10; Isaiah 44:1).

8. Note "For the transgression of My people was He stricken"-one Person suffering for a people.

9. This 53rd chapter portrays an innocent Servant suffering for others (Psalms 51:9). "He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth." Was this true of the Nation? Were they innocent? What has the first chapter of Isaiah to say about this?

10. The suffering Servant portrayed here in Isaiah 53 is a voluntary sufferer. Read Isaiah 53:12 : "He hath poured out His soul unto death." Did the Jews go voluntarily into captivity? Were they not dragged into it by force?

11. The suffering Servant portrayed in Isaiah 53 is an unresisting Sufferer. "He opened not His mouth." "He is brought as a lamb." "He opened not His mouth" (Isaiah 53:7). Was that Jewish Nation an unresisting one? A very hasty glance at their history is quite sufficient to convince us of this.

12. The sufferings of the Servant ended in death Isaiah 53:8, "cut off" (see 9). Have the sufferings of the Jewish nation ended in the death of that nation? The nation, in spite of centuries of persecution, is very much alive.

13. "Oh," says the critics, "nowhere else in Scripture have we suffering associated with the Messiah, hence this chapter is out of harmony with all previous conceptions of the Messiah, and

cannot be accepted as applicable to Christ. An individual with such features has no analogy in Hebrew prophecy" But that is not true. What about Genesis and Psalms.

14. "Is it not impossible," says some, "or at least improbably inconsistent, for the same prophet first to have identified the servant with the Nation, and then to present Him to us as an individual?" Our reply is "No."

15. The Experimental Argument. We know the orthodox view is the correct one because it has brought salvation to us. We found the Atoning Saviour here, and that brought salvation to us. Now we can say: "Surely He hath borne my griefs, and carried my sorrows. He was wounded for my transgressions; He was bruised for my iniquities. With His stripes I am healed. Alleluia!"

IV. ITS STYLE. Jewels are best appreciated when in a suitable setting. The Golden Passional of the Old Testament is more valued when its setting, style, and outline are noted.

Differs.

1. It differs in style from all the rest of Isaiah.

2. It is "broken, sobbing, and recurrent," whereas the rest of Isaiah runs smoothly with "formed flowing sentences."

3. This peculiarity is so pronounced that, "added to the fact that, if it be omitted, the prophecies on either side readily flow together, have led some critics to suppose it to be an insertion, borrowed from an earlier writer."

4. But that is no argument. Principal G. A. Smith, who is favourable to Higher Criticism, sensibly exclaims, "Surely both style and words are fully accounted for by the novel and tragic nature of the subject."

Pronouns. It is important to notice the personal pronouns. Much of the meaning of the poem depends on the use of the pronouns "we" and "he."

Mysterious. A student has drawn attention to the element of mystery in this Passional: "Most wonderful and mysterious of all is the spectral fashion in which the prophecy presents its Hero. He is named only in the first line: elsewhere He is spoken of as He. We never hear or see Himself. But all the more solemnly is He there."

V. ITS SETTING. It is necessary to observe the structure of the Book in order that we might see clearly its setting.

Isaiah.

1. At first sight the book of Isaiah falls into two great divisions-1st, chapters 1 to 39; 2nd, chapters 40 to 66. On closer inspection it can more readily be divided into three: a. Denunciatory-1-35. Prophetic. b. Deliverance-36-39. Historic. c. Consolatory-40-66. Messianic.

2. This third section falls into three sections: a. Comfort-40-48. b. Servant-49-57. c. Future Glory-58-66.

3. In this poem of the broken heart there are 15 verses.

4. It is the middle chapter of the middle section of the third book.

5. It has been pointed out how remarkable is the structure of the book of Isaiah when compared with the Bible: a. Bible has 66 books, Isaiah 66 chapters. b. As the Bible has two great divisions (Old and New Testaments) so Isaiah. c. There are 39 books in the first division of the Bible- that is the Old Testament-and there are 39 chapters in the first division of Isaiah. There are 27 books in the New Testament; 27 chapters in second section of Isaiah. d. The prevailing note in the Old Testament is Law, and prevailing note in first section of Isaiah is Judgment; prevailing note of the New Testament is Grace, and of second section of Isaiah, Comfort.

VI. ITS OUTLINE.

Stanzas.

1. There are 15 verses in the Poem. The Poem begins at 52:13.

2. These fall into five sections or stanzas of three verses each.

3. In the Hebrew the strophes appear, not of equal (as in A.V. or R.V.) but of increasing length.

1st, 9 lines.

2nd, 10 lines.

3rd, 11 lines.

4th, 13 lines.

5th, 14 lines.

4. Each strophe begins with one word or two words, which summarise the meaning of the whole strophe, and forms a title for it: a. Behold-Servant. b. Who hath believed-Faith. c. Surely He hath borne-our Substitute. d. He was oppressed-His oppression. e. And it pleased the Lord-Lord's pleasure. The Outline.

1. Study the chart on the next page.

2. Note its first stanza: a. We have God's Ecce Homo. b. The Servant would gain success through His prudence. c. This first stanza is really a summary of the whole of the poem, and contains in brief the whole story of Messiah's suffering and the glory that should follow.

Analysis of Isaiah 52:13-15; and Isa 53

Stanza|Section|Speaker|Gist|Subject|

First|Isaiah 52:13-15|"MY servant" (13) GOD. 1st To us (13) 2nd To Jesus (14) 3rd To us|His prosperity|God's proclamation, explanation, and vindication of the Sufferer.|

Second|Isaiah 53:1-3|Penitent people of God in the present. (1) Query (1) (2) Statement (2) (3) Confession (2 and 3) "our," "we"|Unbelief|Reason for rejection of Him|

Third|Isaiah 53:4-6|Penitent people of God in the future. (1) Assumption (4) (2) Confession (4) (3) Declaration (4 to 6)|Substitution|Results of receiving Him|

Fourth|Isaiah 53:7-9|God|His Innocency|The humility and Innocence of the Sufferer|

Fifth|Isaiah 53:10-12|The Prophet speaking for God. (1) To us (10) (2) To God (10) (3) To us (11) (4) For God (12)|God's Holy Will|The Surrender of the Sufferer to the Will of God and His triumphant success|

VII. THE MYSTERY OF CONTRADICTION. Have you noticed the bundle of apparent contradictions in this Golden Passional? Calmet points out: "The Old Testament plainly foretold that the Messiah would be God and man: exalted and debased: master and servant, priest and victim; prince and subject; involved in death and yet a victor over death; rich and poor, a King, a conqueror glorious, a man of griefs; exposed to infirmities, unknown, and in a state of abjection and humiliation." But how bewildering all this must seem!

Look at Isaiah 53.

1. Root out of a dry ground (Isaiah 53:2)-Yet fruitful (Isaiah 53:10).

2. No form or beauty (Isaiah 53:2)-Yet God's Servant (Isaiah 53:11).

3. Despised and rejected (Isaiah 53:3)-Yet the appointed Messiah.

4. Suffering unto death (Isaiah 53:8)-Yet ever living (Isaiah 53:10).

5. Without generation (Isaiah 53:8)-Yet numerous seed (Isaiah 53:10).

6. Rejected and beaten (Isaiah 53:4)-Yet prospered (Isaiah 53:10).

7. Cut off (Isaiah 53:8)-Yet prolonging His days (Isaiah 53:10).

8. Growing up (Isaiah 53:2)-Yet Eternal Son.

9. A tender Exotic (Isaiah 53:2)-Yet bearing and enduring an awful storm.

10. No beauty to lead us to desire Him (Isaiah 53:2)-Yet the desire of all nations.

11. Wounded to death-Yet those wounds that led to death are life to us.

12. Jehovah laid upon Him (Isaiah 53:6)-Yet He was Jehovah Himself.

13. Helpless in the hands of His persecutors. Yet omnipotent and delivering others from their oppressors (7).

14. Dying-Yet dividing the spoil (Isaiah 53:12).

Harmonise.

1. No wonder the Jews were embarrassed when they abandoned the old view.

2. In the Lord Jesus they harmonise. THE SERVANT AND HIS SERVICE.

Isaiah 52:13.

I. "BEHOLD." At once our attention is invited and arrested. The "Beholds" of Scripture are all impressive and important, and without exception, challenge and merit our most careful attention. This "Behold" excels all others, for it is the herald drawing attention to the only Begotten of the

Father.

God the Father is not ashamed to draw attention to His Son. "Hast thou considered My servant Job?" God proudly drew Satan's attention to the patriarch; "there is none like him;" and right nobly did Job bear up under his crushing sorrows. He did not let God down. There yet was sin and also much imperfection in this honoured and much tried servant. The fiery trial brought to the surface the sin of self-righteousness Job never dreamt was present in him. There is no such fear in our examination of the Lord Jesus. No one ever detected a flaw or blemish in His spotless character. The fiery trial only brought out all the clearer His perfections, as the fire from the Altar in Tabernacle and Temple only revealed more than ever the wonderful fragrance of the sacred incense.

There are four specially attractive "Beholds" connected with the Lord Jesus, and they wondrously harmonise with the predominant message of the four Gospels.

1. "Behold thy King" (Zechariah 9:9), agreeing with the Gospel of Matthew wherein is drawn for us the portrait of the Lord Jesus as the King.

2. "Behold My Servant" (Isaiah 52:13) agreeing with the portrait drawn of our Lord in Mark's Gospel.

3. "Behold the Man" (Zechariah 6:12) agreeing with Luke's portrait of the Saviour, wherein the humanity of the Lord is emphasised over and over again.

4. "Behold your God" (Isaiah 40:9) where attention is drawn to the Deity of the Servant, as in John's Gospel.

II. THE SERVANT. It is well to observe that God the Father is not ashamed to direct the attention of the Universe to His only begotten Son as "the Servant." There is nothing derogatory in this. In distant parts of the earth, in the habitations of paganism, idolatry, and cruelty, a gentleman is one who never works, and as a proof of this, allows the finger nails to grow to great length, and is arrayed in lengthy and costly robes. But the very glory of Christ is that He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. On the eve of His Passion, fully conscious of His Deity and glory, like a common Eastern slave He girded Himself with a towel, and washed the feet of His disciples. He could even say, "I am among you as one that serveth." There is a great deal of miserable cant in even these so-called democratic days. For why should a domestic servant be considered worthy of less respect and honour than another girl in office or professional labour? Even the King and Queen upon the Throne are but the servants of their subjects. The Lord Jesus, by becoming a servant, has for ever sanctified and dignified that humble word.

Here in this Golden Passional the great service rendered by the Divine servant is that of atoning for the world's sin. The Hebrew word for servant means a person at the disposal of another, to carry out that person's will, to do that person's work, to represent his interests, and to fulfil a mission. This also is the New Testament definition of a servant. In those days a servant and a slave were synonymous terms. The Lord Jesus placed Himself entirely at the disposal of the Father. In the Scriptures various individuals are referred to as God's servants.

1. Worshippers (Psalms 134:1) are called God's servants. How important worship is to be sure, and what an important service it is.

2. Trusting Ones (Psalms 34:22) are honoured by that designation. To place and exercise faith in God is delightful and important service.

3. The Jewish Nation (Isaiah 41:8) is so designated. It would have been well if they had more constantly remembered this, and lived up to this great honour.

4. Certain Individuals are so marked, as for example; David (Isaiah 37:35); Isaiah the Prophet (Isaiah 20:3); and Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 25:9). But the greatest and most glorious of all the servants of the Most High was the Lord Jesus (Isaiah 42:1-7).

III. THE QUALITY OF HIS SERVICE.

1. Filial Service, the Service of the Son. There is a tremendous difference between a mere servant and a sonservant. That is, between a mere hireling and one who, because of a recognised and proud relationship, renders the service more whole-heartedly and more devotedly. It is well to notice He was first Son, then servant, or may we put it-God's servant because He was God's beloved Son. Before we can become God's servants labouring in His vineyard, we must become His children through faith in Christ Jesus.

2. Compulsory Service, the Compulsion of Love. "The love of Christ constraineth us," was the testimony of St. Paul, and was the secret of his incessant and abundant labours in the Gospel. Love was the great constraining force in the life of Christ. It was because He loved the Father that He was so ready to place Himself at the Father's disposal; it was because He loved mankind that He so readily came to render the service of the Cross. Love should be the great dominating force in our lives.

3. Heart Service, not the Service of the Eye. How significant is the phrase used by St. Paul with regard to service. "Not with eye service as men pleasers." Our blessed Lord's service was a real heart service, and so should ours be.

4. Chosen Service, a Service by Wondrous Grace.

"My servant whom I have chosen" (Isaiah 43:10). Undoubtedly our gracious Master is referred to here. He was the chosen one of the Father. But how significant when we can place side by side with this, that amazing verse in John 15, "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you." We, too, are His chosen ones. He has some special work that we alone can do, for which His choice has fallen upon us.

5. Commissioned Service, not an Unrenewed Commission. "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." He came for a definite and specific work, and He has some definite and distinct work for us to do. It is the highest wisdom for all young Christians to place themselves entirely and unreservedly in the hands of the Redeemer,

6. Powerful Service, Energised by the Holy Ghost. "For He spoke with authority, and not as the Scribes," There was wonderful unction in all His addresses. Not one of His words fell to the ground. God save us preachers and speakers and Sunday School teachers from becoming as sounding brass and tinkling cymbal, a mere sound. But may there ever be recognised a definite power behind all that we say.

7. Sustained Service, Upheld by Wondrous Grace. Isaiah 42:1 clearly shows this. Is that not a significant phrase found in Revelation 2:1, "He that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand," indicating the seven leaders of the seven churches in Asia upon whom so great a responsibility rested had special supporting grace given to them. He will sustain us. We, too, will always be held up by wondrous grace. THE SERVANT'S PRUDENCE.

"Behold My Servant shall deal prudently" (Isaiah 52:13)

In this introductory stanza to the Golden Passional we have God's "Ecce Homo." Let us never forget that this was a prophecy uttered many years before Bethlehem and Calvary. Have you ever thought of the goodness of the Father in not only prophesying of the sufferings of Christ, but also of the glory that was to follow? "He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high." These are expressions confined by Isaiah to the Godhead (consult Isaiah 6:1; Isaiah 57:15). Therefore we here not only have prosperity foretold, but much more than that: surely this means nothing less than the exaltation and enthronement of Deity. Unlike mere mortal and finite men, the Man of Sorrows knew exactly all that awaited Him-the betrayal, the failure of His followers, the cruel scourgings, and the awful death. But how often, as He reflected on all these sad accompaniments of His death, His heart must have been cheered by this bright and attractive forecast. That prosperity should follow prudence is to be expected. "My Servant shall deal prudently-He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high." Sometimes prudence fails in man, but never in the Man Jesus Christ.

I. THE NATURE OF HIS PRUDENCE. What is prudence? Prudence and wisdom are not one and the same thing. "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent"-here they are referred to as separate and distinct, though closely related. Prudence is wisdom in action. The prudent are not only the possessors of wisdom. They are those who use that wisdom wisely and well. It is possible to be wise and yet not prudent. In other words, for wisdom to dwell alone. But prudence always dwells with wisdom, as is pointed out in Proverbs 8:12 : "I, wisdom, dwell with prudence." Prudence and wisdom are twin sisters.

II. THE FACT OF HIS PRUDENCE. Our Blessed Lord Jesus was greater in wisdom and prudence than Solomon. Indeed He was, and is, the source of all wisdom and prudence. The greatest and grandest example is found in Him. This declaration in the Golden Passional is, of course, a prophecy. His own life is its fulfilment.

III. THE EXERCISE OF HIS PRUDENCE. A very devoted and eminent preacher of the Gospel of our own time has pointed out how our Lord so wonderfully exercised prudence in His life, and manifested it also in His death.

1. In Not Prematurely Surrendering His Life. Time and again His enemies sought to slay Him, but our Lord and Saviour took every precaution. Till He knew His work was done He would not allow His life to be squandered,

2. His Insight into Character. All who came into touch with Him became conscious of the fact that He knew them through and through, better than they knew themselves. They were aware, time and again, of the fact that He could read their thoughts; and He acted toward all with unerring wisdom.

3. In the Adroitness of His Replies. Christian workers cannot do better as a preparation for missionary work, whether at home or abroad, than to study our Lord's methods with individuals. Both as a preacher and as a teacher He manifested amazing skill-was calm, never flurried, had always an apt reply, ever hitting the nail on the head. Over and over again we simply marvel at His replies.

4. In His Concessions to the Limitations of His Hearers. That He was the All-Wise One, and the All-Knowing One, possessing and exercising in His human life all the attributes of Deity is a fact, yet He never talked or preached above the heads of His hearers. As as example of this He stooped to parabolic teaching, conveying the most abstruse thoughts in simple language. Hence "The common people heard Him gladly," as well as the learned scholars of His time. Many a public teacher is destroyed through lack of prudence.

5. In His Encouragement of all Good Living and Well-intentioned Folk. Time and again, in dealing with individuals, He recognised and complimented them where He could. As for example: "Thou art not far from the kingdom." How encouraging this must have been. "Ye search the Scriptures" (R.V.). There He admitted their diligence in ascertaining the mind and will of God in the written Word.

6. In His Work of Salvation. He ever recognised that man's greatest need is not teaching, but disposition, not merely a code of morals, but a clean heart. Nicodemus right away opened the interview by acknowledging our Lord Jesus as a peerless teacher, assuming that all that was required for the regeneration of mankind was better teaching, but this our Lord at once countered by a firm declaration that man's chief need was a new life. "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

7. In His Wondrous Scheme of Redemption. Study Ephesians 1:8. It is in the redemptive work of our Lord that we have the greatest example of His prudence. So marvellous is the scheme that Satan with all his skill has never yet been able to find fault with it, and we may add, he never will. Every Divine attribute is in perfect and harmonious operation in this wondrous plan of salvation. There at the Cross mercy and truth met together, there, righteousness and peace kissed each other.

IV. THE REWARD OF HIS PRUDENCE.

1. Exalted to the highest pitch of honour. Study Ephesians 1:21.

2. Extolled. Study Php_2:9-11.

3. Glorified.

V. THE EXAMPLE OF HIS PRUDENCE. These records of His wonderful prudence are given to us not merely for our admiration, but also for our emulation Heavenly wisdom is exceedingly practical, as is pointed out in James 3:17. Prudence is much to be coveted and desired in our daily lives and service, and "who is sufficient for these things?" Christ is. The marvel of our redemption is that not only did our Lord Jesus suffer on the Cross in our stead, but after we have accepted that great fact and received Him, He comes to dwell within us and to live out His own wondrous life. The Prudent One will be prudence to us. Oh, that He might fill us with His own gracious presence!

CHRIST, THE STARTLING ONE.

"So shall He startle many nations" (Isaiah 52:15, R.V., margin.)

(This study appears in the author's "Cameos of Our Lord," but is here reproduced with additional thoughts, to complete the series of studies.)

During the last few years the nations of the world have been startled as never before. The greatest war of all time sobered and alarmed them, and post-war happenings have continued to agitate and unsettle. But if this short inspired utterance means anything, it announces another and a greater startling, and that by the Lord Jesus Christ. Many scholars object to the A.V. reading of Isaiah 52:15. Without doubt the original has proved a sore trial to translators, for it is not the usual word for "sprinkling," and therefore ceremonial cleansing is not meant. One learned authority affirms, "It is simply treason against the Hebrew language to render it 'sprinkle.'" On the other hand, the late David Baron defends the A.V. rendering in a learned fashion. Bishop Chandler says: "That to sprinkle is used for to surprise, to astonish, as people are that have water thrown upon them." So we can combine both views, and say what is meant here is that nations would be startled as a man is when cold water is suddenly and altogether unexpectedly dashed upon his face.

I. THE ONE WHO STARTLES. As one closely studies this great stanza of the Golden Passional in order to answer the question-who is the one who will startle many nations?-only one reply is possible-the Servant of Jehovah, the Saviour Himself.

II. THE TIME OF THE STARTLING. In a measure, this was true of Him in the past. It has been truly remarked that "there was something amazing, portentous, sensational about Him. He set all Palestine in a ferment. He "troubled" Herod and all Jerusalem at His birth. And He continued to startle the people up to His death on the Cross. There was something electric, explosive, volcanic, in the very air while Jesus lived amongst men." And yet He never made any attempt at the sensational.

He startled the world:

1. By His Birth. He was born of a Virgin. That is to say, He had no human father. This was something altogether new. The so-called Incarnations in Pagan faiths bear no comparison whatever with the birth of Jesus Christ the Lord. It was startling to find Deity in humanity and the frail bush not consumed.

2. By His Lowliness. He was born in a cattle-shed, was brought up in a peasant's home, and not a Royal Palace. He came as a servant. Considering His lofty claims His lowly condition was startling.

3. By His Teaching. His teaching and preaching altogether differed from that of His day. "They were astonished at His doctrine, for He taught as one having authority and not as the scribes." His teaching was accompanied by miracles, and these performed without strain or effort were startling.

4. By His Death. There is a great difference and a swift and altogether startling change between Isaiah 52:13 and Isaiah 52:14. In the former we have His exaltation, in the latter, His degradation. From the picture of His enthronement we find Him confronted by a ring of shocked and horrified spectators (read Luke 23:48). Isaiah 52:14 must be considered in the light of a parenthesis. And that is quite fitting. In the reading of a narrative, we usually lower the voice on reading a sentence

in parenthesis, and Isaiah 52:14 should be read in a subdued and reverent manner. Dr. C. I. Scofield declares that the literal rendering is terrible: "So marred from the form of man was His aspect that His appearance was not that of a son of man," i.e., not human, the effect of the brutalities described in Matthew 26:67-68; Matthew 27:27-30. As the spectators watched Him on the Cross, many thoughts would enter their minds with startling effect. a. The fact that One so good and useful should suffer. That, of course, was an old and familiar problem. All along in the history of the world the sufferer has been an astonishment and stumbling-block. Did not the sufferings of Jesus prove His guilt? And yet the governor declared he could find no fault in Him! b. The fact that the powerful Jesus was now so weak. A few days before He acted and spake with power and authority. But now He seemed weak and powerless, suffering an entire eclipse. c. The marring of His visage and form. This has been entitled "The Marvellous Marring." Observe "His visage," i.e., His face; "His form," i.e., His body. "More than other men." This must not be considered as exaggerated language, but to be taken literally. What mars? Suffering mars the visage, sometimes almost beyond the possibility of recognition. If the face and body of the Son of God were marred more than any man, it certainly was because He suffered more than any man. And we must remember that His keenest sufferings were not physical. It is perfectly certain that the accompaniments of crucifixion caused untold and unimagined bodily suffering. But the spiritual and mental agony of forsakenness, and the natural shrinking of a pure soul from contact with a world's sin, were ingredients in His cup of suffering we cannot comprehend or assess. Of course there is a possibility of unduly magnifying the incidents and surroundings of His death. After all, the death was the all important fact. Yet are we Protestants not in danger of ignoring or minimising the incidents surrounding His death? It is by reflecting upon these incidents that we travel along one way of understanding and grasping the awful cost of our redemption.

III. THE CAUSE OF THE STARTLING. But the greatest startling is yet future. Note the value of observing Matthew 27:14 as a parenthesis, and the force and power of the wee word "so." Certainly His sufferings startled, but He will be the cause of a greater startling in the future. In Matthew 27:13 we have a word-picture of enthroned Deity-"Exalted. . . extolled, and be very high," are expressions confined by Isaiah to the Godhead (study Isaiah 6:1; Isaiah 57:15) so we have here something more than a mere prophecy of prosperity. What will startle His own nation, and "many nations," will be that the One who stooped so low should rise so high. What will His enemies say when they behold, seated on the Throne of the Universe, the One they nailed to the Tree. Will not our exaltation also startle those who despise us? He has promised that we should sit with Him in His Throne.

IV. THE RESULT OF THE STARTLING. "Kings shall shut their mouths at Him." Tongues will be silenced in amazement. If the silence of amazement be the first result of the startling, surely the second result will be cleansing. "He will cleanse many nations" is another rendering. The Jewish nation will be born anew in a day in consequence of their startling, and no doubt many Gentiles will share their blessing as in the Exodus of the past. The third result will be refreshing. "So shall He cause to leap or spring up for joy," as another renders this sentence. After the awakening and cleansing, will come a great joy.

REASONS FOR REJECTING HIM.

Isaiah 53:1-3.

What rapid changes we have in this Passional. In former studies we saw a group of horrified spectators, then another large group of nations and kings speechless with wonderment and astonishment. Now our attention is directed to a further group-the godly remnant confessing their astonishment at the unbelief of the chosen people. In this second stanza we have reasons for rejecting Him:

1. Unbelief (Isaiah 53:1).

2. Lowly origin and mysterious growth (Isaiah 53:2).

3. Lack of beauty (Isaiah 53:2).

4. Despised.

5. Treated as a leper. Has it ever occurred to you how abruptly this wonderful chapter opens? It is as if the thought of the rejection of the message overcame the prophet: "Who hath believed our report?" This challenging question is twice quoted in the New Testament Scriptures- John 12:38, as an explanation why all did not believe in the days of His flesh prior to Calvary; Romans 10:16, as an explanation why all the Jewish nation had not believed the Gospel preached by the Apostles and disciples. To whom, in the first instance, is this question presented? Here the person is not mentioned, but by the two quotations we see it was the Lord. It is good to take all failures to Him. It is well if the Lord's servants to-day would now and again apply this question to themselves. The great object of our ministry, either by speech or pen, is to get a verdict for Christ. We have a report to give. Are there any reasons in us why it is not believed? Is it simply what we have heard? "Who have believed that which we have heard" (R.V., margin). Of course, it is right and proper that we should pass on what we have heard or read, but only when it has become part and parcel of ourselves. We must firmly believe it ourselves. And further, we must exemplify and illustrate it ourselves.

I. THE ARM OF THE LORD. This is one of Isaiah's favourite expressions. What is meant by this term? God is pure Spirit, and therefore "without body, parts, or passions." It is a figure of speech. The arm is that by which we execute a purpose. It is used in Scripture as an emblem of power. It is a natural symbol of the active energy of Jehovah. The reference to the arm made bare is an Eastern figure, as a warrior would throw back his loose robes when he would strike, or as the workman would pull up or tie his loose flowing sleeves in order to do his work. As we carefully ponder the references to the arm of the Lord, we seem to note here and there hints respecting the personification of the arm. Two Persons in the blessed Trinity form the Executive-the Lord Jesus is, as it were, the outstretched Arm of Jehovah, and certainly the Holy Spirit is also.

1. Where Seen. The Arm of the Lord is seen in: a. Creation (Jeremiah 27:5; Jeremiah 32:17). b. Redemption (Exodus 6:6; Psalms 77:15). Creation is spoken of as the work of His fingers (Psalms 8:3), but redemption required His arm, i.e., more difficult to redeem than to create. c. Salvation (Isaiah 59:16). d. Providence (Isaiah 51:5). e. Eternal Preservation (Isaiah 40:11).

2. Its Character. The Arm of the Lord is: a. Almighty in strength and might. b. Guided by unerring wisdom. c. Controlled by unfailing love. d. Paralysed by unbelief (Isaiah 51:9, with Matthew 13:58).

II. CHRIST WAS NOT THE PRODUCT OF HIS AGE is one of the most startling facts connected with His birth and growth, and to this our attention is drawn in Romans 10:2. This is at the very

threshold of the statement clearly declared.

1. The Fact of His Growth. "He shall grow up." Read Luke 2:52. There certainly was physical growth, for His wee baby form grew to boyhood, youth, and manhood. There was also growth in wisdom and knowledge. Yet He was, and is, the All-Knowing, and the All-Wise One. Have you ever pondered over Psalms 22:9? If this verse means anything, it certainly declares that, as a babe on His mother's breast, He possessed self-consciousness, mental alertness, spiritual longing and hope, that is, a God-given conviction respecting future things. Only one babe ever had that experience, and that was the Babe of Bethlehem. What a wonderful mystery is the Incarnation!

2. The Delight in His Growth. "Before Him." In His development the Father took special delight. Does this not also convey that He grew up ever conscious of the Father's presence?

3. The Protection of the Growth. "As a tender plant." Tender-oh, so tender! Yet guarded and kept by the Father's love.

4. The Royalty of that Growth. "As a root-sprout." The tree is in prophecy an emblem of royalty (see Isaiah 11:1). Royal descent is here referred to, but from a royal house fallen on evil days.

5. The Mystery in that Growth. "A root out of the dry ground." Born in a stable, He grew up in a tiny village among the hills of Galilee and opened out as He grew the wondrous blossom of a perfect humanity, such as had never before been evolved from any root, nor grown on the most sedulously cultivated plant. Brought up in a tiny village, how was it he was entirely free from provincialism? Reared in a peasant's home, how was it He was fit to grace an earthly monarch's presence, and was well-mannered and of kingly presence? The only education He had was in a humble village school, yet He manifested marvellous wisdom and knowledge, outshining all the greatest authorities of that and all subsequent time. And what is the explanation? Only this is sufficient, the Lord Jesus does not represent so much the ascent of man as the descent of God; not so much the climbing of the human into the Divine as the condescension of the Divine to the human; that His birth was not a mere birth but an incarnation.

6. The Beauty of that Growth. "He hath no form or comeliness... no beauty." What is the meaning of this? Surely this cannot mean He was ugly!

Charles Kingsley was overheard in his last illness murmuring quietly to himself: "How beautiful God is! How beautiful God is!" Augustine cried: "O beauty, so old, and yet so new; too late I loved Thee!" Only a beautiful mind could have produced so beautiful a world! Let us never forget that God is the Author and Giver of all the colour, fragrance, glory, and song. Only a beautiful mind could have created such beautiful things. And the Son of God was beautiful. He had:

1. Physical Beauty, a perfectly formed and beautifully fashioned body.

2. Mental Beauty, for only a beautiful mind could have conceived the Sermon on the Mount.

3. Moral Beauty most certainly was His, as also 4. Beauty of Disposition, and 5. Beauty of Action. And yet because there was an absence of martial glory the leaders of His nation were blinded by prejudice and unbelief to His moral glories. There was nothing in His appearance that the carnal or worldly-minded could be attracted by, so different was He to the popular expectancy.

III. AN ILIAD OF WOES. No value was set on Him. "We esteemed Him not." "He was despised." All rejected are not despised-He was both. The rejection followed the despising. Another rendering reads, "He was despised like one hiding his presence from us," just as a leper hid his face and presence. So they treated Him as a leprous person. But pray take note of the tenses. He was despised-that is past history. But pray observe, "He is." Is He still the despised and rejected One? Yes, by many. God grant not by you, dear reader! THE BURDENED SERVANT.

Isaiah 53:4-6.

Is it possible in a short sentence to present our faith? That question has been asked of late. We might point to that wonderful compendium of faith as expressed in the Apostle's Creed, but then it occupies more space than a sentence. When Robert Taylor asked Spurgeon, in his last illness, if he could state his faith in a sentence, without hesitation he gave it in four words: "Jesus died for me." Dr. Fullerton tells of a Church sister who, in visiting a hospital was asked by one of the nurses to speak to a dying boy, who was as much a heathen in Central London as if he had been born in Central Africa. Evidently guided by the Holy Spirit, she said: "Sonny, God made you; God loves you; God came down from Heaven and died for you; and now He is going to take you home to be with Him for ever." "Say it again, lady," he pleaded, so she said it again twice over: "Sonny, God made you; God loves you; God came down from Heaven and died for you, and now He is going to take you home to be with Him for ever." Pulling himself up by the rope hanging over the bed, the boy, who seemed to have gained new vitality, said: "Then thank Him for me," but before she could respond he fell back lifeless, and proved it all for himself, and gave his own thanks face to face with the Eternal. Any preaching or teaching that does not centre on, and radiate from, the substitutionary death of Christ, is doomed to failure, and has no Gospel in it. Is it possible in a short sentence to present our faith? Most certainly. Here is the inspired word: "The Gospel- Christ died for our sins" (1 Corinthians 15:1-3). In the third stanza of the Golden Passional which is before us at this moment we have presented to us the Burdened Servant. The speakers are the penitent people of God in the future. In outline we have:

1. An Assumption. "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows" (Isaiah 53:4).

2. A Confession. "Yet we did esteem Him stricken," etc. (Isaiah 53:4).

3. A Declaration. "But He was wounded," etc (Isaiah 53:5 and Isaiah 53:6). We find ourselves contrasting His burden with ours, as shown in Psalms 68:19.

4. God Burdening His People with Blessings. "Blessed be the Lord who daily loadeth us with benefits." Here in the Golden Passional God's Servant is seen with a load of sins laid upon Him by God.

5. God Sharing His People's Burdens. "Blessed be the Lord, who daily beareth our burden" (R.V.). But in the Golden Passional He had to bear His crushing load alone.

Examining very closely this third stanza, we find two burdens.

I. THE BURDEN OF SYMPATHY. The Bleeding Sympathy of the Servant. On the surface of these verses we have a declaration of Christ's true sympathy. "And Jesus, moved with compassion." That last word is an exceedingly strong one. "Passion"- that is a word descriptive of the sorest of suffering. "Come" -together, a suffering with another, a sharing of the sorrow because of the most

intimate and closest affinity. Two harps, if perfectly tuned together, though at either end of a room, if one be struck the other will respond. We have not a High Priest who is not touched with the feeling of our infirmity. His manhood was, and is, so perfectly attuned to ours, that when we suffer, He suffers with us. A truly sympathetic sick-visitor will, when in the sick room beholding the gasping sufferer, involuntarily have the same sensation, and for the moment feel as if he or she were struggling for breath. Our Lord's sympathy is a heart sympathy. He not only speaks the consoling word, but shoulders our burdens, getting right under our sorrows. True sympathy always means this. Let all Christian workers pray for grace to retain their tender and sympathetic touch, and to be preserved from those dulling and hardening effects of daily routine and constant contact with suffering. But there is infinitely more suggested here than the sympathetic identification with the sorrows of others: we have II. THE BURDEN OF SIN. The Vicarious Suffering of the Servant. That is to say, we have here declared an active bearing of those consequences of sins which He had not committed. It is here we part from much, very much of the preaching and teaching of to-day. So-called "Modernism" sees only in the death of Christ the bleeding sympathy of Jesus with us. We, too, see that-but we go very much further. If words mean anything at all, Psalms 68:5 and Psalms 68:6, do clearly and emphatically declare the Saviour's death as substitutionary.

There is a close connection between Psalms 68:3 and Psalms 68:4. They supposed He was suffering on account of some great sin of His own. But they had erred. It was for sin-but not His own actual transgressions. It was our sin imputed unto Him, and in that sense, and only in that way, made His own. This third stanza is an acknowledgment that they had erred. Of course this is prophecy yet to be fulfilled so far as the Jewish nation is concerned. Even up to the present day they persist in their cruel and erroneous mistake. To-day, the orthodox Jew considers our Lord suffered for His own sins, and He is called Poshe-the Transgressor. "In the Talmud Jesus of Nazareth is placed in hell alongside of Titus and Balaam, and as undergoing not only the severest, but the most degrading form of punishment." But they will alter their view. May that day be hastened! A very eminent Jewish authority, himself a converted Jew, known and beloved by me in my own Mildmay days, but now with his Lord in the Glory, on Psalms 68:4-6, declared that no plainer or stronger words could be used to express the thought of vicarious suffering than those employed in the original of this verse. The verb "to bear," is continually used in Leviticus of the expiation effected by the appointed sacrifices, as, for instance, Leviticus 16:22. Both the verbs used in Isaiah 53:4, "borne," "carried," are to be understood in the sense of an expiatory bearing, and not merely of taking away. "The meaning is not merely that the Servant of God entered into the fellowship of our sufferings, but that He took upon Himself the suffering which we had to bear, and deserved to bear, and bore them in His own person, that He might deliver us from them."

DECLARING HIS GENERATION.

Isaiah 53:7-9.

In our study of this Golden Passional we come to the most difficult portion. No words in the Hebrew Bible have been so variously rendered as those which constitute in the original language Isaiah 53:8. Translators have been puzzled how to adequately translate them.

I. THE SILENCE OF THE LORD JESUS (7). Of all animals, only one is silent when handled roughly by man, and that is the sheep. Rarely is a bleat heard in a shearer's shed or slaughter-house. The prophet points to this unusual animal characteristic as a figure and prophecy

of the attitude of the Lord Jesus, the Lamb of God, toward and under His suffering. What a picture we have in Isaiah 53:7 of the unresisting endurance of the Servant! Surely here we have the most perfect, pathetic, and majestic picture of meek endurance!

There is a danger of forgetting the need and value of silence in this fussy and noisy age. There are moments when prolonged and unbroken silence is golden, and more expressive and fitting than words. Hannah Moore, in one of her essays, remarks, "That silence is one of the great arts of conversation is allowed by Cicero himself, who says there is not only an art, but even an eloquence in it." But silence never shows itself to so great an advantage as when it is made the reply to calumny and defamation. The prophecy of Isaiah 53:7 was literally fulfilled in our Lord's silence under gross injustice. "He opened not His mouth." Jesus' lips were opened in witness, but never in complaint or remonstrance. What a majestic silence!

Now let us consider Isaiah 53:8.

II. THE DIFFERENT RENDERINGS of Verses.

1. "He was taken from prison and from judgment" (A.V.), i.e., His death was a judicial murder.

2. "By oppression and judgment. He was taken away" (R.V.), i.e., the violence meted out to Him, and the suddenness of His death.

3. "By tyranny and law was He taken" (Smith), i.e., by a form of law that was a tyranny.

4. "Without restraint, and without a sentence was He taken away" (a Rabbi), i.e., the swiftness, suddenness, and unseemly haste of His murderers.

5. "And who shall declare His generation" (A.V.).

6. "And as for His generation, who among them considered that He was cut off out of the land of the living" (R.V.) i.e., the indifference of public opinion.

7. "And of His life, who shall recount, for He was cut off" (R.V., margin).

8. "And of His age, who reflected" (Smith).

9. "And among His contemporaries who was concerned" (Von Orelli).

10. "Who shall declare His life," i.e., the mystery of His being.

11. "Who can declare the number of His generation" (Hengstenburg), i.e., of those inspired by His Spirit, or filled with His life.

12. "Who can declare the length of His life hereafter" (Luther, Calvin, and Vitringer).

13. "Who can declare His posterity" (Kimchi).

III. PRISON AND JUDGMENT. "He was taken from prison." He was not imprisoned for long. At the longest but an hour or so. He was arrested at 1 a.m. and crucified at 9 a. m., and in between a great deal took place. The following time-table has been suggested:

1. Arrested and taken before Annas (John 18:13), 1:05 to 1:46 a.m.

2. Trial before Caiaphas (John 18:19), 1:46 to 2 a.m.

3. Taken before Sanhedrin (Matthew 26:59), about 2 a.m.

4. Trial before Sanhedrin (Luke 22:66-71), 5:06 a.m. to 5:50 a.m.

5. Taken before Pilate (Luke 23:1), 5:51 a.m.

6. Taken before Herod (Luke 23:7), 6 a.m.

7. Condemned and scourged (Matthew 27:26), after 6 a.m.

8. Crucified, 9 a.m.

IV. DECLARING HIS GENERATION. What a problem this has been to generations of Bible readers and students. This expression ceases to puzzle one when an old custom is remembered. In those olden days, under the Jewish law, it came to be the custom that every condemned man should receive forty day's grace before his execution, during which period an official, somewhat of the character of our old town-crier, passed to and fro through the town, city, or neighbourhood, and "cried" the offence and sentence of the man, together with his tribe, family, and branch of the family, and announcing that any of his generation (i.e., family or tribe) who could adduce evidence of innocence could appeal before the end of the forty days for a new trial. But Jesus had no forty days' grace, and no one declared His generation. Thus no opportunity was given for a new trial. What unseemly haste!

V. THE BURIAL. The A.V. rendering, "He made His grave," etc., suggests that He had the power to select His grave, and, of course, He had, yet that is not the truth here. The R.V. clears up that point: "They appointed."

Those who know the Hebrew well are startled to find that it is deaths, not death. Assuming that a man can have but one death, critics have fixed upon the plural here as either supporting the application of this Golden Passional to the Jewish nation, and not an individual; or to the extreme violence of that death, the very pain of which made it like dying again and again. But in a surprising fashion, the plural here fits in with the actual facts of the case. For there were two deaths on the cross, spiritual first, then physical. On the Cross Jesus died before He died. What is the death of the soul but separation from God, and the Redeemer "tasted death" during the three hours' darkness (Matthew 27:45-46) when He declared He was forsaken! What an awful "taste" that was! It was then He tasted spiritual death. But it soon passed. Afterward He experienced physical death.

Respecting the death of criminals, Josephus states the Jewish law thus: "He that blasphemed God, let him be stoned, and let him hang upon a tree all the day, and let him be buried in an ignominious and obscure manner," usually in an unclean place. Thus even after death, shame followed the criminal. The Jewish leaders, not content with the humiliation and sufferings heaped upon Him, nor with the cruel and shameful death inflicted, followed Him with hatred to the grave, for "They appointed His grave with the wicked," intending His mortal remains to be interred in an unclean place. But that was an appointment never kept. He died at 3 p.m. Joseph of Arimathaea, a member of the Jewish Council, boldly went and requested the body of Jesus which was granted, and with the help of Nicodemus and others, he took it from the Cross, wrapped it in one cwt. of

spices to prevent corruption, and placed it in his own rock-hewn tomb, this burial taking place between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. And thus "that body, reverently bedewed with tears, wrapped in fine linen, clean and white, softly laid down by loving hands, watched by love stronger than death, lay in fitting repose as the corpse of a king, till He came forth as a conqueror." He was buried in a rich man's tomb. And what is the force of this? The fact that the authorities permitted His friends to have the body of Jesus was a proof that they did not consider Him guilty, that although slain as a criminal, He was not a criminal! What a vindication of His innocency and honour! A CLUSTER OF SPIRITUAL PARADOXES.

Isaiah 53:10-12.

A paradox is a statement seemingly absurd yet true. There are quite a number in this" Golden Passional, and there are a cluster of them in this last stanza. Observe that the speaker is the prophet speaking for God, and the main subject, the glory that should follow the suffering.

I. THE PLEASURE OF THE LORD. The opening sentence of this last stanza found in Isaiah 53:10 is at first sight startling. It has a grim repulsiveness about it. He who has no pleasure in the death of the wicked was pleased to put His Righteous Servant to grief. Surely the God of the Bible does not resemble the many gods of the heathen in being a lover of blood and agony! The explanation of this problem is found in other two statements concerning the pleasure of the Lord, in Psalms 149:4, "He taketh pleasure in His people;" and Psalms 35:27, "He taketh pleasure in the prosperity of His people." The pleasure He takes in His people themselves, and in their prosperity, urged Him to take pleasure in the sufferings of His beloved Son, for, without that atoning death they could never have become His people, and they could never have prospered.

II. THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST DIVINELY INFLICTED. It is distinctly stated that it was the Lord who bruised Him. This might be objected to: was not His death due to the hatred and plottings of wicked men? Study Acts 2:23, where it is shown that whilst the murderers of Christ were acting in fulfilment of a Divine decree, their deeds were really and absolutely their own. It was the Divine counsels that used the enemies of Christ as His instruments. Now in the recognition of this great fact lies the secret of composure. The secret of a happy life is the recognition that nothing can come to us without God's consent. This is the thought and fact that makes pain tolerable, and lights up the profound mystery of suffering. We can always find good shelter behind either His actual or His permissive will.

III. THE SOUL AN OFFERING (Isaiah 53:10). This sentence is impressive. It was His soul and not merely His body, or should we not say, it was His soul plus His body, or through His body, that was the offering for sin. "The prophet lays no particular emphasis upon Christ's bodily sufferings, because, though visible, it was not the main part of His atoning sufferings. Mental pain is harder to bear than bodily pain. The soul, with its larger capacities, finer sensibilities, and chief place as governor of the body, is more sensitive."

IV. HE SHALL PROLONG HIS DAYS (Isaiah 53:10). Note the second occurrence of this sentence, "the pleasure of the Lord." Is it not remarkable that the prophet says nothing about the Saviour's activity on earth till after death! When He is dead He begins to work! Having died He prolongs His days, sees His offspring, and carries into effect the Divine purposes! What a cluster of paradoxes!

V. THE SERVANT'S TRAVAIL (Isaiah 53:11). The word travail, coined to describe the toil and agony attendant on motherhood, is also used in Scripture for painful toil and exhausting labour for Christ. There is a place for travail in Christian service. Toil without God is, in Ecclesiastes 1:13 and Ecclesiastes 3:10, described as a travail. But Paul also uses the word in 1 Thessalonians 2:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:8 to describe the exhausting nature of his labours for his blessed Master. Do we know anything of soul-travail in our missionary labours, or are we "easy going?" What about your prayer-life? Is there ever any travail in it?

VI. THE SERVANT'S SATISFACTION. Many an one is not satisfied with the fruit of his labour-not so the Saviour. As creation ended with the rest and satisfaction of the Creator, so the redemptive work of our Saviour has and will end with the Redeemer's satisfaction. For He will be satisfied with:

1. The Number of the redeemed (Revelation 7:9): "A great multitude which no man could number."

2. The Variety of the redeemed: "Of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues."

3. The Character and attainments of the redeemed. "I shall be satisfied when I awake in Thy likeness." And He cannot be satisfied with anything else.

4. The Prospects of the Redeemed (John 17:24).

5. The Praises of the Redeemed (Read Revelation 5:9, Revelation 5:11-14; Revelation 7:10; Revelation 14:1-3; Revelation 19:1-7).

6. The Service of the Redeemed.

VII. THE SERVANT'S KNOWLEDGE AND OUR JUSTIFICATION. How perplexing is 2 Thessalonians 3:11. What has knowledge to do with our justification? Are we not justified by faith? Then whose knowledge-the Divine Servant's, or our own? There are three explanations.

1. The Punctuation Explanation. A Biblical scholar thus renders and punctuates: "Satisfied by His knowledge, My righteous Servant shall justify many." That is to say, His knowledge of the vast numbers who will be justified through His sufferings, brought satisfaction.

2. Instruction Explanation. Another thus renders the sentence: "By His instructions, My Servant will make many righteous." He is One under authority, and has acted under instruction.

3. The Objective Explanation. David Baron declares that the phrase in the original cannot be understood definitely to be in either a subjective or objective sense, as grammatically it can be rendered either way. But he points out that all the commentators who understand by the Servant our Lord Jesus Christ, prefer the latter, viz., by the knowledge of Him on the part of others. He also points out that the Hebrew "Yada" stands in the Bible for experimental knowledge-a practical experimental knowledge. That is to say, it is not His knowledge of me, but my knowledge of Him which leads to my justification. And even that knowledge, the knowledge of His death and resurrection, of His atonement, of the conditions of justification, we have gained by His grace.

VIII. THE SUFFERING SAVIOUR A GREAT CONQUEROR. There is a singular contrast in 2 Thessalonians 3:12 to the rest of the prophecy. In the former we have the lowliness and the suffering-the minor key; here we have the rapture and the triumph, the major key. Here the once suffering Servant is depicted as a Conqueror, leading back from His conquest a long train of

captives, a rich booty. "He shall divide the spoil." This sentence is taken from the custom of distributing the spoils of victory after a battle. In ancient time, one convincing proof of a victory was the securing of captives and booty. Note:

1. The Time of the Victory. Here is a striking fact, another paradox, the victorious campaign and glorious conquest is achieved after the Servant is dead. This is never so in the case of mere man.

2. The Allies in the Victory. Note the singular blending of God's power and the Servant's own activity: "Therefore will I"-"He shall divide."

3. The Condition of Victory. Note "Because"-that is an important word. The Cross was the condition of the Servant's victory.

4. Evidences of Victory. Great spoil.

5. Recompense Accompanying Victory. Viewing the spoils, He will feel amply recompensed for all the toils and perils of the battle.

"Numbered with the transgressors." He, the Sinless, was counted sin that we sinners might be counted righteous (2 Cor. 5 21). He was numbered with the transgressors that we might be numbered with the redeemed. His name was placed on the roll of transgressors that I might have my name written in the Book of life. "He bare the sins of many." This may seem to teach a limited atonement for a select few. But that is not so. Hebrew scholars say the stress should be placed on the article "the many." It might be rendered "The masses," "an indefinite expression, which, if not declaring universality, approaches very near to it." Thank God for 1 John 2:2 : "And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

IX. THE INTERCESSOR. The Golden Passional closes with a sentence which summarises the whole. In the A.V. we have the past tense-"Made" intercession; in the R.V. we have the present tense-"Maketh intercession." It takes both the past and the present tense to describe His work. He made intercession by His death. Observe the close connection between His death and intercession in the verse. But He "maketh" intercession now in the Father's presence in the glory.

"Why don't you beg?" exclaimed a passer-by to a ragged man. "Beg?" he replied, "why, every rag on my body begs with a loud voice!" In the glory Jesus Christ bears the marks of the crucifixion in His glorified body. Every one of those marks prays and intercedes for us with a loud and prevailing voice. Thus His very presence is a mighty and overwhelming plea on our account. (Note Hebrews 7:25.) Glory to His Name!

RIGHTEOUSNESS.

1. God is Righteous (John 17:25). So is the Lord Jesus (1 John 2:1).

2. Man is Incapable of Righteousness (Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:10). Sin is any want of conformity to the character of God, whether it be in act, disposition, or state.

3. Yet there have been some Men and Women who were Righteous (Luke 1:6). Indeed it is one of the names of the true Christian.

4. How is this Possible? a. God alone can make this possible (Romans 5:17). b. And then, only through Christ (Romans 3:21-22). c. It first is imputed (Romans 3:22; 1 Corinthians 1:30). d. Then imparted, indeed is one characteristic of the New Birth (Romans 8:4; 1 John 2:29). e. Promises for those who hunger and seek after it (Matthew 5:6; Matthew 6:33).

The Death Of Christ

The Death of Christ

SUBSTITUTION.

The Simplicity yet Supremacy of the Substitutionary Death of Christ.

The importance of any item of news can be gauged by the amount of space given to it in the newspaper. The same rule is applicable to the Bible. Take the subject of death. As we commence to read the Bible, we find the smallest possible space given to notices of the death of Bible characters. That first impression is deepened as we prayerfully make our way through the sacred volume, until we come to the New Testament, when we find a great deal of space-whole long chapters-devoted to the death of Christ. Matthew devotes a chapter of 66 verses; Mark, usually very brief in all his statements, 47 verses; Luke, 56; and John, 42. How is this? Surely the implication is that that death was different to all other deaths! The fact is, our Lord's supreme work for the salvation of men was accomplished in His death. We come to live; death ends our work. He came to die; death was the means of accomplishing the work He came to do. And another fact is equally impressive, and that is that the Bible declares that there is no salvation apart from that death. One of the simplest aspects of the death of Christ is that of Substitution. That is taught in innumerable portions of Scripture, such as John 10:11; Galatians 2:20; 1 Peter 3:18. But no clearer explanation or illustration of substitution can be found than what we have in Genesis 22:13, "In the stead of." That great evangelist, D. L. Moody, was right when he remarked: "You take the great doctrine of Substitution out of the preaching of Paul, Peter, John, James, Philip, and all other holy men, and you take out all that they preached. There does not seem any ray of hope for men that ignore the blessed subject of Atonement."

Coming back to Genesis 22, why give Abraham a journey of three days to offer up his son? To show that the act was not one of hasty impulse, but of calm, deliberate, and measured intent. This is one of the clearest pictures of the substitutionary death of Christ in the Bible. The intended sacrifice, Isaac, resembled the Son of God, God's great Lamb, in his supernatural birth; in the fact that he was his father's dearly beloved and only begotten son; in his willingness to be sacrificed; and that he, as later the Lord Jesus, carried the wood (in the Latter's experience, the wooden Cross) to the place of death; in their loneliness, the two apart from all others, in this great act, a faint picture of the loneliness and isolation of God the Father and God the Son on the Cross, shut off from the crowd by the three hours of darkness. Only no substitute was found for the Son of God, as was done in the case of Isaac, for instead, the Lord Jesus was our substitute, and died in our stead. Have you beheld, with the eye of faith, God's Lamb, as John bade his hearers in the famous words: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world?"

PROPITIATION.

Christ's Death as a Propitiation: Its Need, Method and Enjoyment.

"God is angry with the wicked every day" (Psalms 7:11), is a statement in the Book of all books that many would like to get rid of. For there are those who object to any such quality in the Most High. They cling proudly to the declarations concerning the love of God, yet scornfully reject those statements, equally inspired, which ascribe to Him anger and wrath. Yet in all parts of the Bible we find such statements: "And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses" (Exodus 4:14); "O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in Thy hot displeasure" (Psalms 6:1). These are but samples of very, very many references to the anger of the Lord. Even in the New Testament they are found in plenty. Though pre-eminently the New Testament books stress the love of God, we find many references to His anger and to His wrath. The simple reason why God is at times a God of anger, is because He is a God of love. For the God of the Bible is not a cast-iron Colossus, without emotional qualities or feelings! Why, it is written: "Like as a father pitieth His children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." And the human being who knows best his own heart never boggles at such statements concerning His anger, for in his heart of hearts he knows that he has merited by his sins the fiercest wrath of the Almighty. And when the Holy Spirit of God awakens a sinner to a sense of his own sin, he becomes also conscious of the Lord's displeasure on account of his wickedness, and the need of propitiation. But what is the meaning of Isaiah 12:1 : "And in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise Thee: though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me?" What wonderful words! Here the individual, once alarmed to find that the anger of the Lord was his portion, now is blessedly conscious of the glad fact that that anger has been turned away. How is this? God is holy, and must hate sin. And His holiness and hatred must be manifested, and meet and strike someone. His wrath against sin must strike somewhere, either the sinner himself, or a lawful substitute. "The Lord hath laid on Him" (literally, "Made to strike upon") the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6).

Ah, there is the secret of Isaiah 12:1 -the stroke due to us fell upon Him, and by the Blood He had become propitiated. There is no thought in the Bible doctrine of Propitiation of placating a vengeful God, but of doing right by His Holy Law, and so making it possible for Him to righteously show mercy. This word Propitiation only occurs three times in the A.V. of the Bible, and is the translation of two different yet related Greek words. In 1 John 2:2, and 1 John 4:10, it is the rendering of the Greek hilasmoss, i.e., that which propitiates; and in Romans 3:25, Greek, hilasterion, i.e., the place of propitiation. In Hebrews 9:5, hilasterio is the Greek word used by the Holy Spirit for the Mercy Seat. Whatever the Mercy Seat was to Israel typically, that the Lord Jesus Christ is actually to the believer. The Mercy Seat was sprinkled with atoning blood on the great Day of Atonement, in token that the righteous sentence of the Law had been (typically) carried out, so that what must else have been a Judgment-Seat could righteously be a Mercy Seat, a place of blessing.

I. The Divinely Appointed Means of Propitiation- The Death of Christ. "For Him hath God set forth in His Blood, to be a propitiatory sacrifice, by means of faith, thereby to manifest the righteousness of God; because in His forbearance, God had passed over the former sins of men in the times that are gone by" (C. & H.'s rendering of Romans 3:25). This verse will ever be memorable as the means of the conversion of Cowper the poet, at St. Albans, in 1764.

Here is a difficulty. While God had proclaimed His Law and had not yet proclaimed His Gospel, yet He did bear with sinners. Why? Did He think lightly of their sin? Far from it! This verse is the answer. God's past forbearance was exercised in virtue of what the Lord Jesus was to do in the fulness of time. To propitiate is to appease and dispose to kindness or favour, with consequent

blessing. This can only be done by sacrifice. But whose? Such an effectual sacrifice the Lord Jesus has made. The Blood of Christ avails to appease His holy and righteous anger.

II. The Divinely Appointed Place and Pledged Security for Propitiation, is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. What the Mercy Seat was typically to Israel, so Christ Himself is to the believer to-day. Note what is said, "He is the propitiation" (1 John 2:2). Not merely that He has effected propitiation, but that He is, in His own person, the pledge and security of Propitiation.

Think of the old Mercy Seat, and see how it portrays Christ.

1. It was made of pure solid gold, costing £25,000. So our Mercy Seat is pure, Divine.

2. It hid the two unbroken Tables of Stone, witness to the sin of Israel. Ah, but between the symbol of God's presence in the Shekinah Glory over the Mercy Seat, and that witness of the sin of Israel, was the sprinkled Blood on the Mercy Seat. It was that Blood which made what should have been a Judgment Seat a Throne of Mercy and Blessing.

3. It was only here where God could meet with sinful man in grace, and only here where God's voice could be heard in mercy. It was here where God communed with redeemed man.

God now says to the sinner: Do you desire, in spite of your sin, to meet Me? Would you be no longer My enemy estranged from Me? Do you desire My blessing? Do you desire to commune with Me in peace and unity? Would you do business with Me? Would you like to be at peace with Me? Would you have traffic with Heaven? Well then, come to Christ, as the Israelite came to the Mercy Seat, where I can meet with you in grace and wondrous blessing.

RECONCILIATION.

Christ's Death as a Reconciliation.

In a recent book issued in connection with a new and unsound modern movement occurs this passage: "The ancient sacrifices spoke of an angry God Who needed to be propitiated by the blood of victims 'on Jewish altars slain.' The Cross of Christ revealed a God of love Whose love, so tender and so vast and so deep, could go even to the Cross of Calvary." To say the least, this is a mischievous paragraph. It certainly is a caricature of the truth. How foolish to attempt to pit the New Testament against the Old, with the intention that the latter should be discredited. For remember, the Old Testament is equally a revelation of the love of God as the New, as Deuteronomy and other Bible books prove. And why should an attempt be made to laugh out of court the wrath of God? For it is found in the New Testament equally with the Old. Romans 1:17-18 and many another Scripture proves that the Gospel is not only a revelation of the love of God, but equally a revelation of His righteousness and righteous wrath. Besides, the God of the Old and the New Testaments is not an unemotional, stereotyped Being. He is love, and loves all, yet is "angry with the wicked" in the sense that His wrath burns against them in so far as they identify themselves with their sin.

It is quite evident that behind this statement is a deep dislike to the substitutionary Aspect of the death of Christ, and to the truths which most certainly lie behind such a necessity. In certain quarters much bitterness has been shown in criticism of Charles Wesley's well-known verse:

"My God is reconciled. His pardoning Voice I hear."

Say they: "If the Atonement was an act of reconciliation, it was rebellious men, and not God, who needed to be reconciled, for God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19). God is love, and cannot need to be reconciled." This statement is inaccurate. Certainly men need to be reconciled; but was there no need for reconciliation in God? God is indeed Love, but that is why His reconciliation was a first necessity. However startling this may be to some, it certainly is the truth.

I. Reconciliation of God to Man. "And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Peter 4:18). What is the meaning of the word "scarcely?" It cannot mean that there is the least degree of uncertainty concerning our Salvation. The believer's salvation is assured the very moment they trust the Saviour. There is the glorious ring of certainty concerning this vital matter.

Neither does it mean that, though our ultimate salvation is assured, we shall only just be saved, as a shipwrecked mariner scarcely gains the shore on a plank. No doubt that will be the character of the Home-going of many. Yet it is not God's ideal. He desires for us an "abundant entrance," and that we should go sweeping through the gates of the New Jerusalem. The word "scarcely" really means "with difficulty." That is the rendering in the margin of the Scofield Bible. "If a good man is only saved with difficulty," is the rendering of this verse in the Twentieth Century New Testament, and Weymouth reads: "And if it is difficult even for a righteous man to be saved, what will become of irreligious men and sinners?" The same word rendered "scarcely" is used in Acts 14:18 : "And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people;" and Acts 27:7 : "And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against Cnidus." This verse surely means that, in arranging His scheme of redemption, God was confronted with great difficulties, and the first great difficulty lay within Himself. He had no difficulty whatever in loving us. How could He, seeing "God is love." Neither had He any difficulty in persuading Himself to lay bare His arm on our behalf, for His love is most practical. The difficulty lay in His Attributes.

God has been pleased at sundry times to reveal, by word or act, that certain characteristics or qualities reside in Him. These are known theologically as His Attributes. Ah Attribute is that which belongs to a person as distinguished from the person Himself.

Five of the Divine Attributes are known as Absolute or Essential, because they are essential to Deity-Eternity, Unchangeableness, Omnipotence, Omnipresence, and Omniscience; and five are known as moral Attributes: Holiness; Justice (or Truth or Righteousness); Love; Mercy; and Faithfulness. Now of necessity every act of God must be in perfect harmony with each separate Attribute. Not a single Attribute can be overlooked or violated. The problem was: How could God be just, and yet the Justifier of the ungodly? The Attribute of Justice clamoured for man's condemnation, yet the Attribute of Mercy desired his pardon; the Attribute of Righteousness demanded the death of the sinner, whereas the Attribute of Love pleaded for the salvation of the sinner. In the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen there is a single sentence: "What shall I do?" (Luke 20:13), which is a small four-paned window letting in a flood of light. Does this not reveal the Divine dilemma, the Lord puzzled? Speaking, of course, as man speaks. We talk about "the simple plan of salvation," and we are right. Yet there is a danger of forgetting in the thought of the simplicity the difficulty of salvation. In Psalms 85:10 we have a statement regarding a meeting in

perfect accord of those very Attributes: "Mercy and Truth are met together, Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other." Surely this was a prophecy uttered many years before it came to pass. That prophecy was fulfilled at the Cross. It was there the Divine Attributes met and found the means of perfect Reconciliation. In pondering much on this theme, many thoughts have been suggested, overthrowing popular ideas. Rather hesitant at these discoveries, one has been helped by the mature thoughts of several devout and fully accredited Biblical scholars.

"The reconciliation, which is the foundation of the Apostolic Gospel, is not something which we effect when we lay aside our unbelief and enmity and turn to God in repentance and faith (though we must say there is truth in this statement, as we shall note in our second point). It is something immeasurably more important, something which God effected through the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ."-A. E. BARNES-LAWRENCE, M.A.

"The whole tenor of Scripture is to the effect that through the vicarious sacrifice of Christ a change was wrought in God of this nature, that whereas previously He could not, consistently with the perfection of His attributes, grant forgiveness or repentance, now He can."-litton.

These are great thoughts. Of course, we must observe that the Atonement was necessary, not to induce God to forgive, but to enable Him to pardon sin without injustice.

"The death of Christ removes all moral hindrances in the mind of God to the saving of sinners. By Christ's death, God's infinite love and power are released from restraint by the accomplishment of every judgment which His righteousness could demand against the sinner."-L. S. Chafer.

Thus in the death of Christ a basis is provided upon which God can deal in perfect justice, yet in wonderful mercy, with the world. The fact that Christ died provides a sufficient ground upon which God in full harmony with His holiness is free to save even the chief of sinners.

During a mission in Aberdeen conducted by Major Whittle many years ago, a young man of eighteen years testified: "I am saved by the justice of God." This greatly startled the Major. But the young man continued: "By the justice of God I was condemned; by the justice of God, Jesus Christ became my Substitute, I died upon the Cross, and I am saved by the justice of God." That young man had had revealed to him by the Holy Spirit a great truth, and a real stabilising truth, too, of which thousands in our day are ignorant. Oh, it is glorious to find that our salvation rests on so solid a foundation! The late Dr. A. T. Pierson has splendidly outlined another aspect of the problem of all problems.

"The problem of redemption was this: to justify the sinner without justifying his sin; to save him from legal penalty, and yet save God from compromise and complicity with his guilt. Justice demands the execution of the penalty in the interest of law, and of perfect government; mercy yearned to rescue the offender in the interests of love. The problem was so perplexing that only Infinite wisdom and grace together were equal to its solution. Now that it is solved, it may seem simple."

Blessed be God, on account of the substitutionary death of Christ, the problem has been solved. God is now reconciled, and He can be both "a just God and a Saviour" (Isaiah 45:21); "Just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly" (Romans 3:26); "Faithful and yet just to forgive us our sins" (1 John 1:9).

II. Reconciliation of Man to God. The dictionary declares that reconcile means "to bring to agreement; to bring to acquiescence; to restore to friendship." All these definitions are suggestive in relation to the reconciliation of man to God.

Now the sad fact is that the sinner is not merely helpless and in danger, but is actively rebellious and persistently obstinate, which state and temper bears sad fruit in a dreadful defiance of God and His Law. The truth of reconciliation in the Bible is of a twofold nature. The first necessity was a reconciliation in God Himself. And so far as that is concerned, it was accomplished at the Cross (Ephesians 2:16). The second necessity is a reconciliation of man to God, and that, too, was made possible at the Cross (Romans 5:10; Colossians 1:20-21; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19).

"While it is never implied that the world enmity towards God is removed, it is declared that the judicial state of the world is so altered before God by the death of Christ that He is said to have reconciled the world unto Himself."-L. S. Chafer.

Another theologian has finely expressed it thus: "The overture of reconciliation is from God, the acceptance is of man."

Estranged as we are by nature from God, God has taken the first step. God was reconciled to man; the worst of men might now be reconciled to God. Now He sends forth His servants with the Gospel, with the great message of Reconciliation to proclaim: "Be ye reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20).

One of John Wesley's preachers, testifying of saving grace, said that Charles Wesley's hymn, particularly the first verse, was blessed to his conversion, quoting:

"All ye that pass by

To Jesus draw nigh;

To you is it nothing

That Jesus should die?

Your ransom and peace.

Your Surety He is;

Come, see if there ever

Was sorrow like His?"

He remarked: "I then believed that God for Christ's sake had forgiven all my sins, and found that peace which arises from a sense of reconciliation."

ATONEMENT.

Christ's Death as an Atonement, and Much More.

On one occasion, when Tennyson the poet was on holiday in a country place, he asked an old Methodist woman if there was any news. "Why, Mr. Tennyson, there is only one piece of news that I know, and that is, 'Christ died for all men.'" He responded, "That is old news, and good news, and

new news," and he was right. Surely there is no better news, old, yet ever new, because its meaning and power are being personally discovered and experienced continually by first one and then another.

It is rather startling to find that in the Revised New Testament the word "Atonement" disappears; but there is no cause for alarm; for whilst that word disappears, the truth concerning the sacrificial death of Christ remains. Rather than be perturbed, we should be profoundly thankful, for nothing brings out the perfection and thoroughness of the work of Christ on the Cross more than this disappearance. In the Authorised Version of the Bible the word "Atonement" occurs 77 times in the Old Testament, and but once in the New Testament- Romans 5:11. In the Revised Version the word is retained in all the Old Testament passages in which it is used in the Authorised Version, but it disappears from the New; the word in Romans 5:11 being correctly rendered "reconciliation." The fact is that in the original text of the New Testament, the Old Testament word for "atonement" does not once appear in the New.

What is the significance? The meaning of words change with the passing generations, as any English Etymological Dictionary will prove. That is so with the word "atonement," The Biblical use of the word "atonement" differs from its present theological use. In the Old Testament it stands for one Scriptural experience only. To-day in theology it covers the whole sacrificial and redemptive work of Christ. In that sense, of course, the Atonement is the fundamental fact of our Christian life. Salvation through the atoning sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ is not merely one of importance, but the essential and characteristic feature of our Christian faith. Indeed it is the fundamental fact of our Christian faith.

We must ever remember that the work Christ wrought on the Cross was so great, so stupendous, and so varied in its aspects, both God-ward, man-ward, and creature-ward, that it cannot possibly be compressed into one word. For clarity of thought, and in order to note the varied aspects of the word "atonement" in its Biblical sense, the following outline will be helpful.

I. The Origin of the Atonement: Sacrifice. From time immemorial, whenever man thought of approaching Deity, he invariably did so through sacrifice. This practice seems universal. In all parts of the globe this custom is observed.

II. The Reason of the Atonement: Sin. The Bible is the only sacred Book in the world that gives this true reason for the fear of the Divine. That dread lies in man himself-his sin.

III. The Meaning of the Atonement: To Cover Up. The Hebrew word "atonement" means "to cover up." The very first occurrence of that word is in Genesis 6:14, where we are told that Noah's ark was covered with pitch, within and without, and thus made judgment-proof. With regard to sin, it means that sin is so covered up that God regards it as neutralised, disarmed, inoperative to rouse His anger. This is clearly the teaching of Genesis 32:20. Just when Jacob was about to meet his brother, whom he had angered and wronged, he sent the present and said, "I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterwards I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me." The presents that Jacob sent on before his party were to cover the face of the offended person, Esau, so that he could no longer see the offence.

Blood was sprinkled on and before the mercy seat, that satisfaction might be given to Jehovah. Why? The Mercy Seat hid the two tables of stone, evidence of Israel's guilt. There was in the

death of the Lord Jesus that which satisfied the righteous ire of the Holy God Who had been made angry by men's sin. But the work of Christ was more thorough. At the Cross there was no temporising or partial dealing with sin. Christ's work does not pass over or overlook sin, but takes it away. Study John 1:29; Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 10:4; 1 John 3:5. Have you really grasped this? Thousands of true believers have not. The Levitical offerings covered, but did not take away (Hebrews 10:4). These sins God passed over (Romans 3:25). According to Scripture the Levitical sacrifices covered the offerer's sin, and secured the Divine pardon. Yet the sin was not put away. Christ's death puts away sin completely.

There is another point. However welcome the provision of the Levitical offerings, the latter imperfectly met the need. For example, it does seem that there were sins, for which those offerings were unavailing. As Mr. Neill points out, there does not seem to have been any atonement for wilful sin under the Old Covenant, with four exceptions only (Leviticus 5:1; Leviticus 6:2; Leviticus 19:20-22). The Law provided sacrifices only for sins of ignorance, accidental omission, or forgetfulness, not for any wilful breach of the Ten Commandments, with three exceptions in the case of the ninth, and one in the case of the seventh (Leviticus 4:2-3; Leviticus 5:18; Numbers 15:22-29).

David knew this well, and in his sorrow cried, "Thou desireth not sacrifice; else would I give it." His sin was wilful; for which no provision had been made. The Lord was merciful to him notwithstanding. But the sacrifice of Christ provides pardon for all sin. What saith 1 John 1:7? "The Blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." "All"-blessed, blessed word!

IV. The Source of the Atonement: God Himself (Isaiah 53:6, Isaiah 53:10). Not man. Oh, no. You would never have thought of this, if God had not devised this scheme.

V. The Foundation of the Atonement: Love (John 3:16; Ephesians 5:2 and Ephesians 5:25; 1 John 4:10). Not anger. Though God is a Being capable of anger and wrath, of pleasure and displeasure, love is behind the Atonement.

VI. The Method of the Atonement: Blood (Leviticus 17:11; Leviticus 16:27; Leviticus 19:22). The Lord said to Moses, "With My hand will I cover you" (Exodus 33:22). But that only took place after Moses stepped into the cleft rock, a picture of the Rock of Ages cleft for me.

VII. The Essence of the Atonement; or the Abiding-Place of the Atonement: Jesus Himself (1 John 2:2). The late Dr. Edwards of Bala, whilst engaged with his admirable treatise on the Atonement, was suddenly gripped with this thought. He rose from his desk, writes Dr. M'Intyre, leaving his books and papers as they lay, went into the street, and cried aloud, "Jesus is the Atonement! Jesus is the Atonement!" Then he returned to his study to write down sentences like this: "This is the Atonement-not the sufferings, and not the death, but the Person of the Son of God in the sufferings and in the death. He is the Propitiation. He is the Atonement- not He Himself without the act, but He Himself in the act... the Atonement is eternally offered to the Father in the Person of the Son."

VIII. The Result of the Atonement: Salvation. If covering of sin meant salvation in the Old Testament, what a wonderful salvation for us in the putting away of sin!

REDEMPTION.

Christ's Death and the Glory of Redemption.

Language has been called the amber in which a thousand precious and subtle thoughts have been safely embedded and preserved. This is peculiarly true with regard to the word "Redemption." Though, in addition to the precious and subtle thoughts, we must add many painful and saddening ones. Let us explain:

One of the most familiar of sights in the ancient world was long lines of manacled war-captives, on their way to the capital city. After taking a compulsory part in the victorious captor's triumphant entry, usually a price for redemption was placed upon their heads, whereupon they were imprisoned to await its payment, or death. In Israel there was an additional provision of a Gaal, i.e., one who, because a near relative, was duty bound to redeem a captive, or even to redeem an insolvent relative's inheritance. Redemption therefore means a buying back, or a changed state or condition of freedom from bondage as a result of that act of redemption. The Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is, in a sense, a great mystery, or better, there is a mysterious side to it. Attempts have been made, in various ways, to explain and make clear something of its wondrousness, and one of the clearest is to think of it as a Redemption. Indeed it is surely the earliest conception by man, and one of the most beautiful aspects of that sacrificial death. View sin as a slavery; sinners as bondmen to sin and to Satan, Christ's Blood as the Ransom Price, paid to the holy demands of God for the sinner; the Christian as one freed from just condemnation, restored to liberty and much more, and you will begin to understand something of its length and breadth, its height and depth.

Only we must never forget that purchase implies a new ownership. The redeemed must now serve as loving and devoted slaves the One who has redeemed them. It has been well said that "the conception of God as Creator is the foundation-stone of the Christian revelation, the conception of God as Redeemer is the soul and substance of it." The following outline of Redemption, the result of years of brooding upon the subject, is here given in the hope that it may be of service to the Lord's people.

I. The Author of It Redemption is by God. The utter hopelessness of man ever redeeming himself or others is shown in Psalms 49:6-8. Why? The price of redemption is far too costly for any to pay. But observe Psalms 49:15, and how triumphantly the Psalmist exclaims, "But God will redeem." He is our only hope. Note "Of God" in 1 Corinthians 1:30.

II. The Channel of It: Redemption is through Christ. Has Ephesians 1:7, "In whom we have Redemption," ever gripped you? There is no redemption apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our Kinsman-Redeemer: "Any of his kin." "One of his brethren may redeem him" (Leviticus 25:25,Leviticus 25:48). See Galatians 4:5.

III. The Price of It: Redemption is by Blood. That the Blood of Christ is the price of Redemption is clearly taught in Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; and 1 Peter 1:18-19. "Redeemed. . . with the precious Blood of Christ."

IV. The Depository of It: Redemption is in Christ. That Redemption is in Christ is the teaching of the following Scriptures: Romans 3:24; Colossians 1:14. Redemption is in Him, and only there can it be secured. When I receive Him, I receive Redemption.

V. The Security of it: Redemption Includes the Holy Spirit. In this connection ponder over Ephesians 1:13-14; and Ephesians 4:30. By the Holy Spirit we are "Sealed unto the day of Redemption," and the same Holy Spirit is the "Earnest of our Redemption." In land purchased in ancient times, instead of 10% of the agreed amount of money deposited as legal bond, the vendor would stoop down, and taking a handful of the earth bought, hand it to the purchaser. In giving the Holy Spirit to us, we receive the Earnest of our full Redemption. Double security.

VI. The Operation of it: Redemption is by Power. "I will redeem you with a stretched out arm" (Exodus 6:6). "By strength of hand the Lord brought us out" (Exodus 13:14). The power of the Spirit, the Executive of God in this dispensation, sets the captive free on the ground of the Blood of Christ. "The law of the Spirit. . . hath made me free" (Romans 8:2). Turn to Hebrews 11:35, where the word rendered "deliverance" is the same word rendered elsewhere Redemption.

VII. The Scope of it: Redemption is for All. Read and study 1 Timothy 2:6. This clearly shows that there can be no Redemption apart from the Lord Jesus, for "He gave Himself a Ransom," and that Redemption is "for all." It is thus available for all, yet only enjoyed by those who receive Him.

VIII. The Amazing Breadth of it: Redemption is Inclusive. See what a wide sweep Redemption has, and note its blessings. What are we Redeemed from?

1. Curse of the Law. Galatians 3:13. Note how the Old Testament ends with a curse (Malachi 4:6), and the New Testament with a blessing (Revelation 22:21).

2. All Iniquity. Psalms 130:8. This is not only a promise for Israel, for Titus 2:14 shows it is a promise for to-day.

3. All Evil. Genesis 48:16. "Which hath redeemed me from all evil" is R.V.

4. Destruction. Psalms 103:4.

5. Death. Hosea 13:14.

6. Deceit. Psalms 72:14.

7. All Troubles. Psalms 25:22.

8. Loneliness, as illustrated in Ruth, for which see our next point.

9. The Body. Romans 8:23. In these Scriptures we see what we are Redeemed from; now note what we are Redeemed to: (1) The first conscious blessing is the forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14; Ephesians 1:7). (2) The next conscious blessing is freedom from sin's power as well as from its guilt, as is shown in point 6.

IX. The Enrichment of it: Redemption is by Union. This is the teaching of the Book of Ruth. Especially study Rth_4:4-11. To redeem the possessions of Ruth, meant the union of Boaz and Ruth in marriage, meaning good-bye to loneliness and penury. For she then shared the companionship of her husband.

X. The Period of it: Redemption is for Eternity. Hebrews 9:12 clearly shows that He secured an Eternal Redemption for us. Thus the fact with its privileges and blessings, extends beyond time, right through Eternity.

"Glory to Him, whose love unknown,

Touched man's abyss from Heaven's high throne;

Like some new star its radiance beamed,

A new song rose: Redeemed! Redeemed!" THE REMISSION OF SINS.

Christ's Death Makes the Remission of Sins Possible.

At the last supper our beloved Lord said, "For this is My Blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the Remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28), and in the letter to the Hebrews the Apostle writes, "Without shedding of Blood is no Remission" (Hebrews 9:22). Remission is certainly one of the great themes of the Bible. In the solemn and dangerous Covenanting days a Highland lassie was on her way to an unlawful Conventicle, when a party of Claverhouse's troopers surprised her. "Where are you going, my pretty maid?" inquired the Captain. To have frankly declared her destination almost certainly meant instant death. "Oh, my Brother has died: I am going to hear His will read, and claim my share," was her quick reply. "Good luck to you," said the military officer, as he made way for her to proceed on her journey. And she was quite right. He who is "not ashamed to call us brethren" (Hebrews 2:11) has died. Is not the Bible the Will? Why not claim our share, every time we read it! We would be richer and better Christians if we did.

Now in a Will that concerns us every single word receives careful study. Why do we not pay more attention to single Bible words? Only by so doing will we learn the riches of our inheritance, and be enabled by wondrous grace to appropriate and enjoy to the full the fruits of His death.

Remission is the translation of the Greek word Aphesis. Only it is rather curious to find that Aphesis is not always so rendered. Yea, it is more than curious, for it is really an important fact, and in the due noting of it is great wealth. That same Greek word is translated Remission nine times; Forgiveness six times; Deliverance once; Liberty once.

Take up an ordinary English dictionary, and you will be surprised to find the variety of meanings attached to that one word, all of which are significant. It is a word used by the tradesman, as remittance, payment for goods; by a Court of Law, discharging one from a penalty or a fine; by a Sovereign, meaning the pardoning of guilt and annulling the penalty; by a Physician, meaning to abate or relax a fever; by an Emancipator or Restorer, meaning to deliver or to re-instate. By putting all these meanings together we get a wonderful grasp of the deep, deep significance of Remission. Observe:

I. The Foundation and Ground of Remission. When a customer sends an order for goods by post, he usually sends with the order a Remittance in the form of a cheque or Money Order. The price of the Remission of sins was the Blood of Christ. When He poured out His life on the Cross He made the Remission of our sins possible. In fact, the Blood made possible every blessing found in the Divine inventory. Every blessing we are in the enjoyment of comes to us Blood tipped. Apart from that precious Blood there is no hope and no blessing. Next, note:

II. The Sovereignty and Grandeur of Remission. Wherein does pardon, forgiveness, and justification differ? We have in them three aspects of Divine truth, and three views of our God. In pardoning, we have God acting as Sovereign; in forgiving, we have Him acting as Father, in

justifying, we have God acting as Judge.

Strictly speaking, a converted and born-again person should never ask God for pardon, but for forgiveness. On the other hand, an unregenerate sinner has no right to ask God for forgiveness, but for pardon. The correct order is first pardon, swiftly, oh, how swiftly, followed by justification; then, as a child of God, day by day we need His grace of forgiveness. We do mix up these mercies in our prayers, and the Lord graciously overrules. Remission certainly means pardon, and includes forgiveness. When the Moravian missionaries first went to the Eskimos, they did not find a word in their language for forgiveness, so they had to manufacture one, and here it is: Issumagijoujungneinermik. It is a formidable looking word, a puzzle to us as to pronunciation, and yet one of beautiful meaning in their language-"Not-being-able-to-think-about-it-any-more." Praise the Lord! Now notice:

III. The Reality and Enjoyment of Remission. In a Law Court, Remission means to discharge from a penalty or a fine. Is not this just the result of His pardoning and justifying grace? Verily so. It means the blessed consciousness and full enjoyment of the Lord's pardon and justification. It is not only His will that we should be thus treated, but that we should be instantly conscious of those great and beneficent transactions. It is very important that we should learn:

IV. The Breadth and Significance of Remission. Remission is a word of broad and deep significance. It means, indeed is translated deliverance in Luke 4:18. That means much more than deliverance from the guilt and punishment of sin, though, of course, it does mean that; it means "Deliverance to the captives," and "To set at liberty (another translation of the same Greek word) them that are bruised" (Luke 4:18). Let us never forget that the Blood of Christ is:

"Of sin the double cure,

Saving from its guilt and power." There we have it-the double cure! It is His will that we should not only be pardoned and justified, but liberated from the prison house, not only hear sweet words of pardon in our ears, but the fetters on our hands and feet struck off, and full liberty given.

There is full and blessed deliverance and liberty from all evil habits, from all sinful desires, from every evil thing. A wonderful liberty is our Blood-bought heritage. Get rid of the old sinful idea that the only way to be kept humble is to frequently fall into sin. The branch of the fruit tree that bends the lowest is the one that bears the most fruit. If we fully surrender ourselves to Him, and to His Holy Spirit, He will fill our lives to the full with the fruit of righteousness, and in us the fruit of the Spirit will mature and multiply.

Remission also means healing and enrichment. We have noticed that Remission is a medical word used for the abating of a fever. Our Heavenly Physician not only pardons and justifies, but also sanctifies. He not only has accomplished a great work for us, but begins and continues a good work within us. He is able to cope with the fevered condition that inbred sin produces.

Remission is used for re-instatement, or enrichment. All that we lost in Adam we gain, and much more indeed, in Christ. But to enjoy we must by faith appropriate.

Dr. Guthrie, in his autobiography, describes an old Scotch parishioner of Airbirlot, "who died as he lived, a curious mixture of benevolence and folly." The lawyer who drew his will, after writing down several legacies of five hundred pounds to one person, a thousand to another, and so on, at last

said: "But, Mr.---, I don't believe you have all that money to leave." "Oh," was his reply, "I ken that as well as you; but I just want to show them my good will." But God's "Good will toward men" is no mere pretence of bestowing gifts. We need to ascertain what has been left us, then we can claim our share in the Name of the One who shed His precious Blood for us. A PERSONAL INTEREST.

The Imperative Need of a Personal Interest in the Death of Christ shown by an Ancient Census Custom.

A wise tradesman will hold an annual stock-taking in order that he might discover how his business is faring. Nations as well as individuals have their stock-taking, only the former call it by another name-a census. The taking of a census is an ancient custom. We know the Egyptians were adepts at it, for they were most methodical, and were born organisers. Yet the most ancient census on record was not in connection with the Egyptians, but Israel, and it took place more than three thousand years ago. This is referred to in Exodus 38:26, when Israel were numbered in the Wilderness. When led to the Saviour over half a century ago, the writer became conscious of a great hunger and thirst for the Word of God, and was never so happy as when reading and meditating upon it. Well does he remember coming for the first time across 1 Peter 1:18, and upon reading, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold," he rather emphatically exclaimed, "Why of course not, no one has ever been redeemed from sin, death and outer darkness, by such corruptible things as silver and gold: it is the Blood that maketh atonement." But later, when he began to read and ponder on the Old Testament Scriptures, to his surprise and bewilderment he learned in Exodus 30:11-16 of such a provision ordained of God. Unlike any other nation, every time a census was taken, whether it was a national census, a roll call after a battle, the conclusion of a military campaign, or for any other national purpose, every male Israelite from twenty years and upwards had to pay a small silver coin called a half-shekel, in value about 1/21/2 or 1/41/2.

There were other differences to those of our time, as for example, the census was taken just when the leader or king ordered, was carried out by the military, and women and children were not counted. But the outstanding difference was the payment of this small silver coin, and to omit this exposed the individual to terrible danger. Its payment in Exodus 30 was stated to be (a) a ransom (Exodus 30:12); (b) a preservation (Exodus 30:12); and an atonement (Exodus 30:15).

Before considering the significance of this strange custom, let us trace the eleven numberings recorded in the Scriptures. Probably there were many more, but of those no records are preserved. The First Census took place four months after the Exodus (see Exodus 38:25-26). The second took place nine months later, or four weeks after the erection of the Tabernacle (Numbers 1:1-3; with Exodus 40:17-18). Very shortly afterwards the third census was taken, which was confined to the numbering of the firstborn in Israel and the tribe of Levi, following the decision to take the latter in the place of the former, and those over the number of Levi had to pay a special redemption price of fifteen shillings (Numbers 3:46-47). The Fourth Census took place thirty-eight years after in the plains of Moab (Num. 26). Shortly after this a fifth was taken (Numbers 31:49-54), but this was more in the nature of an army roll call after a dreadful military campaign against Moab in which the prophet Baalim was slain. To their utter amazement, though the slaughter amongst the enemy had been great, not a solitary Israelite warrior was missing, and as a special thank-offering for this miraculous preservation, they asked to be allowed to offer gold

instead of silver, which request was granted. The sixth was the one ordered by King David and recorded in 2 Samuel 24, when 70,000 men died by the plague. Had David the king, Joab the commander-in-chief, and the men numbered forgotten to pay the half-shekel as atonement money? It may be, for there is no mention of it whatever. If that is so, have we not in that omission a sufficient reply to the challenge to the justice of God in punishing 70,000 for the sin of one man? None numbered were innocent; they shared the guilt by not giving the half-shekel. The Seventh Recorded Census was taken by Solomon, referred to in 2 Chronicles 2:17. Was this the completion of the census begun hut not ended by David and Joab? The eighth was taken on the return from Babylon (Ezra 2); the ninth at the birth of Christ (Luke 2:1). The tenth took place during His wonderful, life, and is referred to in Matthew 17:24-27, when He admitted Peter to share in the miraculous redemption, reminding us how he admits every believer, to a share in His redemption now, and afterwards the glory. The eleventh is referred to by Gamaliel in Acts 5:37. The proceeds of the first census was used in providing the silver blocks for the Tabernacle to rest upon, this symbolising that God's dwelling with man, and our oneness and communion with Him, all rest on the solid basis of Redemption. Afterwards the redemption money was used to support the services of the Sanctuary. But now, what was the mission or lessons designed by this remarkable custom? What special spiritual truths did it convey? What would the Lord have us to learn, or be reminded of, as the outcome of this meditation?

I. Personal Unworthiness. "They shall give every man a ransom for his soul unto the Lord" (Exodus 30:12), In being numbered amongst Israel, they naturally would dwell on the great honour thus conferred upon them, and might begin to swell with pride, imagining the honour was by merit and not of grace. This Divinely appointed ordinance was designed to keep them humble and lowly at His feet. The moment of the numbering was the very moment God designed for the payment of the half-shekel to remind each individual of his personal unworthiness, sinfulness, and need of redemption. Hence they would be saved from that great peril-spiritual pride.

It has been well said that there are four kinds of pride:

1. Pride of Place-proud of one's position or standing in the world of men, or in the Assembly. Yet, whence came the qualities that make for leadership, and whence that insight into His Word that makes our ministry profitable and helpful to others? Whatever we have we have received from God. Of ourselves we are nothing, yea, less than nothing.

2. Pride of Race-boastful of the accident of birth. But God hath made of one blood all nations of men, determined when we were to be born and where (Acts 17:26). Why forget these facts?

3. Pride of Face. Probably this is more common amongst the young, though the older folk are not always free. But we should remember that all beauty is from God, and that beauty of face is only skin deep, unless it be beauty of soul and spirit.

4. Pride of Grace. Beware of this. It is a most subtle form of pride. Fancy, to be proud of our humility, or standing in His grace and Kingdom! Amazing! If the Devil cannot trip us up in any other way, he will make his appeal in this direction, and frequently he succeeds. Oh, keep humble and lowly before Him! Ever keep in mind your utter dependence upon His grace and the merit of our Redeemer. If this ancient census custom has ceased because of the perfection of Christ's work on the Cross, the coming week by week to the Lord's table, so far as a remembrancer is concerned,

has taken its place. As we eat the bread and drink the cup in remembrance of His broken body and shed Blood, we should say in our heart of hearts:

"My richest gain I count but loss.

And pour contempt on all my pride."

II. Personal Appropriation. "Every man" (Exodus 30:12). "Every one" (14). In the numbering, each Israelite came, as it were individually before God, and each one, irrespective of birth or position had to give the half-shekel as a ransom "for his soul." The rich and poor were of precisely the same value before God, and equally in need of redemptive grace Redemption therefore, is a great leveller. If all are not sinners alike, all are alike sinners and need a Saviour. Every man had to give for himself, not for another Every one must have a personal interest in Christ and His great redemption. This is important. There must be an individual appropriation of the Blood of Christ and of the merits of our Saviour.

III. Personal Thanksgiving. The offering of the half-shekel at a numbering after a battle or campaign would not only be of the nature of atonement and ransom money, but also of thanksgiving. For sparing mercy each one individually rendered thanks to God. So complete and perfect was the one offering of Christ on Calvary for sin that the work was then completed once for all. "It is finished," was His cry. It was a great triumphant proclamation.

We are not now required to make an offering to atone for our sin-that has been done once for all by our Saviour. Our first need is to accept the work done. But, after this act of appropriation and identification there should be the giving, first of ourselves, then of our treasure, as an act of thanksgiving for a ransom and atonement completed. As we meditate on the Cross, there should not only be a deepened sense of personal unworthiness, and a fresh realisation of the worthiness of Christ, and the perfection of His finished work, but the out-pouring of our thanks to Him in prayer, and the offering of money, for the support and furtherance of His work at home and abroad. Not, of course, to buy salvation, but to celebrate a salvation already received and enjoyed. THE FINISHED WORK.

The Glorious Completeness of the Work accomplished by Christ in and by His Death, and what is meant by "receiving double."

No one can deny the presence of difficult and puzzling statements in Holy Writ. Time and again in our reading of the Book we encounter them. How they challenge and arrest us. As we halt and wrestle with them, what a glow such healthful exercise bestows. Whilst the Holy Scriptures are so simple a child can understand them, there are portions so profound that the keenest intellect is baffled. Some erroneously conclude that the presence of the stiff intellectual problems in the Bible are so many proofs that the Book is not from above. Rightly understood, the contrary is really the case. Is it not perfectly natural to expect in the writings of the Master Mind, statements far beyond our grasp and thought, that challenge us at every turn? Verily that is so. But some of these difficulties arise through ignorance of old Eastern customs. As the years have inarched on, a then well-known custom behind a Scripture had lost its popularity, and falling into disuse, is now forgotten. In consequence of this, some of the Scripture preserved for us in the Divine Library becomes a kind of enigma. Isaiah 40:2 is an instance of this. "Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath

received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." "Double" what? How puzzling this seems Receiving double! In plain English, this word means "twice as much." In Jewish Inheritance Law it meant an extra portion. But these meanings do not help us here. When we turn to the Commentaries this mystery deepens, for in the multitude of words counsel is darkened. The most popular explanation is positively and emphatically erroneous, and at variance with the rest of Divine revelation. In one of the recognised and authoritative expositions of Isaiah, a learned University Principal states: "It declares that Israel has suffered of punishment more than double enough to atone for her sins," and recognising that this was antagonistic to the usual view of Christian doctrine, defends his views by asserting that we must not square the teaching of the Bible by our views of Divine truth, but rather subject ourselves to the authority of the Word. Quite so. But one interpretation of a Scripture which violates other clear statements of Holy Writ cannot possibly be the correct one. If one thing is true, it is that sin always breeds suffering; but the sinner can never atone for his sin by his own suffering. The simple fact is that here we have an old Jewish bankruptcy custom. Insolvency was then considered a very serious matter indeed When it was quite patent to the clamorous creditors that a debtor was hopelessly insolvent, notification was given to a certain Jewish official, who, after inscribing on parchment the name, family, and tribe of the bankrupt, with the amount of the debt, would make sad procession to the gate of the city or town, and nail up the document. This was a trying exposure of the unfortunate debtor. Ecclesiastically excommunication followed the nailing up, and this was considered a dreadful punishment. If subsequently the debt was paid by or on behalf of the debtor, the official would make another journey to the gate, and reaching the offending document, and withdrawing the nail, would double it up so as to effectively hide its contents, and then drive the nail with all his might through the doubled sheet to the post. Then the towns-people would excitedly gather around to inspect it, proudly exclaiming: "So-and-so has received double for all his debts." To double up the document meant the cancelling and hiding of the sad record, and the withdrawal of the excommunication. Now the boycotted and ostracised individual was admitted to religious fellowship. Is not this gloriously suggestive of the blessedness and reality of the Divine forgiveness? When He forgives He forgets-doubles up-and all repentant ones who accept the Saviour enter into this blessed experience. The blessed fact is the doubling up has already taken place. For is not that the teaching of Colossians 2:14. "Having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross." When you think of the Cross, what do you see there? Paul saw the record against him doubled up Every nail driven into the body of Christ was a nail doubling up the record standing against us. Have you ever heard the story of the good wife of a celebrated officer in the French army, who had offended the first Napoleon-offended him so sorely that it seemed probable he would have him executed? His loving wife ventured into the presence of the great soldier and began to plead her husband's cause. She thought that he had been unjustly accused, and she began to explain the matter and excuse her husband. Then it was that Napoleon rang his bell, sent a messenger to bring the proofs of this man's guilt, and handed the incriminating document to the pleading wife. She read it through her tears, and could plead no longer that he could be forgiven as a matter of justice; she owned his guilt, but pleaded now for mercy.

Then Napoleon, in a moment of compassion, said to her: "Madame, as you hold in your hands the proof of your husband's guilt, destroy it, and so disarm the severity of our martial law."

What do you think she did? Why, she walked straight away to the blazing furnace and thrust the documents into the very heart of the flames. She acted wisely. There could not have been any better thing to do in the matter, unless Napoleon himself had burnt the proofs. That is what Christ has done. He has taken our sin, the evidence of our guilt, and nailed it to the Cross, put it into the fire of forgiveness. It will never be found again; the sin has all been put away, obliterated, forgiven. The literal application of Isaiah 40:2, is of course to literal Israel. This will be fulfilled in the coming glorious days when Judah and Israel will be restored not only to their own land, but also to the Divine favour. The spiritual application is for our enjoyment here and now. And now we must note the blessings which follow an acceptance of this great and glorious fact. With this in view, let us note some occurrences of the word "double."

I. Deliverance from the Shame of Guilt. Note Isaiah 61:7 : "For your shame ye shall have double." Sin is a disgrace to any nation or individual. There is the shame of guilt. The awakened soul blushes at the revelation of inward and actual depravity. But when that soul turns in penitence to the Throne of Grace, pleading the merits of the precious Blood of Christ, pardon is granted, and indeed very much more of the Divine clemency and grace, and the one who, like the publican, was ashamed to draw near or look up (Luke 18:13) goes down to his house delivered from the shame of guilt, and justified.

II. Deliverance from the Shame of Bondage. "Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope; even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee" (Zechariah 9:12). This was a favourite text with the preachers of a past decade or two, but is seldom used these days. This has literal application to Jerusalem in the time of Jacob's trouble. But it has spiritual application here and now. "Prisoners"-we are not only by nature bearing a load of guilt, but in present bondage to sin. The Law is both prison and jailer (Galatians 3:23).

We not only are conscious of the shame of guilt, but also of the shame of defeat. But thank God, there is hope. If "prisoners," we are prisoners of "hope," and not of despair, for in Christ there is not only deliverance from sin's guilt, but also from sin's power. Thus He saves from the shame of defeat.

III. Deliverance from the Shame of Insolvency. This is behind Isaiah 40:2. Ours is a far worse debt than the one in Matthew 18:24 (£67,500,000). We are hopelessly insolvent. But we are frankly and freely forgiven for the sake of One who paid it all. Then all the resources of God in Christ are at our disposal. Thus, by grace now in the enjoyment of the heavenly riches, we are able to live the life we ought to live. See the play upon the word "double" in Isaiah 61:7. In Christ we receive more than Adam ever lost.

IV. Deliverance from Heart-Grief. "Comfort ye" (Isaiah 40:2). No wonder there is a great change of tone between Isaiah 1 to 39 and 40 to 66. For sin pardoned, blotted out, and all the riches of Christ at our disposal, sadness goes and comfort arrives. Debt shut the Jew out from taking any part in the religious festivities. He was cut off. But grace admits us into the family and fellowship of God.

ALWAYS WHITE.

The Enjoyment in our own Individual Experience of Some of the Blessed Fruits of the Death of Christ.

The brightening of the walls of our homes by artistically illuminated and tastefully produced texts of Scripture is both good for its inhabitants and for visitors. We cannot be reminded too often of God's Word. Moreover, it is quite Scriptural (Deuteronomy 6:9, Deuteronomy 11:20), and is one method of confessing our faith in Christ and His Book.

Spending a week-end in Gospel ministry away from home, and being shown to my room, over the wash-stand a card was seen with these words "Let thy garments be always white." In the dim light of evening, it was thought to be only a motto, but in the better light of morning, it was discovered to be an inspired utterance from Ecclesiastes 9:8. It had conveyed one simple yet important lesson, the same Dr. F. B. Meyer had in mind when he remarked to one who had become a missionary: "It is not cleverness but cleanliness that really matters." But what did this simple message convey to an Eastern mind when it was first penned, and afterwards? By research, one discovered it would convey one or all of five distinct messages.

I. Divine Acquittal. "Always white" means, live daily in the enjoyment of the Divine acquittal, for that would be the first lesson it would convey. When a Jewish priest was charged with a crime and brought before the great Sanhedrim, if found guilty he left the court dressed in black, if declared innocent he left the court dressed in white. White, therefore, was the colour of acquittal. This was also the case in ancient Persia. In relation to God and His justifying mercy, here is the marvel and miracle of grace-only the guilty, who own up to their guilt and unworthiness, and show repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ, are acquitted, justified. Marvellous grace! Guilty, yet acquitted. And the proof of my acquittal is the wearing of the white robe, the white garment of imputed righteousness. So far as purity is concerned, the natural man is naked; so far as righteousness is concerned, clothed with filthy rags. But what are those filthy rags? Not his drunkenness, impurity, iniquity, but his righteousness. That is what our best things are in God's sight. Then what must our evil things be! The white robe of innocence has gone for ever, but there is another robe-the robe of righteousness imputed. All believers recognise this glorious Gospel fact. But do we constantly enjoy our justification? Remember, the blessed fruits of Christ's atoning death are for the enjoyment as well as possession of believers. "Let thy garments be always white"-live constantly in the enjoyment of the Divine pardon and justification. A devoted servant of the Lord, the late Sir Arthur Blackwood, wrote that he had been living a whole week on two words, "Justified freely." Some of God's dear children do not seem to enjoy their salvation. The joy in salvation can be restored by daily remembrance and meditation on God's justifying mercy.

II. The Life of Victory. "Always white" means, live daily the life of victory, which should follow our justification by faith, as another result of Christ's death, and is the second message this simple admonition conveys, for white in ancient Greece and Rome was the colour of victory. It is not significant of triumph now. The white flag is the symbol of submission, and the white feather is the badge of cowardice. But in Solomon's day it was the symbol of victory. In the official state receptions to military conquerors the hero entered the city amidst the plaudits of the throng, dressed in white. Hence the significance of Revelation 3:5 : "He that overcometh the same shall be clothed in white raiment."

Precisely! "I felt so beautifully saved this morning, till the clothes-line broke," mournfully exclaimed a weeping woman," and since then I've not felt the least bit saved." Poor soul. She had not been long on the Lord's side. In the moment of testing, when a whole morning's labour was lost, her old

habits of passion and bad language overcame her. She was assured that in Christ there was not only forgiveness, but deliverance from the chain of evil habit, and getting low before the Lord, and confessing her sin and failure, she went on her happy way dressed in white.

Let thy garments be always those of a conqueror. Yea, through Him we may become "more than conquerors" (Romans 8:37).

III. The Life of Purity. "Always white" certainly means, live daily the all white life, the life of purity, because of His Cross, for white is the symbol of purity in every language, and in every land. In Canada, the highest compliment that can be paid to any is, "He's white," by which is meant, he is genuine, upright, open, honest, brave, courageous, pure, one who would not do a mean thing to save his life. This is not the garb of innocence, but of those who have by grace overcome their sins. He can keep us sweet and pure wherever we dwell, and whatever our occupation.

IV. The Life of Joy. "Always white" means, live daily the life of joy, for white was the Jewish festive garb. Three times a year every male of twelve years old and upward had to appear before God in Jerusalem dressed in white. White is the colour which expresses joy. There is something gladsome in the light. It summons forth the music of the birds, and awakens the world of nature. Sometimes, like a wizard, it charms away the sadness and depression of the night. "Let thy garments be always white." This is an appeal for brightness and cheerfulness. We are not to go through life robed in sack-cloth or suit of mourning, but clothed with light, for if we are living in communion with Him, every day will be a festive day.

V. The Life of Service. "Always white" means, live daily the life of service, for white was the livery of heavenly service. It was the garb without which service in the Tabernacle and Temple by priests and Levites was not allowed. It is the garb which the angels wear. Live to self, you live in vain. Live for others, you taste the sweets of life. Pray note the progression of truth in the order of our thoughts. Before I can enjoy victory I must receive and rejoice in God's justifying mercy, then with justification and daily victory the life of purity and joy will be mine. Then I shall be fitted, experimentally, for service. But how is this possible in this world of sin? How difficult it is to keep things white in our sooty atmosphere. There is an absent note in Solomon's exhortation. He says, "Let your garments be always white," but does not explain how this can be brought about. It seems humanly speaking utterly impossible. But as we turn over the pages of our Bibles we discover that secret. In Revelation 7:13-14 we learn how they can be made white: "Washed their robes, and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb." Then in Revelation 3:4, how they can be kept white: "They shall walk with Me in white." This must be taken not merely as the reward of purity, but the cause of purity. "Walking with Me, they shall walk in white."

Finally, Solomon not only urged, "Let thy garments be always white," but added, "and let thy head lack no ointment." Surely the anointing and filling with the Holy Spirit is meant; and that is the pledge and secret of whiteness. In one of our large cities a little waif was rescued and taken to a home. After much labour he was made clean and clothed with a lovely velvet suit. Never had he known the delights of such a suit before. How proud he was, and how much he admired himself. By and bye bedtime came when, to his consternation and regret he was undressed. Then the matron attempted to teach him his first prayer, asking him to repeat the well-known children's prayer: "Now I lay me down to sleep," etc. Sleepily he murmured:

"Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my clothes to keep." And though they attempted to correct and explain, he again repeated his request as formerly. Can we not offer intelligently the same prayer? He can keep them white.

"THE CARDINAL FEATURE OF YOUR FAITH"

(1 Corinthians 15:1-8, Way's Rendering).

This is one of the sublimest chapters in Scripture. It is the great Hymn of Immortality and Life. In 1 Corinthians 15:1-19 Paul epitomises the proofs of our Lord's Resurrection, and in 1 Corinthians 15:20-30 and onward he bursts into a glorious wealth of thought.

1. Cardinal Fact. Way's rendering is as title. Cardinal is a strong word.

2. Historical Fact. The cardinal fact is historical. Christianity is based on historical facts, and not human surmisings.

3. Personal Fact. This cardinal fact is based on a person-Christ. No other fact is so.

4. Few Facts. There is no more concise statement of the central facts of the Gospel in human language than this. Christ's death (the Greek preposition translated "for" can only mean "on account of"). Our sins were the impelling cause of His death. Christ's burial and resurrection. Just three facts.

Gospel Studies

Gospel Studies

WITH JESUS AT BETHLEHEM. The story of the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem is an old and familiar one. Yet we can never say the last word on it. The birth of our Lord Jesus into the world was unique in the history of the race. We begin our existence at our birth; He lived from all Eternity-before the worlds were He was. He was the God-Man. Not God indwelling a man; not a man deified; but God and man, combining in one Personality those two natures. He had a human mother, but not a human father. He was conceived of the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary.

Study the genealogical tables in the Gospels. A Mohammedan in Southern India was first drawn to faith in Jesus Christ by reading the genealogy in Matthew. Such a procession, he thought, must lead up to a mighty name; and he approached with reverence the story of the Nativity.

What is the genealogical list in Matthew, but the proof of the Messiah's connection with Abraham and David, showing Him to be the true and final successor to the Throne of the Davidic kingdom. The late David Baron pointed out that "This is an indisputable fact, that the Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth is the last in Jewish history whose descent from the Royal line can now be established by sufficiently authentic proof." At the destruction of the second Temple, all the national genealogical records perished; and, apart from a few worthless traditions, there is nothing that any Jew now on the face of the earth can appeal to to prove even from which tribe, not to say from which family he springs. There is neither a tribe of Judah, nor a separate Davidic family now existing, and yet the true King of Israel must prove himself a son of David. The only genealogical records preserved are those proving our Lord and Saviour's descent from David, and they are preserved in the New Testament.

It seems quite clear that the Lord Jesus was born in His ancestral home. This Inn was known in the days of Jeremiah as the Inn of Chimham (see R.V., margin). Chimham was Barzillai's son (Jeremiah 41:17), whom David honoured for his father's sake (see 2 Samuel 19:37-40), and, as suggested by the late Dr. Schofield of London, gave him his ancestral home near Bethlehem (the house of Boaz and Ruth), who, on his death, made it an Inn. To give a Khan or Inn to a town then was equivalent to giving a park or a hospital now.

I. The Toilers Seeking Jesus (Luke 2). The shepherds represent the working class-the toilers. See how our Lord honours the lowly and the humble. A lowly maid was selected to be the mother of Jesus; the lowly town of Bethlehem was selected to be the place of His birth; and working men were honoured by receiving first the glad and joyous news.

1. They were in the Dark, and so are we, if we have not yet taken the all-important step to Christ. Not material darkness, as was theirs, but spiritual darkness, the darkness of sin and doubt.

2. They Got into the Light, a light from above that fell upon them, and so may we, and we most certainly will if we come to the One who has proclaimed Himself to be the Light of the World. It was

a glorious light that shone about them.

3. They were Full of Fear, for light from Heaven always produces fear in the heart of the unconverted. Fear in the heart is one proof that light from Heaven has been given, and is the result of guilt of sin.

4. They Heard the Gospel, and the Gospel was preached by angels, a rare privilege for them. The angel declared Good Tidings, for unto "you is born... a Saviour." Not "unto us"-for there is no Saviour for the fallen angels.

5. They Obeyed the Gospel, for they determined to see for themselves, and the Gospel is to be obeyed as well as to be believed.

6. They Found the Saviour, as all earnest and genuine seekers do.

7. They Rejoiced Greatly, as all they who find the Saviour do, and they glorified God.

II. The Thinkers Seeking Jesus (Matthew 2:2). The fact that not only representative toilers sought Jesus, but representative thinkers did likewise is impressive. The greatest thinkers the world has ever seen have been humble followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible is a Book of Wisdom, and points out the true source of all wisdom. Ponder over this statement: "The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." There we find how we may become wise men and women.

Note a few facts about these wise men showing their wisdom.

1. They were in a Far Country, and so are we, if we have not yet come to Him. They must have been in a far country, for they came from the East.

2. They Saw God's Messenger, and just where they were, too, and that was a sign of real wisdom. There are some folk who see nothing, going through the world with either eyes closed or unobservant. "We have seen His star in the east." Some, like the man with the muck rake do not see because they do not look up. Remembering Balaam's prophecy (Numbers 24:17), they took great heed, recognising in the Star God's messenger. The Holy Spirit is God's Star to-day, and He is ever seeking to draw the attention of sinners to the Lord Jesus. He is seeking to draw us to the only One who can do helpless sinners good.

3. They Started Forth to Find and Worship Jesus. Some see, yet never come. The purpose of the star was not to amuse, but to lead. They had a long journey to make, but we have not far to go to see and find the Saviour. We find not a weak babe, but a strong One mighty to save.

4. They Seem to have Made a Mistake, taking their eyes off the star and leaning too much on their own reasoning. Surely, thought they, that the Great One would be born in the capital; so they took their eyes off the star, following human reasoning, and came to Jerusalem. See the disastrous results that followed-the massacre of the innocents at Bethlehem. Far better to keep our eyes on the Heavenly messenger, and to be guided by the Lord.

5. Ah, soon they Found Jesus, as all real seekers do, and what satisfaction that find brought to their hearts and lives.

6. Then they Worshipped, presenting their costly gifts, as all should act who are the found ones of the Lord. Yet, alas, so many take all the Lord Jesus has to give, but forget to give as a thankoffering, first themselves, then to consecrate all they have to the One who has done so much for them.

COME.

One of the sweetest words in the Bible. "O words of words the sweetest." The first "Come" in the Bible is one of salvation (Genesis 7:1. Note "Come," not "Go!" A proof the Lord Himself was in the Ark), as is also the last (Revelation 22:17).

I. What Must we Come For?

1. Rest-"Come, and I will give you rest," Matthew 11:28 2. Knowledge-"Come and see," John 1:39 3. Satisfaction-"Come unto Me and drink," John 7:37 4. Discipleship-"Come and follow Me," Mark 10:21 5. Victory-"Come, put your feet upon the necks," Joshua 10:24 6. Fellowship-"Come and dine," John 21:12 7. Refreshment-"Come and rest a while," Mark 6:31 8. Inheritance-"Come and inherit," Matthew 25:34

II. How Must We Come? We must come just as we are, without any attempt to make ourselves presentable, for the very good reason that we are too far gone, and only He can do anything with us, and then He will make us new creatures-a new creation-in Jesus Christ.

"Just as I am, without one plea.

But that Thy Blood was shed for me.

And that Thou bidst me come to Thee;

Oh, Lamb of God, I come!"

III. When Must We Come? "One hour before you die?" said some one. Well, when will that be? You cannot say, so you had better come now. In fact, those are the instructions: "Come now," found over and over again in the dear old Book. WITH JESUS AT THE RIVER JORDAN.

The Significance of Christ's Baptism.

"Thus it becometh us" (Matthew 3:15).

Introduction.

"Becoming." That is a word often on our lips and in our thoughts. It is one of the tests of life. It decides matters concerning behaviour and dress. The answer to "Does it become me?" decides choice of material and style of dress, and, "It is most unbecoming of you" settles for us language and conduct. The Lord Jesus makes this the one reason why John should baptise Him. And we, too, are included, for He said, "Thus it becometh us," not me.

400 Years' Silence. For four hundred years prophecy had been silent. At last the silence was broken, and a voice was heard in the land speaking like those of old. It was the voice of one who was clad in the hairy cloak and leather girdle of the old prophets.

Rough Speech. "And," as old Bishop Hall put it, "his raiment was rough, so was his tongue; and if his food was wild honey, his speech was stinging locusts."

"Who" (Matthew 3:7). This phrase arrested our attention a while ago. As there was absence of any marks of true penitence, John asked under whose preaching they had been moved to ask repentance.

Character of his Preaching.

1. Spoke Plainly about Sin. a. Taught absolute need of repentance. b. Repentance must be proved by works. c. Warned men not to rest on outward privileges.

2. Spoke Plainly about the Lord Jesus. a. That He was mightier than he b. He was only slave. Jesus was the King. c. He baptised only with water, whereas the Lord would baptise with the Spirit.

3. Spoke Plainly of Holy Spirit. a. Such a thing as baptism of Spirit. b. Special offer of Lord Jesus to baptise thus in Spirit.

4. Spoke Plainly about Awful Danger of Impenitent. a. Told them there was a wrath to come. b. He preached of the unquenchable fire.

5. Spoke Plainly about the Safety of Believers. He taught there was a "garner" for all who were Christ's wheat.

John's Reluctance.

1. Had John ever seen the Lord? We know not.

2. He felt abashed at His presence. He noted in His face a majesty, purity, and peace, making him feel his unworthiness.

Why Did the Lord Jesus Seek Baptism?

1. It is a difficult question.

2. John's baptism was of repentance-but He was spotless!

3. One explanation is that, at this age, Levites were bathed and anointed and admitted to service.

4. We want to give four reasons why it was becoming of our Saviour to be baptised.

I. Serious Interest. It betokened a serious interest in this national religious movement, and surely that was becoming. "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee." In Carpenter's Shop. Whilst the Lord was working in the Nazareth workshop, news reached His village of the appearance of John, and the multitudes from all parts flocked to hear him. It was the beginning of a national religious movement. He showed sufficient interest to travel 24 miles to hear John.

Indifference.

1. We do not doubt that there were thousands who showed not the least interest in this movement.

2. It is so to-day-and that fact is a puzzle to us.

3. Surely a movement that has existed so long and has wrought such marvellous changes is worthy of a little serious interest.

Unbecoming. We would say to the thousands who have not the slightest interest in the Christian religion that, to say the least, such an attitude is most unbecoming.

Becoming Serious. It was not uncommon years ago to call conversion "becoming serious." And judging from the faces of some of its professors, it appeared to be a very serious matter indeed. It ought to be "becoming joyful." Yes, but you must become serious before becoming joyful. In one sense all unsaved are often sad enough.

II. Humility. His coming to be baptised of John was a proof and fruit of humility, and surely humility is becoming. "Then cometh Jesus to be baptised of him."

Usual. When a King is to be baptised a minister is sent for. But He did not stand on His dignity and send for John. He came. Usually when a King is to be baptised, a prelate or pontiff must officiate-some high dignitary at any rate. But He came to be baptised of this lowly prophet-preacher.

Humility. Humility of heart and mind will betray itself. And humility is most becoming of us.

III. Identification. It was an act of identification with His people, and surely that was most becoming of Him.

Why? It is a sinners' ordinance-but He was no sinner!

Lost His Character.

1. Have you ever thought of this, that our Lord lost His character by this act?

2. Only sinners came to the waters of baptism.

3. Note: a. He was numbered with the transgressors by His baptism. b. It was an act by which He consented to take His place among sinners. c. It was an act of identification with the people. d. It was, in figure, what He would actually do for them by and bye-die.

IV. Submission. It was His submission and obedience to a Divinely appointed ordinance, and surely that act was most becoming. His first public act is one of obedience to the Voice of God as in the rite of baptism.

Don't Go Too Far. There is a danger of some of us making too little because others make too much of ordinances.

Only Two Sacraments. Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Our Duty. Our becoming duty is to observe them.

V. Glorious Result.

1. Opened Heaven. This suggests, or rather, proves, the perfection of the thirty years He had lived at Nazareth.

2. Holy Spirit. First time Trinity clearly made known.

3. Voice. Proclaiming His love to His Son. WITH JESUS IN THE WILDERNESS.

The Temptation (Mark 1:12-13).

Introduction.

Rutherford. Old Samuel Rutherford, who knew the heart of man as few do, wrote in one of his letters: "If we knew ourselves well, to want temptation is the greatest temptation of all."

General.

1. Temptation is probably the most familiar experience of the Christian.

2. If we call the Christian life a life of joy and peace many will tell you they do not know it as such.

3. But speak of it as a life of temptation, and every regenerate soul will readily admit that such is the case.

Comfort. Seeing the experience of temptation is universal, how blessed it is to learn that:

1. He was tempted in all points like as we are.

2. That "He suffered, being tempted"-and to be tempted really meant suffering to Him as it does us.

3. That, seeing "He suffered, being tempted. He is able to succour them that are tempted. Not Sin.

1. It is well for us to note the distinction between sin and temptation.

2. It is not a sin to be tempted.

3. Sin lies in parleying and playing with temptation (as a cat plays with a mouse).

Count it Joy.

1. James says, "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations."

2. Nothing to be doleful about. With Jesus.

1. We are to accompany the Lord Jesus into the wilderness.

2. We have frequently to go into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil, but we are safe if with Him.

3. And His presence makes the wilderness and the solitary place become glad, and the desert blossom as the rose.

Deep and Mysterious.

1. It is well to note the deep significance of the conflict.

2. Jesus was there in the wilderness as our representative.

3. Milton finishes his "Paradise Regained" at this point.

4. The first Adam stood as the head of the race and falling, dragged the race down with him. The last Adam stood as the Head of the new race, and, being victorious, lifted that race with Him, or made the lifting possible.

Points of Difference.

1. The Devil challenged the first Adam, the last Adam challenged the Devil.

2. The Devil ruined the first Adam, the second Adam spoiled the Devil.

3. The first conflict took place in a Paradise, the second in a Wilderness.

After Baptism.

1. The three Evangelists all state that the conflict followed immediately after the season of blessing after baptism.

2. Learn: a. No spiritual privileges saves us from fiery trials. b. The hour of blessing is often the hour of peril.

I. The Peril of Materialism. The first temptation-Stones into bread.

1. Its Application to Jesus. a. It was a Blow to His Sonship. "If." Satan likes to throw the "if" of doubt into our mind respecting our sonship. b. It was a Blow at His Life of Dependence.

(1) It was a temptation to self-reliance.

(2) Temptation to abandon the life of dependence the Father required of Him. c. It was a Blow at His Life of Dependent Service. It was a temptation to use the power to work miracles for an inferior purpose. Jesus always refused to work miracles to please the vulgar curiosity of the people. d. It was a Temptation to Think of the bodies of the People before or even instead of the Souls. The peril of modern social movements is just this-as all keen observers can see. This age thinks more of boots or clogs for bare feet, dinners for empty stomachs, weeks at seaside, than salvation of soul. Let that come first, and all the rest can follow. e. It was a Temptation to Materialism.

2. Its Application to Us. This temptation comes to us in various forms. a. The temptation to place body and its needs first (Devil's order is "Bread, trust, worship." God, "Trust, worship, bread"), then soul. b. To satisfy a legitimate craving of the body in an illegitimate way. c. What I need bother my head about is bread for the body, and never trouble about the soul.

Here Adam and Eve Fell.

1. But Jesus conquered.

2. He conquered by the Word.

Mark's Account.

1. How much Mark compresses into small space.

2. He is a master in the art of concentration and condensing.

3. Learn- a. The driving as well as wooing power of the Spirit. b. The forty days were all days of temptation. c. Probably the foe was invisible during the forty days and temptations were within. d. It was at the end of forty days that Satan came boldly out in visible form, and presented temptation without. e. Wild beasts were there, and were with Him. These creatures recognised His authority and lost their ferocity- a picture of the Millennial Day, when the lion and the lamb shall lie down together. f. The angels ministered unto Him. He who would not tempt God by working miracles at the Devil's bidding to procure bread, or by throwing Himself down, to see if angels should come and bear Him up from harm, now sees angels come and bring Him bread in the desert.

II. The Peril of Sensationalism. The Second Temptation-Leap from Pinnacle of the Temple.

Subtlety.

1. You trust in God? Very well, prove your trust by throwing yourself down from the pinnacle of the Temple.

2. You quote Scripture. I will also give you one to show that God will keep you.

Analysis.

1. It does appear that such an act would have been an act of faith.

2. But on closer examination we think you will see it would have been a clear proof of lack of trust.

3. It would have been an experiment.

"When we doubt a person we make experiments to discover how far they are to be trusted."

Application to Jesus.

1. It was the popular belief that their Messiah would appear suddenly, and in some marvellous way, as, for instance, a leap from the Temple roof into the midst of the crowd below.

2. It was a temptation to gratify the vulgar desire for wonders.

3. It was a temptation to dazzle the people.

4. To appeal to the senses by, in our day, awesome buildings, ritual, music.

Application to Us.

1. This temptation comes to us when he tries to show us we must show our trust by doing something extraordinary.

2. No; we must show our trust by doing the ordinary things of life in an extraordinary way.

III. The Worship of Satan. The Third Temptation-Worship Satan. There must be no compromise with evil.

Quick Panorama.

1. Luke 4:5 tells us Christ saw the vision in a moment of time.

2. He gave the Lord a quick panoramic view of the kingdoms of the world.

Observe.

1. Satan claims some right to the kingdoms of the world, and our Lord acknowledged that claim by later calling him Prince of this World.

2. In Psalms 2:8-9, God expects Jesus to ask of Him the world. But the temptation here was to ask of the Devil. In view of Psalms 2:8, how impressive is Satan's temptation.

Application to Jesus. It was temptation:

1. To secure the Kingdom without the Cross.

2. To take a short and easy way to possession.

3. To take the help of the Devil. Application to Us. This temptation comes to us when we are tempted to live without the Cross.

Secret of Victory.

1. Be born of the Spirit. Well begun is half done.

2. Be filled with the Spirit. This is our privilege.

3. Be assured of your Sonship. Never doubt your standing in Christ.

4. Be acquainted with the Word. WITH JESUS AT A MARRIAGE.

The Marriage at Cana.

"Thou hast kept the good wine until now" (John 2:10).

Introduction.

Lamp in a Sepulchre. Someone has spoken of religion as a "lamp burning dimly in a sepulchre." It sounds poetical, and has an element of truth in it. If it is a lamp in a sepulchre, it burns brightly, not dimly. But the thought behind the sentence is utterly wrong, viz., that we only need the Saviour in our times of sorrow, and as a preparation for the future. Many, alas, act on that thought, and never think of the Lord until face to face with death or sorrow.

Times of Gladness. The subject before us dispels that thought. Here we find the Lord present at a marriage feast. He took a journey of 43 miles (from Bethabara to Cana) to attend. After all, experience teaches us that it is times of gladness which especially need such a sanctifying presence. Then, it is mean to expect the Lord to share with us life's sorrows, and be debarred from its joys.

Jesus not Out of Place at a Marriage. And don't for a moment think He was out of place. You are out of place anywhere if He is not with you. He had no monkish idea of the unholiness of marriage. Marriage is a solemn and Divine institution. And the presence of Jesus proclaims its sanctity.

Jesus was there. Probably the first Christian wedding the world has seen. How we linger over Mark 1:2. If the Lord Jesus was present at your marriage you will never write as one did: "Oh! how many torments lie in the small circle of a wedding ring." It is a Christless wedding that leads to such a woeful testimony.

Shortage. An illustration of the failure of all this world's joys. Shortage, yes, even with Jesus present. Probably He and His disciples were the cause of the supplies running out, more coming to the feast than they had made provision for. But the difficulty was soon mastered. All will be well if He is there.

Mary's Thoughtfulness. It is a simple and homely act of forethought to save her neighbours from shame and confusion. She might have taken no notice, or said, "It is no business of mine," or gloried in the bad management of the parties.

Why Turn to Jesus? Why did Mary turn and tell Jesus of the need? It was her regular habit to do this. She had ever been accustomed to turn to Him in all her difficulties, and certainly she never consulted Him in vain.

Gospel According to the Blessed Virgin. Said a friend to a Romanist: "Have you ever heard of the Gospel of the Blessed Virgin?" And it is: "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it."

Servants' Obedience. Fail not to notice the ready obedience of the servants. And their faith, too. Each held about 20 gallons-hence 120 gallons in all.

Ruler's Testimony.

1st. That this was a sober party, for they could distinguish between the two kinds of wine.

2nd. a. It was a high commendation of His work. b. But this is invariably His rule of working. c. The world gives its best first, and then it is not lasting, for "earth's pleasures come in cups, not in fountains," and the supply is limited and soon exhausted. d. Not so Christ. With Him it is always getting better.

I. In Creation the Best came Last.

1. What a sad condition we see in the beginning! Read again Genesis 1.

2. The first step to improvement was calling forth of light.

3. That is to say, a fuller revelation of the ruin.

4. Note the successive stages.

5. At last man, the crowning work of Creation, appears.

6. The best came last.

II. In Revelation the Best came Last.

1. Through sin came revelation of Gospel truth, yet in stages.

2. How dim, how obscure, how incomplete, for generations.

3. But it was the dawn. Gradually the sun rises higher and higher, until the full blaze and glory of God was seen in the face of Jesus Christ. The best then came, and it was the last.

III. In Christ's Life the Best comes Last.

1. "Man of Sorrows," "acquainted with grief."

2. Misunderstood by His own-hated by many.

3. The Cross with all its agony and shame.

4. But there came the Resurrection and the Ascension.

5. Best has still to come, when He comes for His own, and ushers in the Golden Age.

IV. In your Life, oh Worldling, the Best May Come Last.

1. What you may be tasting of life might seem all right.

2. But it is proof you haven't tasted Christ's wine.

3. These both thought theirs best until they tasted Christ's.

4. Then, what an awful outlook you have-Hell gaping wide to receive you.

5. Oh, worldling, thou art receiving the good things now, and thy evil things will come last.

6. It can be different, and it will be if you turn to Him.

V. In Christian Experience the Best ought to come Last.

1. The bitterness of repentance is followed by sweetness of forgiveness.

2. The sadness of conviction is followed by gladness of conversion.

3. And it ought to be ever improving.

4. Sad to say, in many experiences it is not so.

5. "Oh that I was as in days past," they exclaim.

6. Where is the blessedness I knew when first I saw the Lord?

7. But this should not be. Get low before Him and He will put things right.

VI. In our Christian Life the Best will come Last.

1. Cross-bearing is followed by Crown-wearing.

2. Disowned by the world, we shall be owned by the Lord before the assembled hosts of the Universe.

3. For our present weary pilgrimage will come eternal settlement in the promised land. WITH JESUS AT DIVINE SERVICE.

Jesus in the Synagogue.

"He came to Nazareth where He had been brought up, and, as. His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day" (Luke 4:16).

Introduction. A Hard Church to Join.

1. A negro had applied repeatedly for membership to St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Burlington, United States.

2. Bishop Hall was not satisfied that the negro's state of soul justified admission, so he kept delaying the matter.

3. At last he advised the applicant to pray that his spiritual condition might improve.

4. After doing so, he made a new application. The Bishop said to him: "Well, Erastus, have you prayed as I told you to?" "Yes, indeedy suh; I done prayed an' I done told de Lawd I wants to jine St. Paul's Church, an' de Lawd He says to me: 'Good luck, Rastus; I been trying to jine dat Church fo' twenty years mahse'f.' There is something more than humour, it seems to us, in this anecdote. It will bear thinking over.

Outside Many Churches.

1. That reply reminds us of the possibility of the Lord Jesus being outside the Churches.

2. That is the teaching of Revelation 3:20. "Behold I stand," etc.

3. And consequently there is lifelessness and barrenness.

4. There are some places of worship where all there is of the presence of God is what you take yourself.

Problems that Arise Thereon.

1. And that fact raises many problems.

2. What must I do when I go away on holiday, or remove, and cannot find a congregation or minister that come up to my ideal?

3. Our subject will be a help to us in the solving of this problem.

Sometimes we Can go to Synagogue to Find Him.

1. That was not so in case of crowd in John 6.

2. After miracle of feeding 5000, etc., Jesus and disciples crossed the lake.

3. People hunted and at last found Jesus.

4. It would seem by John 6:25 they found Him on seashore.

5. But by John 6:59 we find they found Him and heard His discourse on Bread of Life in the Synagogue.

6. Do we not sometimes lose the Lord Jesus, or the consciousness of His presence, like Joseph and Mary, in the crowd (Luke 2:44).

7. Thank God, like them, we may find Him in the sanctuary (Luke 2:46).

How Blessed to Take Him with Us. Ah, there is sure to be blessing then. This is the ideal. The Synagogue is an Interesting Subject.

1. Much might be said of it.

2. Its origin is lost in antiquity.

3. It came into common use in time of Babylonian Captivity.

4. Reading of the Scriptures a very important part of its worship.

5. Here is the significance of this study: "It was from the Synagogue, and not the Temple, that the early Christian Church took her constitution, and in the main, her forms of worship. The Anglo-Catholic Revival seeks to take from the Temple."

I. Our Lord had a Regular Habit of Going to the Synagogue on the Sabbath Day. As His Custom Was.

1. This does not refer to a habit cultivated since He entered upon His public ministry.

2. But it was His invariable custom from infancy.

Good Habits.

1. It is important to form good habits.

2. They play an important part in our lives.

How He Viewed.

1. Perhaps he first viewed the Synagogue behind the trellis division in the gallery with His mother.

2. Then by and bye with Joseph in the men's part.

II. This was His Habit when Away from Home as well as when at Home.

1. It is well to emphasize this point.

2. Before the statement in John 6:16 you have John 6:15.

3. Many will, of course, attend the Synagogue in their native place.

4. But how different when they go farther afield, where they are not known.

III. He did not Attend simply Because He had been Asked to do Something.

1. He simply attended as an ordinary inhabitant of Nazareth.

2. It seems quite clear He had never taught-hence their astonishment at the wisdom betrayed by His discourse: "They were astonished, and said, Whence hath this Man this wisdom" (Matthew 13:54).

3. Perhaps He had been Reader at times, but never expounder.

IV. He Attended Regularly though He Knew Far More than man could ever Teach Him.

1. This thought is worth careful pondering.

2. We fancy we ought not to attend a place of worship unless we are sure we shall learn something, and hear something fresh.

3. That was not so with the Lord Jesus.

4. In Him were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

V. He Attended Regularly although He Knew there were Hypocrites and Self-seekers also Attending.

1. Undoubtedly He had met with such in His Synagogue worship.

2. Read Matthew 6:12; Matthew 6:5; and Matthew 23:6.

3. How He hated all such hypocrisy! How it must have grieved Him!

4. Yet He was regular in His attendance notwithstanding.

VI. Whenever He Attended Something Happened (Luke 4:16).

1. We Accompany Him to Nazareth Synagogue and Behold Anger Aroused.

a. If the first effect of His preaching at Nazareth was astonishment, the second was anger. b. Anger because:

(1) The thoughts of their hearts had been laid bare.

(2) The truth had been proclaimed.

(3) They had been rebuked. c. Nothing unusual even to-day, for things like this happen. d. How many have gone out of Assembly, Church, or Hall in anger because they have been found out by the Word of God applied by the Spirit of God?

2. With Him to a Synagogue in Capernaum to Behold the Casting Out of an Unclean Spirit (Luke 4:33).

a. An astonishing fact-one such in a house of prayer! b. Presence of purity made impurity squirm. c. And loudly protest. d. He was teaching, and people in astonishment were listening. e. When the quietness of the place is disturbed by the awful cries of this demon-possessed man. f. Note, the calmness and quietness and perfect ease of our Lord. g. And unclean spirits still obey Him.

3. With Him to a Galilee Synagogue to Behold the Healing of Withered Arm (Luke 6:6-11).

a. It was his right hand-only Luke tells us this. b. Note:

(1) Bade him step forward right in the midst.

(2) Stretch forth in faith.

(3) Type of good people not converted-only conscious of something lacking, something short, not of vileness, nor of moral leprosy.

4. With Jesus to an Unknown Synagogue, probably in Galilee, to Behold the Healing of the Crooked Woman (Luke 13:10). a. It was a trouble of long standing (18 years). b. It was a

degrading trouble (could not look up). c. Jesus (1) Saw her. (2) Laid hands on her. (3) Cured her. d. Had she not gone there that day she may never have met Him again.

Conclusion.

1. We may have representations of all these cases in any Church or Assembly.

2. Some who may have a consciousness of vileness.

3. Others only conscious of shortcoming or crookedness.

4. But they are where the Lord can meet them.

5. Let Him heal. WITH JESUS AT THE SEASIDE.

After a Fishing Experience.

"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord"

(Luke 5:8)

Introduction.

Seasonable.

1. We have here quite a holiday subject.

2. We are to accompany our Lord to the seaside.

3. To the piece of water fourteen miles long, and nine wide, known by three names: Lake of Gennesaret, Sea of Tiberius, Sea of Galilee.

Pressed upon Him.

1. One morning our Lord was walking on the seashore.

2. The people saw Him, and rushed together in crowds to hear Him.

3. "Pressed upon Him to hear the Word of God," not word of man.

4. What an inspiring sight is it to see men eager to listen to the Word of Life!

5. And what is more, they were not disappointed, for the R.V. says: "As the people pressed upon Him and heard." The Fishermen were Washing their Nets.

1. Too engrossed with their work to notice the Lord, or

2. Too busy to spare time to listen to the Lord. They were disappointed men, and disappointment sometimes makes hearts leaden.

3. How many treat Divine things like that.

4. We wonder if our Lord had not a double purpose in entering into Simon's boat-not merely to use it for a pulpit, but to get Simon's attention?

5. Simon granted our Lord's request, and thrust out a little.

6. And now was compelled to listen.

Why He Takes us from our Nets.

1. That is why He sometimes has to take us from our nets.

2. We are prone to allow even legitimate things to monopolise too much of our attention.

3. We pray you, let Him have the pre-eminence in all things.

Recompense.

1. The Lord was determined that Simon should not be any the loser by lending his boat, and being taken from His work.

2. The Lord will not remain in debt to any.

3. He desires to recompense Simon for the loan of the boat.

Note the Order.

1. He entered first, thrust out a little, then launched into the deep.

2. We have in mind many who are unwilling to give up the world and its pleasures.

3. My friend, don't bother about your unreadiness to do that, but invite Him on board your vessel-let that be your first concern.

4. The "thrusting out" followed, not preceded, His entrance. Get Him on board first.

5. Don't forget that the launching out followed the thrusting out. a. Don't be content with the shallows. b. Don't have a shallow, but a deep experience in Divine things.

6. Note, great success in service followed the launching out (or deepening of spiritual life).

Imperfect Obedience.

1. Peter's words sound all right.

2. But, on closer inspection, we note obedience was imperfect.

3. The Lord said nets, not net, plural, not singular.

Astonishing Success.

1. This was a miracle.

2. A great "catch of fish" at an occasional time is not miraculous.

3. But that this was a miracle appears from Peter's words.

4. Effects:

(1) Astonishment to all.

(2) But spiritual crisis in the soul of Peter. It burst upon him who Jesus was-Lord God.

I. It was the Language of-Whom?-What? Where was he?

1. At first sight, it is difficult to say-saved or no.

2. Not the first time he had come into contact with Jesus.

3. It was his brother Andrew who brought him to Jesus.

4. He had been following Jesus for a while.

5. But here he is back into the old ruts again.

6. There are thousands we are not sure of.

Dreadful Possibility.

1. It is an awful thought, that it is possible to see and hear the Lord, have Him pointed out as God's Lamb, note His miraculous work, and yet be unsaved.

2. Many admire Him, but do not resign to Him themselves.

3. Friend, it is not admiration, but submission. He asks first of you.

We Think we Must put them Amongst the Lord's Disciples.

1. It says they definitely believed on Him as result of miracle at Cana.

2. But, oh, the pity, that there should be the least room for doubt.

3. "This man put his hand to the plough and never looked back." So reads the epitaph on a tablet in Exeter Cathedral.

II. It was the Language of One Overwhelmed by the Consciousness of Sin and Unworthiness.

Disciple Before he Received Consciousness of Sin.

1. It is not a consciousness of sin that is essential.

2. But the recognition of the fact of sin.

3. We read that Sir A. Blackwood had no sense of sin until long after conversion.

How he Got this Revelation.

1. He had been gradually learning more of Jesus in the previous weeks or months.

2. Now it suddenly bursts upon him Who it is that sits beside him in his own boat.

3. This sense of unworthiness and self-loathing is ever the effect of the Divine power and presence.

Easier. It is easier to see sin in others than in ourselves.

III It was the Language of One who Mistook the Purpose of the Revelation. Not Willing to Die.

1. It was generally understood among the Jews that he who had had a special manifestation of God would die.

2. This was based on, "No man can see My face and live."

3. Simon did not wish to die yet.

IV. It was the Language of Ignorance.

Humility.

1. It was the language of humility, yet of ignorance.

2. "A sinner such as I am is not fit company for Thee."

3. Peter shuddered at the thought of so much unworthiness being so near such purity and grandeur.

False Conception. What a mistake Peter made. Why, He came to company with sinners.

See what it Would have Meant.

1. Separation from the Sin-Bearer-from Lamb of God.

2. Separation from Emancipation-"If Son shall make you free."

3. Separation from the Baptiser with Holy Spirit.

4. Separation from the Model-the Examplar.

All of these had been known by Peter through John the Baptist.

V. It was a Request Mercifully Unheeded.

Granted Once. Others made same request, only for a different reason, and the request was granted (Luke 8:37).

VI. It was a Request that brings, "Fear Not."

Rotherham's rendering is: "Do not fear, henceforth thou shalt be taking men that they may live."

Prosperity. They left all to follow Him, when their calling thus prospered.

Some in Charge. Mark says: "They left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after Him."

VII. A Warning: Those who say "Depart from me" shall have the Lord's "Depart from Me" (Matthew 7:23; Matthew 25:41).

1. No earthly judge makes the criminal's doom a matter of personal relationship to himself. Christ does.

2. "Depart from Me." In the final word lies the serious significance of the sentence.

3. Who is He from whom they are cast away? a. The Lamb. My sin must be taken away by Him if I am to be rid of it. To depart from Him means to depart from all hope. Expelled from the presence

of Him Who alone can remove it. b. The Saviour. To depart from Him means no hope whatever. WITH JESUS IN A STORM.

"Master, carest Thou not that we perish?"

(Mark 4:38; Matthew 8:23; Luke 8:22-25).

Introduction. There is a story of a Christian Army. Officer at sea with his family in a storm. There was great terror amongst the passengers, but he was calm. His wife, in her consternation, chided him, saying that he ought to be concerned for her and her children, if not for himself, in such danger. He made no reply, but soon came to her with his sword drawn, and with a stern countenance pointed at her heart. She was not the least alarmed, but looked up into his face with a smile. "What," said he, "are you not afraid of a drawn sword at your breast?" "No," she replied, "not when I know it is in the hands of one that loves me." "And would you have me," he asked, "to be afraid of this tempest when I know it to be in the hand of my Heavenly Father, who loves me."

Two Lessons.

1. One lessen we are to learn from this Bible experience is that even in the wild tumults of nature we should be at peace, since our Saviour is Lord of nature.

2. And the other is that even in the fierce storms of life there should be a calm confidence in Him.

Day of Labour. This incident happened at the close of a day of great labour. Again He had preached from a boat as from a pulpit. Parables of Sower, etc., were uttered.

Without Preparation. He was weary and tired, and, as night drew near, He suggested crossing the lake. Probably He longed for rest and quietness, and could not otherwise escape the crowd. Without leaving the boat, and without any preparation, they started forth. (This is the meaning of "Took Him, even as He was.")

Subject to Squalls. The Sea of Galilee lies 600 feet below sea level, and, like all inland seas or lakes, is subject to violent hurricanes of wind, which at times sweep down from the hills with great velocity.

Unusual. This must have been a storm of unusual severity. For the disciples, who were well seasoned sailors, lost their nerve.

He Slept. But, while the wind howled, and waves leapt into the boat, Jesus was fast asleep. He slept because "His human nature was exhausted by His Godlike acts," and because His human life was real, and not merely played or acted. But why did He sleep? How could He sleep in such a storm? It was because He had such perfect trust in His Heavenly Father.

State of Panic.

1. These brave fishermen's faith was paralysed by fear.

2. They held out as long as possible, and then awoke the Lord by a cry of rebuke.

3. Why conflicting reports?

Matt.: "Lord save us, we perish."

Mark: "Carest thou not?"

Luke:"Master, Master, we perish."

4. The truth is, all are correct.

5. The fact is, they all cried at once. All place on record what they heard, or saw, or said.

6. They were in a state of panic.

What Awoke Him. Observe, what the shriek of the storm could not do, the weak, frail cry of a human soul in distress achieved.

Two "Arose." And what was the result. "There arose a great storm." "And He arose"-never fail to connect both. If ever a storm arises, remember He will, too.

Spoke to them First. Here again there is an apparent discord. Matthew states He spoke to them before He commanded the storm to be still; Mark and Luke afterwards. We believe both are correct. He calmed their souls first, then nature.

Threatened.

1. The original expressions, so we are given to understand, are singularly forcible, and are most happily rendered by the French translation, which says, "He threatened the wind and the waves."

2. Just as a master who, waking up, finds his servants in uproar and confusion, and addresses them in menacing tone, Jesus, beholding the commotion in the elements, said to the winds, "Silence!" to the waves, "Keep still!" to all nature, "Be calm!" The Impossible. "It is proverbial to express an attempt at impossibilities, by saying: You may as well speak to the winds." He did it. The wind is not accustomed to drop, in a moment, and when there is any approach to this, the sea is not instantly calm. Yet such was the power of Christ, and such the obedience of all nature to His Voice, that this was accomplished.

Fruitful in Lessons. This incident is fruitful in lessons. All of the utmost value.

I. They had Embarked with Christ.

Privileged. What a boon and privilege His presence was. Have You? We are all sailing on the ocean of life, to the vast shores of Eternity. Is He on board your frail barque?

All Can Have Him Now. That was not so then. "There were also with Him other little ships"-only near Him, they had not Him on board. What became of them in the storm? We know not.

Get Him in Calm as these Disciples Did. Men sometimes laugh at religion while the sun is shining. But when the tempest comes they are glad of Him. Seek Him while the sun still shines. If the storm is raging, and you have not the Lord on board, let us assure you that He is within hailing distance.

II. His Presence on Board is no Guarantee of Perpetual Calm.

1. One might think it would be so, but it is not.

2. Surely His presence in our hearts rouses the Devil.

3. The reason why this was so fierce a storm was because, we suspect, the Devil was trying to get rid of the Lord Jesus.

4. But if His presence means now and then a storm, remember "He maketh the storm a calm."

5. One enjoys the calm all the more because of the previous storm.

III. The Arrival of the Storm does not Mean that He has Left Us.

1. We should not conclude Christ has left us because the elements roar, and the deep threatens to swallow us up.

2. Therefore, let us trust Him in the darkness.

IV. Do not Lose Faith and Patience if He Seems Calmly Indifferent.

Problem of the Ages. This is the problem of the ages-the Lord's apparent indifference to our pain and suffering. Sometimes Christ seems unconcerned in the trouble of His people, and regardless of their prayers. "Awake, why sleepest Thou, O Lord? Arise, cast us not off for ever," is the exclamation in Psalms 44:23.

Worse Off than Disciples. They could see Him, and get hold of Him. We seem sometimes to be forgotten, and we cannot get hold of Him, and He seems a long way off. But He Does Care. One of these who cried: "Carest Thou not," years afterwards wrote: "He careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7). Many of His silences we can now explain, and those still unsolved some day will be understood.

V. Remember, His Fortune is Bound up with Yours. If your ship sinks, He will go down with it. WITH JESUS AT CAPERNAUM.

The Roman Officer and his Slave.

"Who was dear (precious, R.V.) to Him" (Luke 7:2).

Introduction. This is a charming incident in the life of our Lord. And it conveys an important lesson, especially as a study in contrast. This was most unusual conduct on the part of a master. It is not often that a master will put himself to inconvenience these days for a sick servant, and was most unusual in those distant days. Then, they got all they could out of the servant, and when of no further use, cast them off as a piece of orange peel. Then remember that the master was a proud Roman officer.

Note the trouble he took for this poor sick slave. He first sent a deputation of Jewish Elders (Mark 1:3); he then sent some friends of his own (Mark 1:6); and, finally, he was so concerned that he came himself (study Matthew 8:5-13). This last step was most certainly a wise thing for him to do. It certainly is good to get other people to go to God for us, but that is not sufficient unless we go to Him for ourselves.

Why did he do this?

1. Not from a mere sense of duty. For no one felt it to be their duty in those days. There was no public conscience on matters of this sort.

2. It was not out of fear for a Coroner's Inquest, for there were none then, so cheap was human life.

3. It was love that moved him. No Doubt about His Love. Why is there no doubt that the Roman officer loved his servant?

1. The way he acted emphatically proved this.

2. But the way he referred to his servant spoke volumes about his love. The beauty of the original is hidden in the A.V. The elders asked the Lord to heal the Centurion's slave; but the friends of the Roman officer took a direct message, which by and bye he himself supported, calling the sick slave, "My child." He does not use the rough word which implies a bondslave, but a term of endearment. This is brought out in the various renderings. "My young man," is the Weymouth rendering; "My boy," is the R.V.; and "My child," is Bullinger's rendering. This is delightful. Love betrays itself not only in conduct, but also in words, yea, in tone also. A More Remarkable Fact. But there is a more remarkable fact still, and that is that God has, and does, put Himself about for us. More, He did not send a deputation, but came Himself. And He came to be a man and die. There is no doubt at all about His love- His works and His words all proclaim this. And God's treatment of us in such a gracious manner is more remarkable. And for the following reasons:

I. This Servant was Deserving of such Attention. Whereas we are not. There is no doubt that the Centurion loved him because he was worthy of that love; yea, that he had merited that love. It is generally understood that he had, at the risk of his own life, saved the life of his master. No wonder then that he was loved, when his master owed life itself to his slave. But what about ourselves? Have we done anything notable for God? Why, the very opposite. We are, by nature, "enemies of God by wicked works," as the Bible declares. Yet, though utterly undeserving, we are dear to Him.

II. He was his Master's own Slave, whereas we Belong to Another. For the Centurion to put himself about concerning this servant really was not so very wonderful when considered from our standpoint, for was he not caring for his own property. Things are different with us, for we are the slaves of another, the enemy of God. Yet,"though the slave of another, God loves us.

III. He was Dying, whereas we are Dead. That makes a tremendous difference. Whilst there's life, there's hope, we say; in our case we are lifeless, so far as spiritual life is concerned.

IV. He was Helpless, and so are We. And, as in his case, Another is, and has, interested Himself in us. See what He has already done on our behalf-sent His Son to die for us; bestowed the Holy Ghost to convict, woo, and win us; and given us a wonderful Book for our guidance and learning. Is He Dear to You? You are dear to Him! It was the sickness of this servant that brought his master into contact with the Lord on His behalf. Surely you won't wait until sickness drives you to Him? WITH JESUS AT JERICHO.

The Conversion of Zacchaeus.

"He looked up and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house" (Luke 19:1-10).

Introduction.

Most Unusual. That is to say, the Lord invited Himself. This was a most unusual thing for the Lord to do. In fact, this is the only instance on record when our Lord did do so. Therefore this incident stands unique in the sacred Records. His Custom. With this exception, He only became a guest when invited. He even acted in this manner towards His disciples.

1. In the account of our Lord walking on the water (Mark 6:48). Mark states He,"would have passed by them."

2. And in the walk to Emmaus (Luke 24:28), Luke states that "He made as though He would have gone further."

Often a Guest. He had often gone before as a guest into houses. Into houses not only of His friends, but also of His secret foes-but always as an invited guest. Yes, even into the houses of His enemies.

Enemies. If you feel a bitter enmity in your heart toward Him-take encouragement. He will enter your heart as a guest, even though you hate Him. He will then turn the hatred out.

Acted as a King. If you ask the reason why, there are two answers. One we shall deal with presently, the other we state now. This conduct of our Lord harmonises with the events narrated in this chapter later. This chapter gives an account of the one occasion on which He allowed His Kingship to be publicly acknowledged. Usually He checked and forbade any such acclamations. His Right. As a Royal Person He has a right to invite Himself. He has the right to command His subjects. That is what our own King does.

Clue to Former Study. Luke alone records this event. We said in another study that we knew not what length of time passed between the healing of the one blind man as He entered and the healing of the two as He left Jericho. But this gives us a pretty good idea. He must have stayed overnight with Zacchaeus.

Unique. So unusual an incident is worth our closest study. Why should Zacchaeus be selected? What was there about his character that justified this? He was once a pure, patriotic, Jewish boy. (Name reveals that he was a pure Jew).

I. The Descent of Zacchaeus.

1. Began with his Choice of Business.

a. I was going to say with his choice of residence. b. For without doubt he lived in a place that had a bad name. c. Probably he had been born there. d. But, without doubt, his first step down was when he decided to become a tax-gatherer under the Roman Government. e. Not that the business in itself was wrong. f. Rates and taxes are respectable, legitimate, nuisances. g. It was the method of gathering the Roman taxes which offered plentiful opportunities for robbery and extortion. h. Of course it was possible to conduct such a business honestly. We fancy Matthew (once a publican, afterwards an Apostle) must have done so. i. But to one of a weak nature like Zacchaeus such was next to impossible. j. Some trades had far better be abandoned by some who wish to live the better life.

2. His Descent Increased Rapidly when he Suffered the Loss of Reputation.

a. We do not love tax gatherers even in this country, for none care to be compelled to give to Governments. b. But in Judea, the tax gatherers were hated for an additional reason, that they had become the officials of a Heathen Power. c. Note how they had christened him-"Guest with a sinner" (7). d. Not that they did not admit themselves to be sinners (as in China).

3. His Descent became Swift when by Losing his Reputation he Lost Self-respect, and Consequently had no Character to Support.

a. Usually it is easy to degrade a person by reckoning them so. b. The first step downward is to sink in the estimation of others. c. The next step downward is to sink in a man's own estimation. d. As he had no character to support and live up to, he just let himself go.

4. At the Bottom.

a. There you see him at last right at the bottom. b. With a load of guilt.

II. The Ascent of Zacchaeus. God must have been at work with him. The first evidence of his ascent is:

1. It Began with his Repentance and Restitution.

a. Mark 1:8 has been understood as his decision after our Lord's entry into his house. b. But please not the present tense-not "I will give," but "I give." c. It was a policy he had been pursuing unknown to his enemies. d. And he only declared it to justify our Lord before the eyes of them, not for any personal honour. e. Think of it-this man, so condemned, had, all unknown to them, commenced to lead a better life. f. Ah, many a person we sit in judgment upon is perhaps leading a better life than we ourselves are. g. But we pray you to note, salvation did not come to him then. h. Repentance and restitution did not save him. i. Salvation only came when Christ came.

2. It Increased with his Refusal to Allow a Hindrance to Keep him from Jesus.

a. "Though Jesus did not follow after fame, fame followed after Him," wrote an old writer. Crowds followed. b. No doubt curiosity led Zacchaeus to seek to see Jesus. c. But there was heart hunger too. d. There is always something to keep us from Him, some crowd of engagements, friends, pursuits. e. Note:

(1) He pocketed his dignity.

(2) He did not mind being laughed at.

3. His Quick Response to Our Lord's Royal Command.

a. How did our Lord know Zacchaeus was there in hiding? b. How did our Lord know his name? c. Only one answer is possible-He was, and is, Divine. d. "To-day"-not to-morrow. e. Perhaps it was the first time for years his name had been uttered in kindly accents. f. He came down. There must be always a coming down ere He can abide in our hearts. g. Oh, how few, comparatively speaking, give Christ the glad, unhesitating obedience of Zacchaeus.

4. His Glad and Joyous Reception of the Lord Jesus.

5. His Humble Acknowledgement of the Lordship of Christ.

a. "Stood." b. The place of the humble slave. c. His acknowledgment of Jesus' lordly authority and dignity.

Application. This is a message to:

1. That one who, with a real heart hunger for better things, 2. And despised by others, 3. Is overburdened by a sense of unfitness and unworthiness.

4. "Oh! make haste!" cries the Lord. WITH JESUS AT JERICHO.

"And he, casting away his garment, sprang up and came to Jesus" (Mark 10:46-52, R.V.).

Introduction. That was how blind Bartimaeus came to Jesus long ago, and that is what we desire all poor sinners would do. Coming to Him always means a "casting away." Some cast away before they come to Him, whilst others come, then cast away. The all-important matter is "Come!" This is one of the most familiar Bible incidents. We have always admired the man who would not be silenced. But, familiar though it be, there are points about it all have not noticed. Our Lord was on His last journey to Jerusalem before His death. That journey was more in the nature of a Triumphal Journey than others He had taken. Crowds accompanied Him. He seemed exceedingly popular. The shouting multitudes are escorting Him out of the city. They had just passed the gate, and are in the act of turning toward the mountain gorge through which runs the Jerusalem road, when, amidst the plaudits of the throng a cry of need is heard. And what then? Could one cry of need be heard above the din? Certainly it was not a weak cry, for it could be literally rendered, "He screamed." But even then, what was the scream of but one amidst all that noisy Eastern crowd! Ah, the cry of wretchedness was far sweeter to Him than all their hollow Hallelujahs. It was heard, and it stopped the Lord in His progress. Have you ever been puzzled about prayer, and wondered if one cry from you would be heard, and felt tempted to give way to doubt and despair? Ah, take heart from this true story. Just think of the multitudes now hymning His praises in the glory. What is one cry? Everything to Him. Cry, and you will be attended to.

It was wonderful that Joshua of old could command the sun, and it was stopped in its progress; but here is something more wonderful still-a poor blind beggar arresting the steps of Him who bade the sun to be, and Who keeps it whirling in its orbit. He got to the Lord Jesus; and so may every sinner if they will take the five steps this man took. They are five words we can take as key-words, and they are: "Heard," "Cry," "Came," "Received," "Followed."

I. He Heard of Blessing Granted to Others (Matthew 20:30; Luke 18:35). Our Lord's Name had become a household word in Palestine. He had been labouring there for three years or more. There is no doubt that this blind man had heard of Him. Without a doubt he had heard of the blessing received by the blind man on the other side of Jericho, but a wee while before. A discrepancy has been supposed in the three Gospels. Matthew says that two men cried "as they departed from Jericho." Luke says one man cried "as He came nigh to Jericho." Mark says one man "as He went out of Jericho." Those who believe we have here a discrepancy do so on the assumption that they all tell of one and the same event. But the Scriptures do not say that this is the case. Surely there were three men healed at different times.

We have here a most solemn and yet an encouraging fact. The unknown man Luke tells about who influenced Bartimaeus, and Bartimaeus influenced his unknown companion in sorrow, are

facts that are impressive. Who knows but that the salvation of someone depends upon your stepping out, as in the case before us!

II. He Recognised the Lord Jesus as the Divine One. He must often have pondered over the person and work of Christ, and he felt that here was One who was more than merely human. Asking the reason of the commotion, they informed him that "Jesus of Nazareth" was passing by, when he called out, "Jesus, thou Son of David," not merely "Jesus of Nazareth." He recognised His Mes-siaship.

III. He Made the Best of his Opportunity. Note that the Lord Jesus never entered in person Jericho again, so that this was the blind man's last chance, which he made good use of, thank God! Of course, now the Lord Jesus is present always everywhere, yet there are times when He seems to specially visit places and persons in salvation grace.

IV. He Did not Mind being Conspicuous. To come right out into the open means suffering to retiring dispositions, yet why should we not be bold in confessing our need of a Saviour. This blind man shouted to attract the attention of our Lord, never troubling about the attention he was drawing to himself.

V. He Refused to be Silenced. How changeable are folk, bidding us hold our tongue one minute, and then urging us to redoubled effort the next moment. But the more they tried to silence him the more he shouted.

VI. He Cast Aside every Hindrance. This happened to be the long Eastern cloak which hindered free movement. Observe, it was something useful and lawful, yet it hindered him coming. Whenever we think of coming to Him hindrances always crop up. These, by His grace we must lay aside, whether lawful or otherwise.

VII. He Received the Blessing. Observe, he was called whilst still in his blindness. His sight came after he came to Jesus and not before. He recognised sight as a gift to be received, and not as a reward to be merited or earned. He received his sight immediately. So will we.

VIII. He Followed, Glorifying God. WITH JESUS AT THE LAST SUPPER.

"And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this and divide it among yourselves" (Luke 22:17).

Introduction.

Thankfulness. Lessing, considered by some as one of the great thinkers of the eighteenth century, once remarked: "A single thought of thankfulness to Heaven is the most perfect prayer."

Present Difficulty.

1. Observe, He not only took the cup, but then gave thanks, and gave to others.

2. The difficulty is to persuade us to take the cup; and then to secure our thanks, and finally to get us to hand it to others.

Lord's Table Manners.

1. Here we incidentally get a glimpse at our Lord's table manners.

2. The Jews generally partook of their meals in a serious and devout manner, after a solemn blessing and thanksgiving to God for His goodness.

3. To partake of food without offering thanks to God was considered sacrilege.

4. We can almost say with certainty the exact words our Lord uttered. a. The usual grace said before partaking of bread was: "Blessed be Thou, our God, King of the Universe, who brought forth bread out of the earth." b. And before partaking of the contents of the cup they said: "Blessed be our God, King of the Universe, the Creator of the fruit of the vine."

Origin of Grace Before Meat.

1. It is generally conceded that here we have the origin of our present custom of saying grace.

2. Do you say grace?

3. In homes where this duty is not practised, it is often the first confession of Christ by the new convert.

4. The bowing of the head, not in an ostentatious spirit, but in grateful and adoring thanks.

5. It is reported that a good King noticed that his courtiers never said grace, so he resolved upon giving them a lesson. He picked a beggar from the streets in his rags, and told him how to act. The King brought him to the Royal table. After feasting on all the good things provided, to the astonishment of the courtiers, he arose up, and went away without giving thanks to the King for his liberality. At the expression of anger at the man's ingratitude, he reminded them how they had treated their Heavenly Father.

Before proceeding, whilst on the subject of grace before meat, let us make one or two remarks. a. Don't ask the Lord to make you thankful-what base ingratitude. Tell Him you are thankful. b. Long graces are not advisable, for the dinner will get cold. An impressive grace we heard was just, "We thank Thee!" c. Avoid saying grace in a mere formal fashion. Jesus would not repeat the usual Jewish grace in a mere formal fashion. The Lord's Habitual Practice.

1. But this action of our Divine Lord was His habitual practice.

2. Not only at the taking of the daily cups at the homely meals, but all the cups His Heavenly Father gave to Him.

3. There were four cups used at the Passover feast. a. At the commencement. b. During supper. c. Cup of blessing (Mark 1:17). d. At the singing of hymn (Mark 1:20).

4. There are three cups mentioned in Scripture. One the Lord drank. Two we can drink.

I. The Cup of Indignation and Wrath (Psalms 75:8).

1. That is the cup referred to in this Psalm and Luke 22:42.

2. The cup our Lord dreaded was cup of indignation and wrath.

3. In the Father's hand there was a cup-and the Saviour took it and drank it to the bitter dregs. That cup was not one of physical, but spiritual suffering.

4. Dr. Pierson has told a touching story relating to the war between Russia and Circassia in the middle of the last century.

5. The prophet chief, almost adored by his followers, found that someone was exposing to the enemy his designs and plans, and he issued a decree that if the traitor was found out, one hundred lashes on the bare back should be administered.

6. A few days later it was discovered, to his astonishment, that the guilty party was his own mother.

7. He went into fasting and retirement for two days, and coming out pallid and ghastly, ordered his mother to be brought from the tent, and her back bared for the scourge. He stood by while one, two, three, four, five of those fearful lashes gashed her flesh, then he made the executioner to arrest his blows, bared his own back, and took the other ninety-five lashes on his own person, till the flesh hung in shreds.

8. And the effect it is said was electric. His followers were melted, and even his mother was utterly subdued, as she never would have been by force.

9. Jesus stood forth. a. Bore all the stripes that were ours by right. b. Drank this cup, we by legal right should take.

10. Let your prayer be:

"Oh, make me understand it.

Help me to take it in;

What it meant to Thee, the Holy One.

To bear away my sin."

11. But He drank the cup of wrath in order that another cup might be ours.

II. The Cup of Salvation (Psalms 116:13).

1. Thinking of the Cross, my heart cries: "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?"

2. What can I do to show my gratitude? a. Our first expression of gratitude ought to be to "take"

(1) For before you can begin to toil for Him you must trust Him.

(2) Before our Lord cried "Blessed," He said "Repent."

(3) "Take"-He offers it to you.

(4) It is a gift-we are to be His guests. b. Your second expression of gratitude must be "divide" -i.e., hand story to others.

3. All you have to do is to take, give thanks-and give it to others after partaking of it yourself.

4. "How low down can I drink?" asked a poor little girl when handed a glass of hot milk. She belonged to a poor family, where such things had to be shared. She was astonished when informed she could drink it all.

5. Oh, drink deeply. Drink much of His Salvation. Drink, and drink again.

III. The Cup of Suffering (Matthew 20:22-23).

1. It is good when mothers come to the Lord on behalf of their sons-as the mother of Zebedee's children did.

2. "Ye shall indeed drink of the cup"-no escape from it.

3. The cup of suffering falls to the lot of all. Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.

4. But the advantage of the Christian over the worldling is that he takes the cup out of a loving Father's hand.

5. In the days of our childhood the bitter medicine went down the easier if the loving hand of our beloved father or mother handed it to us, rather than the hand of a stranger.

How do you Take the Cup of Suffering?

1. But how do you take it?

2. One we know was a long while ago called to pass through sorrow.

3. Whilst walking in a busy thoroughfare, and pondering over this text, like a flash the rebuke came: "You have taken the cup of suffering, but have never offered thanks."

4. Jesus did-He took the cup, and gave thanks.

5. There are cups of disappointment we have to drink.- Plans concerning your future service are overthrown. Plans concerning your children are upset. Plans concerning your position in life crumble to pieces.

6. What must we do under the circumstances? Take the cup and give thanks.

Let Us give Two Helps to Thankfulness.

1. Don't Forget Past Mercies. a. Look at life as Gladstone did. b. When he was reminded of the pain he suffered during the last six months of his life, he said there were no reasons why he should forget that he had enjoyed twice 86 times six months of wonderful painlessness. c. Generally we allow the little suffering to obliterate from our memories the years of painlessness. d. In Stanley's "Life of Arnold," we have a similar example. Taken suddenly ill, his son entered the room and sat down with his mother at the foot of the bed. Presently his father said in a low voice: "My son, thank God for me!" And as his son did not at once catch his meaning, he went on saying: "Thank God, Tom, for giving me this pain. I have suffered so little pain in my life, that I feel it is very good for me; now God has given it to me, and I do so thank Him for it."

2. Don't Forget the Bitter Cup is Handed to you by the Pierced Hand. Seek for the grace of thankfulness, so that you may be able to say:

"My God, I thank Thee, Who hast made

The earth so bright.

So full of splendour and of joy

Beauty and light;

So many glorious things are here.

Noble and right.

"I thank Thee more that all my joy

Is touched with pain;

That shadows fall on brightest hours,

That thorns remain.

So that earth's bliss may be my guide.

And not my chain.

"For Thou Who knowest, Lord, how soon

Our weak heart clings,

Hast given us joys, tender and true.

Yet all with wings;

So that we see, gleaming on high.

Diviner things." WITH JESUS AT CALVARY.

The Seven Words from the Cross.

Introduction. How fitting it is for the Lord's people to meditate on the seven last words of our Lord from the. Cross. Not His seven last words-His last word can never be spoken, for He is the Eternal One.

Out of the hundreds of people mentioned in the Bible, it has pleased the Lord to move the inspired writers to allude to the dying words of but some half-dozen, and then in the briefest possible manner. But there is one exception, and exceptions to general rules in the Bible arrest attention. That exception is the Lord Jesus. The chapters devoted to the account of Christ's death are altogether out of proportion to those dedicated to the record of His life. This fact is impressive. We know the lesson-the work He came to do was to die for men. That is the Gospel: "Christ died for our sins." The seven words from the Cross fall into two clear sections-the first three for others; the following four concerning Himself.

Suffering is a great test of character. What we really are is the more easily manifested through suffering. Observe that our Lord's first thought was not for Himself, but for others; and you realise one of the great revelations of His suffering. As He had to suffer the most agonising of pains, He

could have been excused if He had been absorbed in His own sufferings and pains; but no. He thought of others-others were His first concern.

I. Forgiveness. Christ's first word from the Cross is the sinner's first great need, viz., forgiveness: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

"Then." When? Mark well that adverb. It was when, having nailed Him as vermin to the Cross of wood, and raising it, had allowed it to fall into the hole made for it with a dreadful and awful thud and jolt, that lacerated the newly made wounds-"then!" There was not a trace of resentment or bitterness. Prior to Him comforting His mother, before He gave thought to Himself or anything else, He prayed for His executioners, and the Jewish authorities who were behind the sentence.

"Father." What a tender word! But that tender and loving word was to be addressed to God no more till after the close of that awful three hours' agony. God remained His Father, but He took the sinners' place, and as the sinners' substitute could not use that word. This is an important thought, and explains a great deal.

Advocate. The Lord Jesus was Sacrifice and Advocate all in one. An Advocate always seeks for extenuating points. The moment the sacred Blood began to flow the intercession for sinners began. Jesus pleads in extenuation, the guilty party's ignorance.

Answer. This prayer was answered very speedily in the case of the dying thief; in the Centurion's case; in the case of the people on the Day of Pentecost; and in every penitent sinner since, including you and me, dear reader.

Some Questions.

1. Have you been forgiven? Do not stay away from Him. Has this prayer been answered for you yet?

2. Have you forgiven? Has the Spirit of Jesus taken possession of you? We forgive, not to be forgiven, but because we are forgiven (Ephesians 4:32).

3. Let me ask myself three questions: 1st, Am 1 a forgiven sinner? 2nd, Am I a forgiven saint? 3rd, Am I a forgiven servant?

II. Future Life. Christ's second word from the Cross settles the fear in most hearts concerning the future, and was spoken to the dying thief, viz., "To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:39-43). It is quite clear that at the first both thieves railed at Christ. To prove this, we have only to turn to Matthew 27:44, and Mark 15:32. Why the change? Certainly due to the Holy Spirit. Yet the Holy Spirit usually works through others. Assuredly it was the wonderful spirit of forgiveness manifested by the Lord Jesus, and indeed His whole demeanour which influenced the thief. The Evidences of Conversion are three:

1. His honest confession (Mark 1:41). The first step to God usually is the taking by the sinner of his proper place.

2. His frank declaration of our Lord's Divinity and Kingship. Note: "Thy Kingdom."

3. His conviction that the soul after death still lives: "Remember me." The Lord's Swift Reply.

1. Overthrows the teaching concerning Purgatory. "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." No such place as Purgatory here. From earth to Paradise right away, direct.

2. Explains what Paradise is. The value of the promise is in two words, "With Me." To have entered Paradise alone, without a friend to introduce him, and to plead for him, stained as he was with guilt, would that have satisfied and comforted him? But "With Me"-ah, that made all the difference in the world!

3. Overthrows the "sleep" theory. Jesus meant not that his soul should be with Him in sleep. Surely His words mean the conscious presence of two personalities thoroughly awake. "To-day, etc.," would have been deceitful language unless it meant that the soul of the penitent thief should be conscious of the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. Sleep is only used for the body.

Learn.

1. Here was salvation by faith only. He could not perform any works to save his soul, for he was nailed to the Cross.

2. A great deal of knowledge is not required to be saved.

3. There is a way to Heaven from the very gate of death.

4. The suddenness of conversion, and of spiritual change. In a moment.

5. Note also the swiftness of spiritual growth. Rapidly the dying thief got a grasp of Messianic truth, and other truth as revealed in his request.

6. There is hope for the worst of sinners.

"The dying thief rejoiced to see

That Fountain in his day,

And there may I, though vile as he.

Wash all my sins away."

7. Do not despise death-bed repentances-the Lord Jesus did not.

III. Home Circle. Christ's third word on the Cross touches the home circle, the loved family, wherein He commits as a legacy to John His mother (see John 19:25-27). After the Incarnation and birth of the Saviour, the blessed mother of Jesus seems to retire behind the scenes. We hear very little about her. Her work in the world was to be the mother of His humanity. Not the Mother of God, as some erroneously declare.

Mary at the Cross.

1. Being His mother, she is there at His death. How mother-like!

2. She is there submissively and uncomplainingly.

3. She is not alone, for other two Marys are with her- the blessedness of companionship in sorrow. The Sacredness of Family Relationships.

1. Here, in the hour of His greatest sorrow, He sanctifies the ties of home, the relationship of the hearth. Public servants should never forget private family claims.

2. Love needs only a hint. The disciple who understood Jesus, knew what our Lord's short message meant, and fulfilled his charge by taking Mary to his own home.

3. Have you ever been impressed by the fact that nowhere in Scripture does the Lord Jesus ever call Mary, "Mother!" Of course she was His mother, but in view of Mariolatry, how impressive is this fact!

IV. Atonement. Christ's fourth word reveals the awful price He had to pay to atone for our sin. The fourth word was the cry of the Forsaken One (see Matthew 27:46). From noon till 3 p.m. there was darkness. What happened to our Lord Jesus during those three hours we know not. We must respect the silence of Scripture. The darkness was Nature's sympathy with its Creator. Extraordinary light attended His birth; extraordinary darkness attended His death. At last the silence is broken by a cry. So there was not only the darkness of nature but there was darkness in the soul of our Saviour.

"My God." Only once did the Lord Jesus call upon His Father as God. And it was here. He appeals to God as the Creator, and that is the very lowest ground. Here in His agony He goes back to the language of His childhood, for He speaks in Syriac, His old vernacular. In the darkness He has not lost the consciousness or fact of Sonship, but the right, for the time being, on account of taking our place, so He does not use nor avail Himself here of the term Father. His Only Question. You will notice this is a question, the only question ever uttered to the Father from those lips. And how startling to find that to that solitary question there was no reply.

Why that Cry?

1. Was it weakness? No. It could not be weakness, because later He cried with a loud voice. This proved He was not exhausted.

2. Was it imagination? Sometimes we think we are forsaken of God, for most have their times of deep depression. But of course we are mistaken, for He Himself has declared: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Was He mistaken? Had He made a mistake? He never made a mistake in His life.

He was Forsaken because He was made Sin. "This really is a cry that no created intelligence can fathom. It is a cry out of deeper depths than the human soul has ever touched." It was really true. He was forsaken because we ought to have been; He was forsaken in order that that fate might never be ours.

Reflection. The Lord's people sometimes have to walk or sit in darkness (read Micah 7:8). Remember even in the darkness we can still say, "My God." Jesus had no desire or intention to abandon the God who had forsaken Him.

V. Thirst. Christ's fifth word from the Cross is the cry of His humanity, "I thirst" (John 19:28). This is the only word of the seven that brings home to us the real humanity of the Lord Jesus. He really became flesh. For a while His spirit was completely triumphant over His body; but presently His bruised body asserted itself, and physical anguish must find language. This is the shortest of the

seven words.

Various Thirsts.

1. There is bodily thirst. This was the anguish of physical thirst in its most acute form.

2. There is thirst for God. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee." His cry after God was an evidence of the possession of this soul-thirst.

3. There is thirst after the souls of men. "He thirsted to be thirsted after."

VI. Accomplishments. Christ's sixth word was, "It is finished" (John 19:28-30). Rightly understood, this is a claim unique. It means much more than, "It is all over." Most men leave unfinished tasks. Jesus accomplished everything He set out to do.

"The finished work of Christ" was a phrase our fathers were very fond of. By this phrase they meant that God did not need to be propitiated, for Jesus had accomplished that great work.

Professor Clow gives four thoughts on this phrase. In it he saw:

1. A Sigh of Relief. What a relief it is when we have completed some arduous task. "There, that's finished," we exclaim. This meant for the Saviour that His life of suffering and of loneliness was finished.

2. A Shout of Victory. Tennyson declared that "The most pathetic utterance in all history is that of Christ on the Cross, 'It is finished!'" "Nevertheless," says his biographer, "He also recognised the note of triumph in 'It is finished.'"

3. A Message to the Father. He was not ashamed to announce to His Father the completion of the work entrusted to Him. The work had been well and truly done.

4. A Proclamation to Men. What has this to do with me? The fact that someone else has completed a task may have little interest for me! But this has to do with me! The successful completion of His work is a matter of life and death to me.

What was Finished? The work of atonement!

VII. Rest. Christ's seventh and last word on the Cross is a very precious one: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit" (Luke 23:46). These words were uttered in a loud voice, proving that Jesus did not die of weariness, that His life was not forced from Him.

Observe.

1. He died with Scripture on His lips. You will find these words in the Old Testament.

2. He again calls God by the endearing term, Father. The storm of God's wrath beat fiercely upon that devoted head-but the storm has passed and the sunshine has come again.

3. Note, "Thy hands." Not the Devil's. Some erroneously say that when He died Satan got hold of Him, and took Him to Hell. No; no; a thousand times, no! He was in the Father's safe and loving keeping: "Thy hands."

William the Conqueror died exclaiming: "I commend my soul to Mary." But Lady Jane Gray, laying her head upon the fatal block, said: "Lord, into Thy hand I commend my spirit." She followed her Lord's example.

Then we read that our Lord "Dismissed His spirit"- wonderful statement! This was an act of Deity. We can never dismiss our spirits. He did. WITH CHRIST AT CALVARY.

In Darkness.

Sitting in Darkness, Luke 1:78-79

Hanging in Darkness, Matthew 27:45-46

Called Out of Darkness, 1 Peter 2:9

Turned from Darkness, Acts 26:18 Four Scriptures which have a close connection with each other, as we shall see in the course of our meditation.

I. Sitting in Darkness (Luke 1:78-79). With glee some Bible critics have pointed out here a supposed inaccuracy. "See," say they, "how Zacharias, filled with the Holy Ghost, misquotes Scripture!" This they say on the supposition that he was quoting Isaiah 9:2. But Zacharias did not say so. He was so saturated with Scripture that, on examining his utterance, we find that he was quoting from Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Malachi. As a matter of fact there are in Isaiah two special Scriptures on darkness-1st, one on Walking in Darkness (Isaiah 9:2). But 29 years later, the prophet spake on Sitting in Darkness (Isaiah 42:7).

It is a picture of deterioration and degeneration, and in our Lord's day it had come true. Once, though in darkness, they exercised an element of freedom and unsettlement and dissatisfaction, for they walked in darkness; now, in fast and fatal bondage, they sit in a dark and loathsome dungeon.

Allow this picture language to grip you. The late Dr. Jowett has so graphically drawn attention to it. "Sitting in darkness!" Try to realise it. You sit by the fireside on a winter's night, with a bright fire making the room genial and warm. You sit on, until the fire burns low, and eventually dies out, and the warmth gives place to a searching chill. Then the lamp goes out, and darkness is added to coldness. But you still sit on, and terrible bondage becomes yours. And there are people whose soul-life is just like that. There is no fire in the grate, and their light is gone out, and they abide in cold and dreary desolation, and hard bondage.

It was not ever thus. Once there was a fire in the grate, and a bright light showing and shining. The soul of man was lighted by the presence of the Holy Spirit, and wanned by the fact and presence of Divine love. But sin changed all this. Sometimes a darkened room helps an invalid to recover health, but a darkened soul is the result of a spiritual catastrophe, and betokens the presence of a dead spirit, a lifeless soul. Job speaks of "a land where the light is as darkness."

Sitting in Darkness. This is either a picture of enjoyment, contentment, or enslavement and despondency, or all.

II. Hanging in Darkness (Matthew 27:45-46). Have you ever connected Sitting in Darkness with Hanging in Darkness? There is a very close connection. If we had never walked or sat in the

darkness of sin, He would never had found it necessary to have hung in darkness. He hung in darkness to atone for our sin, and to make it possible for us to sit in light-the light of His presence and love. The solar darkness He experienced, was an emblem of soul-darkness He endured on our account.

III. Called Out of Darkness (1 Peter 2:9). This declares that for those sitting in darkness God has a tender regard. That, for them, "a Day-spring from on High hath visited us." That also a voice is heard, calling out of the darkness.

IV. Turned from Darkness (Acts 26:18). Do you say: "I hear the voice calling me out of darkness, but I am chained fast, and cannot respond." Well, for you there is hope, for there is One Who will turn you out of darkness, for He can liberate you from the fetters of sin, and lead you right out into liberty.

PROVISION FOR NEED.

"And Abraham called that place Jehovah Jireh" (Genesis 22:14).

The name of Jehovah Jireh is a monument of a great discovery and a great deliverance. It means either the Lord will see, or the Lord will provide. In common speech these two words "see" and "provide" are distinct in their meaning. Yet the moment we deal with God the two words are found to be one and the same, for His prevision means His pro-vision.

"In the mount of the Lord it (A.V.)-He (R.V.)-shall be seen." Surely here we have a hint and explanation of John 8:56. God gave Abraham insight into the mystery of the Cross.

We can say that the Lord has now provided for man's great needs.

I. For Man's Insensibility and Slumber, He has provided in the Person of the Holy Spirit an Awakener, One to rouse us from the slumber of sin.

II. For Man's Sin, the precious Blood of Christ. It is not left to the sinner to provide a sacrifice (Genesis 22:8), for God Himself has done this. The Lord Jesus died in our stead, as the ram died in the stead of Isaac. Dr. Dinsdale T. Young has so splendidly declared: "Every day I live, yes, every day, this possesses me more and more completely in mind and heart-that that death was a substitution. I know it is an old-fashioned word, a word that is spurned in some quarters. I confess that it satisfies my guilty conscience and comforts my troubled heart, and gives me a joy in my religion incomparable. When I look up and say, He took my place, I cannot understand it. But He did it. He bore my sins in His own body on the Tree."

III. For Man's Ignorance, His Word, the Bible. Read Psalms 119:98-99. We must be people of the one Book, whatever other books we may possess and read. We must give the Bible its chief place in our lives.

IV. For Man's Weakness, the Holy Spirit. How weak is man. But the Holy Spirit communicates strength, through Regeneration and Renewal.

V. For Man's Emptiness, the Divine Fulness. There is fulness of blessing for all who believe. It pleased the Father that in His beloved Son all fulness should dwell, and when He comes and fills my heart and life with His holy and blessed presence I have the fulness.

VI. For Man's Loneliness, the Divine Companionship. He has promised never to leave us.

What ample and blessed provision He has made for all our needs. THE NAMES OF OUR LORD JESUS.

Matthew 1:21, Matthew 1:23.

1. Emmanuel-What He was, His Person.

2. Jesus-What He was to Do, His Work.

3. Christ-What Place He was to Fill, His Office.

4. Lord-What Claim He was to Make, His Headship.

5. King-What Rank He was to Hold, His Kingdom.

6. Son of God-In Relation to God, His Mission.

7. Son of Man-In Relation to Man, His Mission.

PASSING OVER.

"And when I see the blood, I will pass over you"

(Exodus 12:13).

Introduction. Not Pass By. Have you ever been gripped by that? For years we thought it just meant He would pass by them, but when the real import of the language used came home to one, how beautifully new this old verse became.

National history is always interesting and instructive. Exodus gives the history of Israel and their development from a family into a nation. Exodus 12 gives very unusual particulars concerning the great event which led up to their emigration from Egypt to Canaan, and we are prepared to pass on, thinking it had no further interest for us, only we cannot forget several important and impressive facts.

1. The Space Devoted to the Passover Attracts our Attention. If a great deal of space is given to any one event in the Bible, we can be quite sure that, in the mind of the chronicler, that particular event is of prime importance.

2. We Become Impressed by the References in the New Testament to the Passover, especially that statement: "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7). So that, without doubt, this great Passover event is of prime importance to us.

3. We Become Impressed by that word "It" in Exodus 12:4, Exodus 12:6, Exodus 12:9, and Exodus 12:10 of Exodus 12. On Passover eve not less than 250,000 lambs would be required to be slain to meet the needs of the nation, yet all those thousands of lambs are considered as one. Never do we read, "Kill them," but "Kill it." Evidently those thousands of lambs in the mind of God stood for but one-the Lord Jesus Christ, who was declared to be by the forerunner, "The Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world."

4. It is also impressive to note that what saved was not the eating of the lamb, but the Sprinkled Blood. This is very important. Eating the Lamb was part of the ritual, but only after the sprinkling of the blood. We are not saved by going to the Lord's Table to partake of the Bread and Wine, sweet memorials of the Broken Body and shed Blood, but by hiding under the protection of the Sprinkled Blood.

5. Observe where the Blood was Sprinkled. First, on the lintel of the door, suggestive of protection from the righteous wrath of Heaven; then on the doorposts, separating them from Egypt. Oh, do please take note of this important fact-the same Blood which saved from the wrath of a Holy God, separated them from all around them. When we come to the Blood of Christ, we are not only saved from our sin, but also separated from the world unto the One who has shed His Blood on our account.

Pondering on the verse at the head of this study, we note that the Sprinkled Blood meant eight great mercies:

I. A Substitutionary Mercy. "A lamb for an house." Interest in each lamb for each person. The Gospel is "That Christ died for our sins," that is to say, His death was a substitutionary one.

II. A Sparing Mercy. Authorities state that "I will pass over" could mean, "Step over," or "Leap over." The idea of sparing from the judgment that went abroad that night all over the land.

III. A Brooding Mercy. Better still, the word "Passover" means "Brood Over," as a bird broods over her young, protecting them with her own body (see Deuteronomy 32:11, and Matthew 23:37). When we trust the Blood of Christ, He covers us with His wings, and we are then and thus safe from all harm.

IV. An Assuring Mercy. "When I," not you, "see the blood." Thus He assures us of our safety, and thus we should be free from all fear.

V. A Regeneration Mercy. As suggested in the sentence "Beginning of months" (Exodus 12:2). Israel were thus to commence their reckoning from the date of the blood shedding and sprinkling, so that Redemption and Regeneration are linked. The moment we come under the shadow of the Cross of Christ, that moment we are regenerated by the Holy Spirit of God.

VI. A Feasting Mercy (see Exodus 12:8). Blood sprinkled before eating, yet eating following the sprinkling of the blood. Feasting in the Scriptures always speaks of great joy and gladness. What joy follows a reception by faith of the Lord Jesus Christ as our Atonement.

VII. A Cleansing Mercy (Exodus 12:17). The Feast of Unleavened Bread always follows the Feast of the Passover. Did not put leaven out in order to be saved, but because they were saved. There really was no break between the two feasts. Nor can the doctrinal truths and experiences they symbolise be separated.

VIII. A Delivering Mercy. After the Feast of Passover, there came glorious deliverance from Egypt. And that after many years of hard, hard bondage. How welcome would be this liberty!

Warning. The blood was not to be sprinkled upon the floor, and none on the threshold. Is that not an awful word in Hebrews 10:29 : "Trampled under foot the Son of God. . . and accounting the

Blood... an unholy thing." Dread possibility!

WHY GOD WANTS US TO DRAW NEAR.

1. To Hear (Words before Works), Joshua 3:9 2. For Revelation of Himself and His Will, Genesis 45:4 3. For Victory, Joshua 10:24 4. For Ministry, Ezekiel 44:15-16 CHRISTENING AND CURING. Have been much amused at the remark of old Aunt Matilda Jane, who said, when the doctor told her she had nasal catarrh: "It is a common cold in the head, but I haven't sent for you to christen it, but to cure it." In the moral and spiritual realm there is far too much christening and too little curing.

Yet a right christening is not to be despised. Doctors cannot deal satisfactorily with a patient until first they have made a right diagnosis.

What is the Matter with Mankind? There are too many quacks about, so let us turn to the Expert, for none can make a diagnosis like Him. See what He says about our hearts: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord" (Jeremiah 17:9-10). Also note His diagnosis in Isaiah 1: "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint, from the sole of the foot even to the head there is no soundness in it." It is an appalling description of our state by nature. Note:

1. Heart wrong. Heart is seat of affection.

2. Head wrong. Head is seat of intelligence.

3. Foot wrong. Feet make possible movements. The Cure. Ah, has it ever gripped you that on the Cross:

1. Blood flowed from His head, to atone for our sins of thought.

2. Blood flowed from His heart, to atone for our sins of affection.

3. Blood flowed from His hands, to atone for our sins of action.

4. Blood flowed from His feet, to atone for our sins of walk. What a perfect atonement! In the Old Testament ritual (Cleansing of the Leper, etc.) oil followed the blood, that is, the Holy Spirit, for oil is an emblem of the Spirit. If the Blood be applied to us, His Holy Spirit will anoint our heads, feet, and hands, thus with a new heart created within us, we are made new creatures in Christ Jesus. A SELF-RIGHTEOUS MAN'S REST AND COVERING.

"For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it" (Isaiah 28:20).

Introduction.

1. To appreciate to the full the force of this statement you need to read it on some cold frosty night.

2. Then the thought of some poor body having to pass the night on a bed too short for them, and a covering so narrow they cannot wrap themselves in it, simply makes one shudder.

3. What a night of unrest and discomfort he is sure to have; yea, further, what a positive danger is he in, through lack of proper clothing, for a serious and probably fatal illness might ensue.

4. That is but a faint picture of the condition of the self-righteous. His resting place is too short for his need; his covering is frightfully narrow and totally inadequate. In fact everything is short about him, for it is written: "There is no difference, all have sinned and come short." And that one is in terrible danger.

5. So was it with these men of Jerusalem (Exodus 12:14), to whom this word was spoken by the prophet Isaiah. They were in jeopardy from other nations. Though still away from God, they had made their plans, and boasted about their rest and safety.

6. But the Lord said: "Your refuge is a refuge of lies, you have found a resting place and a covering you think will hide you, but both are totally inadequate for your need."

7. The overflowing scourge shall pass through, and ye shall be trodden down by it.

8. You are wise in scenting danger, but you have erred in making to yourselves a refuge.

9. May this not be a message of warning for some of us.

10. Like them, you see the danger. "A prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself, but the simple pass on and are punished" (Proverbs 22:3).

11. But the question now is: On what are you resting your hopes upon; what are you relying upon in the way of covering? Could our text be truthfully applied to you?

12. But before we proceed, let us inquire:

I. Do you Feel your Need of Rest?

1. For, after all, what is the use of talking of a resting place, unless you feel your need of rest.

2. It is only the weary who desire a resting place.

3. That sweet invitation of our Lord: "Come. . . and I will give you rest," sounds only as music in the ear of the weary.

4. All are not conscious of soul-weariness.

5. And the reason is simply that they have never given the salvation of their soul a single thought.

6. Standing by the sick bed of a young man, I asked him that question, and he had to confess he never had.

7. And I said he reminded me of some young married couples, who, in order to get a good house of furniture, denied themselves of even the necessaries of life, so much so, that they weakened their bodies, and easily fell victims to a contagious disease.

8. They thought solely of their house, and forgot the inhabitants of the house.

9. Frank Bullen, in his "Apostles of the South East," speaks of some "who live the life of an intelligent animal, without the wise instincts which prevent an animal from doing harm to its own body."

10. May we just note what leads to weariness? a. Disappointment leads to weariness. Life is full of disappointments. Life's friendships are often full of bitter disappointment. Could you not say, "I've tried the broken cisterns," etc. b. The Burden-Bearer soon gets weary. The one whom the Lord invites in the sweet invitation is the "heavy laden," for it is the heavy laden who feel their need of rest. Have you no burden to bear? What about your guilt, your burden of iniquity? c. Labour leads to weariness. It was to those who "labour" our Lord speaks. That is, to those who were desperately hard at work, seeking to gain salvation. That one who seeks Justification by works is sure soon to be weary, for it is a hard and hopeless task. d. Disease leads to weariness. One of the first symptoms of a diseased condition is weariness. Bad sign when you awake weary to begin the day. What about your spiritually diseased condition?

II. On What are you Relying for Rest and Covering?

1. This message is really for those who do feel their need of rest.

2. May we ask what is absolutely required for full and complete rest? A resting place and a covering sufficiently large to meet all needs.

3. Mark you, these are not essential for sleep.

4. Some boast they can sleep on a clothes line. I do know that one can sleep on a hard board.

5. But there is a vast difference between sleep and rest. You can have a very restless slumber.

6. Even those seeking rest on a short bed and narrow covering sleep.

7. That is the trouble-the unconverted are asleep.

8. But whilst there is sleep, there is no comfort and no rest.

9. Your bed, oh, self-righteous one, lulls you to sleep.

10. Your place of rest may satisfy you, but does it satisfy God! And is it sufficient for your needs?

III. The Perfection of His Rest.

1. We used to sing: "On the other side of Jordan there is rest for the weary," etc.

2. You have no need to wait for "the other side.." On this side Jordan you can have rest.

3. We hear a great deal of "rest cure." Certain it is that His rest is a cure for all the ills of the soul.

4. On Him there is room sufficient for complete rest- you can stretch yourself.

5. In Him you have ample covering.

Application.

1. You invite me to come, but I don't feel weary! Have I to wait until I find myself to be weary? No, come just as you are.

2. You are more weary than you imagine.

3. Often you only find out how weary you are after you lie down.

CHRIST'S ASCENSION AND ELIJAH'S.

2 Kings 2:11.

1. Elijah did not ascend; he was carried up. Jesus did ascend, without any outward sign to accompany His slow upward movement through the quiet air.

2. The Lord Jesus went up by His own power; not so Elijah.

3. Elijah left his cloak; the Lord Jesus left a benediction and sent His Holy Spirit.

4. When Christ went up on High He relinquished nothing of His activity for us; Elijah's work was done when he was carried up on High. A DOUBLE PORTION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

2 Kings 2:9.

The Double Portion was the eldest son's portion, the portion allotted to the heir. Jacob treated his son Joseph as his eldest son by giving him a double portion. Elkanah, as a mark of his special affection for his wife Hannah, gave her a double portion (see R.V.) of sacrificial food. Job received a double portion when the Lord turned his captivity. The Lord Jesus is God's Firstborn, entitled to a double portion, and we are joint-heirs with Him. By and by, when the Lord again takes up Jacob and his descendants, the Lord will give them a double portion (Isaiah 61:7; Zechariah 9:12; Isaiah 40:2).

NOTHING BUT LEAVES.

Mark 11:13.

Strange.

1. But why curse the fig tree for not bearing figs, seeing it was not time for the fruit? How strange!

2. It is our Lord's only destructive act.

Circumstance.

1. Jesus had spent His last Sabbath on earth with Martha, Mary, and Lazarus at Bethany.

2. Though He had just left that hospitable home, He became hungry-evidence of the reality of His manhood.

3. Though passing many fig trees by the wayside, only one particularly attracted His attention though "afar off." He came expecting figs and found nothing but leaves. Why expect figs though it was not the time for figs?

Clue.

1. The fig tree produces fruit first and leaf afterwards, and in some cases the leaves accompany, but do not precede the fruit.

2. This fig tree was false and untruthful; it made a loud profession by its leaf, but there was no possession.

Two Lessons. "And Jesus answered" (14): He heard what the fig tree said.

1. Jesus draws a lesson on the wonderful power of the prayer of faith.

2. Indirectly there is given to professing Christians a solemn warning on the peril of mere profession without possession.

Direct.

1. The direct application of the parable is to the Jewish nation.

2. The heathen nations of that time were barren enough, but they were not professors as Israel were.

3. A curse has rested on Israel for now 19 centuries.

4. But that fig tree will yet be restored to fruit and blessing.

Alpine Climbers.

1. It is said that skilled Alpine climbers can tell their altitude by the kind of vegetation they see growing around them.

2. Skilled spiritual guides can tell a person's spiritual plane by the graces to be observed in that life.

3. Worldly habits and outlook proclaim a life lived on the low altitude of the world.

Why Leaves Only is Considered Serious.

1. Misrepresent our Christian faith. For true religion does not consist in mere church or meeting attendance.

2. Such hinder seekers. a. The blessed man in Psalm 1 is the one who stands not in the way of sinners. b. Mere professors have always been the stumbling-block.

Why No Fruit?

1. No life, in some cases, though not in this, as leaf proves.

2. No nourishment-poorness of soil.

3. No concentration. Expending strength in producing wood and not fruit. Wasteful expenditure of energy.

4. No shelter. Exposed to the cutting east winds. Do you shelter in Him?

5. No careful scrutiny. Take time to be holy.

6. Uncongenial atmosphere. In some towns plum trees will not grow, nor some kinds of apple trees, because they are very sensitive to soot-laden atmosphere. (Cinema and theatre attenders.) Application.

1. Jesus hungers for fruitfulness, for goodness and usefulness. Shall we not seek to satisfy Him?

2. Remember, He will come for the last time, and then the curse will fall. The date of this miracle has an important bearing on its meaning and purpose. It occurred on the first week day morning of

the last week of Christ's ministry. A Father's Prayer. A little boy knelt down at his father's knee to say his bedtime prayers. After he had repeated his usual ones, the father suggested offering some other. After some hesitation, the wee one said: "Dear Jesus, when I grow up, make me big and strong like daddy." The words sank deep into the father's heart for he had gone astray, and very late that night, hours after, he prayed, "My Father, now that I am grown up, make me pure and sweet like my boy." And his prayer was answered.

TWO COMMANDS.

1. "Come down and sit," Isaiah 47:1 The Sinner's Position.

2. "Arise, shine," Isaiah 60:1 Following the Sinner's Salvation.

THREE QUESTIONS IN JEREMIAH.

1. "What have I done?" Jeremiah 8:6 2. "What wilt thou do?" Jeremiah 12:5 3. "What wilt thou say?" Jeremiah 13:21

"CALLED, HELD, KEPT, USED."

Isaiah 42:6, Isaiah 42:7.

Frances Ridley Havergal, the sweet poetess, whose lyrics have cheered so many weary pilgrims on their way to the Celestial City, found great comfort in these words in her last moments. On the last day of her life she asked a friend to read to her Isaiah 42. When the friend reached these verses, Miss Havergal stopped her, saying, "Called, held, kept, used," then she whispered, "Well, I will just go Home on that." And she did go Home on that, making the promise her triumphal chariot in which she went through the gates of pearl into the city of gold.

What spiritual insight she had in the meaning of these verses. With what skill she brought out the ideas enshrined therein. If these thoughts were a source of consolation to her when dying, they should be a fountain of encouragement to those who are living. Of course, literally, these words were spoken in reference to the Divine Servant-the Lord Jesus. But they have an application to the Lord's servants here and now. We, too, are the "called ones," as is emphasised so often in the New Testament.

I. Called-Salvation.

1. All are called, yet all have not responded to the call. Once in a Court of Law a very small man was pushing his way through a crowd. "What are you pushing for?" inquired some. "Why, I'm called," he replied. At once all made way for him.

2. The call to salvation is a call to holy living as text shows.

3. He has a perfect right to call us-we belong to Him. He has right as well as love on His side.

II. Held-Companionship.

1. What condescension on His part.

2. When we respond to His call, He will become our Friend. We shall then be admitted into His fellowship.

III. Kept-Preservation.

1. Kept, not always from temptation and trial: not always from sorrow and affliction, not from crosses and losses, but kept in and through, and sometimes by, all these processes of discipline.

2. On a tombstone there is simply name and one word, "Kept." What a glorious epitome of a life of faith and trust in the Saviour.

IV. Used-Service.

1. It is said that in Athens of old, there was a law to the effect that any man who had a lighted candle, and refused to allow another to light his at it, was punished with death.

2. If God has lighted our candle, let us light others. Let us allow others to be lightened by us.

THREE IMPORTANT POSITIONS.

Mark 3:3; 1 Kings 17:1; Php_4:1.

"Can your horse run fast?" was a question addressed to a boy by a gentleman as the former was holding the horse's head in a busy London street. He replied, "No, sir; he cannot run fast, but he can stand fast"; a great quality to be admired and commended in a horse. Yes, and in men and women. For these are difficult days, and there are many temptations to turn us from the paths that are right and good.

How can we stand fast in times of trial and temptation is an important question. For our comfort, let us notice that this is not the first position we should take. There are two prior ones, as follows:

I. Stand Forth (Mark 3:3). This is the sinner's position. The man in the story here was only conscious of shortcomings, and not moral leprosy, yet he needed the healing touch of the Saviour just as much as the leper. This is a lesson all very respectable sinners should take to heart. Yet, whether conscious of moral leprosy or not, we all need the Saviour. To receive His blessed healing ministries we must take the definite step to Him, standing forth even in the midst (see marginal note), that is, a public confession of our sinnership.

II. Stand Before (1 Kings 17:1). This is the position of the believer. Elijah was known as the man who stood before God. This position is suggestive of fellowship as well as service. We are saved that we might, yea, should, might we not say must stand before God; that is to say, that we might enter into blessed friendship with Him, and such a friendship bearing the fruit of happy and successful service.

III. Stand Fast (Php_4:1). This is the position of the loyal friend, loyal to all the interests of the Lord. This follows naturally the other two; in fact, the prior positions fit us for this one. Oh, to be true to Him at all times under all circumstances, and at all costs! THE POWER OF THE DIVINE TOUCH.

I. The Power of His Touch in Nature (Psalms 144:5).

II. The Ministry of His Touch in Grace:

1. Awakening,|1 Kings 19:5|

2. Healing,|Matthew 8:3|

3. Cleansing, |Isaiah 6:7|

4. Shrivelling the self-life, |Genesis 32:25|

5. Bestowing Holiness,|Exodus 29:37|

6. Giving a willingness to serve,|1 Samuel 10:26|

7. Bestowing power to speak, |Jeremiah 1:9|

8. Suffering, |Job 19:21|

PAYMENT OF VOWS.

Psalms 66:13, Psalms 66:14.

Introduction.

Returning Emigrant.

A ship on its voyage home was caught in a terrific storm, and it was feared she might founder.

One of the passengers who was returning to his native land with a fortune, was full of terror, and, kneeling before a statue of St. Christopher, kept loudly calling upon the saint in prayer, promising, if he would only interfere, and bring him safe to land, a wax taper the size of his statue in Paris.

"Look out what you promise," said a bystander; "although you sell off all your property, you can't pay for it."

"Hold your tongue, you fool," said the other; then lowering his voice, lest the saint should hear, said: "Do you suppose I mean what I say? If once I get to land, I won't give him a tallow candle."

Thus his vow was insincere and untruthful, made with no intention of being kept.

What about You? We are prepared to condemn severely such meanness and deceit. We cannot find words to express adequately one's abhorrence of such conduct. But what about you? Have you any unpaid vows? Not Deceit, but Forgetfulness. We can hardly think we all could answer "No." We do not think any of us are guilty of such deceit. When we made our vows we meant to keep them. But, alas, we so easily forget. You remember what vows you made to the Lord in that time of severe trial and sickness. Is it true that the debt is not yet paid, though years have passed away? If so, thank God you are still here in the body, and we trust you will say with David: "I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all His people."

Millennial Psalm.

1. This is one of the Millennial Psalms, and is worthy of notice. It is prophetic as well as commemorative.

2. He calls upon all to praise God.

3. He then foretells that they shall do so.

4. And having stirred up all people, and all God's people in particular, he stirs up himself. A Clue.

1. Psalms 66:2 gives us a clue to a great difficulty.

2. How is it that, after Christ's glorious Millennial reign, there can possibly be found men so evil as to combine in one last terrible revolt?

3. Here you have the clue-it is, as A.V. margin, only "a feigned obedience" rendered by many in the Millennium.

4. "Mighty power" alone changes not the enemy, and only causes him to yield feigned obedience.

5. It is only the greatness of His love that can change enemies into friends, and prompt unfeigned obedience.

Commemorative.

1. From Psalms 66:1-7 all people are invited to praise Him.

2. But from Psalms 66:8 there is a difference-for here God's people are invited so do so-"O bless our God" (Psalms 66:8).

3. The Psalmist remembers some national and personal deliverance.

4. It was David's own experience; and he failed not to keep his promise.

5. And may you and I emulate him in that virtue.

6. In dealing with this subject will you please first notice.

I. When the Vow was Made.

1. The vow was made when "I was in trouble."

2. This was no ordinary trouble. R.V. renders it as "distress."

3. There had been a grievous trouble-something that had greatly distressed him.

4. Whatever we have to say about the wisdom of making vows, we naturally incline to make them when in distress.

5. Making vows was a general habit in the Old Testament.

6. And in the New Testament, too, for did not Paul go to Jerusalem under a vow.

Why?

1. I fear the motives which prompts the making of vows are not always commendable.

2. Too often a vow is made as a bribe to purchase His interference and assistance.

3. Instead of as a thank-offering.

4. Oh, friends, let us take care of our motives!

II. Why Our Vows Should be Kept.

1. Self-respect. a. My first reason why we should keep our vows is self-respect. b. This is, of course, the lowest ground to take, but it is good to begin low. c. As persons of honour, we should scorn to make a solemn promise when in dire need, and then when the danger has passed forget all about it. d. Take a lesson from Carthage-the great Carthaginian, General Hamilcar, had a little son named Hannibal. When the boy was nine years old he begged very hard that his father should take him to battle with him. Hamilcar consented, but before they went, he made Hannibal place his hand on the altar of his idol god, and swear that he would make perpetual war with the Romans. Hannibal kept his word. He spent 36 years fighting them, and at the end of a life of 70 years he had not forgotten his vow.

2. Respect for God. a. This should be our second reason. b. We would not think so lightly of our vows if we really understood the view God takes of such. c. Do you know that God thought so seriously of vows that He devoted a whole chapter, and that the last one in the book of Leviticus, to that question. d. Jacob made a vow, the morning following the first night he spent as a fugitive from home. Twenty-one years afterward He appeared unto him, saying, "I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto Me" (Genesis 31:13). e. For 21 years God had treasured that vow. f. And all this so impressed the Jews that they considered a vow as a very sacred thing.

3. Fear of God. a. This is our third reason. b. Look at the view the Psalmist gives of God (Psalms 66:5, Psalms 66:3, Psalms 66:5 of Psalm 66). c. He did not think God was a being to be played with. d. He did not dream that he could treat God lightly. e. Do you wonder that the son of one who held such majestic views of God should write: "Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay" (Ecclesiastes 5:4-5).

II. How we May Keep our Vows. What is Easy. The giving of gifts, i.e., money, etc. is quite easy. But usually our vows are concerning betterment of life. And that is difficult.

Dr. Johnson in his "Prayers and Meditations" wrote: "I have now spent 55 years in resolving, having from the earliest time almost that I can remember, been forming schemes of a better life. I have done nothing. The need of doing therefore is pressing, since the time of doing is short. O God, grant me to resolve aright, and to keep my resolutions, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen."

Conclusion-A Warning.

Hardest Ice. In conclusion, let us remind you of a fact in natural science which conveys a very solemn lesson: The hardest ice is that which freezes after a thaw. The Thaw.

1. You know something of a thaw in your experience.

2. Your indifference to God and Divine things melted away when you were in trouble, when you were face to face with death, or disaster, or some terrible catastrophe.

3. And you would then give yourself to Him and your service.

4. Take care of freezing!

Most Difficult. The most difficult people to deal with are those who once laboured under deep spiritual concern, but have quenched all tender and yearning feelings for God.

What is Expected.

1. Remember Murray McCheyne's saying that "spared fig trees should bear much fruit."

2. Let your prayer be:

"Saviour, Thy dying love, Thou gavest me, Nor should I ought withhold, my Lord, from Thee; In love my soul would bow, my heart fulfil its vow; Some offering bring Thee now, something for Thee."

3. And you remember the Divine order, as pointed out by St. Paul in 2 Corinthians 8:5.

4. The Macedonian Christians gave liberally, but said he, they "first gave their own selves to the Lord."

5. This was what the Psalmist did, and so must we.

ROPES AND SACKCLOTH;

or, how to meet God.

1 Kings 20:32.

King Edward III, in 1327, besieged Calais, and when it was in extremity agreed to spare the place on condition that six of its principal citizens came out, clothed in sackcloth and halters round their necks. They were spared death only through the intercession of his wife, Queen Adelaide. We wonder if Edward III got his idea from the Bible? For there is a similar scene in 1 Kings 20. During the life of the Prophet Elijah, 5 years after Carmel, Benhadad, King of Syria, assisted by 32 Kings, came against Israel. Ahab was frightened, and agreed to pay an indemnity to save himself and people. But Benhadad went too far, and God delivered him into the hand of Ahab, a great slaughter following. Now without an army, in a strange land, he was in a dreadful position. Then his advisers spake.

"We have heard that the Kings of Israel are merciful Kings," said they, and they decided to throw themselves on his mercy. Clothing themselves with sackcloth, and with ropes around their necks, a deputation thus waited upon the King, and succeeded in securing life and liberty. On the lonely Isle of Patmos, which is only 15 miles in circumference, lived a hermit. Asked why he was living in such seclusion, he replied: "Some day I have to meet God. I am preparing for that day." His desire for readiness is commendable, but not the mode of preparation. The best preparation to meet God up in the Better Land is to meet Him down here. "There will I meet with you," said God to Moses, referring to the Ark with its blood-sprinkled Mercy Seat. God has His meeting-place, and that is the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Reading this story, note:

I. Their Peril. They were enemies, and had taken up arms against Israel. We are rebels to God both by birth and choice. "He that is not with Me, is against Me," is the Word of the Lord.

II. Their Hope. They heard of the mercy of Israel, whom they had come up to fight. Is not our God merciful? Mercy is one of His moral attributes. We have a merciful God.

III. Their Action.

1. Clothed themselves with sackcloth-emblem of sorrow-our grief on account of our sins.

2. Put ropes around their necks-their confession by deed that they were worthy of death.

3. Their confession by word of mouth, and plea for mercy.

IV. Their Salvation.

1. Pardon. "Come up into the chariot."

2. Friendship. Treated as friends and not as enemies.

3. Restoration. Restored him back to his house and friends and to his former possessions. We gain in Christ more than we lost in Adam.

4. Covenant. See Hebrews 8:10-13. THE NEED OF THOUGHT.

Isaiah 1:3.

Thoughtfulness.

1. How true are the words of Hood, the poet: "But evil is wrought by want of thought as well as want of heart."

2. Parents know how true this is. Much of the pain and sorrow they suffer through the actions of their children is not for want of heart, so much as want of thought.

3. "So-and-so is most inconsiderate," we often say. It is sheer thoughtlessness which is the cause of much of life's heartaches and pains.

4. Note God's plaintive lament in Isaiah 1:3. Even the ox and ass were more considerate than Israel. God had fed and cared for Israel, yet they did not love and care for Him, and all this was the result of thoughtlessness. Even the very animals are more grateful to us for what we give than we are to God for what He gives.

5. Oh, we sometimes say, "Oh, if people would only think!" Note God's appeal for thought in connection with the forgiveness of sins in Isaiah 1:18.

6. This is not a thinking age.

7. But what must I consider? Five things.

I. "When I consider Thy Heavens" (Psalms 8:3).

1. The study of the Heavens was the favourite occupation of the Eastern shepherds.

2. It was in the East the science of Astronomy had its origin.

3. Do you ever consider the Heavens? Let us look up a little oftener.

4. David, the writer of this Psalm, had been a shepherd, and often as he kept his father's sheep he considered the Heavens. What was the result of his meditation? a. Their greatness makes man look so small and mean. And yet nowhere is God stated to love the stars, but man. Man is of more value than many stars or suns. b. The calmness of their revolutions shame the fussiness and

passion of men. It is Longfellow who speaks of a star as:

"So still and saintlike,

No fret and worry, and anger and wrath." c. Their order shames our disorder. They obey the command of God. Here there is nought but strife, discord, disobedience. Thus I get little encouragement from that study.

II. "Consider the Lilies of the Field" (Matthew 6:28).

1. An old man called flowers "God's smiles." How often He smiles then! The stars are the flowers of the skies, and flowers are the stars of the earth.

2. As I consider the lilies, I notice their purity and beauty, but that only condemns my impurity and ugliness.

III. "Consider the Ravens." God feedeth them (Luke 12:24).

1. Remember they are unclean. Surely God will do naught for them! Oh, wonder of wonders, He cares for ravens!

2. A PLACE WAS FOUND FOR THE RAVENS, EVEN IN THE

Ark, and God used them as "His servants to feed Elijah. I am like a raven-unclean-but God has a thought for me, and has made provision for the supplying of my complex needs.

IV. "For Consider Him" (Hebrews 12:3).

1. What a subject for study! You can never exhaust this subject.

2. His greatness, calmness, obedience, purity, beauty, entrance me. The beauty and order and greatness of the stars and hills fade into insignificance.

3. But as I consider His death, I find it is life to me.

V. Let us consider one Another to Provoke (Hebrews 10:24).

1. Oh, yes, we are worth considering. There is something to admire.

2. But why? To provoke one another-to arouse one another to love and good works.

"BUT THOU."

Psalms 3:3.

"But Thou."

1. Ah, that makes all the difference!

2. It reminds one of a gloomy day-leaden sky, nothing but a dreary drab.

3. All of a sudden there is a rift in the dull, heavy clouds, a patch of blue sky is seen and the sun streams through.

4. What a sullen sky spread itself over the Psalmist. All was darkness.

5. "But Thou." Ah, that made all the difference. It was that fact that altered the whole situation.

6. Oh, let us never forget that, whoever we lose, and whoever leaves us, we still have God.

7. We do not wonder that this Psalm was used by the French Protestants during persecution times as a signal for the stationing of sentinels to keep watch against sudden attack.

8. It not only acted as a signal, but a wholesome reminder of their Divine Protector and Protection.

Results of Remembrance of the Lord.

1. Earnest and successful prayer (Psalms 3:4).

2. Restfulness (Psalms 3:5).

3. Hopefulness (Psalms 3:6) and courage.

4. Importunity. THE VALUE OF AWE.

Psalms 4:4.

Strange.

1. What a strange exhortation to come immediately after the exulting claim to be the Lord's own.

2. "Awe!" Not fear or reverence. Awe is a holy dread, a reverential fear.

3. But there is a most fruitful connection between the two. The World and Awe.

1. Psalms 4:2, lying and falsehood, are two fruits of a lack of awe.

2. What strikes one more than anything else when looking at the mass of men and women of to-day is the utter absence of awe. a. There is no awe of life. Life is not treated with solemnity and reverence. There is levity and frivolity. b. There is no awe of death. Jesus came to take away the fear, but not awe of death, e.g., How lightly people take their own lives. c. There is no awe of God. If John 3:16 takes away the awful fear, it ought to make all the inhabitants of the earth stand in awe of Him. We should not be afraid of God; we should be in awe of Him. The Church and Awe.

1. But we must not dream that awe is lost only in the thought and life of the worldling.

2. There is an absence of awe even amongst Christians.

3. Why, it is never or seldom spoken of in our pulpits!

4. What a loss that means.

One has said that the world that has banished awe has banished wholesome laughter. The ages that have known most of religious awe are the ages from which have come the most lyrical notes of Christian joy. The older ages lived and breathed and rejoiced in God amidst their dark theologies. Bernard had stern stupendous ideas of the Deity, and yet it was he who sang, "Jesus, the very thought of Thee." Samuel Rutherford was clasped in all the rigours of a Calvinism which touches the very springs of awe in the human breast, and yet from him came the love letters of Christianity.

Note the connection of Verses 3 and 4.

1. Though I am His possession, I must not take liberties with Him; I must be respectful and reverential.

2. And it means, too, that such a fact of God setting sinners apart for Himself is awe-inspiring.

Why this Strange Union of Awe and Sin?

1. Awe is not everything.

2. The Hindus treat cruelly the cattle they worship.

3. And there is One who can keep us from sin.

ONLY GOOD, THE LIGHT OF HIS COUNTENANCE.

Psalms 4:6.

The clamour of many is after the supreme good. Here we have the many asking an important question. It is the voice of the worldling. Many replies have been given and tried, but ail to no purpose. What about the Lord's own dear children? They, too, sometimes ask the same question, only in the very next breath they own up to the real source of all good: "Lift Thou up upon us a banner as the light of Thy countenance" (Edersheim). What is the meaning of this? It means that the Psalmist was not so much seeking for good as the Good One; not good in the abstract, but good in the Person; and this is only another way of saying, as he does elsewhere: "I have no good beyond Thee" (Psalms 16:2., R.V.). That is to say, our Heaven is the consciousness of His smile.

"The light of His countenance," meaning the Lord's smile and benediction. The Lord taught Israel it was the best thing Aaron and the priests could ask for Israel (Numbers 6:26). This means:

I. Life. For "In the light of the King's countenance is life" (Proverbs 16:15).

II. Joy. For "Thou hast made me exceeding glad with Thy countenance" (Psalms 21:6). Quoted "Full of joy" in Acts 2:28.

III. Good. All good. What a word is Good! All that that word stands for, and more, we have in Christ.

OVERTAKEN BY BLESSINGS.

Deuteronomy 28:2.

What a great difference there is between blessings following and overtaking us! It is one thing to follow a person, but quite another to catch up with them. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me." Yes, that is good, but will they overtake me? The Psalmist knew what it was to be overtaken with blessings, for he could say: "Blessed be the Lord who daily loadeth us with blessings." The chariot of God's gracious benevolence had daily caught up with him, discharging its blessings.

If His blessings are to overtake us, studying this verse and context, we note that certain conditions must be kept.

I. Redeemed Ones only are overtaken with blessings. Israel were in that happy position and condition, being the redeemed of the Lord. If we have not yet come under the shadow of the Cross of Christ, and under the safety of the Sprinkling of Blood, the Avenger of Blood is after us; we are bidden to flee to our Refuge "lest the avenger of blood overtake the slayer" (Deuteronomy 19:6). Remember that later on in this chapter we read of curses following and overtaking the sinner. Dread, dread business!

II. Learners. Only those who hearken diligently to the Lord and His message are overtaken with blessings. Hearken to the Voice of the Lord as we have it in the Word of God, for the Holy Spirit will make the Written Word a living Voice in our hearts.

III. Obedient Ones. The overtaken ones must be "observers of the law of God." You know what an observer is? Take a walk in an Art Gallery, and watch the art expert gazing at the works of art, and you will learn what observing is. Watch a mother looking at her firstborn sleeping in his cradle, and you learn what, observation really is.

IV. Serving Ones. Only they who "do" are overtaken by blessings. It is not sufficient to become acquainted with His will; we must- "Trust and obey, for there's no other way To be happy in Jesus, than to trust and obey." In another place the Psalmist could say, "My soul followeth hard after Thee." Is that your attitude? Then you will catch up with Him, for He will suddenly reveal Himself to you. THE VALUE OF SOLILOQUY.

Psalms 4:4.

Most Unusual.

1. This is a most unusual exhortation.

2. It is advice to practice the art of soliloquy.

3. Generally the Bible urges us to commune with the Lord.

4. One reason why we do not talk to ourselves much is because we do not live lonely lives. To the Worldling.

1. Perhaps it was addressed to the worldling 2. The sinner must commune with his own heart before he can hope to commune with the Lord. To Christian.

1. It is a similar exhortation to that in 2 Corinthians 13:5.

2. Here we who profess to be Christians are exhorted to examine, criticise ourselves, and not another. To Workers. Cecil, in his "Advice to Ministers," said to a young minister: "A man who talks to himself will find out what suits the heart of man." To Those who have a Grievance.

1. Strange alternative rendering in margin of R.V., viz., "Be ye angry, and sin not."

2. It is so rendered in the Septuagint, and quoted as such in Ephesians 4:26.

3. There is a sinless anger, because it is an anger against nothing but what is sin.

4. It is an anger created by the Holy Ghost.

5. An anger that is not hasty.

6. An anger that is not a mere emotion, but a conviction.

7. An anger that can stand being slept upon.

8. Really it is a word against rashness.

DESIRING AND SEEKING.

Psalms 27:4

Introduction.

1. Luther remarked that the Bible has hands to grip, eyes to see, feet to run.

2. Not so fanciful as some suppose.

3. The Bible not only was, but is, inspired.

4. Many a text starts forth and grips us.

I. Longing. The greatness of our desires is one proof of our greatness.

1. The animals are creatures of but few desires.

2. The desires the Psalmist refers to were concerning the Lord.

II. Seeking. It is not sufficient to desire without seeking. "That will I seek after."

III. Expecting. Too often we seek for things and do not expect them. R .V., "One thing have I asked of the Lord."

IV. Remembering. One reason why we do not look out for answers is because we ask for so many things that we forget what we have asked. He could say, "One thing have I desired of the Lord."

V. Right Desire. What one thing did he desire? To abide in the house of the Lord constantly. Do we love the sanctuary as much as that?

VI. Reason. Why he wished to abide constantly in God's House.

1. To behold the beauty of the Lord.

2. To commune with the Lord.

3. To inquire of the Lord.

"Inquire"-ask Him to explain the difficult things of His Word and Providence.

Conclusion.

1. We can abide in His Presence, without abiding constantly in any earthly house or building.

2. We can behold the beauty of the Lord. "Unto you that believe He is precious."

3. We can commune and inquire of the Lord. A DIVINE BED-MAKER.

Psalms 41:3.

A poor young Christian girl, an invalid through the drunken habits of father, mother, and brother, was very much neglected. Sometimes her bed was not made for six weeks. One day her brother came home almost sober, when she prevailed upon him to make her bed. This he did so unskilfully that she was placed at great discomfort. She sorrowfully picked up her "Daily Light," and was much comforted by reading, "Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness." She thus was assured that the Lord knew all about her, and she was rested. The wonder and beauty of the Bible is that it conveys to us, in simple vet suitable language, its wonderfully deep teaching. This figure of speech conveys several suggestive lessons.

I. What a mercy that we have a bed to make! Let us not forget this as one of our mercies for which to thank God. "He had not where to lay His head."

II He is with us, else how could He make our bed? Satan is a master of strategy, and knows when and how to attack us. When we are weak and ill, he simply swoops down upon us, and one of his master strikes is to try and persuade us that the Lord has forgotten and forsaken us. But how can He? He has promised never to leave us. And He always keeps His word. How could He make our bed unless He is with us?

III. He is with us for a purpose. Not merely to while away the time, but to do something very definite for us. His visits to this earth were always for very specific reasons and missions. He came not merely to sympathise, but to relieve us.

IV. He is with us to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. How weak and helpless are we when ill, and how unable to make our bed. How weak and helpless we are by nature, and how utterly unable to save ourselves. But He is our Saviour, and will accomplish for us what we cannot do; and how tenderly, graciously, and skilfully He will make our bed.

V. He will do for us what we do not deserve. Sometimes good turns are done to and for us because we have rendered good service to our kind friend. But what have we done for Him? We are, by nature, His enemies by wicked works.

VI. He will make us comfortable and happy, for that surely is the thought conveyed by this statement concerning His bed-making. He will give us rest from an accusing conscience through the Precious Blood and from corroding care. Dr. Payson when racked with pain, exclaimed, "I have great pain; yet I have great peace." There are seven blessings in this Psalm for those who trust in the Lord: 1st, Deliverance in trouble (Psalms 41:5); 2nd, Preservation; 3rd, Length of days; 4th, Deliverance for body; 5th, Prosperity; 6th, Strength when most needed; 7th, Bed, comfort in time of sickness. THE SECRET OF LIFE AND BEAUTY.

Numbers 17:8.

This Scripture is one of the Old Testament portions for Church services. It is a strange chapter, yet yields helpful lessons. It points out the secret of spring in our souls. Whilst Israel were in the wilderness, owing to jealousy, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram raised insurrection. In spite of awful judgment it was not quelled. God resorted to a method that proved successful, the placing and testing of rods.

Lesson: When in trouble, you do as Moses did. Leave the difficulty in His hand, and He will settle the matter. The rods were, of course, the Eastern walking sticks. What a miracle! you say. Yes, but such a miracle takes place in every Christian soul. See God's will for Aaron's rod. But it has no life.

I. Lifeless. My soul is like that rod: dead and lifeless owing to severance from God by the knife of sin.

1. Though not at all objectionable.

2. Though stripped of all unpleasant evidences of death.

3. Though had been used to do great things.

II. Living. My soul can become like Aaron's, rod, provided I place myself where God can work.

The place of life-giving was the place where there was evidence of life given, i.e., before the Ark, and on its lid, known as Mercy Seat, blood was sprinkled.

Oh, get down before the Cross of Jesus! Don't speculate as to how the Spirit of God will work, but lay yourself down at His feet. And just place yourself as you are, as Moses placed the rods. With this difference, all, not one in twelve, who put themselves down at His feet will have life given to them. Almond tree flowers in January and bears fruit in April. This did all in one night.

III. Fruitbearing. My soul can become as this rod, not only having life, but also beauty and fruit.

All true Christians have life. All have not beauty of character and fruitfulness of service. "Glorious in holiness." The beauty of holiness."

IV. Honoured. Solemn fact-only the rod that had brought forth buds, blossom and fruit, was honoured by having a permanent place before His presence.

Fruit decides character, and character decides destiny.

"THY WORDS WERE FOUND."

Jeremiah 15:16.

Observe that in this verse we have both "words" and "Word." In words most certainly we have the written Word, which we now know as the Bible; but surely in Word we have the Living Word, the Lord Jesus. The Living Word, the Lord Jesus, is found in the Written Word, the Bible. Note what we find in this verse:

I. Inspiration-"Thy Words."

II. Searching-"Found."

III. Satisfaction-"Eat them."

IV. Rejoicing-"The Joy."

V. Privilege-"I am called."

VI. Separation-"I sat not" (Jeremiah 15:17).

VII. Testimony-"I sat alone" (Jeremiah 15:17).

LED BY THE LORD.

Psalms 5:8.

Here we have the Psalmist's prayer for guidance. This is a familiar expression in the Psalms. As a man of affairs, he was only too conscious of the fact that it is not in man to direct successfully his own steps. Pondering on this request for guidance, four questions suggest themselves.

I. Why?

1. Because of the Enemy. Like the Psalmist, we are surrounded by the enemies of the King of kings. Of those there are: a. "Those which observe me" (A.V., margin), a very large class indeed. Then there are: b. "Them that lie in wait for me," as is suggested by the margin of the R.V.

2. Because of my Ignorance and Helplessness. We are just as weak and helpless as a child; and just as silly as sheep.

3. Because of His Reputation. "For Thy Name's sake lead me and guide me" (Psalms 31:3).

II. How?

1. He leads us Himself, and does not leave us merely to angels.

2. He does it by His Word and His Spirit: "O send out Thy light and Thy truth, let them lead me" (Psalms 43:3).

III. Where?

1. "Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I" (Psalms 61:2). We must first be led to Himself, who is the Rock here referred to.

2. "He leadeth me beside the still Waters," that is, the waters of quietness (Psalm 23). He gives quietness and rest.

3. "So He led them through the depths" (Psalms 106:9).

4. "To Him which led His people through the wilderness," thanks must be given (Psalms 136:16).

5. In the paths of righteousness (Psa. 23).

IV. When?

1. In day time and night. "In the day time also He led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire" (Psalms 78:14).

2. Wherever I go on sea or land. "If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me" (Psalms 139:8-9).

"HE LEADETH ME."

Psalms 23:2.

Introduction.

Doing Without.

The three words of our text were brought to mind by a little scene witnessed. A little child was trying to walk, the mother was tenderly watching, and held out her hand, but the child wanted to walk alone, and waved her aside. Said the mother: "She thinks she can do without me."

Independence is good in some things. It was right and proper that the wee girlie should try to walk alone. But independence in spiritual things is disastrous. He Himself says: "Without Me ye can do nothing." What disasters often fall upon Alpine climbers who attempt to scale the heights without a guide, and without safe company. God has a large family, yet none able to walk alone.

Value of a Guide. To have a guide means not only to make sure of life, but to make the best of life. We see more of London in a week than many do in a month if we have with us a friend thoroughly acquainted with it.

"He"-"Me."

1. What a blessed companionship!

2. He, the Good Shepherd, not only gave His life for the sheep, but He gives His life to His sheep, and lives His life for His sheep.

3. "He leadeth me." Have you discovered your need of a Guide as well as Saviour? But Where? Where does He lead?

I. He Leads to Repentance. "The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance" (Romans 2:4).

II. He Leads to Life. "Narrow is the way that leadeth to life" (Matthew 7:14).

III. He Leadeth to Transfiguration (Mark 9:2).

1. "After six days Jesus taketh with Him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and He was transfigured before them."

2. Jesus was transfigured.

3. And they were never the same afterwards.

4. If He is made real to us, and we behold His beauty, we are spoiled for the world.

IV. He Leads to Hidden Truths and Pleasant Surprises (Isaiah 42:16). Three thoughts here.

1. He will guide through difficult paths. He will 2. Guide to fresh discovery of truths. And He will 3. Guide to pleasant surprises.

SEVEN CLASSES IN THE DISCIPLES' PRAYER.

Matthew 6:9-15.

I. As Children, when we say, "Our Father."

II. As Worshippers, when we say, "Hallowed be Thy Name."

III. As Subjects, when we say, "Thy kingdom come."

IV. As Servants, when we say, "Thy will be done."

V. As Suppliants, when we say, "Give us this day," etc.

VI. As Confessors, when we say, "Forgive us," etc.

VII. As Dependents, when we say, "Deliver us," etc.

Or, as some one has put it:

I. Our Position, a son adopted, "Our Father."

II. Our Fitness, a worshipper sanctified, "Hallowed."

III. Our Allegiance, a citizen, "Thy kingdom."

IV. Our Usefulness, a servant employed, "Thy will be done."

V. Our Provision, a beggar fed, "Give us this day."

VI. Our Pardon, a sinner absolved, "Forgive us our debts."

VII. Our Safety, a pilgrim guided, "Lead us not into temptation."

VIII. Our Victory, a soldier succoured, "Deliver us from all evil."

"THEY LEFT HIM AND WENT THEIR WAY"

Mark 12:12.

"If the cap fits put it on," we say. Yes, we generally do, but the question is, how do we put it on? The Scribes and Pharisees felt our Lord's message was for them; they put the cap on, and sought to slay our Lord. But they were unable to lay hold on Him, and then we read, "They left Him and went their way." Mark, "their way," not the Lord's way. There is much in the Word of God about ways. There are but two ways-we are either on one or the other.

I. Own Way (Isaiah 53:6).

1. It is a Broad Way (Matthew 7:13). In the cities the broad road is generally the best. Not so in the things of the soul. This appears to be the best, but it leads to ruin.

2. It is a Hard Way (Proverbs 13:15). "The way of transgressers is hard." No doubt easy for a time, but "hard" further on.

3. It is a Deceptive Way (Proverbs 16:25). Paul says in Romans 3:16 : "Destruction and misery are in their ways." Yes, in theirs, but not in God's way.

II. God's Way. "Expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly" (Acts 18:26), was the mission of Aquila and Priscilla, so far as Apollos was concerned.

1. It is the Way of Salvation (Acts 16:17).

2. It is the Way of Righteousness (Matthew 21:32). "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness" (Psa. 23).

3. It is the Way of Peace (Luke 1:79). "My foot hath held his steps."

Application.

Can you say with Job, "His way have I kept and not declined" (Job 23:11)? If not, will you say Isaiah 2:3 : "Come. . . and He will teach us of His ways." To walk in "His way" we must "Come to Him." The reason they "went their ways" was because they left Him. Cling to Him at all costs.

CLEANNESS.

Job 17:9.

A very remarkable thing took place in a home some time ago. The youngest child, a boy of ten years, suddenly became solicitous about the cleanness of his hands. Each time he entered the house, he made a bee-line for the tap. The family noticed that he was not anxious about the cleanness of his neck and face, but only his hands, for the "tide-mark" on his neck remained. His elder brother inquired of him the reason for this unusual behaviour, to which he replied: "I want to be strong." "But what has the tap and the washing of your hands to do with strength?" he further inquired. "Well, it's in the Bible," said the boy, and then he quoted the above verse. He had to be told that there was much else beside hands and bodies that required cleansing. That the Bible speaks of:

I. A Clean Conscience. "Purge your conscience" (Hebrews 9:14).

II. A Clean Heart. "Create in me a clean heart, O God" (Psalms 51:10).

III. A Clean Mouth. For when God saves a person He captures the tongue, cleansing the mouth from obscenity and blasphemy, from filthy speaking, and improper jesting. Study the following Scriptures: Ephesians 5:4; James 5:12. A question is: "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" (Job 14:4). No one, but the Lord Jesus. He can.

STANDING IN THE WAY OF SINNERS.

Psalms 1:1.

We clearly see the reason why we should not walk in the counsel of the ungodly by a study of the context. But we must go further. Here we are told not to stand in the way of sinners.

I. Standing in the Way with Sinners. Some do this to get them to Christ, and that is right. But the idea here is that of making acquaintances and friends and confidents of the ungodly. Walking out with them. This we must not do. Instead, make friends with God's children.

II. Standing in the Sinner's Way and Not God's Way. This is a further thought. We should not travel in the way of the ungodly. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but---." That is not the way we must go.

III. Standing in the Way of Sinners Coming to Christ. Hindering sinners coming to Christ. What a tragedy! How can we be hindrances? We can do so by being very bad samples. Bad samples do

not commend the goods. No commercial traveller would ever be guilty of such conduct. Don't be thankful for new light and not walk in it. What a hindrance is an inconsistent life.

SITTING IN THE SEAT OF THE SCORNFUL

Psalms 1:1.

This is the last step in wickedness.

Sin is Progressive. I begin by walking in the counsel of the ungodly. Then I am found in the way of sinners. At last I am sitting in seat of scornful. The Three Degrees of Sinfulness.

1. Simply ungodly-not godlike-sin by not doing.

2. Then sinners-those who step over-sin by action.

3. Then scornful-the contemplation-sin by ridiculing. The Last State is Worst. That one who turns sacred things into ridicule has got as low as he can possibly get. He is a murderer. George M'Donald says: "Contempt is murder committed by the intellect, as hatred is murder committed by the heart." The Seat of the Joker in Holy Things is as bad as the seat of the scornful. Never use the Word of God irreverently.

See the Connection of Scornful with the delight in the Word of God. Note Jeremiah 15:17. Who was this one who sat not in the assembly of mockers? One who finds God's Word the joy and rejoicing of his heart.

Questions.

1. Do you delight in the Word of God?

2. Do you meditate upon it day and night?

3. Is it the joy and rejoicing of your heart? A TONIC FOR THE FEARFUL.

Psalms 2:4.

I. Rightly considered, these verses form a tonic for the fearful.

II. How concerned we get when Divine Truth is attacked.

1. See how the Lord takes it, also Psalms 37:13 and Psalms 59:8.

2. Laughs at these efforts, as father laughs at the efforts of his little son to get something out of a closed hand.

3. The inspired interpretation of this is Acts 4:25-28, which asserts its fulfilment in the crucifixion.

4. It will be true of the efforts during the dark days to come prior to the ushering in of the Millennium.

III. How fearful we become when we hear of wars and rumours of wars. But listen to Luke 21:28. Don't hang your head down, but do as the Lord bids.

LIFE AS A STORY.

Psalms 90:9.

This is the oldest Psalm in the Bible, and was composed by Moses during the forty years' wandering in the wilderness. There is much that we could with profit dwell upon, but at the moment fix your attention upon Psalms 90:9, as above. Life is likened to a tale that is told, not read. Those were the days when reading matter was not as common or plentiful as to-day. Consequently there were quite a number of men who were professional storytellers. These were always welcomed in military camps and in towns and villages. The metaphor is a simple yet suggestive one.

I. There are long tales and short ones, so there are long lives and there are very short ones. Of course we cannot always measure life by years, as we can measure a story by pages or inches. It is what we put into life that counts. We must look upon life as a measure to be filled and not as a goblet to be drained. It is what we put into our days and into our years that will decide the value of the life lived.

II. There are dull tales, and there are very interesting ones, so there are lives that are very hum-drum, very sober and unattractive; whereas there are lives full of change and very exciting. Of course tastes differ, and what seems drab and uninteresting to some is considered as quite opposite by others.

III. There are bad tales and there are good ones, so there are lives that are really bad, exerting a baneful influence, whereas there are lives that are boons and blessings to all. Only one life to live, and how most of us long to be as useful and helpful as possible.

IV. There are tales that have a glorious mission, whereas there are others that are constantly producing nothing but evil; so there are lives just like that. We can think of books that have produced great and beneficial results, such as "Uncle Tom's Cabin," which contributed very largely to opening the eyes of the world to the awfulness of slavery, etc., etc.

V. How can my life be as a good and beneficial tale? There are three conditions.

1. Must have the Right Author. It takes a genius to produce a really great tale, one that will live on and on for generations. Only the Lord Jesus Christ can produce a life that is as a good, useful, and helpful tale. We must be His workmanship. We cannot do this ourselves. We must resign ourselves to His gracious and marvellous creative skill.

2. Must have the Right Hero. The quality of the book can be decided, and indeed hangs upon the quality of its hero. If Christ is the pivot and centre of our lives then all is well.

3. Must have the Right Object. A book without an object is likely to be a weak and watery one, a very flat and dull one. What is the object of your life? Are you doing everything for the glory of God? Remember the famous snippet from a great Catechism: "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever." What a great object is this! What kind of a tale is your life telling? THE THREE B's.

I. Bag. For my sins (Job 14:17). When reading this verse there came into mind a practice at sea-side towns of putting dogs and cats that have been condemned, into a bag, with weights, tied, and then cast into the river or sea. This the Lord does, in figure, with sins.

II. Book. For My Name (Psalms 139:16; Php_4:3). What a great privilege to have our names written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

III. Bottle. For our Tears (Psalms 56:8). It was an Egyptian custom at funerals, for mourners to have handed to them a sponge or cloth to wipe their tears, which were wrung out into a tear bottle, and this was placed in the tomb. God takes notice of all our tears.

He knows. He loves. He cares Nothing this truth can dim.

ONE THING.

I. One Thing Lacking: The inclusiveness of the Lord's claims (Mark 10:21).

II. One Thing Needful. The blessedness of giving the Lord our trust, love and attention (Luke 10:42).

III. One Thing Done. The value of definiteness and concentration upon the things of God (Php_3:13).

BENJAMIN: AN OLD TESTAMENT PICTURE OF SALVATION.

Genesis 43 and 44.

1. Object of his father's special love. God loves us.

2. Bore unconsciously on his journey the evidence of his guilt. Our fallen nature, which we bear, is evidence of our fallen and guilty condition (Genesis 44:2).

3. The evidence of his guilt not placed there by himself. We inherit ours.

4. Separated temporarily from his father, but in danger of that separation becoming permanent. That is our dreadful condition.

5. A Surety provided before the need arose (Genesis 43:9). So with us.

6. That surety was bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. A picture of the reality and oneness of the Lord Jesus Christ with us in our humanity.

7. Was delivered through the intercession of that surety (Genesis 44:16-34).

8. The delivered one cleaves to the deliverer, for the tribe of Benjamin ever clave to Judah. A picture of the eternal gratitude of the delivered to their Deliverer.

Note. "Ye shall not see my face except," etc. (Genesis 43:3). We cannot see the face of God and live, if out of Christ. God out of Christ is unintelligible, and a fear and dread. God out of Christ is a consuming fire.

TWO ESTIMATES OF THE ONE LIFE.

Genesis 47:9; Genesis 48:15.

These two estimates differ greatly. The first is doleful. There is a spirit of melancholy about it. It is a complaint. How illogical! If the days were evil, was it not a good thing they were but few? The secret is just this, in the former there is nothing about God. It is all Jacob. In the latter we notice a

great deal more about God than about Jacob.

I. All Jacob (Genesis 47:9). God left out.

1. Doleful.

2. Complaining.

3. Unreasonable.

4. Illogical.

II. All God (Genesis 48:15). "The God who pastured me. ... the Angel which hath redeemed me" (R.V.).

1. Triumphant.

2. Grateful.

3. Sensible.

4. Logical. THE PLAN OF SALVATION, SHOWING THE TRINITY OF DIVINE LOVE IN ACTION.

God is|

A Just God|A Holy God|

Who cannot clear the guilty.|Who cannot associate with the impure.|

But we are|

Guilty.|Impure.|

Therefore to Stand|

In the Judgment.|In the Presence Chamber.|

We need to be|

Justified. i.e., pronounced innocent.|Sanctified. i.e., made holy.|

This Can only be done by|

The Righteousness of Christ imputed to us.|The Holiness of Christ imparted to us.|

Which is|

Christ's Work for Us. Passive and Active. Suffering and Serving|Christ's Work in Us. By the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit.|

1. The originating cause is the love of God the Father.

2. The Procuring cause is the merit of Christ the Son.

3. The efficient cause is the operation of the Holy Ghost.

4. The instrumental cause is the Word of God.

5. The receptive cause is the faith of man. The Result.

We are|

Justified. 1. From all guilt. 2. One act. 3. Perfect on believing.|Sanctified. 1. In the whole man. 2. A progressive act. 3. Perfect only above.|

Amen.

By an unknown author. (Copied from the Latin by the late Canon Stuart, of Canterbury. Preserved by the author of this volume in his pocket Bible for thirty years).

THREE TREES.

I. The Tree of Knowledge. Reminding us of man's sin and ruin (Genesis 2:17).

II. The Tree of Calvary. Telling us of man's redemption (Acts 10:39; Acts 5:30; 1 Peter 2:24).

III. The Tree of Life. Speaking to us of man's full regeneration (Genesis 2:9; Revelation 2:7; Revelation 22:2).

FOUR ACTIONS AND POSITIONS CONNECTED WITH TREES.

I. Adam Behind the Tree. Ruin. (Genesis 3:8).

II. Jesus on a Tree. Substitution (Acts 10:39).

III. Nathaniel Under a Tree. Discovery (John 1:48).

IV. Zacchaeus up a Tree. Appropriation (Luke 19:4).

WALKING.

I. Before God: Divine Inspection (Genesis 17:1).

II. With God: Divine Companionship (Genesis 5:22).

III. After God: Divine Leadership (Deuteronomy 13:4).

IV. In God: Divine Indwelling (Colossians 2:6). And the last includes all the others. THE MAGNET. The labour-saving devices in works and workshops are simply amazing. What specially took my fancy when visiting Iron and Steel Works at my native town after years of absence was the Magnetic Crane. It was just then engaged in unloading and removing a truck-load of scrap. Formerly this all had to be done by hand, a slow and laborious job. Now it was done quickly and ex-peditiously by this Magnetic Crane. Lowering an arm like a big stump, or as another has likened it, as resembling an elephant's foot, the current was switched on, when the metal at once clung to it. Drawing it up, the crane removed itself to the desired place, whereupon the current was switched off, when down fell the metal scraps. It was done so quickly, and in such a wholesale fashion that one simply marvelled. Our magnet is the Lord: "Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be" (Genesis 49:10). A study of the word "draw" in the Word enables us to see the varied aspects of His attractiveness, and the various methods and results He has in drawing us.

I. By Teaching (John 12:32). "No man can come to Me except the Father. . . draw him." But do not pause; go on reading. Never separate John 12:44 and John 12:45. The significance of John 12:45 is that it shows how the Father is seeking to draw men to His Son, viz., by the teaching of the prophetical books and other books of the Bible, and by the ministry of the Word to-day.

II. By Sacrifice (John 12:32). Observe that the drawing follows the lifting up. The great attractiveness in the New Testament story is the story of the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ. The great magnet is not only the Cross, nor the Gospel story, but the Lord Jesus Christ Himself on and through the Cross and in the Gospel story.

1. Suffering always appeals to our hearts.

2. Suffering for the sake of others particularly moves us.

3. Personal testimony of the effect of the story of the Cross upon us always moves us.

III. By His Beauty (Son_1:4). The Bride is taken up with the beauty of the Bridegroom. And she finds in it a great source of attraction. Observe the change from the singular to the plural. "Draw me... we will run after Thee." That means that when He draws me to Himself, others benefit, others are influenced for good through me.

IV. By His Kind and Loving Providences (Jeremiah 31:3).

V. By and Through His Own Dear Children and Disciples. One of the interesting incidents of days long since past, was to persuade some workman in connection with the electric generating plant at the Iron Works to take an ordinary pocket knife and have it magnetised, so that it became, at anyrate for a time, a magnet. Just ordinary bits of metal, but what a change! And how this has come to ones mind as we have thought of methods the Lord has in drawing men and women to Himself. He can so fill us with Himself that we, though humble folk, both on account of His life in us, and the wonderful story of His grace we have to tell, become magnets for Him. Oh, Christian workers, ever lift Christ up! Speak of His death, and not merely of His life. You demagnetise Christianity, as all history shows, if you strike out the atoning death on the Cross.

VI. By a Shout (1 Thessalonians 4:16). This is quite future. Dr. Pettingill in the American Sunday School Times, recently described an experience with a magnetic crane which greatly interested me, as I had also seen the crane. "Turn on your current, and move slowly, keeping near the ground" were the orders given to the crane driver. When this was done, I saw bits of scrap which had been lying about the ground, leap up to the magnets, cleaving to them. And more than that, I actually saw the ground itself moving, and out of the very dust came the scrap that had been mingled with it and buried beneath its surface. Out came the pieces, flying straight toward the magnet, and sticking to it together with the other pieces from the ground." Thank God, the time is coming when all His own that are in the graves, and those then alive on the earth, will together be caught up by and to the Lord. Even the buried saints will come out of their graves.

Only iron and steel scraps rose to the magnets from that Rolling Mill yard. Only those metals were caught up that partook of the same nature as the magnet. Precisely so in that Great Day coming. Only those who have become partakers of His own Divine nature through regeneration, will be caught up. The rest must wait until the Great White Throne has been set. But blessed and holy are they who shall take part in this first and glorious resurrection.

SOAP AND SODA.

Jeremiah 2:22.

Fancy soap and soda in the Bible! Why not? These are everyday essentials for bodily health and comfort. But what about the soul? Have we performed our full duty to God and society when we have made our bodies presentable? Verily no. There are urgent spiritual necessities. (Nitre is soda.) This verse in Jeremiah points out the inadequacy of mere reformation of life and manners. What about the record against us up on High? "Thine iniquity is marked before Me," saith the Lord. Only the precious Blood of Christ can avail for that dire need. THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST.

Romans 5:19.

Napoleon's Kindness. During one of the wars of Napoleon Bonaparte, after a day of fierce fighting, as night drew on, sentinels were chosen to be placed at different points of the camp to guard against surprise. They were charged, on pain of death, to keep awake and do their duty. About midnight the Emperor arose, and walked around, to find one of the sentinels asleep, his gun lying beside him. Worn out by the terrible struggle of the previous day, on being left alone, he had fallen asleep. What must be done? The sentinel's duty must be done or he must die. Silently the Emperor picked up the gun, and, putting it to his shoulder, acted as sentinel till dawn of day. When the soldier awoke, he was filled with alarm. But Napoleon simply handed him back his gun, bidding him be more careful in future.

You are prepared to applaud this humane act. We wish to draw attention to Another who has done much more for us. Our text refers to Him-the Lord Jesus.

I. Man's Commission. As each soul is marched into the arena of life, God gives a commission (see Deuteronomy 10:12; Micah 6:8). Is there a single soul who can say they have executed that commission?

II. Man's Disobedience. "I wish I could mind my God as my little dog minds me," said a little boy. That statement revealed man's depravity.

Everything obeys the Lord.

1. Orbs of Light (Joshua 10:12-14). Sun stood still.

2. Mighty Ocean (Matthew 8:27). "Even the winds and seas obey Him."

3. Evil Spirits (Mark 1:27). "With authority com-mandeth He even the unclean spirits."

4. Birds of Air (1 Kings 17:4). "I have commanded the ravens to feed thee." Did we say "Everything?" Ah, there is one exception-man. What will be the end of the disobedient ones? Joshua 5:6 tells us, Israel "were consumed because they obeyed not the voice of the Lord."

III. He Took our Place. The Lord Jesus

1. Not only lived a perfectly obedient life, filling up the full measure of righteousness, 2. But atoned for our disobedience.

3. Not only did what Napoleon did, but more, for He suffered for our disobedience.

4. By Napoleon's obedience this man's life was saved.

5. By Jesus' obedience (obedient unto death, even death on Cross) we are saved.

IV. You are now commanded to obey the Gospel, And if you will do this, and come to Jesus, He will give you the Holy Spirit, who will enable you to live the Holy life. THE FIVE PRECIOUS THINGS OF THE BIBLE.

1. His Word and Thoughts, Psalms 139:17 2. His Redemption, Psalms 49:8 3. The Life of the Believer, Psalms 72:14 4. The Lips of the Well-informed, Proverbs 20:15 5. The Death of His People, Psalms 116:15 IN HIS PRESENCE Here and now is- 1. Sadness (His presence is a trouble when everything is not right), Nehemiah 2:1 2. Joy, Psalms 16:11 3. Power for Service for God and our fellows, Nehemiah 2:6 WHAT CONSTITUTES TRUE GREATNESS.

"He shall be great in the sight of the Lord" (Luke 1:15).

Introduction.

Heaven's Standard.

1. "In the sight of the Lord," not in the sight of men.

2. There is the world's estimate of greatness, and there is God's estimate.

3. The one greatly differs from the other.

4. The former is false and fanciful, the latter true and eternal.

5. John's greatness was according to the standard of Heaven. In the Lord's estimation he was a great man.

Useful not Great.

1. Some are born great, others have greatness thrust upon them.

2. Most, if not all of us, have no aspiration for earthly greatness.

3. We have not the slightest expectation of ever becoming great in a worldly sense.

4. But that is not the reason why we desire it not.

5. We sympathise much with the poet who wrote:

"Pay not thy praise to lofty things alone. The plains are everlasting as the hills."

6. The plains are as necessary as the hills.

7. What should we do if all the globe was but a collection of hills and mountains?

8. We have no ambition for earthly greatness.

9. For one thing, greatness fills the pillow with thorns.

10. We desire rather to be useful than great.

Useful Because Great.

1. And we can be useful without earthly greatness.

2. But that is not so with respect to spiritual greatness. Note little word "and", Romans 5:17.

3. Goodness and highest usefulness is conditioned on being "great in the sight of the Lord."

4. John was good and useful because he was great in the Lord's sight.

Four results of greatness: (1) Parents rejoice; (2) Fellows benefit; (3) Fulness of blessing; (4) Usefulness in service. A Longing.

1. Do you not long that your parents might thank God you were ever given to them?

2. And that others of your fellows should thank God you were ever born?

3. Surely we all long for that privilege!

4. Well, all this is the outcome of becoming great in His sight.

5. Note that little word "for" and previous verse.

How to Get Power of Spirit.

1. Further, how we long to be filled with the Spirit.

2. How we long to have power in service.

3. How we long to be the instrument of the conversion of many.

4. Here you see all this is fruit of being great in His sight.

5. Do you not think there is some connection between a. Being great in the sight of the Lord, b. Being filled with the Holy Spirit, c. And turning many to righteousness?

Prophecy that Came to Pass.

1. This was the prophecy of the angel who announced His birth.

2. Did the prophecy come to full fruition?

3. How many lives of promise become tragic failures?

4. Yes, listen to the words of Jesus. Looking back on the career of this man, the Lord Jesus endorsed the prophecy, declaring that it had become a fact. "Among those that are born of women there is none greater."

Elements of true Greatness.

1. If we want to know the elements of true greatness, the greatness God recognises, we do well if we turn to the life of this man.

2. Lives of great men like John remind us, we (or rather God) may make our lives sublime.

3. What was there about John worthy of such noble comment?

4. We have seven facts to bring to your notice.

5. And we make bold to declare that all the principles of John's life, character, and service might become ours.

I. He was a Man of Noble Birth (Luke 1:5). Descendant of Aaron.

1. He was a descendant of Aaron, belonging to the priestly family.

2. What a very great honour this was I 3. He was a noble man of noble birth.

4. Well begun is half done.

Discouraged.

1. Ah, at that word you discourage me.

2. I am but of humble and lowly origin.

3. I am but one of the common folk.

4. No need now to proceed any further. But listen!

Great Soul.

1. It was said of one that, he was "a man of mean estate" yet "his soul was great."

2. So you can have a great soul.

More Noble Birth.

1. But you can be of far nobler birth than John.

2. You can have the very life of the Creator in your soul.

3. The life of the King of kings within you.

4. "Partakers of Divine nature." Can you have anything greater than that?

Greater than He.

1. If you think we are romancing, listen to the Saviour (Luke 7:28).

2. The greatness referred to here is not that of character, but that of position.

3. The contrast is drawn between being within and being without the kingdom.

4. John the Baptist only stood upon the threshold, we go right in.

5. "He that is least within the Kingdom is greater than the greatest without."

You Can Become a Relative.

1. John was a relative to Jesus.

2. You, too, can become related to Him.

II. He was an Unworldly Man (Luke 1:80). "A man clothed in soft raiment?" No. This is seen in different ways:

a. His love of solitude. b. His plain dress. c. His plain food.

Different Type.

1. Of course we know our type of holiness is different to that of John.

2. Concerning the dark middle ages, an historian writes: "In those days John the Baptist's life seems to have been the ideal of holiness far more than that of the Son of Man; to renounce the common food and the common joys of humanity was deemed far nobler than to turn earth's daily bread to Divine uses."

3. Yet according to his light, he was right.

4. He was a man who lived above the world.

III. He was a Man who had Control over his Appetites.

IV. He was a Man Filled with the Holy Spirit.

V. He was a Man with a Mission.

Born for a Purpose.

1. He was born in order to do a specific work.

2. He did not go aimlessly through life.

3. So with us.

4. Every man's life is a plan of God.

Answered. He answered the purpose of his existence in

1. Introducing Jesus, and acting as 2. Fore-runner of Jesus. So we:

1. Can we not make it easy for some to come to Jesus.

2. Can we not introduce others to Jesus?

VI. He was a Man Obedient to the Call. Not Only Knew.

1. He would be told by his parents the circumstances surrounding his birth.

2. And he obeyed the call.

Abraham.

1. The call came to Abraham and the Lord said that if he would leave his home and obey the call, "I will bless thee and make thy name great."

2. Obedience, then blessing, then greatness. "Whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 5:19) Mark, do and teach-obedience before teaching.

VII. He was a Man of Unwavering Firmness and Courage. Not "a reed shaken with the wind."

Courage.

1. In rebuking sin, even that of King Herod.

2. He laid down his life.

Elizabeth Fry.

1. Elizabeth Fry, as a girl (born in 1780), "was of pleasing person, gentle in look and manner, loving, obedient, and possessed of an exquisite voice.

2. Yet she was timid and obstinate.

3. Yet it is said of her that "her natural timidity in after years, under Divine Grace, was transformed into a chastened courage, and her childish obstinacy, became a finely-tempered decision of character." All the result of the Holy Spirit's presence in her life.

VIII. He was a Man on Fire for God. IN HIS PRESENCE.

1. Salvation, Psalms 42:5, marg.

2. Rest, Exodus 33:14 3. Joy, Psalms 16:11 4. Safety, Psalms 31:20 5. Highest Communion, Psalms 140:13; Son_2:11

WHAT THE LORD DOES FOR US.

Psalm 34.

1. Redeems, Psalms 34:22

2. Saves, Psalms 34:18

3. Hears, Psalms 34:4

4. Delivers, Psalms 34:4

5. Preserves, Psalms 34:7

6. Deeply Interested In Us, Psalms 34:15

7. Is Near, Psalms 34:18 IN THE LORD THERE IS DELIVERANCE

FROM

1. Fear, Psalms 34:4

2. Danger, Psalms 34:7

3. Trouble, Psalms 34:7

4. Afflictions, Psalms 34:19

5. Death, 2 Corinthians 1:10

6. World, Galatians 1:4

7. Darkness, Colossians 1:13

8. Wrath, 1 Thessalonians 1:10 OUR INHERENT GREATNESS.

"He hath made everything beautiful in His time, also He hath set the world (eternity) in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end" (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

Introduction.

Puzzling.

1. What a puzzling and bewildering sentence is, "He hath set the world in their heart."

2. It has been a trouble to many thoughtful Christians.

3. How is it possible to believe that God is responsible for the love of the world within our hearts?

4. The fact is that the word translated "world," does not mean this material world, but duration; not place, but time.

5. R.V. margin clears away the difficulty, where it a. Refers not to space, b. But to duration of time.

Difficulty.

1. It is not only a difficult phrase, but difficult to understand what precise meaning is to be attached to these words, and connection with context.

2. Ecclesiastes is the autobiography of a backslider, and therefore we need not wonder at its haziness. Get away from God and you will soon get hazy views, soon be in a fog, in a spiritual fog of your own creating, and floundering about. Not Transient.

1. He has been speaking of the change and decay he saw in all around.

2. He was gloomily meditating on the transitory character of all earthly things.

3. But it was then he declared that man is not a transient creature, for he has eternity in his heart, i.e., is eternal, and is conscious of the fact.

4. He is an immortal being, or better, an endless being.

Inherent Greatness.

1. We were reminded of these verses when reading Carlyle on "Greatness:" "Man's unhappiness, as I construe, comes of his greatness: it is because there is an Infinite in him, which, with all his cunning, he cannot quite bury under the Finite" (Sartor Resartus).

2. That is to say, man is naturally great-there is eternity within him.

3. In a former study we were thinking of greatness in His sight (Luke 1:15).

4. That was a greatness made possible through Redemption.

5. We are now thinking of our inherent greatness.

6. This side is often neglected.

7. We generally leave it to the Materialists and Rationalists to declare.

8. But we must rescue it from such sordid surroundings and place it in its rightful evangelical setting. The Beautiful World. The sense of beauty is one of the things that allies us to God. God must be glad when one loves His world so much.

Three Thoughts Suggested by Text.

1. The world in the heart-a sad and woeful fact.

2. Eternity in the heart-a glorious and blessed fact.

3. The Eternal One in the heart-a marvellous possibility for all.

Another Way of Putting It. But in order to bring out the fact of man's greatness, let me put it another way.

I. Man's Greatness Proved beyond Doubt by the Fact that, though the World is in his Heart, he is not Satisfied. A Sad Fact.

1. The world is in our hearts by nature, by our natural birth; not only are we in the world, but the world is in us.

2. Of that we are only too conscious; even Christians sometimes discover this to be so.

3. We are so occupied with the world that many have no time for Divine things.

4. We are so taken up with thoughts and cares of worldly things, and so exercised concerning them, that many have little heart for eternal things.

Blackwood.

1. Sir Arthur Blackwood discovered this.

2. During the Crimea War he became serious and decided for God.

3. But on his return home he found it very difficult to keep on in the good way in the whirl of social life.

4. Under date April and May, in 1856, he writes: "Troublous times-undecided-world in my heart-God in my conscience."

5. Take those four sharp, finely cut sentences-what a portrait of many a one. a. Troublous times. First experience of one who faces the current. b. Undecided. Halting between two opinions. c. World in my heart. Ah, that's the tragic fact; the magnet is there! d. God in my conscience. A troubled conscience. Who Put it There?

1. Not God.

2. "An enemy hath done this."

Result.

1. Does the world in the heart satisfy it? No!

2. "Man's unhappiness comes of his greatness."

3. Great though the world is, man is too great for it to satisfy him.

4. He has a hunger for eternal things.

5. Only eternal things can satisfy him.

6. The worldling tries to satisfy the craving of his being for eternal things by the material, yet is like the prodigal at the swine trough.

Solomon.

1. Solomon is an illustration.

2. Getting away from God, he sought satisfaction in wisdom, learning, letters, science, wealth, etc.

3. But "vanity of vanities, all is vanity," was his verdict.

II. Man's Greatness is Proved beyond Question in that Though in the World, he has Deeply Rooted in him the Thought and Fact of Eternity.

Revised Version.

1. That is the teaching of the rendering of the R.V.

2. It suggests four thoughts: (1) Consciousness; (2) Fact; (3) Longing; and (3) Dread of Eternity.

Everlasting Problem.

1. "If a man die shall he live again," is the question in Job.

2. This is the everlasting problem.

3. "He thinks he was not made to die." Ah, how sure!

Solution.

1. Revelation and reason give incontestible proofs of immortality.

2. But there is another-intuition.

3. God not only has made man immortal, but: He has put the consciousness of immortality within our hearts.

4. He made us eternal, and put within us the consciousness of that fact.

Only Beings.

1. "We are the only beings on earth who can speak the Word or think the thought of eternity." Ponder on that phrase.

2. God has put the consciousness of eternity in our hearts.

3. And now the Gospel has cleared away all mists. "Life and immortality has been brought to light through the Gospel."

Burns.

1. James Drummond Burns was in poor health for 20 years.

2. His last words were: "I have been dying for 20 years; now I am going to live."

Shell from the Sea-shore.

1. Man, so small, so tiny, that from a hill-top he appears but as a speck in the valley below, yet within him the roar of the infinite sea of eternity is for ever sound ing.

2. Just as a man will pick up a shell from the sea-shore and carry it 3000 miles inland, and listening, he hears the beating music of the waves that made it so.

3. O man, no matter how far thou hast wandered from God, in thy heart is the passion of Deity, the sounding of the billows of eternity!

4. The whirl and noise of day may silence that music, but in the silence of the night there comes back the call of the infinite. It is a call that surges through him.

III. Man's Greatness Proved by the Fact that though in the World, he has a Heart that the Eternal One Claims and can Fill. Has Man the Capacity?

1. Has he the capacity of becoming the Sanctuary of the Lord?

2. Those who know anything about the Bible know such is its teaching.

3. And those who know anything of the human heart know this is so.

How to get rid of World. The only way of getting rid of the world in the heart is by letting the heart's rightful Guest in.

How to get Peace.

1. If God is in your conscience-troubling you. The precious Blood of Christ and 2. God in the heart will bring peace.

Too Big for World. We are too big for the world. The world cannot fill our hearts and lives. A MISSIONARY'S EQUIPMENT.

2 Kings 4:10.

This woman, great in soul, and probably in wealth, suggested to her husband sacrificing the most cherished part of the Eastern home for the comfort of the prophet Elisha. Her husband seconded the handsome proposition, and it was carried into effect. It is interesting to note the articles of furniture she considered necessary for the prophet's comfort. In what they remind us of we have the essentials for home and foreign missionary work. Unless we possess what these articles stand for, we cannot be useful workers for the Lord.

I. Bed. Which speaks to us of rest. This is the first necessity. In fact, if we do not enjoy rest from the burden of guilt and an uneasy conscience, we cannot be workers. Only Christ can give rest. Does He not say, "Come unto Me... and I will give you rest?"

II. Table. Which speaks to us of communion. Communion with Christ should follow receiving from Him rest. Pray note, not the table first, and then rest. No; that would never do. And yet there are many who teach that this is the proper order. Such say, "Unless we partake of the Sacrament we cannot be saved." Neither the Lord Jesus nor any of the apostles taught this! We refuse to re-arrange these articles to please anyone. God's order must be observed. At the same time, may we not urge upon those who have rest, the necessity of the table of the Lord! It is our duty and privilege to go to the Lord's Table to remember the Lord's death till He come.

Then again, now that rest is your enjoyment, do not forget that He desires you to have communion and blessed fellowship with Him day by day; that is, the table to follow the bed. Do not come short of His purposes, nor be satisfied with anything less than His best.

III. Stool. This comes third, and speaks to us of discipleship. How important it is that we should frequently sit at His feet to be taught of Him. What about the daily devotional study of the Scriptures? Then what about the daily closer study of some portion of the Holy Book? Ah, the discipleship position is important. This will fit us for the fourth.

IV. Candlestick. This speaks to us of witness-bearing, shining for Jesus in the dark and gloomy places, where our light is most needed.

KISSING.

"Kiss the Son" (Psalms 2:12).

Introduction. Kissing in Oriental countries has a much greater significance than in the West. On that account, reference to that act in the Bible deserve a closer study than is usually given. The Power of a Kiss. A woman prisoner was being taken from one prison to another loaded with chains, because she was so rebellious that nothing seemingly could be done with her. The matron of the prison she had been sent to refused to receive the new charge unless the chains were removed. This was done, whereupon the matron kissed the female prisoner, who broke completely down at this unexpected and undeserved welcome, and led to her complete transformation, so much so, that later she became a successful Christian worker. The Divine goodness is designed to lead us to repentance. The Cost of a Kiss. When the Princess Alice died, it fell to the lot of Gladstone to move in the House of Commons a vote of sympathy. In doing so, he told how she came to her end. Her little child was ill with diphtheria. The doctor told her that, on no account must she kiss the child. In a paroxysm of pain, she picked her little one up in her arms. She became conscious, and said, "Mamma, kiss me!" What could a mother do in the face of such an appeal from a loved suffering one? She knew what it might mean, but could not do otherwise, and gave the loving kiss. Does not this remind us of Christ's great act of love. He thought not of the cost. He knew that, coming into contact with a sin-diseased world meant death. And He died, and in dying for us took away our sin. But that great act of His love was not in vain, for us, as was Princess Alice's loving act. It has meant for millions, as it has meant for many a believer to-day, health and salvation.

I. The Kiss of Subjection (Psalms 2:12). This is one of the many Messianic Psalms, and is full of Christ. Here is inspired good advice: "Kiss the Son." It is the kiss of subjection that is meant here, the kind of kiss given by a subject to a prince, or by a captive to his captor, and what a sinner should give to the Saviour. It signifies the surrender of the will, a vital condition of salvation, and indeed of every spiritual blessing. Did we say, inspired good advice? Rather, an inspired command. It is imperative. And why? "Lest He be angry." Yes, that is true, for there is not only the love of the Lamb, and the Blood of the Lamb, but also the wrath of the Lamb. Our God and Saviour knows what wrath is, because He is Love. Kiss the Son lest ye perish!

II. The Kiss of Pardon (Luke 15:20). This follows the kiss of subjection, and indeed is the beginning of all good. It could be rendered, "He kissed him again and again." What a surprising gift was this! Note:

1. It followed the return, which was the sign and proof of real genuine repentance.

2. It was given before the prodigal could say a word. Though he had prepared a speech, not a syllable was uttered until the Father kissed the returned prodigal. Wondrous grace!

3. It was bestowed on the prodigal whilst yet in his rags and dirt. Therefore entirely unmerited. He was not asked first to make himself presentable ere the kiss could be given.

4. It was followed by the bestowal of other gifts, and never stands alone. This, the first blessing, is always followed by other mercies and blessings.

III. The Kiss of Affection and Communion. (Son_1:2). Only returned ones, who are pardoned and clothed and restored to friendship, can be expected to love. And they alone can be admitted into friendship and fellowship with God and His Christ. THE SATISFIED LIFE.

"Full of years" (Genesis 25:8).

This is a choice and suggestive phrase. It is not synoni-mous for longevity. Abraham lived to be 175; Isaiah, 180; Job, 140; David, 70; Jehoida, 130 (2 Chronicles 24:15); yet same expression is used for all. Read "satisfied" for "full"-really its meaning-and you have the true meaning of the term. And he acted like a satisfied man. No desperate clinging to life, no unwillingness to go. He was like one who, having had enough at the table, blesses the Giver of the feast, pushes back his chair, gets up, and goes away without a struggle, or with out the least resistance-satisfied!

What had he got? He went out of Mesopotamia expecting a country and a nation. But he dies with no possession save a grave, and with no further sight of posterity than his son Isaac, and his two grandsons, who were fifteen years old when he died. Then why was Abraham satisfied and not sickened with life? He lived the following life- a life:

1. Filled with God (Psalms 105:40; Psalms 107:9).

2. He lived in enjoyment of the unmerited favour of God. "Satisfied with favour" (Deuteronomy 33:23). His faith was counted for righteousness.

3. He daily received the mercies of God (Psalms 90:14).

4. He lived a life of trust in God. Is noted for his faith.

5. He lived a life of communion with God, in spite of many hindrances.

6. He lived a life of busy service for God.

7. And he lived in the full certainty of going to God. Ponder over the phrase, "Gathered to his people."

WE MUST DELIGHT OURSELVES 1. In God Himself, Psalms 37:4 2. In His Word, Psalms 1:2; Psalms 119:24 3. In His Service, Psalms 40:8 4. In Prayer, Isaiah 58:2 Then what a joy to learn that God will delight in us (Psalms 37:23; Proverbs 11:20; Proverbs 12:22).

WALKING OUT WITH HIM.

"Can two walk together except they be agreed?"

Amos 3:3.

Introduction. Have you ever grasped the significance of this statement? In one part of the North of England, it is customary when announcing the courtship of a couple to say: "So-and-so are walking out together." That is the very phrase used here, as descriptive of a wonderful possibility for man. It is a sublime conception of the Christian life. To be a Christian means more than to accept a Creed, or even to accept a living Christ, it means to walk out with God day by day and all our days. Walkout with Him! Oh, the sublimity of this figure of speech. But there are essentials. Prior to walking out with Him we must agree regarding certain facts. There must be four prior agreements.

I. Agreement as to Place. That is the place of meeting. He has made an appointment for sinners, and that is that they should meet Him in grace at the Cross of our Lord Jesus. That is the place of meeting. Will you keep the appointment? If not, another appointment will be made-at the Great White Throne, in Judgment.

II. Agreement as to Goal. Agreeing that the glory of God be the aim, and motive of life; and by-and-by, Heaven.

III. Agreement as to Pace. Keeping step with the Master, neither lagging behind nor going on ahead. Walking at the same pace. Ask Him to take your hand, and then you will walk together.

IV. Agreement as to Cost. A walk with God is costly. It means many a persecution, many a sorrow, many a tear, but very much joy, and His smile. Is such a life possible? Enoch lived that life, without the wonderful helps that are ours in Christ Jesus, and for three hundred years, too, till God took him.

"Do the converts stand?" inquired someone of Gipsy Smith. At once he replied, "No, they don't stand-they walk! They keep going!" For they walk with Him.

BROUGHT 1. Low, Psalms 116:6

2. Up, Psalms 40:2

3. Out, Psalms 107:14

4. Into, Psalms 18:19

5. On, 2 Corinthians 1:16 SLITHERING THROUGH LIFE.

"Then Jacob lift up his feet" (Genesis 29:1, margin).

"Slithering" is quite a North Country word. You see a person going along dragging his feet-that is slithering. Some do this out of sheer habit-certainly a very bad habit. Such soon wear their boots out, and other people's patience too. Some drag their feet because of sad and sorrowful spirits. Much had just happened to Jacob to make his feet heavy as lead. He had deceived his father, robbed his twin brother, and had been compelled to flee for his life. All this is recorded in Gen. 28. It is a sad chapter. Was Jacob to go "slithering" through life? No. God took measures to save him from that dread disaster.

Jacob "went out" (Genesis 28:10) of the home and encampment. No doubt he would go out alone, unattended, so as not to arouse his brother's suspicions. After travelling about forty miles of mountainous country, he reached a rocky valley, with stones piled up like a huge stone staircase. As he lay down and slept, it seemed as if the stones of the valley were being builded together, by unseen hands, into a stair, till it reached the deep blue-spangled sky. He saw the angels of God ascending and descending, and there by his side (see R.V.) the Lord. Jacob had been so full of his own activities, plannings, and schem-ings, that the only time God could get his attention was when he was asleep. What did this vision do for Jacob?

I. It Banished Mere Earthliness. "Top. . . reached to Heaven."

Worm.

1. It is not likely that Jacob would be cherishing any lofty thoughts for he was a fugitive.

2. He had been grovelling like a worm on earth with but few thoughts beyond; this vision lifts his eyes from the low level.

3. There had been little traffic between his soul and heaven; the vision shows him a path from his very side right into its depths. He calls it "gate of Heaven." The gate is the busiest place of a city, not only the entrance but the gathering place.

4. "Fear not thou worm Jacob." Too often he was like the worm grovelling in the earth when he ought to have been like the butterfly, flitting through sunlit gardens.

Staircase.

1. What that ladder was to Jacob, Jesus is to us.

2. Indeed in John 1:51 He declares it was a type of Himself.

3. Jesus is: a. Our connecting link with Heaven. b. All blessings come to us along that way. c. Every child of man has the ladder right at his feet.

II. It Banished Loneliness. "Angels of God ascending and descending."

1. He thought himself alone, but the vision peoples the wilderness.

2. Note, "ascending and descending," not descending and ascending,. teaching earth was their home.

3. Solitary, far away from his beloved mother, he found himself cared for by angels.

III. It Banished Spiritual Forlornness. He thought he was forlorn, but, lo, he found he was not alone. Don't stop at angels!

1. He saw "angels." Yes, but he saw Someone else- Lord.

2. Oh, never allow angels to shut out the Lord! Where was the Lord?

1. Not "above it," as A.V., but "beside him" (R.V., marg.) 2. Perhaps he thought he had left God in father's encampment.

3. Or that God had forsaken him because of his sin.

4. Oh, the blessed thought of the nearness of the Lord!

5. How God comforts the lonely and forsaken.

6. He is by your side, oh sad and lonely one!

IV. It Banished Helplessness.

1. He had felt himself defenceless in that wild and dangerous region.

2. The vision musters armies for his safety.

3. Yea, better still, the God of armies (Genesis 29:15).

V. It Banished Aimlessness.

1. God took him into partnership with Himself (Genesis 29:13-15).

2. He would realise that he was partner with God in the fulfilment of the Divine purpose.

3. He now had an object in life.

VI. It Banished Ignorance (Genesis 29:17).

1. It revealed to him his sin.

2. It is an eloquent testimony of man's consciousness of sin, that whenever a present God becomes a reality to a worldly man he trembles.

VII. It Banished Homelessness (Genesis 29:17).

1. He was driven away from his father's house, but he got to know of God's house.

2. Jacob loved home more than Esau. He was a lover of home.

3. This vision taught him that earth, "which we are too apt to make a workshop or a mere garden of pleasure, is a Bethel-a house of God."

4. Note:

a. Luz. Separation from the world. b. Bethel. Adoption into God's house, God's family, House of God. c. Peniel. Fellowship and knowledge of God. Face of God.

5. Oh, the horrid bargaining Jacob indulged it. We won't end there.

VIII. It Banished Sluggishness (chap. Genesis 29:1).

1. Margin, "Lift up his feet."

2. Not drag his feet.

3. How our feet drag when our hearts are sad and heavy.

4. Blessed by contact, abiding contact with God, he resumed his way with a light heart and elastic step.

5. There is a spirit of cheerfulness about it.

6. So may we go through life.

7. And those who, by Divine grace refuse to slither through life become the means of blessings to others.

Studies For Believers

Studies for Believers

CROSS-BEARING.

"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23).

Introduction.

Startling.

1. It is difficult for us to imagine what such a statement meant for the disciples and how startled they must have been.

2. To them the Cross was a hateful, accursed thing.

3. Our Lord first mentioned the necessity of bearing the Cross when He commissioned them (Matthew 10:38). Now He speaks most emphatically.

Cross Deified.

1. One reason why it is difficult for us to imagine what their feelings were when they first heard of the Cross is that now we view it differently.

2. The Cross is now a symbol of all that is holy and precious.

3. Alas, by many it is deified and worshipped.

4. This was never God's intention. When Change Occurred.

1. It was not until the commencement of the fourth century when Rome, the mistress of the world, adopted the Cross to supplement the Eagle as a military ensign, that this change took place.

2. Constantine sought to honour the Cross, to which he ascribed the success of his arms, and the attainment of his ambition, by putting a spear in that form into the hand of the statue erected for him at Rome.

3. A most baneful sign indeed.

4. The spear and the Cross had met before under totally different circumstances.

5. But now a worldly policy had practically made the Cross of Christ of none effect by taking it under patronage in a most public manner.

Early Christians.

1. It is significant that the Cross was never used by the primitive Christians of the first century. Indeed, it was not until the fourth century that they began to do so.

2. To them it was simply a symbol of torture and shame. Who Invented It?

1. No one can tell us who invented the Cross.

2. It is believed the Romans introduced it from India for the punishment of criminals and slaves, and others whom the executioner must disgrace as well as kill.

What it Meant to Bear the Cross.

1. To bear the Cross meant to bear disgrace.

2. To bear the Cross meant to bear the instrument of suffering and death. Our Lord's Words.

1. Our Lord declared that none can follow Him unless:

1st. Deny self.

2nd. Take up Cross.

3rd. And that every day.

2. Indeed, in Matthew 10:38 He declares we are not worthy of Him if we do not.

3. And in Luke 14:27 declares otherwise we cannot be His disciples. Not as a Punishment for Sin.

1. It must be understood that we are to bear the Cross not as a punishment for our sins, nor to put away sin.

2. His Cross does that.

3. We come to Him, and get deliverance from one burden only to receive another.

Two Crosses.

1. No one can be a follower of our Lord without bearing two crosses.

2. One is a cross laid upon us, the other is a cross we take up.

3. The first is an inward cross, the second an outward.

I. The Inward Cross, the Holy Spirit and Divine Nature.

Compelled.

1. Let us again remind you of our Lord's word "cannot."

2. There was one who was compelled to bear Christ's Cross-Simon (Matthew 27:32).

3. No choice was left to him in the matter.

4. The difference is, that Cross was laid upon him by the Roman Government; ours by God Himself.

Two Crucifixions.

1. Think you that Christ had two Crucifixions?

2. His Divine nature was the constant Cross of His human nature.

What Makes a Christian?

1. Is it not the anointing? The word Christ means the anointed one, and you are not a Christian until you receive the anointing.

2. What is the anointing but the coming in of the Divine nature.

Real Cross.

1. The Crusaders used to carry a painted cross on their shoulder.

2. Our inward cross is no painted one.

3. And we carry it, not on our shoulder, but in the heart.

How Coliseum was Saved?

1. It is said that when the Roman Coliseum began to fall into decay, the people used to take the stones of which it was composed to build their own houses. To such an extent was this practice carried, that many feared this noble relic of the Imperial City would soon disappear.

2. To prevent so great a loss, antiquarians consulted together, and talked, and talked, but all to no purpose.

3. At last the Pope devised a simple plan. He had a huge cross made and planted in the centre, whereby declaring the building hallowed.

4. And it thus became sacrilege to remove the stones.

How God Saved Humanity.

The world was in an awful condition as Romans, chapter 1, shows. But the planting of the Cross of Christ brought fresh life-brought regeneration and renewal. How are We Saved Morally?

1. Men's souls, like the Coliseum, are fallen to ruins.

2. How is the work of the spoiler to be stopped?

3. The planting of the Cross, the infusion of a new life and a new nature.

How can we Mortify?

1. The Cross is the emblem of that which is painful and mortifying to the flesh.

2. We are exhorted to mortify ourselves-but how?

3. The only way is by the true inward cross.

II. The Outward Cross. Suffering and Disgrace.

1. Most of the references to the Cross in the Gospels imply suffering for Christ's sake.

2. "If any man desire to come after me," said the Lord Jesus, he must be prepared to suffer pain, disgrace, and persecution for My sake."

Easy to See.

1. You will readily see why this must be so, when you remember whose territory we are marching through.

2. "We're marching through Immanuel's ground," we sing. But are we?

3. As a matter of fact we are marching through the enemy's territory. Not Sullenly Endure.

1. But please observe that little word "take."

2. If we are followers of Christ we cannot get away from these outward crosses.

3. But how shall we act? a. We may put up with it as that which is inevitable. b. We may sullenly endure it.

4. But there is no joy in such an attitude.

5. Our Lord wants us to consent to it, to carry it willingly, to take it up as an act of willing submission.

6. To shoulder the Cross bravely is the noblest way of all.

7. And the path of blessing.

What Rutherford Found in the Cross. We have in one of our favourite authors-Samuel Rutherford-an illustration of this. He had to suffer grievously for conscience sake. But he shouldered his cross heroically- and see:

1. He found it Light. "However it be, the din, and noise, and gloom of Christ's Cross are weightier than itself."

2. He Found it a Joyful Thing. a. "Seven crosses-seven joys." b. "If it were come to exchanging crosses I would not exchange my cross with any." c. "Some have written to me that I am possibly too joyful of the cross, but my joy overleapeth the cross, it is bounded and terminates upon Christ. I can report nothing but good both of Him and it, lest others should faint."

3. He Found it Light and Helpful. a. "The Cross of Christ is the sweetest burden ever I bear. It is such a burden as wings are to a bird, or sails to a ship, to carry me forward to my harbour." b. Not a hindrance, but a help-lifting him up to God like the wings of a bird, and helped him on, like the sails of a ship.

4. He Found Christ and His Cross Inseparable. a. "Christ and His Cross are sweet company, and a blessed couple. He and His Cross are two good guests and worth the lodging." b. "No cross, no crown"-we rightly say. c. Let us also add "No Christ, no Cross."

5. Application. a. Will you not invite this Guest? b. Will you not say with Rutherford: "Welcome, welcome, sweet, sweet and glorious Cross of Christ; welcome, sweet Jesus with Thy light Cross."

TRUE SELF-DENIAL.

"Then Peter took Him. . . saying, Pity Thyself, Lord." "Then said Jesus, ... If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself" (Matthew 16:22, Matthew 16:24). ("Let him cross himself out,"

Burroughs.) Introduction. Pity thyself-Deny thyself.

Difference.

1. What a vast difference between these two statements!

2. Yet all are either doing the one or the other-either pitying and sparing, or denying and ignoring self.

Marvel.

1. Men often wonder why there are, comparatively speaking, so few disciples of Christ.

2. We ought, instead, to marvel there are so many.

3. For look at the conditions of discipleship-they are not easy.

4. For no teacher or leader had ever proposed such conditions.

5. In profane history we read of many noble acts of self-denial, but no lives of habitual self-denial.

6. Yet that is what our Lord claims of all His followers- it has got to be done every day. St. Luke adds that to his account in Luke 9:23.

7. No holiday but our habitual habit and practice.

First Time.

1. This is the first time our Lord referred to the denial of self as a condition of discipleship.

2. Cross-bearing and self-denial up to now had not been the badge of discipleship.

Result.

1. Until our Lord made this declaration He had many followers.

2. Up to this time our Lord had proclaimed the Gospel of the Kingdom.

3. But He had been rejected.

4. Now He hints at a new order of things: the calling out.

5. For the first time He spoke of the Church.

6. Now it is not the Kingdom, but the Church.

7. And from that time His followers dwindled.

Evidence of Humanity.

1. Do you not detect an evidence of His humanity-in the question He asked His disciples? (1 Chronicles 4:13 and 1 Chronicles 4:15).

2. He was curious to hear from His disciples (of course what He already knew) of the world's estimation of Him.

3. How differently they viewed Him: John, the ascetic; Elijah, the ardent, enthusiastic, and fierce; Jeremiah, the prophet of the tender heart and tears. They saw all three in Him.

4. Then He inquired: "What am I to you?" He desired to know their own views of Him.

Opinions.

1. But there is in these questions something else besides an evidence of humanity.

2. Is there not manifested here His deep concern respecting the opinions of His disciples?

3. Say some: "It matters not what our opinions are- it's conduct that counts."

4. This is utterly wrong-creed influences conduct.

5. The inquisitors had hearts of flesh, but creeds of iron.

What if He had Pitied Himself?

1. "From that time" He spoke of Cross and self-denial.

2. This was too much for loving and impulsive Peter.

3. If He had pitied Himself we would verily have been in a pitiful condition.

What if You Do? And if we pity and spare ourselves we shall at last be found in a pitiful condition in spite of that atoning death of Christ. Who Suggests?

1. Note, the suggestion to pity self is from Satan.

2. To deny self, from God.

I. The Nature of Self-Denial.

General Idea.

1. The general idea is that which is exhibited in weeks of self-denial-denying to ourselves certain things- food or pleasure-pleasant to the natural man.

2. We would that there were more of this.

3. But true self-denial is something much more.

4. Possible for self to be very prominent in self-denial.

5. And so-called self-denial to be really self-glorification.

"Himself."

1. Note these words were addressed to men who had already made great sacrifices in order to follow Jesus.

2. But He asked of them an even greater sacrifice- themselves.

3. Observe, deny, not to himself, but himself.

4. To ourselves is but one aspect of self-denial.

II. The Necessity of Self-Denial. "But," you may inquire, "why should I deny myself?"

1. There is No Salvation Without Self-Denial. a. Do not imagine it is a thing of little consequence or merely the high attainment of some few of the saints. b. It is a thing all must have that will be saved. c. As Baxter, the Puritan, says: "It is a plain contradiction to be saved without self-denial. For as it is self that we must be saved from, so to stick to self is to be lost and miserable, and therefore not to be saved." d. Self is the root, tree, and branches of all the evils of our fallen nature. e. Every son and daughter of Adam are in the service of self, and what an awful and disastrous service it is. f. What hurried Eve headlong upon the forbidden fruit, but that wretched thing herself? What drew that one to kill his brother Abel, but that untamed self? What drove the old world on to corrupt their ways? Who but themselves, their sinful selves. g. Listen to Rutherford: "Every man blameth the Devil for his sins, but the great devil, the house-devil of every man, that house-devil that eateth and lieth in every man's bosom, is that idol that killeth all, himself. Oh! blessed are they who can deny themselves, and put Christ in the room of themselves! h. Remember this: "Till a man deny himself, he denieth God" (B.). i.. "Deny self or you will deny Christ" (B.), for self is both an Atheist and an idolater, self is an Antichrist, and glories in self-exaltation." j. The initial act of self-denial that leads to our salvation, must become the habit of our lives.

2. There can be No Successful Service for God Without Self-denial. a. A man and a boy went fishing. The boy caught plenty, but the man had not a single bite. b. The man inquired; when the boy replied, "Ah! thee mun lie thee daan, mon!" c. He was tall, and stood up, and the sun cast his shadow upon the water, frightening the fish. d. It is the shadow of self that mars our work.

III. The Example Our Lord Gave to Self-Denial.

1. Look at the Life of Our Lord-Ponder over these sayings. a. "I can of mine own self do nothing" (John 5:30). b. "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me" (John 5:30). c. "I do nothing of Myself, but as My Father hath taught Me, I speak these things" (John 8:28). d. "The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of Myself, but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works" (John 14:10). e. "For their sakes I sanctify Myself" (John 17:19).

2. Learn. a. He came to this earth by the Father's wish. b. Not a word did He speak by His own power. c. Not an act did He do of Himself. d. He was moved and controlled by God.

3. If Jesus thought it Necessary to Deny a Holy Self, what shall We say about our Sinful Self?

IV. The Path to a Life of Self -Denial. But how can I possibly live such a life? By walking close to Him.

1. A little boy was walking by the side of a missionary on the way to a meeting. The little fellow amused himself by the shadows they cast upon the path as they walked. After trying in vain to keep the shadow of himself from appearing outside that of his friend, he gave up the attempt, and said, "Please take my hand." In a little while he cried, "Oh, look, you can't find me now; you can't find one bit of my shadow now. I'm lost in you."

2. Exactly.

3. If you try by yourself to deny self, you will fail.

4. It is only companionship with Him that makes such possible.

5. It is only as we walk with our hands gripped in His.

6. Is not this sentence significant: "And Peter followed afar off." If following afar off led Peter to the denial of his Master, surely following very closely will lead to a daily denial of self.

Conclusion.

1. To pity self is to destroy yourself.

2. You cannot "come after" unless you come to Him. THE LORDSHIP OF THE SPIRIT.

"Where the Spirit is lord, there is liberty" (2 Corinthians 3:17). (Rotherham).

Introduction. The Apostle is contrasting the glory of the Old Covenant with that of the New, the Ministration of Death (1 Chronicles 4:7), and the Ministration of the Spirit (1 Chronicles 4:8), the Ministry of Condemnation (1 Chronicles 4:9), and the Ministration of Righteousness (1 Chronicles 4:9). The veil, originally on the face of Moses, is here spoken of as on the hearts of the people (1 Chronicles 4:15). Now we have to admit that there is not always liberty where the Spirit of the Lord is, so it is with relief, we note Rotherham's very fine rendering.

I. The Presence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is first without us, striving with us for God, seeking to convict us of sin. He then loves to draw us to the Saviour. The moment we come to the Blood of Sprinkling, the moment we come to the Fountain of Blood opened for us, that moment the Holy Spirit regenerates us, imparting to us the very life of God.

Yet the Holy Spirit may be dwelling within us as a grieved Spirit-grieved because of our disobedience and carnality-grieved, yet not departed.

II. The Lordship of the Holy Spirit. A woman-a godly Christian woman-lost her husband just when her two boys required the firm hand of a father. She had to take in lodgers to make a living. One of her lodgers, a fine Christian man, after staying there for about a year, married the widow. The guest became lord and master. It was most interesting to watch the change for the better in that household. It made all the difference in the world when the guest became master. The Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit at your conversion, dear reader, entered your heart and life as Guest. Have you made them Lord yet? Unless we recognise the Lordship of the Holy Spirit, and make Him Lord of our lives, we can never have lordship over ourselves, can never have the mastery over the world, the flesh, and the devil. Instead, our experience will be a very up and down one. Unless the Spirit is lord within us, we are unmastered, and our being is not in harmony. Pray observe, the Holy Spirit can be less than lord to us!

III. The Liberty Through the Lordship. In history we read of a Roman Emperor taken out of prison, yet with chains on hands and feet, placed on the Imperial Throne in order that state business might be transacted. How like many a Christian man and woman-truly the Lord's, yet in bondage to sin and the world. Verily he is not free who drags his chain. "Oh, Lord, make us grammatical Christians," earnestly prayed a man in a prayer meeting. Of course he really meant "genuine," only he had got a bit mixed in his English. A woman there took the petition up, and prayed, "O Lord,

Thou hast blest us in the past tense; Thou are blessing us in the present tense; and oh, Lord, Thou wilt go on blessing even in the future tense!" One present at once thought of 2 Corinthians 1:10, where we have the three tenses connected with deliverance. Praise God, He can do all three!

IV. The Growth Through that Lordship. 2 Corinthians 3:17 could read: "Now the Spirit is Lord, and where the Spirit is Lord there is liberty." And the next verse: "But we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from a Spirit that is Lord." This is a suggestive rendering. It clearly proclaims that, after we have made Him Lord, there is rapid development in our Christian lives, with a marked growth in the Divine likeness. Our gracious British King honours a public benefactor with a peerage, a lordship. The Holy Spirit has bestowed and conveyed to you great benefits, make Him Lord! Then greater blessings will follow.

V. Three Statements About the Spirit. In Ephesians 1:13-14, we have three statements concerning the Holy Spirit.

1. He is Called the Spirit of Promise (1 Chronicles 4:13). He is called by this name either because He was the promised Spirit, or He is the Spirit whose coming to us promises so much, is full of promise, and those promises are never broken or frustrated, only save through our own folly. To see some of the glorious possibilities, note the full significance of the other two names.

2. He is Likened to a Seal. The Holy Spirit Himself is the Seal. And the fact that we are sealed: a. Is a proof of our value, for only valuables are sealed. b. Proof of our acceptance in the Beloved (proof that Mordecai had gained the King's favour was in possessing his seal, the seal of the kingdom-study Esther). c. Proof that we are owned by the Lord. For He would not seal anything or anyone not belonging to Himself. d. Pledge of safety. Pilate sealed the tomb of Jesus to make it safe. e. Pledge of freshness. We seal jars when filled with Jam to preserve. f. God's method of conveying the Divine likeness. The seal makes the impression.

3. He is the Earnest (1 Chronicles 4:14). When we come to Christ, we become joint heirs with Him, and the Holy Spirit is the earnest and pledge of our ultimate possession to the full of that blessed inheritance.

HOLY FURY.

"And the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard those tidings, and his anger was kindled greatly" (1 Samuel 11:6).

What a strange effect of the Holy Spirit of God! We all know well that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, and other most admirable and desirable virtues-but Anger? Well, that is a surprise! The biographer of Savonarola, the great Italian patriot, commenting on his writings of the year 1492, remarks, "They are filled with manifestations of religious zeal to which the term Holy Fury may well be applied." What a striking phrase-Holy Fury! The Reformer was furious in his denunciation of wrong and his agitation after national righteousness, and this holy zeal found expression in Holy Fury.

There is one command in Holy Writ that has troubled many, viz.: "Be ye angry and sin not." What does this mean? Human and sinful anger laments injury to self, whereas Holy anger laments the injury done to God. The way to be angry and sin not is to be angry at nothing but sin. When God's

holy fire shall fall upon me, then I shall know what it is to be angry and sin not. The tidings that came to Saul was indeed sad. Read the context. God had not forsaken His people. He had one He could use, so He filled Saul with the Holy Spirit, and the result was righteous anger and Holy Fury. But note the preparatory work. It is very clear by chapter 9 of 1 Sam that Saul's first interview with the prophet Samuel was at a great sacrifice. The step to that Sacrifice was a step to the Throne. We, too, must meet the Lord at the Cross, discovering there God's view of ourselves, and His great purposes for us in the future. A question is asked in Psalm 90: "Who knoweth the power of Thine anger?" What a question. Only the Lord Jesus got to know the power of God's anger, and then at the Cross, particularly during the three hours' darkness.

"The Lord, in the day

Of His anger did lay

Your sins on the Lamb,

And He bore them away." The next step in the preparation of Saul was when he was "turned into another man" (1 Samuel 10:6-11), and that by the action and operation of the Holy Spirit. Does this not stand for what we know as Regeneration, the New Birth? And it all comes to this: Before the Spirit of God can fill me with holy anger and fury, He must be allowed to lead me to the Cross to see my sin dealt with, to save me from my sin, change me into another man by His wonderful regenerating grace, and then fill me with His Holy Spirit. THE NEED OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

"But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet" (Judges 6:34). The Holy Spirit required for the right performance of common duties. Did Gideon really need the special enduement of the Holy Spirit in order that he might blow a trumpet? "At Christmas," you say, "I only know too well that my children can blow trumpets quite easily without any special assistance!"

Ah, you miss a great lesson by reasoning of that sort. The great truth here is that we require the aid of God's Holy Spirit for the right performance of our ordinary everyday duties, as well as for the extraordinary things of life. Nothing counts in Heaven save that which is done by His grace and power. Really, what He desires is that we should do the ordinary things in life in an extraordinarily effective and efficient a manner. Even to quote a very familiar text, in the proper and effective way, we need the Holy Spirit (see 2 Chronicles 15:1-2). The late Dr. A. B. Simpson, in one of his addresses passed on a thought all Christian workers would do well to heed. It is as follows:

One Touch of God. At one time a group of men were attempting to raise an obelisk in Egypt to its base, and the work was under the supervision of a very exact and careful engineer.

They had raised the great mass of granite to within few inches of the level of the base and then were unable to lift it further. They could not get it up to the level of the pedestal by their utmost efforts. But there was a secret in Nature that they did not know. There was a sailor there who knew all about it. He shouted, "Wet the ropes!" As they did so, the ropes began to groan, and strain, and shrink, and the great mass rose, and rose, till it came to the level of the base, and they could push it over and establish it firmly on its pedestal.

It was a little secret, but it was an effectual one. The men had pulled at the cordage and strained away at it, but the obelisk was in mid-air, and there it hung until the cry came to wet the ropes.

Dear friends, the instant we let the Holy Ghost saturate the soul, the Lord Jesus Christ brings into it all His infinite forces of love and power. One touch of God will do all that our tugging and struggling could not do.

"O, YE OF LITTLE FAITH."

There are four occurrences of this word:

1. When our Lord rebuked Care, Matthew 6:30

2. When our Lord rebuked Fear, Matthew 8:26

3. When bur Lord rebuked Doubt, Matthew 14:31

4. When our Lord rebuked Faulty Reasoning, Matthew 16:7-8

FIRST THINGS.

1. Seek, Matthew 6:33

2. Give, 2 Corinthians 8:5

3. Reconciled, Matthew 5:24

4. Cast Out, Matthew 7:5

5. Learn, 1 Timothy 5:4

6. Say, Luke 10:5

7. Count, Luke 14:28 FIRE, AN EMBLEM OF THE SPIRIT.

"He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire"

(Matthew 3:11).

Introduction.

Holy Fire.

1. Or "with Holy Fire," as Dr. B. says it can be rendered.

2. Not, as some have thought, Holy Spirit and Tribulation.

3. But the fiery influence and power of the Holy Spirit.

Wanted.

1. A Chinese convert was asked what China needed. "What China needs are men with hot hearts, to tell the love of Jesus."

2. That is the great need of the world.

3. Whitsuntide shows us how that need and lack can be met.

4. It is being immersed in this Holy Fire; it is by knowing experimentally the fiery and glowing character of the Spirit's operations.

5. What China needs, Lancashire and all Christian countries require.

Contrast.

1. In this verse we see John's lofty conception of the work of Jesus.

Water and fire-our two great cleansing ministrants. Which is the more searching?

2. As is the difference between the two elements, so was the difference between his ministry and that of the Lord.

3. "The one effecting an outward cleansing, the other being an inward," penetrating and purifying power, "searching men through and through."

4. The one cold and negative, the other glowing and positive.

5. John recognised that the religious movement under his ministry was not sufficient for the human need. It was not equal to the deep corruption within men. It was a mere cleansing by water whereas what was required was a cleansing by fire.

Emblem of Deity.

1. Fire, all the world over, has been considered an emblem of Deity. In some cases it has been worshipped.

2. And in the Bible it is a much used symbol. a. Lamps of fire passing between the dismembered sacrifice and Abraham. (Here fire represented God.) b. The fire which enveloped the bush that Moses saw, and the pillar of fire at night, and fire on Mount Sinai. c. New Testament says: "Our God is a consuming fire."

3. And how diverse in the Bible are His operations. Sometimes the fire of God's Spirit is a wrathful energy, working pain and death to the transgressor. At others a merciful omnipotence, bringing light and warmth and joy and peace.

Trinity, Dove. "For the first time the Trinity, foreshadowed in many ways in the Old Testament is fully manifested." "Spirit descends. Father's Voice," and presence of Jesus.

1. How opposite to the other emblems.

2. Spirit fell upon our Lord as a Dove, on disciples as fire.

3. In Christ there was nothing to consume; in the disciples there was much to destroy.

4. Before we can know the Holy Spirit in His Dovelike, gentle office, we must know Him as the Fiery Destroyer, as a Consuming Fire. The Powerful and Searching Ministries of Fire.

1. What this emblem of the Holy Spirit can teach is simple and easy to discover and grasp.

2. We have eight of its ministries in mind-others may suggest themselves to you.

I. Fire Awakens. Fire of London. Strange find after Great Fire of London.

1. It is said that the heat of the Great Fire of London in 1666 so penetrated and warmed the soil that unknown flowers sprang from long and deeply buried seeds.

2. There the seeds lay asleep and forgotten in their tombs.

3. But the fire awakened them-called them forth.

Seed of the Word.

1. Is that not taking place in the spiritual world everyday.

2. The seeds of the Kingdom have been lodged in heart and mind from infancy, buried and forgotten.

3. But the fiery energy of the Holy Spirit calls them forth-and they spring up and bear fruit.

4. Oh, that God might do that now! Rabbi Duncan.

"One day as I sat down to study, and took my pen in my hand, I suddenly became the passive recipient of all the truths which I had heard and been taught in my childhood. I sat there unmoved for hours, and they came and preached themselves to me." So testified Rabbi Duncan.

II. Fire Reveals. 1 Corinthians 3:13.

1. This is the statement in this Scripture: "It shall be revealed by fire."

2. Fire shines as well as searches-it reveals as well as tests.

It Tests and Reveals my Godless Morality.

1. When the fire of God begins to shine upon us we find out the true nature of our godless morality.

2. And this is one of the most difficult matters.

3. Only when we see ourselves in His light do we get a right view of sin and unworthiness.

III. Fire Consumes. Isaiah 40:7.

1. There is a strange and unusual phrase in Isaiah 40:7. "The grass withereth and the flower fadeth because the Spirit of God bloweth upon it."

2. We would have written the contrary.

3. Here the Spirit is spoken of as a Destroyer!

4. Probably Isaiah had primarily the scorching east wind in mind-for there is but one Hebrew word for wind, breath, or spirit.

5. Even then we have a helpful lesson-he counts the withering, scorching wind as from the Lord.

6. But you will see he has men and women in mind.

Recreation Ground.

1. One Spring we saw men burning rank grass.

2. In September of same year the site of the charred mass was covered with beautiful fresh grass.

3. Before there can be fresh useful grass there must be a destruction of the old.

4. Death is the prelude to life.

5. The old growths, the product of your old life, must go in order that you might be clothed with the garments of beauty.

6. And under the breath of God's Spirit that beauty which is the product of the old nature will wither in order that you may be clothed with His beauty.

IV. Fire Purifies. How appropriate is Malachi 3:2-3.

Purify.

1. Only by fire can we separate the dross from the precious metal.

2. And fire, better than anything can destroy the impurities which are the germs of disease.

3. It is said that the Great Plague of London lingered and kept bursting out until the City was thoroughly purified by the Great Fire of London.

4. For the fire destroyed the germs of disease. My Need.

1. Purity.

2. Sweetness.

V. Fire Softens.

1. Stone and iron become soft under its fierce rays.

2. What need of tender hearts and bowed necks.

3. His Holy Fire can melt my hard heart, making it soft to take His impress.

VI.-Fire Transforms.

1. Here is a piece of hard, cold, rusty iron.

2. Put into the fire it loseth its rust and becomes white and glowing.

3. Fire lays hold upon cold dead matter, making it sparkle and blaze and turning it into the likeness of its own leaping brightness.

VII. Fire Enflames.

1. It transforms the hard cold iron into a glowing mass.

2. And Holy Spirit comes to kindle in men's souls a blaze of enthusiasm, of Divine love, melting all the icy hardness of the heart.

3. He gives ardent desires, warm and glowing hearts.

VIII. Fire Protects. Travellers in wild regions protect themselves at night by fires. Surrounded by fires they are safe and secure. Three Fires.

1. Observe a triple reference to fire.

2. But these three fires have not the same effect.

3. The first and last destroys, the second cleanses.

4. The first and last are in the form of serious warnings and threatenings, this is a gracious promise.

Remember.

1. There is a fire of anger as well as of love; the fire of the lightning which burns and consumes, as well as the fire of sunshine and of the cheery hearth.

2. Will you be baptised in the fire or consumed by it?

John.

1. What must I do to be baptised with the Holy Ghost?

2. First and foremost I must come to the Blood.

3. Note order in John 1:1 st, Christ as Lamb of God bearing away sin. 2nd, as Baptiser with the Holy Spirit. 3rd, Behold Lamb-just the Lord as Example.

4. Be first taken up with the work of Christ for you then the work of Christ in you. THE SPIRIT AS STANDARD BEARER.

"When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against Him" (Isaiah 59:19).

Introduction.

Standard Bearer.

1. The Standard Bearer was an important officer in olden times.

2. He not only bore the military insignia under which the army fought, but he always began the battle by striking the first blow, e.g., when Romans invaded Britain.

3. He was thus in the forefront of the battle, and bore the brunt of the fighting.

4. In the severe conflict, in the long campaign the Christian is engaged in, he has a standard-bearer, the Holy Spirit.

5. Thus the Spirit is the Standard-Bearer for and on behalf of the Lord's people.

6. To lift the standard- a. Means the declaration of war. b. Also organisation for war-gathering of foes. c. The actual conflict.

Reasons for Not Becoming a Christian. Not Refrain from Doing.

1. The advice our Lord gives in Luke 14 has been misunderstood by many.

2. He did not mean that, before you commence to build or go to war, you must first sit down to count the cost and refrain from doing so if you think you cannot succeed.

3. He meant that, by sitting down and carefully thinking over the matter, be able thus to make full and complete preparation so as to carry on the work successfully.

Why Some Refrain from Doing So.

1. There are many who, after calm reflection, fear to decide, for, say they, I fear to step over the line because Satan and temptation will come in like a flood sweeping me off my feet, bringing to me dismay, disaster and dishonour.

2. My friend, you have done well, not to underestimate the power of the enemy, for at times he does come in as a deluge, but Another will meet him for you.

3. Oh, timid soul, look up! Remember there are always two coming-ins.

Examples.

1. Do you think God will allow the enemy to triumph? Never.

2. The enemy's coming in is always met by the coming in of the Spirit of God.

3. And we have abundant proofs of this in Bible and history. In the Beginning.

1. It was so in the beginning.

2. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

3. But according to Isaiah 45:18, He did not create it without form and void, as we have it in Genesis 1:2.

4. It was the coming in of the enemy as a flood that brought about chaos.

5. Was the enemy to have all his own way?

6. The Spirit of God lifted up a standard against him: "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." In the Days of His Flesh.

1. Was it not so in the days of His flesh? Before the Lord's temptation there was His baptism.

2. Was not that awful tragedy on the Cross an evidence that the enemy had come in as a deluge?

3. But what about the Spirit of the Lord?

4. Pentecost followed Calvary. In History.

1. It has often been so in history.

2. Often and often the enemy has come in as a flood, and everything seemed to be at his mercy. But the Spirit has come in, and all was changed.

3. Take the time of the French Revolution as an example.

4. Christianity was dethroned, and Atheism ruled supreme, and the streets of Paris ran with blood.

5. But do you know things were ripe for similar events in this country-yet the Spirit of God through the revival under Wesley stemmed the horrid torrent.

6. Are we not ripe for a similar effusion of grace? (Note the awful coming in of evil in our own day and generation). In this Chapter.

1. So in this chapter.

2. It opens with an appalling description of Israel's moral condition. (Read Matthew 3:3-4, Matthew 3:7 and Matthew 3:8.) 3. Then in Genesis 1:9-15 we have a heart moving confession.

4. And then, as there was no intercessor (Matthew 3:16), God Himself interposed, and the Spirit of the Lord sweeps in.

5. This is a prophecy, and shall take place in Israel's history.

Difficult Verse.

1. This verse has evidently been a difficult one to translate.

2. An alternative rendering in R.V.: "For He shall come as a rushing stream which the breath of the Lord driveth."

3. Showing not only His agility, but also force, the power of His coming.

4. Put him to flight-showing the success of His coming. a. To masticate, break up food, is necessary to digestion.

5. We love to take a text and break it up.

I. The Enemy is a Person and not an Influence, and his identity is clear.

1. "The Lord shall lift up a standard against him," note.

2. This statement needs emphasising these days.

3. The master stroke of the enemy is his persuasion of men that he does not exist.

4. No one can hold this belief who clings to the inspiration of the Bible.

5. He is a person to be reckoned with. a. It was he who inspired Hannibal, Alexander, Napoleon, to execute their campaigns. b. He is at the bottom of all sin and intrigue.

II. His Coming Implies a Former Ejection.

He Must be Out.

1. His coming in implies that he must have been out.

2. Is this so with you?

3. This is a word of comfort addressed to those out of whom he has been cast out. The Enemy's Home.

1. What a telling description our Lord gives in Matthew 12:43, of the unclean spirit's resting place: "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none."

2. No real rest for the enemy out of our corrupt heart. How has the Enemy to be Put Out?

1. Only the Spirit of the Lord can, as margin has it, "put him to flight."

2. And to secure the incoming of the Holy Spirit there must be a coming to the Precious Blood.

III. The Casting Out of the Enemy is Followed by a Twofold Peace.

1. Have you noticed the twofold peace in John 20:19-22?

2. Twice over our Lord said: "Peace be unto you."

3. The first is the peace which rests on the blood; the second is the peace which depends upon the Spirit.

4. "He showed him His hands and His side," as much as to say, "It is a peace which rests on sacrifice accepted."

5. But when I receive that peace I am yet conscious of war within. An inward disturbance.

6. That war will only end by the incoming of the Spirit.

IV. The Condition of His Coming-Come to the Blood.

1. So it is in this chapter.

2. Before we read of the Spirit, we hear of the Intercessor and the Redeemer.

3. We must know the efficacy of the Blood before we can know the power of His anointing.

4. There must be repentance and a turning to the Blood: "Repentant tears are the waters upon which the Spirit of God moves."

V. When Once Ejected, the Holy Spirit will Keep him Out. The Ejection of the Enemy.

1. It is one thing to get the enemy out, another thing to keep him out.

2. That was a sad case our Lord referred to in Matthew 12. Then he saith: "I will return unto my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept and garnished."

3. There was no Spirit to withstand him.

4. The soul garrisoned by the Spirit of God is impregnable.

VI. When the Enemy Swoops Down upon us we shall Not Succumb-for the Holy Spirit will Put him to Flight.

How to Keep the Enemy Out.

1. Some temptations come to us as a wee purling stream.

2. Others gather force and come in as a pent up flood.

"Tempted and tried! oh, the terrible tide

May be raging and deep, may be wrathful and wide!

Yet its fury in vain, for the Lord shall restrain,

And for ever and ever Jehovah shall reign.

"Tempted and tried! There is One at thy side,

And never in vain shall His children confide;

He shall save and defend, for He loves to the end-

Adorable Master and glorious Friend."

CHRIST, THE HEALER OF THE BROKEN HEARTED.

Psalms 147:3-4; Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18.

Introduction. A Common Malady.

1. A broken heart is a very common thing at the present day.

2. Perhaps commoner now than it ever has been in the world's history.

3. Heart-break is not a rare and tragic episode in human experience.

4. Note, there is a difference between being broken-down and broken-hearted.

Broken-Down, not Broken-Hearted.

1. "Broken-down" people are not always brokenhearted folk.

2. We have known some who were broken in health, broken in wealth, even broken in love, yet not brokenhearted.

3. No; when we speak of people broken-hearted we mean more than broken-down.

Ruptured Heart.

1. We have heard of people who have died of ruptured heart.

2. Through brooding over sorrow.

I'm Heart-broken.

1. Meaning a great and overwhelming grief.

2. Something more than a pin-prick.

Hopeless.

1. So far as this world is concerned, such are hopeless.

2. Science has to a great extent conquered physical pain.

3. But science has done nothing to diminish mental pain.

4. Christian Science-which is no science at all-seeks to cure by leading people to ignore-funny sort of cure, isn't it?

Various Causes for Heart-Break.

1. Broken by Grief. a. That is suggested by Psalms 147:3 (for "wounds," margin has "griefs"). b. Grief through bereavement. c. Grief through loss and sorrow.

2. Broken-Hearted by Failure.

3. Broken by Sin. "The sacrifices of God are a broken and a contrite heart." "He will have a whole heart or none, yet He won't despise a broken one." a. Their Own Sin.

(1) There is little of this, alas, to-day.

(2) Why should there not be? We have sinned as great as our fathers. b. The Sins of Others.

I. The Lord's Commission (Isaiah 61:1). He is the Great Heart Specialist from the Court of Heaven.

1. The great and crying need has been met, thank God. "Sent."

2. A skilful physician or surgeon sometimes is sent to a Crowned Head suffering, in response to a pressing need.

3. He was sent: a. Not because we asked Him to come. b. Nor because we desired Him to come. c. Not to the great ones only, but to all.

4. He is a Heart Specialist, from the Court of Heaven, sent by the Father Himself. "He hath sent me."

Five Symbols (Luke 4:18) of sin's handiwork.

1. Poor-sin impoverishes.

2. Captives-sin imprisons and captivates.

3. Blind-sin blinds.

4. Bruised-sin bruises.

5. Broken-hearted-the result of the discovery of all the former.

II. The Lord's Qualifications. His Greatness.

1. The Lord Knows, the Mystery of the Stars (Psalms 147:3-4).

a. What a strange combination. b. The Psalmist speaks of star-counting and heart-healing in the same breath. c. What a grand breathless thought of God!

(1) "He telleth the number of the stars."

(2) The mystery of the stars is known by Him. d. Why speak thus of God?

(1) Only the infinite can heal the soul.

(2) God could not minister to broken hearts if the stars were too much for Him.

(3) "The mystery of the stars, and the mystery of human pain are parts of one great mystery that is no mystery to God."

(4) The God Who alone can heal is the God Who counts the stars.

(5) No thought of God narrower and lower than that can ever truly comfort us.

2. He has Received the Heavenly Enduement. He has received the Spirit in fulness.

3. He has Suffered with the Same Malady.

a. Jesus died of a broken heart, and not as the result of the physical tortures of the Cross. b. We could not insist upon medical men suffering from certain maladies before they attempt to cure them. Yet Jesus has suffered from a broken heart. c. A broken-hearted man needs a broken-hearted Saviour.

4. He Made the Heart.

a. He who made the heart alone can heal it. b. He is the only real heart doctor.

III. The Lord's Success.

He First Binds.

a. Giving instant relief. b. Giving instant rest. So Binds that it "Heals."

a. It is not a partial or temporary healing. b. It goes to the very core.

How Does He Heal?

a. Ah, you must leave that to Him. b. Come to Him.

Application.

1. To find healing for such sorrow as this men must find God.

2. When our Lord read Isaiah 61:1-2 in the Nazareth Synagogue He added: "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears."

3. Has it been fulfilled in your experience? It may be. THE SERAPH'S WINGS.

Isaiah 6:2.

Introduction.

1. This is the only mention in Scripture of the Seraphim.

2. Are they identical with the Cherubim? Note, Cherubim are always spoken of as before the Throne, whereas the Seraphim above.

3. These are celestial beings named but unexplained.

4. Word "seraphim" means "burning ones."

5. Burning ones: a. Nearest the Throne. b. Flashing with splendour. c. Full of swift energy, as a flame of fire. d. Glowing with fervid love. e. Blazing with enthusiasm.

6. There is no ice in His presence.

7. The nearer we get to Him the more we shall glow and burn.

8. Cold religion is a contradiction in terms, though it is a reality in professors.

I. The Wings of Reverence. "With twain he covered his face." As a man brought suddenly into the sunlight, out of a darkened chamber, by an instinctive action shades his eyes with his hands.

1. The incapacity of the highest creature, with the purest vision, to gaze undazzled into the shining light of God.

2. Though with far feebler sight and more sinful, we may behold His glory veiled in Christ.

3. Absolute need of the lowliest reverence in our worship of God.

4. In many congregations it is apparent to all that there is a carelessness and shallowness, and a want of a realisation of the majesty of the Father. This should not be.

5. If a seraph hides his face, surely it becomes us to do likewise, crying "Holy."

II. The Wings of Humility. "With twain he covered his feet."

1. An instinctive lowly sense of unworthiness, caused him to fold wings over his feet.

2. The nearer we get to God the more we shall be aware of our limitation and unworthiness.

3. Once get that sight, and away goes my self-conceit, and all my fancied superiority above others.

III. The Wings for Service. "With twain he did fly."

1. That is the emblem of joyous, buoyant, unhindered motion. Alas, how slow-footed we are!

2. Whoever, beholding God, has found need to hide his face from the light, and to veil his feet from the All-seeing Eye, will also feel impulses to go forth in His service.

3. The act of service here was the purging of a sinner from his uncleanness.

4. Cherubim have to do with brazen altar, Seraphim with the laver.

5. Those make the best workers who are reverent and humble, and who see the King of Glory. THE VISION.

Isaiah 6.

I. The Vision of the Lord.

1. He was worshipping in the Temple when he saw the Lord.

2. Whether he saw this outwardly or inwardly we know not.

3. Great leaders go; but God remains. The Throne of Judah had been emptied but he saw the Throne that is ever filled.

II. The Vision of Perfect Service. Only reference to seraphim in the Bible. He saw two of the Lord's servants.

1. Position. Near the Throne. Oh! to be near!- "above it. "

2. Posture. a. Covered faces-reverence. b. Covered feet-self-hiding.

(1) Forgetful of past service rendered.

(2) Not taken up with past service.

(3) Hidden service. c. Flying.

(1) Alacrity. Rendering swift, unquestioning obedience.

(2) But not before adoration. d. Fellowship with one another. "One cried unto another. "

(1) Not dumb to each other.

(2) Spoken to each other of the Lord.

(3) Spoke of the holiness of the Lord. The Prophet's Confession.

1. He discovered his own impurity by gazing on purity.

2. The revelation given to him was of uncleanness and unfitness in speech and word.

3. He had been busy pronouncing six woes on others, he reserved the seventh for himself.

4. What he confesses is not what he had done, but what he was: First, "I am": we are concerned about what we have done at conversion; Second, at what we are-sanctification. The Prophet's Cleansing

1. God uses three main agents in cleansing men from their defilements-Blood, fire and water, i.e., Calvary, Pentecost, and the daily action of God's Word upon the conscience.

2. The prophet was cleansed by fire and blood-"Live coal" (burning wood) from off the altar of sacrifice.

Note the Points-Seven C's.

1. Contemplation. "I saw."

2. Conviction. "I am unclean."

3. Confession. "Woe is me," etc.

4. Cleansing. "Thy sin purged."

5. Call. "Whom shall I send? "

6. Consecration. " Here am I."

7. Commission. "And He said Go." THE MINISTRY OF THE CLOUD.

"It shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud" (Genesis 9:14).

Introduction. There were three Covenant signs.

1. The Rainbow. Sign of God's promise to preserve the earth from another flood.

2. Circumcision. Sign that the circumcised was in the covenant of blessing.

3. The Sealing by the Holy Spirit. A sign of the Justification and Regeneration of the believer. The rainbow was God's first covenant sign. He did not want His people to live in fear and dread. The appearance of the rainbow, which seemingly united Heaven and earth, proclaimed the friendliness of God.

I. Clouds Come Over Us.

1. How familiar we are with the clouds in the sky.

2. Clouds come not only over the sky of nature, but the sky of our lives.

3. Often there is for us the clouds of adversity, of sorrow, sickness, and bereavement.

4. We sometimes say, "So-and-so is under a cloud," and we know what is meant.

5. But if clouds come over us, let us not forget it is

II. Only by God's Permission.

1. "I bring a cloud." Clouds do not please themselves, but obey wonderful laws, and the Lawgiver.

2. God knows all about our clouds.

3. We read, the disciples on the mount of Transfiguration "feared as they entered into the cloud."

4. We ought not to fear, for- a. He has brought the cloud. b. The clouds obey Him, and, further, III. God is in the Cloud.

1. Said He to Moses: "I come unto thee in a thick cloud."

2. Thus the clouds are the dwelling-place of God.

3. Often God answers our prayers to be drawn nearer to Him by sending a cloud.

4. We get to know each other better in the mist, before the mists are rolled away.

5. The clouds shut us in to God.

6. Remember IV. His Presence is in the Cloud.

1. Therefore brightening and glorifying it.

2. We read in Exodus 16:10 : "The glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud."

V. There is no Cloud Without a Bow of Promise.

"The bow shall be seen in the cloud."

VI. Dark Clouds Mean Bright Blessing.

1. This is so in nature: dark clouds mean showers of fertilising rain.

2. It is equally so in grace.

3. Thus the clouds are more than shutters; they are also springs of blessing.

Application.

1. A woman prayed for more patience.

2. God answered the prayer by sending tribulation.

3. Tribulation worketh patience.

"Ye fearful saints fresh courage take.

The clouds ye so much dread

Are big with mercies, and will break

In blessing on your head." THE METHOD OF THE DIVINE PLOUGHMAN.

"The plowers plowed upon my back" (Psalms 129:3).

"Doth the plowman plow continually to sow? Doth he continually open and break the clods of his ground?" (Isaiah 28:24, R.V.).

I. The Ploughing.

1. How often we are able to repeat the words of the Psalm.

2. They are particularly applicable to our Lord.

3. And Israel as a nation, too, can take up the words.

4. Yes, we, too, know something of the work of the Divine Ploughman. The plough of God's providence has often cut deep, turning over our plans, and purposes, breaking up the even tenor of our life.

5. And making the once clear plain a sea of choppy ridges.

II. Why the Ploughing?

1. The joy of harvest is the outcome of the painful operation of ploughing.

2. We would never know ourselves unless the plough had not turned over revealing the hidden depths of our being.

III. How Long?

1. Not continually.

2. If God ploughs, He ploughs to sow.

3. He does not use the plough for fun.

4. He does not exercise Almightiness to crush feebleness.

IV. Great Comfort.

1. To Israel. The plough has been at work nearly two millenniums, but it will cease and blessing follow.

2. To Sinners. a. Plough of God's Spirit at work, but will be followed by b. Conversion and regeneration. c. The plough is working, let Him lead you to the Saviour.

3. To Saint. a. Plough of God's providence works in our lives. b. The calm will follow the storm; day follows night; harvest follows Spring. c. There will be the joy of a great harvest by and by. OUR HAIRS NUMBERED.

"But the very hairs of your head are all numbered"

(Matthew 10:30).

Observe, "numbered," not simply counted. Dr. Pierson has pointed out that "every hair has its own number, and if one had disappeared that number has gone out of the list. What marvellous thought it is!" Note the statement just before this: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father." This means more than that God knows: it means that He is with the fallen bird. This is wonderfully comforting, especially when we remember that we are of more value to Him than many sparrows.

THREE HARVESTS.

1. Past, Jeremiah 8:20

2. Present, Matthew 9:37

3. Future, Matthew 13:39

COME.

1. And Rest, Matthew 11:28

2. And See, John 1:39

3. And Drink, John 7:37

4. And Dine, John 21:12

5. And Follow Me, Mark 10:21

6. And Rest Awhile, Mark 6:31

7. And Inherit, Matthew 25:34 WEEPING, YET SOWING.

"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Psalms 126:5-6).

What a splendid verse is this! It has been an inspiration for the Christian worker ever since it was penned by good King Hezekiah nearly two and a half millenniums ago. It may be called an inspired proverb. It has found its way into general literature, and is frequently quoted for different purposes. It really is prophecy, fulfilled many times in Israel's history, with a fuller and grander fulfilment yet ahead. But right on the surface it presents a problem. For whoever has heard of a weeping sower, of a farmer or gardener weeping as they sowed! Usually this process is undertaken in a spirit of great cheerfulness and abounding hope. They surely never "sow in tears" though they "reap in joy." What a problem this presents.

Yet the clue is very simple. Study the whole Psalm and readily the problem will be solved. It is a Psalm of Captivity, or rather, a Psalm of the return from captivity. "When the Lord turned again the Captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream." The news of imminent emancipation seemed too good to be true. Yet the promise materialised. "Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing." Even the heathen exclaimed, "The Lord hath done great things for them," so overwhelmingly patent was their deliverance of the Lord's own doing. When the happy and fortunate freed-men heard this they with one consent exclaimed, "The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad."

Gladly, joyfully, triumphantly, they returned to their own beloved land. But the sight of ruined cities towns, villages, and vineyards unsealed the fountain of tears and the mourning choked the new-found joy. But here is the point: Did they abandon themselves to their sorrows? Did they nurse their grief with folded arms? By no means. Though with tears, they commenced their labours to remedy the sad state of affairs. They ploughed, and harrowed, and sowed, though with tears. Though they went forth weeping, yet they carried with them their seed baskets, bearing precious seed. Consequently, by and by, they came again "with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." The application is not difficult to see. Many a business man to-day is face to face with ruin. A good business, the result of years of labour, has ceased to exist. What then? Must the unfortunate one abandon himself to despair? No; though with tears, the old tasks must be taken up. The day following the disastrous Chicago fire, this notice was found on the blackened ruins of a once flourishing shop: "Everything lost, except wife, children, and hope I Business resumed as usual to-morrow morning!" Capital!

Leaders of Christian enterprises sometimes, through no fault of their own, find the work of years undone. What then? Hope must not be abandoned, but the seed basket taken hold of, and the old familiar tasks taken up in the certainty of an abounding harvest. Is there not a message here for defeated and dispirited believers who are grieving over their backslidden state, and over the waste and ruin in their lives and experiences. If confession of sin is made, there will not only be forgiveness, but in Jesus Christ there is full and complete deliverance, and the restoration of the years that the locusts have eaten. Such may, yea must, take up again the old and blessed familiar tasks in the Lord's service, assured that "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy."

There are seven facts concerning the Christian worker to be noted in pondering on this Scripture.

I. His Activity. "He that goeth." God has a work for all to do. Happy are we if the tasks occupying our time and thought are Divinely appointed.

II. His Unselfishness. "He that goeth forth." Will-ing to leave comfortable arm chairs and warm firesides at the call of duty, remembering that there can be no gains without pains.

III. His Sincerity. "He that goeth forth weeping." That is to say, attending to the allotted tasks in no mere dry and perfunctory manner. Doing our work in no empty professional manner, but with real heart and feeling. Suffering is the price of all real progress.

IV. His Resources. "Bearing precious seed." The seed is the Word of God. His precious truth has to be sown in faithfulness and confidence. What a glorious seed-basket have we in the Word of God.

V. His Assurance. "Shall doubtless." Turn that word round-less doubt, without any doubt. We can go forth in absolute hope of a glorious harvest.

VI. His Gladness. "Come again with rejoicing," The joy of harvest is a real very joy indeed.

VII. His Reward. "Bringing his sheaves with him." Coming before the great Reward Seat not alone, not empty handed. What a reward for sacrificial service.

LO!

ONE OF THE MONOSYLLABLES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

The Lo! of-

1. Spiritual Surrender,|Mark 10:28|

2. Consecration,|Isaiah 6:7|

3. Christ's Continual Presence,|Matthew 28:20|

4. Doing the Will of God,|Hebrews 10:7|

5. Real Worship,|Revelation 5:6; Revelation 14:1| THE FLOWING OIL.

2 Kings 4:1-7

Introduction.

Trivial.

1. "A simple, trivial, incident, not worthy of incorporation in a Divine Book," say some.

2. "Simple," we admit; "trivial" we deny. It is as full of lessons as an egg is full of meat. The Story.

1. "A certain woman." Rabbis say she was wife of Obadiah.

2. She had lost her husband. Sad, sad loss!

3. He had left her with a load of debt. Not the first or the last of such instances. How careful husbands should be!

4. The creditor, according to Mosaic Law, had the right, which he was about to put into practice, of taking the children to be bondmen. (See Exodus 21:1-11; Lev. 25.) 5. "Pot of oil." Had she kept this for her burial?

I. Literal Application to Those in Money Difficulties.

Widows.

1. This is one amongst many instances in the Bible of God's care for widows.

2. Jeremiah 49:11 has been a comfort to many: "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive, and let thy widows trust in Me." This is a glorious promise.

Literal.

1. We have so spiritualised this that we have lost sight of the fact that it was a literal money difficulty.

2. How this debt had been incurred we know not. Rabbis say Obadiah incurred it in feeding the 100 prophets.

3. "He feared the Lord," therefore it was not incurred by ill-living. A Natural Instinct.

1. The afflicted, by natural instinct, look to religious people to help them in their hour of trial.

2. They even come to penniless people like Elisha and missionaries.

3. Unlike many such suppliants, she was a good woman.

How Solved.

1. By the "Shut Door."

2. By the woman's "Shut Door," and not merely Elisha's.

3. Many ask our prayers, but do not pray for themselves.

Easier.

I. Some say it is easier to pray about the soul than the purse.

Debt Paid First. Note: First pay debt then keep rest for yourself.

II. Spiritual Application is to Spiritual Insolvency.

1. What about the empty vessels of our neighbours? Empty hearts, minds, lives.

2. You are to fill them. How?

3. You must have your own vessels filled first, then your neighbours.

4. How filled. "Shut Door." The value and importance of prayer for others and for ourselves.

1. Her Condition of Need. Spiritual Insolvency.

(1) There is such a thing as spiritual as well as financial insolvency. (In Church: dearth of great men. In individual life: carnal living.) (2) There are spiritual obligations: a. To God. He expects holiness. b. To man. They expect more of us,, (3) There is such a thing as spiritual bankruptcy. A bankrupt is one unable to meet his obligations.

(4) She herself was not the cause of her unfortunate position. It was due to another. So is this with you and me. Our state of insolvency is inherited.

(5) Others were dependent upon her. a. No one liveth unto himself. b. Others suffer for our lack of grace.

2. Her Assets.

a. She had Good Family Connections.

(1) Some are proud of noble ancestry. They boast of possessing "Blue Blood."

(2) "Have you any lords in your family?" asked a schoolboy of another. "Well," said the little fellow, "I have heard my mother say as how the Lord Jesus is our Elder Brother."

(3) By nature we have a sad family connection-with Adam in his fall.

(4) By grace we have a glorious family connection- with and in Christ.

(5) Can you declare your pedigree? Have you the assurance of salvation? b. She was Thoroughly Dissatisfied. c. She had a Good Friend to Consult. Yet that was not sufficient. d. She Already Possessed a Little Oil.

(1) Oil, emblem of Holy Spirit.

(2) Only applied after the Blood.

(3) Unless we have the Spirit we are none of His.

(4) But has the Holy Spirit got possession of us?

3. Her Deliverance.

a. Was by the Way of the Cross. In two cases. First: Cross of Christ. Second: Her own cross.

(1) She had to be quite willing to become to her neighbours a laughing stock.

(2) This was not the world's way of wiping away debt.

(3) Remember He is still without the camp!

(4) She came to an end of herself. b. Was by the Multiplication of Oil (1) That was how her insolvency disappeared.

(2) But when did the oil multiply? c. Was by the Shut Door.

(1) Not by the reading and study of good books.

(2) Not by attending good meetings.

(3) But by getting alone with God.

(4) By spreading before Him our own empty vessels of desire and expectancy. (We can do this each day.) (5) And the neighbours empty vessels, too! The Shut Door. Can we undervalue the Shut Door? Yes. It is of vital importance in life and service.

1. It meant Salvation for Noah and his family (Genesis 7:16). First Shut Door in the Bible; and God shut that door.

2. It meant Sanctification in figure for the widow in 2 Kings 4:4.

3. It meant Satisfaction for Thomas and rest of disciples (John 20:19-20). No other Evangelist mentions that Shut Door.

4. It meant Success for Elisha (2 Kings 4:33). Gehazi did not shut his door. THE IRON THAT SWAM.

2 Kings 6:1-7.

Introduction. The Incident.

1. Some of the most wonderful stories are recorded in the life of the prophet Elisha. Possibly none more wonderful than this of the "Lost Axe Head." A school of prophets flourished under the fostering care of the prophet, who lived with and at the school.

2. The prophetic college became too small. Need of larger premises.

3. The prophet's permission for extension was first sought, then his presence solicited.

4. They decided to do the alterations themselves.

5. On reaching the Jordan banks they commenced operations.

6. Whilst engaged in this healthful exercise, one of the young prophets, possibly wielding his axe with more force than judgment, caused the iron head to fly off and disappear under the water.

Some Smile.

1. Some worldly wise folk smile unbelievingly when they read or hear read this incident.

2. It is valuable.

I. A Lesson on the Divine Care.

1. This spiritual application is thus put by John Newton: Not one concern of ours is small.

If we belong to Him;

To teach us this, the Lord of all.

Once made the iron to swim.

2. This may seem a triviality to the worldly folk.

3. But He takes a real, living, practical interest in everything in our lives.

4. It was bad enough to lose an axe head; but worse, seeing it was borrowed.

5. He is interested in your axes and knives, and pots and pans and brushes.

II. A Lesson in Spiritual Effectiveness.

1. It points out for the Christian believer's edification, the danger of losing spiritual effectiveness.

2. The man did not lose the whole of his axe, but the effective part of it, without which he was useless in the work.

3. The axe head was lost. a. At a time of growth and expansion. b. In the midst of service.

4. He did not lose: a. The axe handle, nor b. His knowledge of how trees should be cut.

5. How he recovered his loss. a. He confessed his loss. b. He returned to the place where he lost it.

Satan does not mind if we deepen our knowledge and keep sound our doctrine, but he wishes to rob us of the keen edge of spirituality that is effective.

6. One great secret of retaining our spiritual effectiveness is abiding in Him, as in our next point.

III. A Lesson on the Importance of Union.

1. In this story the truths set forth in John 15 may be found.

2. Two kingdoms here. Iron, belonging to mineral; wood, to vegetable.

3. When separated-useless.

4. Nothing must be allowed to come in between the Lord and ourselves.

5. If left to ourselves we shall "sink" and be useless.

6. There is always the downward pull in the world, and always something in our old nature to answer to that pull.

7. How to maintain our abiding. a. Union maintained. b. Meditation of the Word. c. Cleansing by Word.

IV. A Lesson on the Salving of a Sinner. The Sinner.

1. The axe head may be taken to represent the sinner.

2. He had lost what was really not his own. We belong to God.

3. Its nature was to sink deeper. So poor sinner is only capable, apart from the power of God, of getting further away. The Place.

1. The place where it fell, Jordan, the sinner's position before God, viz., in the death of trespasses and sins.

2. Jordan stands for death.

How to be Saved.

1. Can the axe head raise itself? No; help must come outside itself.

2. God has cut down a branch (Isaiah 11:1), and cast it into the pit of death.

3. When cast into the waters it disappears.

4. But only for a moment, to re-appear in resurrection.

Comes to Us.

1. The stock came to where the axe head lay.

2. So the Lord Jesus comes to where we are. The Result.

1. Recovered.

2. Raised.

3. Not "the iron did float"-a dead corpse can do this.

4. The iron did swim-does what is contrary to nature. This meant progress.

5. Union with the living Christ means: a. Life. b. Energy. c. Progress. d. Restoration.

6. Restoration to proper and original owner-God.

How to be Raised.

1. Tell the Lord.

2. Consult the servant of the Lord. THE LORD WRESTLING WITH JACOB.

Genesis 32:24-32.

This Contest I. A Literal Fact. Not a dream or vision.

II. Its Purpose. To bring him to the end of self.

III. It Took Place. When he was alone with God.

IV. It Concluded. When resisting Jacob became clinging Jacob.

V. Its Fruit. Shrivelling of self-life and enriched character.

Low Shelves. The late Dr. F. B. Meyer once wrote: "I used to think that God's best gifts were on tall shelves, and I must grow tall in order to reach them. Now I have learned that they are on low shelves, and that we must get down in the very dust to take them." The Lord had bestowed many gifts and blessings on Jacob, tall though he was in his own estimation, but ere he could have the best of all he had to bend very low.

Jacob's Prayer. He schemed and plotted first (Genesis 32:3-8), then prayed. He reminded God he was on this journey by His command (Genesis 32:9); confessed his unworthiness (Genesis 32:10); remembered God's bountiful kindness to him (Genesis 32:10); frankly disclosed his fears (Genesis 32:11); reminded Him of His promise (Genesis 32:12). "The best we can say to God in prayer is what He has said to us." The Fruit.

1. A Life-long Limp. "The limp of Jacob was indeed a life-long disability, but it was also the patent of his nobility."

2. The Shrivelling of the Sinew was symbolical of the shrivelling of the "I," the self-life.

3. The New Name. He was knighted on the field, on the scene of his defeat.

4. Power with God and Man.

5. Sunrise. It is sunrise with the soul which has definite experience with God. THE APPLE OF HIS EYE.

Zechariah 2:8.

At first sight it is not easy to say whether "His Eye" means God's eye, or the eye of the one who seeks to injure God's servant. The latter is certainly true. He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his own eye, i.e., will do himself irreparable damage, or injure himself in the most sensitive part. The enemies of God's people sooner or later find this out by bitter experience. But we may take it that God is here calling His people the apple of His eye, and this figure of speech is most suggestive, teaching us several things.

I. The Delight we are to Him. We are the Apple of His Eye.

II. The Blessed Unity Between the Lord and His Own. He calls you His eye. It is the most prominent part of our appearance. What a close and blessed unity this suggests. Nearer we cannot get, for how near the eye is to the individual!

III. The Loving Care He Exercises over His Own (Deuteronomy 32:10; Psalms 17:8). "He kept him (Israel) as the apple of His eye." Thus declared Moses concerning God's care over His people. You thought you were friendless and helpless, but you have a wonderful Defender, and He exercises a wonderful care over you. See how swiftly and automatically we defend our eyes. Let David's prayer be yours: "Keep me as the apple of the eye" (Psalms 17:8).

IV. Learn the Special Mission He has for His Own. In the Hebrew the pupil of the eye is called the gate of the eye, because through it enters the light. How appropriate is this. His people is the pupil, the gate through which the light comes to lighten those in darkness. THE LORD THINKETH UPON US.

"But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me"

Psalms 40:17

I. A Confession. It is a confession of poverty. That may be true in a literal sense-poor as far as this world's goods are concerned. But it certainly is true in a spiritual sense. A confession many do not care to make. It is so natural for us to hide the fact of our poverty, whether temporal or spiritual. Some do not make it for they do not know of it. We refer specially to spiritual poverty (Revelation 3:17).

Don't be afraid. He knows. Don't be afraid to tell Him. Whether you do or no, He knows all about it.

II. An Encouragement.

Comforting. How comforting it is for a poor person to hear that some wealthy relative is thinking of him. Alas! they often just think, and nothing more!

Certain. One thing is certain, if God thinks of us, all is well. "What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us that we perish not."

How do we Know He Thinks of Us? Because of what He says in His Word. "For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil" (Jeremiah 29:11). Because of what He is constantly doing.

III. The Nature and Character of God's Thinking. Not about, but upon us. There is a sense of awayness, of distance, in His thinking about us. When the children are at school, mother thinks about them; but when they are seated at the table she thinks upon them. It might be rendered, "is thoughtful over me." There is a sense of nearness and affection in the expression-"Upon." God's thinking is done whilst bending over us in love.

"Jesus now is bending o'er thee,

Jesus lowly meek and mild." THE MYSTERIOUS YOUNG MAN

Mark 14:51.

Who was he? The more we ponder on this incident the more we are led to believe it was Mark himself, the writer of this Gospel, and for the following reasons:

1. This way of referring to himself is quite in keeping with the usual manner of personal references in the Gospels. This was how John spoke of himself in his Gospel.

2. The very triviality of the incident seems to point to Mark as the young man concerned. This incident has little or no bearing on the story. Yet it was not trivial to Mark.

3. The minuteness of the reference inevitably suggests that the Evangelist is giving a bit of his own history.

4. "Having a linen cloth"-having a sindon, a fine and very costly cloth, so called because it was woven at Scinde, India. It was a kind of linen cloth greatly valued, but exceedingly costly, and only the very wealthy could afford it. Now we do know that Mark and his mother were wealthy.

5. In all probability this young man had been a silent, hidden observer of our Lord's agony and prayer in Gethsemane, and that is one reason why, though the three selected disciples were asleep, we have so full an account of what really happened. A STRANGE NESTING PLACE.

"Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest. . . even Thine altars, O Lord of Hosts" (Psalms 84:3).

Introduction. A Strange Nesting Place. A strange nesting place was chosen by a pair of Birmingham thrushes, under a railway car that four times a day does the journey between Sutton and Birmingham. But here is a stranger-the Temple altar.

Context. The Psalmist is not hinting that the altars of the Lord had been so neglected and disused that birds had nested there. Unable to attend the services of the sanctuary, his heart yearned for that privilege (Mark 14:2), and he envied the birds that nested there. The Altar. The lessons are simple and important. The altar speaks of bloodshedding, of sacrifice, and loudly speaks of Cross. The Cross, God's Best Altar.

I. The Weakest can Find Sanctuary in the Altar, Place of Safety. The weak sparrow and swallow found sanctuary in God's house. But the place of blood-shedding was the place of safety. The Cross is your only sanctuary, your only City of Refuge.

II. The Weakest find the Place of Death the Place of Life. The place of blood-shedding was not only the place of safety, but the place of life. When I cling to the Cross I find- 1. Pardon.

2. Life for a look.

III. The Most Timid find the Place of Sacrifice a Place of Quietness. In this distracting world it is possible to be quiet and do our work.

"Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of Sin,

The blood of Jesus whispers peace within."

IV. Place of Sacrifice the Starting Point of all True Service. Here the altar was a place for busy service.

SEVEN ASPECTS OF SALVATION.

1. Horn of Salvation-the Power of Salvation, Luke 1:69

2. Rock of Salvation-the Stability of our Salvation, Psalms 95:1

3. Tower of Salvation-the Security of our Salvation, 2 Samuel 22:51

4. Helmet of Salvation-Preservation of our Salvation, 1 Thessalonians 5:8

5. Cup of Salvation-the Joy of our Salvation, Psalms 116:13

6. Wells of Salvation-the Refreshment in our Salvation, Isaiah 12:3 THE FIVE RECORDED OCCURRENCES OF OUR LORD PRAYING.

1. At His Baptism, Luke 3:21

2. On the Mount of Transfiguration, Luke 9:28

3. When Choosing His Disciples, Luke 6:12

4. When the Jews Sought to Kill Him, John 12:27

5. In Gethsemane, Luke 22:42 AMEN.

"My heart wishes it to be exactly so"

(Chinese Version).

"Amen" Study No. I.

Introduction.

1. No word used more in devotion than this.

2. And we might add, none more lightly used.

3. We use it as a fitting finish to our prayers, though its full significance is not so well known.

4. It is a word capable of many renderings, its precise meaning to be decided by context.

I. It is Used as a Note of Affirmation. In the Douay Version of Scriptures our Lord's "Verily, Verily" is rendered "Amen! Amen."

II. It is Used as Meaning "True, Faithful, Certain, Steadfast." In Revelation 3:14, Christ is called "The Amen." Oh, how true is He! How faithless we are!

III. In 2 Corinthians 1:20, All the Promises of God are said to be "Amen in Christ," that is, they are certain and firm to those in Christ.

IV. There is a fourth use and meaning of the word "Amen," the one we often make of it. The use our Lord taught us to make of it: "So be it," or, "So let it be."

V. A friend stated that his sister says it ought to be pronounced "A-men!!!" meaning "It shall be!" Sometimes we feel we are storming Heaven and can then lay full claim.

VI. But the Chinese Characters used for Amen, mean, "My heart wishes it to be exactly so."

a. Is this not a charming definition. b. Another way of saying: "Lord, this is not the mere expression of my lips, but the language of my heart." A VERY DESIRABLE "AMEN."

Oh, to leave this world thus with a benediction.

Luke 24:50-53.

"Amen" Study No. 2.

I. Joy and Praise.

1. No real Christian can but long- a. For more joy (Luke 24:52), b. And for more of the spirit of praise.

2. To our sorrow we have to confess we lack often these essentials.

3. Now and again we are in this frame of mind.

4. But these were so "continually."

5. Said John Livingstone (1603-1672): "The capital crime of the Lord's people is barrenness in praises."

6. Rutherford said: "How joyful is my heart that ye write ye are desirous to join with me in praising, for it is charity to help a debtor to pay his debts."

II. Praising and Blessing.

1. Not interchangeable terms.

2. To praise is to magnify His mercy; to bless is to speak good of His Name.

III. Continually. Some seem to think that this meant "attendance only at stated hours of prayer."

IV. What will Lead Us to this Frame of Mind and Soul?

1. Be blessed by Him (we must be blessed before we can bless).

2. Worship Him.

3. Abide in Him (He is our Temple).

4. Then you will praise Him more.

"AMEN" TO JOHN'S STRANGE COMMAND.

1 John 5:21

"Amen" Study No. 3.

I. What is an Idol?

1. This "Amen" must be considered as not merely a fitting conclusion to the Epistle, but as a heartfelt desire concerning this last command.

2. We might be inclined to think this has no application to us.

3. There is much idolatry to-day even in England. a. Of course there is to-day Image worship. We would do as John Knox did, when lying in irons in the French Galley. He was asked to worship an image of the Virgin Mary, but he flung it overboard, declaring it was "but a pented brod"-a painted board. b. There can be idolatrous systems of worship. The following of any man-made religion is idolatry. "All worshipping, honouring, or service of God invented by the brain of man in the religion of God, without His own express command, is idolatry," said John Knox in later life. c. Dr. Torrey said: "That which a man thinks most of- that is his god. It may be money, position, or pleasure."

II. Who are the "Little Children?"

1. 1 John 2:12-13 and 1 John 2:14 decides.

2. Observe three stages of growth: a. Spiritual babyhood, or infancy. b. Spiritual youth. c. Spiritual maturity.

3. Little children are in particular need of a word about forgiveness (1 John 2:12), victory over sin (1 John 2:1), power of overcoming (1 John 4:4), etc.

III. "Keep yourselves." Let God have His rightful place in your hearts and life.

"AMEN" TO THE CURSES.

Deuteronomy 27:15.

"Amen" Study No. 4.

Introduction. This is the most difficult "Amen" of the Bible. It is easy to say "Amen" to the blessings. It is quite natural for the heart to wish for them. But the curses? Ah, that is difficult. These are instructions concerning a strange ceremony to take place on entrance into Canaan.

Why should it be difficult to say "Amen?" It is comparatively easy to say, "It shall be," one of the definitions of "Amen." For whether we say "Amen" or no, it is bound to take place. But to say, "My heart wishes it to be exactly so"-well, that is the difficulty. And yet that is the position the Lord desires us all to reach. Our hearts should only wish to be and to hear and do what is His wish and will for us.

I. Is it His Will for Us to Tread some Lonely and Tortuous Way? Pray for grace to say "Amen."

II. Is it His Arrangement for you to Bear Many Burdens of Responsibility? Pray for grace to say "Amen."

III. One Thing that will Help us to say "Amen" to the Curses: The presence of the Altar. The altar had to be fixed on the side curses were announced.

IV. If a Curse Rests on Every One that Continued Not in the Book of the Law to Do Them, yet "He was made a curse for us."

"AMEN" TO THE LORD'S COMING.

"Surely I come quickly. Amen" (Revelation 22:20).

"Amen" Study No. 5.

1. Can we all say this to this Divine intimation?

2. I fear there are many professing Christians who could not.

3. When our friends tell us they intend to call upon us some day we ask them to send us a card so that we might get ready for them.

4. How we wish the Lord would do the same.

5. But He does not. Why? He desires us to be always ready.

6. Note the present tense: "I come." He desires us to live in the expectancy of His Coming.

7. Our Lord's Coming is mentioned 318 times in the 260 chapters of the New Testament, and it occupies 1 in every 25 verses from Matthew to Revelation.

8. Much, from time to time, has been said about the Eastward position. The Christian position is the upward position, the upward gaze.

HOW TO SAY "AMEN."

Revelation 19:4.

"Amen" Study No. 6.

1. We had for our meditation in Study No. 4 one of the most difficult "Amen's" in the Bible.

2. We think we have got on very far in the Spiritual life when we can say "Amen " to all God's dealings with us.

3. But there is something else required. How do we say "Amen?"

4. So many say "Amen" to God's providences in such a way as though they were martyrs in having to submit to them.

5. Notice in Revelation 19:4 what the "Amen" is followed by.

6. If it takes a lot of grace to say "Amen," what grace is required to say also "Alleluia!" A lady went to China to undertake missionary work. With a deep love for the Chinese people, she tackled the language. After some months she was asked to remain in the Training Home. Surprised, and for the moment disappointed, yet she said Amen, but some time passed before she could add Hallelujah.

7. Revelation 19:4 tells us one secret of being able to add, "Praise the Lord!"

8. When we remember that, notwithstanding all the darkness, and all the unintelligible things, yet God is on the throne, it is then we can say "Alleluia," as well as "Amen."

9. And when He is on the throne of our spirits, crowned Lord of all, then we can say: "My heart would have it so-praise the Lord." THE APOSTOLIC BLESSING.

2 Corinthians 13:14.

"Amen" Study No. 7.

Introduction.

1. This verse is most familiar to us, as it is used universally in the dismissal of congregations.

2. We have all repeated "Amen" after the preacher, and it is good to so respond.

3. But what an "Amen" this is.

4. This "Amen" practically amounts to two things:

I. Our Acceptance of the Trinity.

1. If Jesus is not God the Son, and if the Holy Spirit is not a Personality, it were blasphemous to associate the names thus.

2. It does not mean that we understand the Trinity.

3. But we can accept that Doctrine.

4. It was Henry Ward Beecher who said it was easier for him to believe in the Trinity than the Unity of God.

5. Science has something to say in favour, for in nature the highest organisms are the most complex.

6. Philosophy teaches that love demands love; that Eternal Fatherhood implies Eternal Sonship.

II. Our Wish for Blessings to be Bestowed by the Trinity. What a splendid wish and prayer this is for a congregation about to leave, or for that matter, for all our friends.

1. The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Be with you." a. Note, not Jesus, but Lord Jesus. How reverently that peerless Name is uttered. b. Not only the blessings that come to us through Jesus. c. Or the blessings that are bestowed by Him. d. But there is a further meaning-the refinement and gracefulness of the Lord Jesus. e. Jesus Christ was always graceful in His deportment and manners.

2. The Love of God. . . "Be with you." a. A constant realisation of the love of God. b. His own love constantly dwelling within us.

3. The Communion of the Holy Ghost. . . "Be with you." a. God has only one Vicar on earth-the Holy Spirit. b. He is here now right by our side. c. We can have partnership, oneness, with Him in all His wishes and desires.

Note the ascending scale.

First: Grace.

Second: Love.

Third: Fellowship. When I get grace I am made to know of the fact that He loves me, and, most marvellous of all, we then can have communion.

TASTING.

Psalms 34:8.

1. This means that Christianity is something to sample as well as something to believe.

2. Conversion is spoken of in 1 Peter 2:3 as "tasting."

3. Strange, yet true, that those who know nothing experimentally about religion have most to say about it and against it.

4. Why the Psalmist longed for others to "taste." Because his God was a God who- a. Answered prayer (Psalms 34:4). b. Delivered from fears (Psalms 34:4). c. Lightened hearts of those who look to Him (Psalms 34:5). d. Saved people out of their troubles (Psalms 34:6).

5. What is necessary in order to "taste?" a. Call upon Him. b. Come to Him. c. Take from Him gifts offered.

PRAYER. A MATTER OF THE HEART.

"Therefore hath Thy servant found it in his heart to pray this prayer unto Thee" (2 Samuel 7:27).

Prayer Study No. I.

A Find. Note that expression. David had made a find, a great find, an important one. And the find was in his own heart. And the find was a desire for prayer-a heart desire-a love for prayer. Have you a love, a heart affection for prayer?

Highest Form. This is the highest form of prayer. Prayer first begins as a matter of necessity. But it soon ought, and should, become a matter of the heart.

Madam Guyon has defined prayer as "nothing else but the application of the heart to God." In other words, the heart talking to God, and communing with Him.

Independent. "The prayer of the heart," wrote Madame Guyon, "cannot be interrupted by the occupations of the mind." Nothing can interrupt the prayer of the heart but unruly affections.

Essentials. In order to find prayer in the heart, the following are essentials:

1. A Heart Right with God. If the heart is not right with God, communion with God is impossible. An impenitent sinner finds no such thing in his heart. He has no intelligent wish to enjoy God's friendship. The whole atmosphere of prayer is foreign to him.

2. A Heart Filled with Him. That is a heart in which He is quite at Home, and which He has filled with Himself.

3. A Heart Set on God's Word. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." This is a trustingly beautiful prayer by David. Read it carefully and prayerfully. When examined, you will find that David is only talking over and repeating and thanking God for His own Word. This is one secret of blessing and successful prayer seasons and times.

PRAYER: A MATTER OF THE INTELLECT.

"Ye said also, Behold what a weariness is it!"

Malachi 1:13

Prayer Study No. 2.

A Sad Mark of Spiritual Degeneration is Here. The sacred offices of the sanctuary had become a weariness. Sad, oh, so sad, when prayer becomes a weariness! Yet is there a Christian who has not found it so at times?

Indolence. It suggests that there can be weariness and indolence in prayer. Coleridge thought the act of praying to be, in its most perfect form, the very highest energy.

Dead Prayers. We offer many dead prayers through mental indolence. We do not shake ourselves up to think and act.

Matter of Intellect. We noticed in our last study that true prayer is a matter of the heart. It is also a matter of the intellect. We may pray with the intellect without praying with the heart; but I question whether we can pray with the heart without praying with the intellect. We have to serve God as well as love Him, with the mind, as well as heart.

Let your Prayers be:

Affectionate-with real heart in them.

Intelligent-with real thought in them.

Energetic-with real energy in them.

1. Old Dr. Chalmers spoke of Dr. Doddridge's prayers as having an "intensely business-like" spirit.

2. An old American preacher, in denouncing indolent prayers, said: "Can we expect that our sins can be washed by a lazy prayer." Think on this.

3. Of course it is the Blood of God's Son that cleanseth from sin, yet prayer for that mercy usually precedes the blessing.

4. The Lord save us from lazy prayers! THE MIGHTY INFLUENCE OF PRAYER.

"The heartfelt supplication of a righteous man exerts a mighty influence" (James 5:16).

Prayer Study No. 3.

F. Rays. We have been startled lately at the discovery by an Italian of what are now known as "F. Rays." These Rays will blow up a ship with its own dynamite at a distance of 20 miles. It is an invisible yet mighty force. A Mightier Power. But we know of a mightier power. Invisible, too, viz., that of prayer, as James here declares.

James. The tradition concerning James is that his knees were worn hard as a camel's, through his constant habit of prayer. This gives force to his statement concerning prayer, for he lived the prayer life. He practised what he preached, and he preached what he practised. James insisted on the extreme value and power of prayer (see text). Is this True? The great majority of us have little faith in prayer. Christians often have little faith in prayer as a power in real life. Or though we may say differently with our lips, by our lives we show little faith in prayer.

Heathen Shame Us. Heathen habits of devotion shame us. Heathen prayer, whatever else it is or it is not, is a real belief in the heathen mind. When Ethelred, the Saxon King of Northumberland, invaded Wales, and was about to give battle to the Britons, he observed near the enemy a host of unarmed men. He inquired who they were, and what they were doing. He was told that they were monks of Bangor praying for the success of their countrymen. "Then," said the heathen prince, "they have begun the fight against us; attack them right away."

Mighty. Remember prayer is a mighty weapon. Use it.

Key. Prayer is a golden key, which, kept bright by constant use, will unlock the treasures of earth and heaven. THE VALUE OF SILENCE.

"Be silent unto God, and let Him mould thee" (Luther's Translation, Psalms 37:7).

Prayer Study No. 4.

Seeming Injustice.

1. It appears that the Psalmist often noticed the seeming injustice of God's dealings with men as witnessed in the frequent prosperity of the wicked, and the frequent adversity of the righteous. What then?

2. Why, do not fret, and don't be envious, but- a. Trust in the Lord. b. Delight thyself in the Lord. c. Commit thy way unto the Lord. d. Rest in the Lord.

Luther's Rendering. Luther gave a suggestive rendering and translation of this verse. The margin of our A.V. says, "Be silent to the Lord."

Value of Silence. We are slow at learning the value of silence. It seems one of the most difficult to learn these bustling 20th century days. And that is the reason so many break down in body, and also why there is so little worship. In Nature. We have an example of the value of silence in the natural world. The silent seasons of life are not inoperative. The winter is the mother of spring; the night is the fountain of physical forces of the day. So in Grace. The greatest things in our spiritual lives come out of our waiting hours, when all activity is suspended, and the soul learns "to be silent unto God" while He shapes and moulds us for future activities and fruitful years.

Silence-what in? Silence sometimes of our own clamorous needs and petitions. Silence of our own mental doubts and difficulties. Silence of our own plannings and scheming.

Why-what for? To hear His voice. To learn His will. To have His mind-his thoughts imparted to us. To have our characters moulded.

QUIETNESS BEFORE GOD.

Psalms 37:7, R.V.

Prayer Study No. 5.

Cecil. We were much impressed by a remark of Cecil recorded in his Memoirs: "Quietness before God is one of the most difficult of all Christian graces." This is a remark by one who was wise and understanding in the things of God and in the ways of men.

Recognised. David seems to recognise it as such. See, it is the fifth grace mentioned here:

1. "Fret not" (Psalms 37:1).

2. "Trust" (Psalms 37:3).

3. "Delight" (Psalms 37:4).

4. "Commit" (Roll thy way upon the Lord, R.V.). (5).

5. "Rest" (be silent to the Lord, R.V.) (7).

How necessary it is to enjoy God and hear His voice.

Higher Degree. Madame Guyon calls a state of quietness before God as one of the higher degrees of prayer. A Help to This. Madam Guyon says: "It is also necessary that you should go to God, not so much to obtain something from Him as to please Him, and to do His will; for a servant who only serves his master in proportion to the recompense he receives, is unworthy of any remuneration."

THREE STEPS IN THE PRAYER LIFE.

Psalms 5:1-7.

Prayer Study No. 6.

I. The Prayer's Request (Psalms 5:1).

1. He hears every word we speak in even ordinary everyday conversation.

2. How often we grieve Him!

3. He hears also our thoughts! Oh, how that startles and humbles us!

4. But the Psalmist has particularly prayer in His mind.

5. He hears our prayers when offered audibly or inaudibly.

II. The Prayer's Determination as self-preservation (Psalms 5:2 and Psalms 5:3).

1. Come what may, "Unto Thee will I pray."

2. And one thing that makes him most determined to pray is the fact of the holiness of God (Psalms 5:4).

3. By prayer I receive strength to avoid and gain victory over evil and temptation.

4. And thus live and dwell in His Presence.

5. He determined to pray specially in the morning for "well begun is half done." And after prayer, continue all day to "look up!"

III. The Prayer Attitude (Psalms 5:7).

1. He would not approach God on the ground of His own goodness, but rely on His mercy (Note, "multitude of Thy mercy").

2. And he would approach God in reverence. "And in Thy fear. THE IMPORTANCE OF WORKERS, OR THOSE IN TROUBLE GETTING ALONE WITH THE LORD.

Mark 6:31.

Prayer Study No. 7.

Introduction.

1. How familiar are the words of our text.

2. We remember them in times of sickness, when we note with thankfulness that it is "Come," not "Go," suggesting He is there to greet us.

3. But there are two classes suggested by the events of the context.

4. And we particularly remember our text in relation to waiting on God.

I. There is Sorrow, Because of Bereavement or Other Losses.

1. By St. Matthew 14 we learn that these words were said immediately after our Lord heard of John the Baptist's martyrdom.

2. He wanted to get away from the bustling crowd.

3. There is nothing like solitude with God for healing our soul trouble.

4. Strange, often we feel least inclined for Him at such tiroes.

II. Christian Workers, After Public Service, Require Loneliness.

1. The Apostle had returned after a successful missionary and evangelistic campaign.

2. They were jubilant.

3. He calmed them by taking them aside.

4. We will soon get flat if we do not have our times of solitude.

5. And we will soon begin to think unduly of ourselves if we do not seek for solitude.

III. Even as Christians we Need Such Solitude to Regain Lost Brilliancy.

1. An archduchess possessed some of the most magnificent pearls in existence.

2. Having been left unworn for a long time, the gems lost their colour and became, as the authorities declared, sick.

3. Experts declared that the only way to restore their original brilliancy was to submit them to a prolonged immersion in the depths of the sea.

4. At the foot of a cliff, under the windows of a Castle, at a depth of 80 feet below the surface of the Adriatic's clear waters, in a cage fixed by divers, they lay for years.

5. We lose colour and become sick through wear and tear, and lack of solitude with Him. OUR CHIEF WORK.

"On that day did David make it the chief work to give thanks unto the Lord"

1 Chronicles 16:7, R.V.

Prayer Study No. 8.

This Psalm is a compilation from three others. Verses 8 to 22 consists of first 15 verses of Psalms 105:23-33, quotations from Psalm 116; 1 Chronicles 16:34to36 from Psalm 106.

David drew attention-

1. To Works of God (1 Chronicles 16:8, etc.).

2. To Majesty of God (1 Chronicles 16:23, etc.).

3. To Mercy of God (1 Chronicles 16:34). This latter is sweetest note of all. The chief work not to pray, but to praise. In everything give thanks. When He took the cup He gave thanks. AT JESUS' FEET.

1. For Redemption, Luke 7:38

2. For Adoration on account of mercies received, Luke 8:35

3. For Instruction, Luke 10:39

4. For Consolation, John 11:32

5. For Intercession on behalf of others, Mark 7:25

6. For Worship, Matthew 28:9 THE "MUSTS" OF THE SCRIPTURES.

1. The Must concerning the sinner and the putting away of sin (Ezra 10:12 and Acts 9:6).

2. The Must concerning Regeneration and all (John 3:7; Acts 16:30-31).

3. The Must concerning Propitiation for sin (John 3:7; and Acts 4:12).

4. The Must concerning Worship (John 4:24).

5. The Must concerning Faith (Hebrews 11:6).

6. The Must concerning Receiving and Confessing Christ (Luke 19:5).

PROPHECIES RELATING TO CHRIST. The author has several times used this Bible Study with Agnostics, and with others who doubted the full Inspiration of the Bible, and never without, by the blessing of God, making a tremendous impression, and with remarkable effect. Usually after pointing out these Scriptures existed hundreds of years before Bethlehem and Birth of Christ, he asked: "How can you account for these exact predictions?"

I. His Birth.

1. Mode, Genesis 3:15 2. Nation, Genesis 12:3 3. Tribe, Genesis 49:10 4. Family, Isaiah 11:10 5. Mother, Isaiah 7:14 6. Place, Micah 5:2 7. Forerunner, Isaiah 40:3 II. His Life and Death.

1. Poverty and Suffering, Psalms 22:6-16 2. Worshipped by Gentiles, Isaiah 60:6 3. How He Entered Jerusalem, Zechariah 9:9.

4. For the Sake of Others, Daniel 9:26 5. Object of Conspiracy, Psalms 2:1-3 6. Followers Dispersed, Zechariah 13:7-9 7. Ill-treated, Isaiah 50:6 8. Pierced, Zechariah 12:10; Zechariah 13:6 9. Vinegar to Drink, Psalms 69:21 10. Spat upon, Isaiah 50:6 11. Cut off Without Trial, Isaiah 53:8; Daniel 9:26 12. Garments Distributed, Psalms 22:18 13. No Bones Broken, Psalms 34:20 14. Rise Again, Psalms 16:10, applied in Acts 2:27-31.

III. His Second Advent.

1. Return to Gather, Deuteronomy 30:3 2. Rejected-Reigning, Psalms 2:1-12; Psalms 50:30; Psalms 95:10-11 3. Waiting, Psalms 110:1 4. Endless Government, Isaiah 9:7 5. Good Government, Jeremiah 23:5 6. A Priest-King, Zechariah 6:13 7. Everlasting, Daniel 7:13-14

Scripture Couplets

Scripture Couplets SALVATION BEFORE HELP.

"Lord, save me" (Matthew 14:30). "Lord, help me" (Matthew 15:25).

Two important, earnest, and impressive prayers. But please observe their order in the sacred narrative. Peter's cry, "Lord, save me," comes before the Syro-Phoenician's plea, "Lord, help me." Before the request for his assistance comes the call for his salvation. This is highly significant, and conveys a much needed and vitally important lesson.

"But I do ask God to help me," is often the reply of men and women when dealt with about their souls. There is hardly a Christian worker but has heard this statement many a time. And one cannot but feel that self-righteousness prompts that reply. No doubt it is true, for instinctively the most careless and depraved cry out for the help of the Almighty in times of distress and disaster. But it is not according to the Divine order. I must cry, "Lord, save me," before I cry, "Lord, help me." Before I have any right to ask for His assistance I must ask for His salvation. In fact, I have no claim on His willingness to help unless I have received His grace and mercy. This order is recognised in other portions of the Holy Book. For instance, the Gibeonites in a time of sore and desperate need sent an urgent message to Joshua, saying, "Save us and help us." (Joshua 10:6); and the saint in the grand old 46th Psalm boldly exclaims: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Note the order-"save" then "help"; a "refuge," then a "present help"-yea, "a very present help."

It is all very well to say: "I do ask God to help me," but is that prayer answered? Ah, that is another thing. The heart-moving plea of the woman of Canaan in Matthew 15 was unheeded by the Saviour; yea, though the disciples begged Him to grant it in order to get rid of her (for undoubtedly that is the full significance of their conduct as indicated in Matthew 15:23). And it was all because she had not recognised and observed the Divine order. She had, as a matter of fact, taken up an entirely false position, making a claim on Jesus as the "Son of David," a title she as a Gentile had no right to plead. It was only when she had taken her rightful place at His feet that her request for His help was granted. Oh, the blessedness of lying low at His feet in penitence and confession! Then, having become my Divine refuge from sin, He becomes my daily helper and strengthener. Having cried, Lord, save me," I have a humble right to cry daily, "Lord, help me."

I. "Lord, save me"-It was the Prayer of Sinking Peter for Himself, after attempting to do as Jesus did. Impetuous Peter asked the Lord for His invitation, and the Son of God could not do otherwise than invite him. And for a moment or two all seemed well. Peter, too, began to do the impossible, as all who trust the Saviour accomplish; but taking his eyes off the Master, he began to sink, and cried, "Lord, save me." This was a perfect prayer. It was short, direct, definite, earnest, and received an immediate reply. It does not take the Lord long to save us. Let the cry of penitence rise from a broken and a contrite heart and immediately He saves. Oh, sinking, soul, why do you not cry out to Him?

II. "Lord, help me." It was the Prayer of One for Another, the clamorous cry of a mother for her child, the expression of a desperate need that would not take "No" for an answer, the request of one prepared to take any lowly position provided she could secure the boon she coveted. And that prayer, too, was ultimately granted. What else could the Lord do? The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. What a rebuke this mother's desperate plea is to many of our prayers for others! We will stir ourselves up, and lay hold on God, and then He will not deny the help we crave. THE FACE OF THE LORD.

"Hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the Throne" (Revelation 6:16).

"My heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek" (Psalms 27:8).

What a startling contrast have we here in these two Scriptures! The first depicts a scene of unparalleled horror. There is nothing more awful in Holy Writ or in any other literature. Men and women crying out in terror for nature to hide them "from the face of Him that sitteth on the Throne," and crying in vain. But the second introduces us to a scene of peace and bliss. The blackness and the darkness have given way to the light of a bright summer morn. Instead of the anguishing cry of fear and dread, there is the wooing and soothing notes of worship. The same face to one company an unspeakable horror, but to the other an exquisite delight; the one fleeing from that holy countenance, the other seeking the same with wholehearted and earnest endeavour. What a startling contrast! How is it?

"No man can see Me (My face) and live" (Exodus 33:20). Such was the Lord's word to Moses. This certainly does not mean that He desires to hide himself from us. Away with such a thought. Why, He bids us seek His face! It simply means that the face of Jehovah, as involving the full blaze of His manifested glory, no mortal could bear, as the sight would overpower and shatter his frame. We have known instances of the sudden and unexpected sight of the long-lost face of son or daughter to so fill with joy the invalid parent that the transport shattered the feeble frame, and death intervened. For this reason in cases of this nature we speak of the wisdom of "breaking the news." Such a preparatory work is needed concerning the sight of the Lord's face. This is forcibly illustrated in the two Scriptures before us. The fact that "they shall see His face" (Revelation 22:4), by and by, is counted by believers as an inexpressibly privilege, because they are passing through the preparatory stages down here; whereas the mass of the mere worldlings are terrified at the prospect of beholding Him, because they are consciously unfit and unprepared. The best preparation for beholding His face by and by is to gaze into it here and now. How is this possible? The first and most important preparatory step is the one Moses took, viz., the step to the Cleft Rock (Exodus 33:22). There is another Rock, riven by a more awful storm, a Rock cleft by a thunderbolt of Divine justice- it is the Rock of Ages, that Rock which is Christ.

HOW TO SECURE SPIRITUAL IMMOBILITY "I shall not be greatly moved." "I shall not be moved" (Psalms 62:2, Psalms 62:6).

Referring to the physical sufferings of one of his missionary brethren, Dan. Crawford suggestively writes that the burden "may have only looked to outsiders like a tombstone hung round his neck, whereas in reality it was only a weight necessary to keep down the diver while he was collecting pearls." This is a telling simile. Verily afflictions are weights. Yet they are not sent to crush us, but only to enable us to gather the precious pearls of Divine truth, and to add to our rich stores of

Christian experience. This was pre-eminently true of David the Psalmist. He was a man of affliction. Often the waves and billows went over him. But what precious lessons he learned and has passed on to us in his writings. This is seen in the Psalm from which we have taken our two Scriptures. When David wrote it he was evidently in great difficulties. He was surrounded by enemies, conspirators, and false friends. The Psalm is in four divisions. He first speaks to his enemies (1 to 4), then to himself (5 to 7), to his friends (8 to 11), and finally to the Lord (12). As he contemplates his foes he did not feel very sure of himself, and so he exclaimed, "I shall not be greatly moved." He was afraid he would be disturbed, and overcome just a little. But presently all such gloomy forebodings vanish. He became radiantly optimistic and gloriously dogmatic, and exultingly shouted, "I shall not be moved."

Both these verses are alike, but for one word. But that one word makes all the difference in the world. Why the change? What had brought it about? Was it because in the first he was addressing his enemies, and consequently must be cautious in his statements, whilst in the second he was addressing himself, and was trying to brace himself up? No, not exactly. The agreeable change was the result of giving his fears an airing. There is nothing like it. The microbe of unbelief cannot stand the clear light of day. Fears flourish in the dark. Drag them out into the light of His presence; tell Him all about them: tell some trusted Christian soul, too, and, lo, they vanish away. Then, after mournfully exclaiming, "I shall not be greatly moved," i.e., "I am bound to be moved a little," he began to think of the Lord, and that sure ground of confidence. Ah, He makes all the difference. Have you any fears? What a plague they are! But do not hide them any longer in your bosom. Just tell Him all; think a little more of Him, and, lo, they will disappear. And then, like David, you will boldly exclaim "I shall not be moved." But moved by what, by whom? It is left indefinite for a purpose. You can just put in your own trouble and difficulty. But let us notice four powers that seek to move us.

I. Satan Seeks to Move Us (2 Samuel 24:1). There is no doubt as to the identity of the person referred to as "he." 1 Chronicles 21:1 shows it was Satan. David was instigated by Satan to do this thing. And, alas, the enemy's tactics succeeded only too well. He was greatly moved, and terrible were the results. The devil is constantly seeking to move us to do wrong, endeavouring to lead us to either go before or follow a long way behind, and even forsake our Master, and is perpetually plotting our overthrow. And how skilful he is. What chance have we against this old campaigner? Here is our safety: "For the king trusteth in the Lord, and through the mercy of the most High he shall not be moved."

II. Sin Seeks to Move Us. In Acts 7:9 we are informed that the reason the patriarchs sold their brother Joseph was that they were "moved with envy." Sin, in all its varied forms, seek to move us to do wrong. And, mark you, it is not only a temptation from without, but, more trying and dangerous still, it is one from within. Sin is a mighty enemy entrenched within us. But, thank God, if the Christian has an indwelling enemy he has an indwelling Friend. "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved." The secret of overcoming and of spiritual immobility is the presence of the Indwelling One.

III. Afflictions Seek to Move Us. The reason why Paul sent Timothy to visit the Thessalonians was lest any one of them "Should be moved by... afflictions" (1 Thessalonians 3:3). They were evidently having a very rough time, and there was the great danger of becoming unsettled by

these surging sorrows. But the antidote is this: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." Those who cast their burdens upon the Lord, and perpetually confide in Him, will find themselves immovable.

IV. Friends Sometimes Seek to Move Us. Paul, believing himself to be in the will of God, was on his way to Jerusalem, but friends tried to dissuade him, yet he declared, "But none of these things move me" (Acts 20:24). The only security from even well-intentioned but mistaken friends is this: "I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved." It was this that helped Athanasius. He stood alone as the champion for the true and proper Deity of our Lord. "Do you know," said one to him, "that all the world is against you?" "Then," replied the brave defender, "I am against all the world."

TWO COVERINGS FOR SIN.

"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper" (Proverbs 28:13) "Love covereth a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8. R.V.). In an interview with a famous Gospel preacher the reviewer said: "His first words to me were, 'Things are very different now from what they were 25 or 30 years ago. It was easy to work for God then, compared with what it is now. There was then a sense of sin, but where there is no sense of sin you have no fulcrum for your lever." Alas, how true are these words in our own time But if the sense of sin has been lost, the fact of sin remains. In the two verses before us two coverings for sin are given. In the one, covering of sins is denounced; in the other, commended. By bringing these texts together we note the contrast. There is a covering of sin allowable, if only the sin be another's and not our own. But we reverse the order, hiding our own, and uncovering the sins of others.

I. The Covering of Sins Commended. There is a covering of sins which is not only allowable, but commended, the sin which is not my own but that of another. Human nature persists in reversing the order. Yea, alas, alas, so many make traffic with the sins of another! This does not mean that we view sin differently in others than in ourselves. Sin is ever the same hideous monster wherever it be. I must never condone or excuse sin in either myself or in another. This just means that I must never make merchandise of the sins, faults, or failings of another fellow-mortal. It means that I will uncover the sins of others only to the Lord when alone with Him. It was said of one after she had gone, that "she was never known to speak ill of an absent friend." Could that be said of me, and of you?

Why should I cover the sins of others? 1st: On the common ground of the Golden Rule, doing to others as we would be done by. Sins have a strange way of coming home to roost. 2nd: But the Christian has a higher and a nobler reason for covering the sins of others-to cover sin is God-like. What He has done for me for Christ's sake, I must do to others for His dear sake. Observe, there is no limit to this operation. "A multitude of sins."

II. The Covering of Sin Denounced. If love leads me to cover my neighbour's sin, pride prompts me to cover my own. For the sinner naturally wishes to be thought better than he really is. To uncover my sins does not mean (1) that I have to parade them before the public gaze. God forbid that we should ever gloat over our past, or refer to it in a spirit of bravado! Nor does it mean (2) that I have to uncover my sins to man, if the sin has just been between God and my soul. "I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord," was the Psalmist's declaration (Psa. 32). The Divine Covering. If

I uncover my sin to the Lord, He will, by His Precious Blood, blot it out, and that is "better than covering. In the Old Testament sins could only be covered; in the New Testament sins are put away, blotted out.

REST GIVEN AND FOUND.

"Come. . . and I will give you rest." "Take. . . and ye shall find rest" (Matthew 11:28-30).

It is safe to say that this is the best known and most beloved of all the sayings of our Lord Jesus. No human being can possibly estimate the multitudes who have been led into the Kingdom of His grace by the means of those precious words. Yet whilst so well known, few have noticed that there are two distinct Rests referred to. Those who can read the Greek declare there are two distinct words rendered in our English Bibles by the one word "rest." The first is a verb, the second a noun. The first signifies a temporary rest, one with the view of going on in the journey; the second stands for a more durable and lasting one. The first is a rest to the conscience; the second a rest to the soul. The first is a gift; the second a discovery. This is recognised in the Book of Common Prayer, where in the Communion Service we have, "Come unto Me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you," i.e., a refreshing with a view to going on to a more permanent blessing. Oh, what a pity that so many seem to be content with the first, instead of pressing on to possess the second. In other words, mistaking the starting point for the goal.

I. The Rest that is Given. "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy ladem, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

Come! is one of the sweetest words in the Bible. The first come in the Bible (Genesis 7:1), is one of salvation, and so is the last one (Revelation 22:17). The blessing to be had for the coming is a precious one indeed, one of universal need. All do not hanker after pleasure, or crave intellectual treats, yet all are in need of rest.

He gives rest to the guilty conscience by His precious Blood.

II. The Rest that is Found. "Take My yoke upon you. . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls." (Matthew 11:30).

Whatever this means it is for those who have received the first, the temporary rest with a view to going on to the permanent one. This second word signifies a deep, abiding, permanent repose that is undisturbed in the turmoils of life. Israel had temporary rests all the way to Egypt, but they did not receive the permanent one until they reached the Land of Promise. This rest is only found by wearing Christ's yoke. The yoke in the Old Testament was a symbol of slavery. We read of the "yoke of the King of Babylon." Passing under the yoke meant good-bye to personal liberty. Christ demands an absolute submission, a full and complete surrender. And the first act of that submission we call consecration. THE PURPOSE AND RESULT OF THE COMING OF CHRIST.

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace" (Luke 2:14). "I came not to send peace but a sword" (Matthew 10:34).

How glaringly contradictory do these statements seem to be! The first agrees with all our ideas of the purpose of His coming, and harmonises admirably with many other Scriptures; whilst the second is exactly the opposite. Some might be inclined to ask: Which is correct? Which have I to

accept? Which have we to accept? Why, both, for the two are correct, though they do seem to differ entirely. This view may seem illogical, but life proves many a proposition true that logic would readily demonstrate as false. The first tells of His purpose in coming; the second the actual result of that coming. This phraseology is peculiar to the Bible where, sometimes, a person is declared to do only that which he permits. This does not mean that our Lord's purposes have been finally thwarted, that He came to bestow peace, but lo! His purposes are not, and will not be realised. What He has set out to do will assuredly be accomplished sooner or later. But is there not another view of this matter-in order to establish peace, or in establishing peace, the sword of the Spirit is required? There are two pictures of our Lord Jesus in the Bible. The most familiar one is that of the Lord bearing the Olive Branch. He came to make peace by the Blood of His Cross, and to preach peace. But there is another picture, and one not so well known, that of the Lord with a drawn sword in His hand. Joshua saw the Lord, "over against him with His sword drawn in His hand" (Joshua 5:13). Christ as the Man of War. In Revelation 1:16, John saw the Lord, when "out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword," teaching the mighty power of His Word. The Saviour we have to deal with is tender and compassionate. Yet One who can slay by a word.

I. Before Christ can establish His Peace in my heart He has to unsheath His Sword-In other words, before I can know Him as Peace Bringer, I must know Him as Peace Breaker. The unsaved soul is, by nature, wrapped up in a deep, deep peace, the peace of spiritual slumber and of death. A peace that is the herald of the awful storm of Judgment. A sleep from which there is no awakening if left to ourselves. He comes to disturb that false and awful peace.

Arctic explorers speak of the soul-subduing silences of the Arctic region. A strange peace reigns supreme. No life, nothing but a dreary chilling desolation. Everything is wrapped in the cold embrace of winter. Before the beautiful and refreshing peace of Spring time can visit that region there must be a great disturbance. The sun shines with its gladdening rays of warmth, the great ice field melts, and the result-an awful tearing and grinding, shrieking and rending, with explosions as of dynamite. So when the Sun of Righteousness shines upon souls wrapped up in the cold embrace of spiritual death, there is a disturbance, a breaking up of the stillness of spiritual death. To change the metaphor, the Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God begins its cutting and thrusting. But after conviction comes conversion, after repentance comes peace through the Blood of His Cross.

II. The establishment of His Peace in the individual soul often means the unsheathing of the sword of persecution at home, in workshop, or elsewhere. Of the truth of this every Christian can fully vouch. Here is a worldly home, wrapped in carnal peace. One member of the family is converted. At once family peace departs, and persecution enters. The fact of the presence of Christ in that one life becomes a disturbance, making all uncomfortable. We have sometimes wondered why a veil was drawn over our Lord's life at Nazareth. Perhaps it is a mercy that it was so. Was our Lord here speaking from personal experience? Was there strife and contention because of the presence of that Pure One? There are several significant facts in the New Testament. His kinsmen thought Him mad (Mark 3:21). Even His mother and brethren shared the same view. And in John 7:5 we are informed His brethren did not believe Him. But thank God, He gives peace to the persecuted ones.

III. It is also true to say that every saved soul is sent forth with a sword to make war upon the hosts of sin. Christ not only puts peace in my heart, but a sword in my hand. The note of warfare rings right through the New Testament Epistles. There are hosts of sin and wickedness to be attacked, and the Word of God is the weapon He puts into our hands. There is a call for volunteers. Who will step out on the Lord's side!

IV. Peace of God-A Peace within. This peace baffles all description. It surpasses all thought. It is that holy calm which rests in God alone, and which He is willing to communicate to us. There are three steps to its enjoyment.

1. It becomes mine when I realise my standing in Christ, when I discovered I have peace with God on the ground of the shed blood of Christ.

2. It deepens and increases as I grow in grace. It is the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22), comes to us by the aid of the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17), and is the result of a deepened knowledge of God (2 Peter 1:2), and of increased spirituality (Romans 8:6).

3. It follows the cultivation of the prayer-habit, as Php_4:7 clearly shows. THE DIVINE ALCHEMIST.

"Instead of which (shields of gold) King Rehoboam made shields of brass" (2 Chronicles 12:9-10). "For brass I will bring gold" (Isaiah 60:17).

The old alchemists spent their lives in seeking to discover a substance which would change the baser metals into those of value. But all their efforts only met with failure. What would they have given to be able to transform brass into gold! There is a heavenly Alchemist who can do this. What a contrast there, is between these two Scriptures! In the one brass is substituted for gold, and in the other gold for brass. The contrast is so great because one is the act of man, whilst the other is the act of God. Man, if left to himself, always substitutes the lower for the higher. Yet side by side with this degeneration we see the Divine Alchemist at work in regenerating, transforming and transfiguring.

Five years had passed since Solomon's death, and they had been sad years of retrogression. During these decadent years the great split in the nation-the revolt of the nine and a half tribes-had taken place. Then, worse than all this, Judah "forsook the law of the Lord." In this time of sin and schism their old enemy, the King of Egypt, found an easy entrance into the land. Though the king and people humbled themselves and sought the Lord, God permitted Shishak to spoil Jerusalem, to appropriate the treasures of the Temple and of the king's house, wealth beyond the dreams of avarice. Note the irony of the situation-Israel, when led by God out of Egypt, spoiled the Egyptians. Now the Egyptians, six hundred years afterwards, spoiled them, getting their own back with usury. Among the booty were three hundred solid gold shields, worth £7500 each, used on special state occasions. Oh, how short lived is the glory which depends on the faithfulness of man! The Temple built by Solomon is robbed in the days of his son; and instead of the shields of gold which Shishak looted, Rehoboam made shields of brass. Yet, thank God, the Divine Alchemist is at work for His people. He is coming back again. And when He comes, He will bring back glory to Israel. Then, literally, as well as spiritually, for brass He will bring gold. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." But there is a message in all this for the backslider. When Rehoboam lost the pure gold what did he do? By all means he must keep up appearances. If he cannot afford golden shields, he must have

something which resembles that precious metal-brass. And to avoid too close scrutiny by the people, he had them doubly guarded. Is there a single Christian who has not at one time or another substituted brass for gold? Through unfaithfulness and sin we lose the pure gold of heart purity and communion with the Lord, of spiritual hunger and thirst after Divine things. And for all this gold, brass is substituted. All the outward acts of devotion and piety are kept up, and we look just the same as ever in the eyes of men. Scientists tell us of ice, and stone, and bronze ages. In religious experience we have these different periods. The ice stage is our state by nature the golden age is our state by grace. But, alas, there is sometimes the bronze age of mere externalism, when, though we have lost our first love, we keep up our round of Christian duties and perform all the outward acts of piety. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity (love), I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." Brass instead of gold. The appearance without the reality. "I bless His name, that I wax not pale, neither have I lost the colour of gold," wrote Samuel Rutherford, during a time of great testing. Can you say this? If not, pray put yourself into the hands of the Divine Alchemist, who can give gold for brass. Then you will be able to joyfully testify: "He restoreth my soul." Are you burdened by a sense of unworthiness? Then listen once again to Rutherford: "Often He makes gold of dross." Splendid! What cannot the Divine Alchemist do with us, if we will but surrender ourselves to Him?

WHITE, THEN WHITER THAN SNOW.

"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18). "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Psalms 51:7).

"White as snow," "Whiter than snow." These are not synonymous terms. They differ in many respects. One was the Word of the Lord, whilst the other was the cry of a king. Three hundred years separate the two utterances. Both Scriptures point to clear and distinct truths. The first is the Lord's promise, the second a penitent's plea; the former describes the work of God when He forgives sin, the latter is a deep inward work of grace done afterward; the one is a righteousness imputed, the other a righteousness imparted. And, mark you, this order is always observed-I must be made white as snow, then whiter than snow.

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord." This is a command none can afford to treat lightly, for it is a word of authority, being a "thus saith the Lord." What is behind a command is of extreme importance. If I say, "Move on," to loiterers in the street, they can afford to treat it lightly; if a policeman says the same, they will either have to "move on" or "move in." The law of the land is behind the man in blue. This is a word with all heaven behind it. Then notice, it is an appeal to reason: "Let us reason together." God appeals to mind as well as heart, to reason as well as to affections. And pray notice, it is a word, an importunate and imperative word, for the immediate present: "Come now"-not to-morrow, or the day after. This is a word for the double-dyed sinner. Those who understand well the original language say that the word translated "scarlet" here really means the double-dyed, or twice-dipped. The scarlet colour in ancient times was the result of two dippings. What a word of hope is this then, for the vilest! None need despair, for Christ has died. Yet even the respectable sinners are included here, for, after all, are we not all double-dyed sinners, having been dipped in the vile pool of original corruption, and in the bath of actual transgression? Verily, we are sinners twice over, by choice as well as by birth.

"Scarlet." This word teaches the permanency of sin, for it is a fast colour. It has been said that there is no power in chemistry that can take the scarlet colour out without destroying the fabric. But what is impossible in chemistry is possible in grace. The red blood of the Son of God obliterates our scarlet sins, and the white robe of the spotless righteousness of God is thrown over the penitent one. Praise God for that word of hope: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." May it be so, dear reader, in your experience.

It is reported that away in the far North, on the brow of a hill covered with snow, illuminated by the light of the Polar star, a member of one of the Arctic Expeditions lies buried. A large stone covers the dead, and, on a copper tablet at the head of the grave, our text is inscribed: "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." There, amidst the eternal snows, man's passionate longing for purity finds a voice. But, whiter than snow-surely David made a mistake. Can anything become whiter than snow? Ah, even the snowflake is not pure. It seems that nothing can touch this sin-cursed earth without becoming contaminated. Elements of earthliness are wrapped up in the bosom of every snowflake that falls upon the earth. It has been calculated that a slight fall of snow carries to the surface of the county of London alone 343 tons of solids. Even on the high pinnacle of the Alps it is not pure. Professor Tyndale took a sample of snow from the top of a high mountain, and found bits of steel filings and coal dust. Therefore you see this is the cry of the Psalmist for a deep purity, for a deeper and richer experience. It is the request of one who has known the joy of being made white as snow. Such a longing is the proof that the first has taken place. In fact, this is the very purpose God has in view in covering us with the white robe. He counts us white in order to make us what He counts us to be. Indeed, in nature this is so. Snow first hides all the vileness and blackness, and then whilst doing so has a bleaching effect. How white the paving stones and flags seem after snow has rested some time upon them. Will you not apprehend that for which also He apprehended you? Make David's prayer yours. Thank God, He can answer it.

BEND OR BREAK-WHICH?

"The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars" (Psalms 29:5.) "A bruised reed shall He not break" (Isaiah 42:3).

"Bend us, O Lord!" was the prayer of Evan Roberts, frequently offered during the great Welsh Revival, when facing congregations gathered together in the chapels and churches of Wales. God graciously answered that prayer hundreds of times, for we know His mighty Presence was manifested, and multitudes were bent before the heavenly breeze. It would be well if that prayer were offered more frequently by us, for without that holy, awful Presence meetings are powerless and fruitless. It is His presence that produces conviction of sin. May God grant us more and more in our gatherings an overwhelming sense of His presence! But even in that sanctuary where the heavenly gales are blowing, there are some who refuse to bend. And what then? They who refuse to bend in grace will be broken in judgment. Frequently we have heard the phrase: "If he won't bend, then he must be broken," by which is meant that if the gentler methods do not accomplish the desired purpose, harsher measures must be adopted. This is the teaching of our two texts. Those who bend like the bruised reeds will not be broken; those who refuse to bend, like the cedars, must be broken. Better, infinitely better, be a reed, shaken, bent, by the wind of God, than the proud cedar tree, erect and defiant, to be hurled down, without any possibility of recovery, by the fiery indignation of God.

I. He Breaks Not the Bruised Reed. How comforting this has been to countless thousands. The R.V. margin gives "dimly burning wick!" This is the condition of many. Instead of burning brightly, they are only smouldering and smudging, and in consequence more of a nuisance than a help. Such deserve to be extinguished. But our Blessed Lord does not possess an extinguisher. If He so bears with us, should we not bear with one another? This is not only a word for the sickly Christian, but in the figure of the bruised reed we have a comforting word for the convicted sinner. For wounds and bruises are to be found in the service of sin. What bruises that traveller from Jerusalem to Jericho received when he fell among thieves. Remember, they who break the law of God are bruised in the act. But the fact is, we are all weak as bruised reeds. How frail is the bruised reed! Alas, the unsaved so often think themselves as strong as cedars when in reality they are as weak as bruised reeds. "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." And why not break the reed? Because the bruised reed bends submissively to Him in lowly penitence. He was broken in its stead.

Though He breaks not the bruised reed-

II. He Breaks the Cedars. In the 29th Psalm we have a vivid description of a thunderstorm. The pealing of heaven's artillery has often roused poetical imagination. The inspired poet here sees in thunder an emblem of the voice of God. The cedars of Lebanon have ever been famous. Wood for the Temple was procured from thence. One who has visited the forest of Lebanon writes: "As we stand beneath the giant arms of those old patriarchs of a hundred generations, there comes a solemn hush upon the soul as if by enchantment. The girth of the largest is more than 41 feet, the height of the highest may be 100. Some of them are supposed to be quite 3500 years old. Thus, at this rate of increase, they must have been growing ever since the flood. But they are not all erect. Some are struck down by lightning, broken by enormous loads of snow, or torn to fragments by tempest."

Note that word "Yea!" Even such mighty cedars as these of Lebanon find no escape. And why? They do not bend. There they stand, gripping the earth firmly, lifting their proud heads haughtily to the skies as if defying the living God. For this the cedar trees are not to blame. Not so men and women. Do you think it is a light thing to live a life of defiance to God? Listen to this parable. The reed advised the cedar to bow to the coming storm; but the cedar haughtily scorned the advice; so the mighty wind flouted it, broke it, blasted it, tore it up by the roots, and tossed it aside in its anger, whilst it passed over the weak bending reed unharmingly. Remember there is the world of difference between being humbled and humiliated. They who humble themselves shall be exalted; but they who refuse to humble themselves shall most certainly be humiliated. "He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." THE TWO IMPORTANT LOOKS.

"Look unto Me, and be ye saved" (Isaiah 45:22). "Look to yourselves, that we lose not" (2 John 1:8). A lady journalist in America consulted an oculist with regard to a trouble in her eyes. After a careful examination the specialist said: "Your eyes are tired; you must rest them. Have you any wide views from your house?" "Oh, yes," she replied. "From the front porch I can see the noble peaks of the Blue Ridge, and from the rear windows I can look out upon the glorious Allegheny Foot Hills." "Very well," said he, "that is just what you need. When your eyes feel tired, look steadily at your mountains for ten minutes-twenty minutes would be better; the far away look will

rest them." Just so. And there is a deep spiritual lesson here. For this is a world with weary, tired eyes. Oh, how weary is the world! But there is a cure. There is a glorious far away look that rests and refreshes, a look nor merely to the hills, but away and beyond to the God of the hills. "Shall I lift up mine eyes to the hills? Whence should my help come? My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth" (see margin of Psalms 121:1-2). This is the look that brings rest and refreshment to mind and heart when burdened by work or distracted with care. And this faraway look also brings comfort to sad and sorrowful souls. But the pity is that so few have learned its value and tasted of its joys. Friend, try the far-away look!

"Look unto Me, and be ye saved." This is a message direct from the Lord Himself. And important are its issues. Salvation is dependent upon it. The look that saves is a look backward-a look to the Cross. Such a look brings rest to the weary soul and to the troubled conscience. There is life for such a look. The look that saves is also a look upward. Note the Psalmist's determination in Psalms 5:3. Look and live was the first message we needed; live looking is the second. "Looking unto Jesus." The look that saves is also a look into. Scholars tell us that in the Greek the word translated "unto" means not only "at," but "into." Thus the verse could read, "looking into Jesus." Not only looking at His works, His miracles, His beautiful life, but looking right into Him and reading His heart. The look that saves is also a look forward. "Unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Thus is readily seen how important is looking to the Lord. According to a famous preacher, in Isaiah 45:22, we have the greatest possible blessing-"salvation"-offered to the largest possible number-"all the ends of the earth"-on the simplest possible terms- "Look unto me"-on the highest possible security-"for I am God." But there are some who object to the simplicity of these conditions. "How paltry and mean to make my salvation and happiness dependent upon a look," they say. But really, looking is not the vain and useless thing that it might appear to be. As has well been said: "Almost all knowledge comes from looking. We look at the physical world, and are taught what nature has to teach us. We look at books, and we learn what printing has to teach us. We look at men-their faces, their acts, their characters- and we discover what mankind has to teach us. Not to look is to shut ourselves off from almost all sources of information. Our eyes are more than organs of discernment; they are channels of reception. Our visions become our possessions."

How blessedly simple is all this. Why, looking is the simplest thing in the world, something even weak invalids and weak wailing bairns can do! How good of our God to make salvation dependent upon something we all can do. But possibly there may be some who are saying: "I cannot really do even this, for mine iniquities have taken hold of me, so that I am not able to look up" (Psalms 40:12). The publican was like this, yet he cried to the Lord for His forgiveness, and he went down to his house justified.

"Look unto Me," "Look to yourselves." What is the meaning of these two apparently contradictory Scriptures? Just this: whilst the first is necessary for our salvation, the second is essential for the reception of a full reward, and is only another way of saying, "Beware of pickpockets." It is a solemn fact that many of God's dear children will not receive a reward. Saved souls, but lost lives. This is the teaching of 1 Corinthians 3:14, 1 Corinthians 3:15. Beware! Look to yourself. Don't let the enemy rob you of the fruits of your walk and service. A careful examination of 2 John 1:8 shows that what was in the mind of John was loss through the reception of false teaching. How applicable this is to our own times, for error is to be met with on every hand. Be on your guard! But

don't forget that for every look to yourself let there be ten looks to thy Lord. "Ten to one," let that be your motto. THE SECRET OF A GREAT CHANGE.

"Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone" (Hosea 4:17), "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard Him, and observed Him" (Hosea 14:8).

What a startling change we have here! The first speaks of a nation hugging its idols in spite of prophetic warnings concerning the dire consequences of such conduct, whilst the second Scripture depicts a nation-the same stubborn and wilful people of Israel-throwing away these very selfsame idols. Naturally we are interested in tracing the reason for swift and sudden decisions, especially if they are those of a strong-willed and stubborn folk, and we are not left in ignorance of the secret. We might remark that the discovery of the secret of such a change is not merely interesting, it is a vital matter, affecting our own moral and spiritual condition, for herein is disclosed God's way of weaning us from the world, and from vice and sin and self.

First, we are introduced to a nation wedded to its idols. Those were sad, sad days in the history of God's chosen people. Prophet after prophet had been sent with messages of love to a backsliding people, but all to no purpose, for they persisted in their evil courses. And now comes the Divine verdict: "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone." To be left alone was just what they desired, yet no worse thing could possibly have happened to them. Sometimes when men and women of the world are pressed by earnest Christians to become concerned about their souls, and so seek the Lord in repentance and faith, they exclaim: "Why do you trouble me? Leave me alone." We are told that travellers in Arctic regions are sometimes so overcome with the cold that, sinking down exhausted upon the snow, they beg of their companions as a special favour, to be left to rest and sleep for a wee while. But that request is never granted. How false and cruel would be these fellow travellers if they did not shake the drowsy one, compiling him to keep on the move, for to be left alone means death. "Let us alone" (Luke 4:34), was the sinner's ignorant cry of the Saviour. Nay, more than that, it was a cry inspired by the evil one. May God never grant that request of any reader of this page!

"Hugging idols-I make no pretence to godliness, but I am not doing that," is that what you say? Pray remember this, that what a man thinks most of-money, position, pleasure, appetite, applause-that is his god. Frankly now, answer this question: "What comes first in your life? Who, what, is your first thought in the morning, and your last thought at night?" Can you say:

"I think of my blessed Redeemer, I think of Him all the day long." Not one unsaved soul can answer in the affirmative. And, please remember, whatever comes first in your life is your god. Hugging sins and pleasures. Is that true of you? Perhaps, alas! some would sorrowfully confess that it is not so much they hugging their sins as their sins hugging them in a dreadful embrace. Oh! He loves you too much to leave you alone just yet. If in Hosea 4:17 He says "Let him alone," in Hosea 11:8, He exclaims, "How shall I give you up, Ephraim?" The sequel is seen in our second Scripture, where we have a nation throwing away its idols. But how was, or rather, how will this be brought about? This stupendous change is the result of the expulsive power of a new affection, brought about by personal contact with the Lord, by hearing Him and observing Him. This is a prophecy that will be fulfilled by and by in the history of the Jews. But it may be fulfilled in every experience here and now. Wedded to idols and idols wedded to you, yet there is deliverance through Him. To know Him is life eternal, with all its accompanying blessing. "I have heard

Him"-why, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. "I have observed Him"-that is how affection springs.

It is reported that a great sculptor spent eight years in producing the face of the Lord Jesus, and at last wrought one in which the emotions of love and sorrow were so perfectly blended that beholders wept as they looked upon it. Subsequently being solicited to employ his great talent on a statue of Venus, he replied: "After gazing so long into the face of Christ, think you I can now turn my attention to a heathen goddess?" And he spurned the offer. Here is the secret of weanedness from idols:

"I have heard the voice of Jesus,

Tell me not of aught beside;

I have seen the face of Jesus,

All my soul is satisfied."

YE ARE COMPLETE, THEREFORE BECOME SO.

"Ye are complete in Him" (Colossians 2:10). "Labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand. . . complete" (Colossians 4:12).

Anyone could be excused if, after reading these two texts, they exclaimed: "Really now, which of these have I to believe? " Here in the first, the great Apostle assures the Colossian Christians that they are complete in Christ, and yet by the second text I see that their dear friend Epaphras, was agonising in prayer for them, in order that they might become complete. Now, which is right?" "Which have you to believe?" Why, both, to be sure, for they are equally correct. The one refers to our standing, whilst the other refers to our state. In other words, Paul says:" You are complete, therefore you must become so. Of course, it goes without saying that this is not in accordance with the usual method of human reasoning; but then we must ever remind ourselves that God's thoughts are often different to ours. Who would dream of exhorting Christians to seek maturity, to become complete because they were complete? Reason says: "Become complete in order to be complete." God says: "Ye are complete, therefore strive to become so." Reason says: "I must become a saint by doing saintly things." God says: "You are a saint, therefore become one." (Note "To be" in Romans 1:7, are in italics, showing that they are not in the original; therefore it reads, "Called saints." See also 1 Corinthians 1:2.) Well might it be said that man is constantly making a goal of what God views as a starting-point. Such a blunder competitors in earthly races would never dream of making. But let us illustrate our first Scripture. There are two shops in the same line of business in the same busy thoroughfare. Though both are owned by industrious tradesmen, having equal chances of success, how differently they have fared! One is well stocked with goods, which are shown to the best advantage by a shop-front and fittings of the latest and most expensive pattern; whilst the other is but a poor affair, with a scanty stock and a wretched old-fashioned shop-front. It is surely evident that whilst one finds business a pleasure and a delight, to the other it is but a dreary and a doleful task. Let us go to the less fortunate tradesman and solicit an explanation. "Ah!" says he, "that is easily given. The other man over the way began where I can only hope to end. His father is wealthy and gave him a splendid capital to begin his business career; such a sum of money I can only hope to have at the end of years and years of

strenuous toil."

There are many in the great business of Christian living who can only hope to end where so many others begin. They begin to read the Bible and pray, try to live good lives, knock off this evil habit and that sin, and attend the services of the sanctuary, hoping at the end to gain God's favour and everlasting bliss. But their life is a miserable struggle, and all their efforts are doomed to utter failure. The true believer begins where these vainly hope to end. He begins with a splendid capital. He commences his career by being counted righteous before God, by possessing, through Christ, the favour and wealth of God. "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Brother, you, too, can begin the business of Christian living by a glorious capital. "Of His fulness have we all received" can become your testimony.

"Ye are complete in Him." How emphatic this is. "Ye are," not "Ye shall be." And how inclusive, too- "Ye." The weakest saint is included in that "Ye." Observe, "in Him," not "in myself." Thus it is not a matter of attainment, but of faith. What comfort there is in beginning housekeeping with a house completely furnished; not to do so often means years of scraping and weary struggle. But there is this difference: a completely furnished house depends upon £ s. d., whereas a completely furnished soul is dependent upon faith. How glorious this is!

"That ye may stand complete." We usually confine our prayers to the unsaved; not so the early Christians. They prayed earnestly that the Lord's people might live holily and unblameably, for they recognised that the greatest hindrance to the evangelisation of the world is the worldly lives of Christians. Our second text preaches that, although counted complete, I am experimentally incomplete. But the Lord desires that I should make true in myself what is already true for me in Christ, or as it has been put, to turn a fact of doctrine into a fact of experience and attainment. (Note Leviticus 14:7, Leviticus 14:8. Though pronounced clean, the leper had a work to accomplish in order to be clean.) Then pray remember that the Lord counts the trusting soul complete in order to make it so. Oh! He desires to make me what He has already counted me to be! And He will place no obstacle in his way. THE ARM OF THE LORD IS TOWARD, OR UNDER YOU-WHICH?

"He saith, all day long I have stretched forth My hands" (Romans 10:21). "Underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deuteronomy 33:27).

"The eternal God is thy refuge." The word translated "refuge" is a very strong one, and is not often met with in the Bible. It means infinitely more than a temporary place of safety, a mere shelter. It is, as the R.V. points out, a dwelling place, a habitation, a. home. You are caught in a sudden storm whilst in a public park, and with all speed you make for the shelter provided by the authorities-it is a refuge, and very acceptable-but it is not home. You are attempting to cross one of the main thoroughfares in a busy city, and finding yourself in danger fly to the refuge in the centre of the road. That little oasis in the midst of surging traffic is very welcome- but it is not home. Now, God in Christ is all this to the trusting soul-and very much more-for He is a home. After all, what is it that makes home? Is it not the loving arms of father and mother? Do you feel quite at home with God? If you feel uneasy at the thought of God's presence, if there is a lack of homeliness in God for you, let Him throw His arms around and underneath you, and He will chase every fear away.

What a contrast is this expression to that quoted by Paul in Romans 10:21 : "All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." Certainly if the everlasting arms are not beneath you, they must be stretched forth in earnest pleading. The luxury of resting in the everlasting arms is known only by those who have responded to His loving invitation. But note, "all day long." What an example of patience and intense earnestness! God is depicted as stretching forth His hand for an entire day. How trying is the holding forth of the hands only for a little while. Here He waits long and patiently. How much longer will you keep Him in that uncomfortable attitude? The arm of God is a symbol of power, therefore there is a thought of might in this figure. But there is also a thought of affection and love in the metaphor. Isaiah in his prophecy has much to say about the arm of the Lord, but Moses is concerned about the arms-not might only, but also love. The Bride in Solomon's Song could say: "His left arm is under my head, His right hand doth embrace me." Thank God! Though the Almighty's right hand is stretched out to defend us from all perils and dangers, His left hand binds us to His great heart of love. But there is another important thought. He holds out His arms not only to rescue us from danger, but to satisfy His great heart of love. Men and women hunger for the love of little children, and never seem so happy as when they are folding the little ones to their bosoms. It is thus the hunger of their hearts is met. And is this not so with our God? Oh, if not for your own sake, yet for God's sake come to Him. And He will rest in His love.

BEHIND THY BACK.

"Thou hast cast Me behind Thy back" (1 Kings 14:9).

"Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back"

(Isaiah 38:17).

What an amazing contrast! In the first God is speaking to a King, in the second a king is speaking to God. In the former a sinner is seen casting God behind his back, whilst in the latter God is seen casting, not the sinner, but the sinner's sin behind His back. Again we remark, what an amazing contrast! How magnanimous of the Lord to deal so mercifully with the repentant soul! But then, it is just like Him.

Some Scripture texts need a great deal of explanation, but these two are as clear as noonday, and require no interpretation. Yet, though they may be read clearly afar off, we may see additional beauty in them by closer inspection. Note first:

I. The Sinner Casting God Behind his Back. Our first Scripture formed part of a message addressed by God to Jeroboam, first king of the ten tribes. There are reasons for believing that, before his elevation to the throne, he was a humble follower of Jehovah, for when his eldest son was born he gave him the name of Abijah, which means, "Jehovah is my father," or "Jehovah is my desire." However, no sooner did he become king than he made the blunder of his life-erected golden calves for his subjects to worship. Merely worldly policy dictated such a step. He took counsel with himself and not with the Lord (see 1 Kings 12:26). Now his sin seems more heinous when we note that he knew that it was for this very sin God had permitted the revolt (see 1 Kings 11:33). Warnings were sent to him, but to no purpose, and now God permits his eldest son to be smitten with an incurable malady. Anxious about his beloved son, the king bethought himself of the despised and neglected prophet of God; but, not willing to face him himself, like a coward, sent his

wife, bidding her to disguise herself, and take only the present of an almost destitute person. But her efforts to disguise herself were all to no purpose, and the Lord gave the prophet this stern message to send to the king by his wife.

Now could there be a more serious and damning charge? To cast behind the back is an act expressive of utter disregard and contempt. It signifies that God had been treated as of no value, and of no consequence, as worthless and useless. But let us come a little closer. Cannot God lay such a charge at the door of every one of us? Truthfully can He say to thee, dear reader, "Thou hast cast Me behind thy back." Do you deny it? Well, now, can you say, "I have set the Lord always before me?" That is to say, you have always made Him your model and ideal, have ever kept Him in mind, recognising His presence with you?

If you cannot-and who dare say that he has---if He is not before you He must be behind you! And what about God's law? In the prayer of penitence offered in Nehemiah 9:26, Israel confessed that their fathers had "cast Thy law behind their backs." Have you always loved and kept His laws? The fact is, we were born with our backs to God. And whilst some deliberately and wilfully cast Him behind their backs, the vast majority do it unthinkingly and carelessly, yet nevertheless it is done just as certainly. What a relief it is to turn to our second Scripture.

II. God Casting the Sinner's Sin Behind His Back. This is part of good King Hezekiah's outburst of praise to God on his recovery from a most serious illness. He remembered, and placed on record, that, though in common with his fellows, he had cast God behind his back, yet, on confessing his sin, and seeking mercy, God had cast his sin behind His back. And there are thousands to-day who can, and do, give the same glad and joyous testimony. This is not according to our deserts. If we received our due, He would treat us as we have treated Him. And does He act thus because He thinks lightly of sin? For answer to that question go to Calvary. Jesus, our Lord, suffered in our stead. It is because God cast His beloved Son behind His back that He can now cast the repentant sinner's sin behind His back.

"My sin is ever before me," moaned another king in heartbroken sorrow. Ah! that is it; when the sinner sets his sins before his own face and confesses them to the Lord, then it is that the merciful Lord sets them behind His back. Alleluia!

SPIRITUAL UNCONSCIOUSNESS.

"And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him" (Judges 16:20). "Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone " (Exodus 34:29).

It seems almost sacrilege to place Samson and Moses side by side, seeing the former was the slave of passion, whereas the latter was the slave of God, yet we do so for a specific purpose, viz., to place the two in contrast, and that we might emulate Moses.

There is nothing new or strange in unconscious acts. There are many things in life which we do quite unconsciously, through sheer force of habit. For instance, the accomplished pianist or organist does not think about the notes he has to strike. It is easy to see what a merciful provision this is which saves our feeble consciousness from being burdened with the heavy daily load. Had we to think how we were to manage every step we take, how we were to masticate our food, how to act or speak, or any other action which we now automatically perform, the mind would be

crowded to distraction with these competing elements, reason would snap under the intolerable strain, and the world would be turned into a raving Bedlam.

It is when the unconsciousness has to do with the spiritual realm we need to be on our guard.

There are two kinds of unconsciousness. Samson was unconscious of spiritual loss, whereas Moses was unconscious of spiritual gain. The first was tragic; the second was blessed; the first was fatal to service; the latter was one important bit of service, and increased his usefulness.

I. Unconscious Spiritual Decline. One cannot help pitying Samson, fool though he was. "He wist not that the Lord was departed from him," but he ought to have known that his evil living would lead to this loss. Reading the life of Samson, we have the same feeling of grief as when reading the life of Burns, the Scottish poet-it is the what might have been which oppresses us. There were great possibilities for Samson, yet they were never fully realised. It is a very solemn and awful thing to hinder God's purposes for us.

God did not forsake him immediately. He bore long with him-at least a score of years did He suffer him, giving deliverance upon deliverance. The phrase "departed from him" had only reference to service, not to salvation. Though he had played fast and loose with sin, he was still in the Heavenly family. "Departed" meant powerlessness in service for God.

It is an awful thing to know that the Lord may depart from us, so far as power in service is concerned, and yet we be unconscious of it. It means that we can get so hardened by the deceitfulness of sin that we are not as sensitive as formerly.

II. Unconscious Spiritual Gain. For forty days and forty nights Moses had been alone with God. Beholding the glory of the Lord, he had been changed into the same image. And if we were more often alone with the Lord our countenances too would be oftener radiant.

Unconsciousness is the invariable sign of true holiness. ON OR UNDER-WHICH?

"I bare you on eagles' wings" (Exodus 19:4). Gathered you under My wings (Matthew 23:37). What a contrast have we here. We certainly have in the first a noble and majestic figure of speech. All the might of God bearing Israel up. What a wonderful relationship is here shown between God and His redeemed people. That was what God was to His people in grace under the Old. Covenant. But which is the safer of the two-"on" or "under"? In the New Testament, under the New Covenant, God hides us under His wings. Even the Psalmist knew of this, as we see in Psalm 91: "He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust." No position so near to the heart of God, and no position so warm and comfortable, as well as safe.

DRAWN OR DRIVEN-WHICH?

"Draw me, we will run after Thee" (Son_1:4).

"So He drove out the man" (Genesis 3:24). One is always interested in the utterances of Spirit-filled and much-used men of God. Early in the Welsh Revival, Evan Roberts said: "There is no driving in anything which pertains to God; it is Satan that drives; God persuades, draws." And then, lifting up his voice, cried: "Draw us. Lord; draw us by thy Holy Spirit."

Meditating much on this statement, and searching the Word, we find that God does both, as above Scriptures show. But with this difference-references to His drawing are usually in connection with salvation, whereas His driving is usually in connection with judgment. So there is placed before us the choice: Whether we shall be amongst the drawn ones or the driven! God loves to draw, but hates to drive. Blessed are they who are drawn; woe to those who are driven.

I. The Sinner Drawn.

1. A Personal Plea. a. It is a personal plea-"Draw me." b. This is the language of an awakened soul, conscious of being away from God.

2. A Confession of Weakness. This is the language of conscious weakness Away from God, and unable to run in the way of His commandments. If He will only draw, then "we will run."

3. Language of Helplessness. This is the language of one who longs to follow the Lord Jesus, but is conscious of the alluring and awful fascination of sin.

4. Confession Prompted by a Sense of Unworthiness. The language of one who feels he deserves to be driven rather than drawn.

5. Request Granted "The King hath brought me." God loves to draw. This is seen in nature. The tides are caused by the drawing power of the moon. Evaporation, and in consequence the fertilizing showers, is the result of the drawing power of the sun. The growth and position of plants, trees, and flowers, depend upon the alluring and attracting power of the sun. But what about the world of men and women? Ah, no one offers this prayer in vain.

6. How Does He Draw. a. The Ancients declared that the god Jupiter had a chain of gold which he could at any time let down from Heaven, and by it draw the earth and all its inhabitants to himself. Only a fable, yet there is a suggestion in it. It is true that our God, the only true God, has a golden chain, which in the "fulness of time" He let down from Heaven to earth to draw His erring creatures to Himself- and the Golden Chain is the Lord Jesus Christ, for is it not written: "Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be," and did He not Himself say: "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me?" (John 12:32). God draws through the Atoning Death of His Beloved Son. b. He draws also by His sympathy and love. As we read the sacred records we discover His loving sympathy with all.

7. The Result. In our text there are three blessed results of His drawing. a. Run after the Lord. Only the drawn ones can follow after the Lord in the way of loving obedience. Observe, run, not crawl. And note the power of influence-"We," not merely the suppliant; so others are influenced.

There is said to be a hill in Ayrshire up which cyclists are able to free-wheel, but have to pedal hard to get down. There is a vein of metallic ore in the hill which sets up a magnetic current up the hill. We do know that the Christian runs up the Hill Difficulty because drawn by the Lord. b. Communion. "The King hath brought me up unto His chambers." c. Joy and Delight. "We will be glad and rejoice in Thee."

II. The Sinner Driven.

1. After the Sad Fall, sinful man driven out of the garden (Genesis 3:24), yet not driven out in judgment until the promise was given of a Saviour, and provision made for a covering.

2. After his Atrocious Deed, "Cain said unto the Lord, My punishment is greater than I can bear, behold Thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth, and from Thy face shall I be hid" (Genesis 4:13-14).

These are awful words.

Warning. If not drawn to God by the Lord Jesus Christ and His Atoning Death, we shall, by and by, be driven to the Great White Throne. THE TWOFOLD PEACE.

"Peace with God " (Romans 5:1). "Peace of God" (Php_4:7).

Introduction. When the great Atlantic Cable was laid, the first message flashed across it was one by Queen Victoria to the President of America: "Peace on earth, good-will toward men." This is the first great need of mankind. The time is coming when peace will be universal on the earth. In the meantime peace can become the individual possession of each one. Indeed, this is really essential to universal peace.

What a vast difference there is in the two texts at the head of this meditation. "With God" and "of God" refer to a twofold peace vital to human happiness. We may have the first without the second, though we can never have the second without the first. The first peace is dependent on faith; the second is dependent on prayer. The first is a peace outside of me; the second is a peace within me. If the first describes a state between God and myself, the second describes a condition within my being.

"Peace with God"-A Peace Outside of Myself. Peace is difficult to define. It may be understood as harmony, unity, concord. Romans 5:1, implies a previous state of enmity, of warfare between.

"We have peace," not we make peace. "Peace with God" can never be ours without personal surrender to God on our part, yet it is the fruit of the personal surrender of the sinner's Saviour, and not of the sinner. Formerly sinners were asked if they had made their peace with God. Though the questioner meant well, it was wrong. A better phrase is: Have you found peace. In Ephesians 2, three facts concerning peace are given.

1. He Made Peace (2 Timothy 4:15). How did He make it? Not by declaring it-that He did later. He made it by shedding His Blood (see Colossians 1:20). "Peace with honour," Lord Beaconsfield's familiar phrase, describes the peace Christ made. All the attributes of God go to making up the Atonement, Thus this peace honours the Law of God. Every attribute of God is in perfect accord. By His death He satisfied all His righteous requirements and liberated His mercy and love.

2. He Preached Peace (2 Timothy 4:17). When did our Lord first proclaim peace? We have no record that He ever preached peace before His atoning death. The first time He preached peace is recorded in John 20:19-31. If an ambassador were to go to a rebellious people carrying tidings of peace, after proclaiming it he would produce his authority. Jesus stands in the midst saying, "Peace," and when He had said so, He showed them His hands and His side-His authority, for His hands and side bore the marks of His passion.

3. He is Our Peace (2 Timothy 4:14). The peace which Christ preached has its security in the person of Christ! He is the security and guarantee of peace with God.

SIX BRIEF WATCHWORDS.

1 Timothy 6:11-19.

I. "Flee" (1 Timothy 6:11). An honourable Flight.

II. "Follow" (1 Timothy 6:11). A Glorious Pursuit.

III. "Fight" (1 Timothy 6:12). A Perpetual Conflict.

IV. "Lay Hold" (1 Timothy 6:12 and 1 Timothy 6:19). A Treasure to Grasp.

V. "Keep" (1 Timothy 6:13-16; 1 Timothy 6:20). A Treasure to Guard.

VI. "Charge" (1 Timothy 6:17-19). A Warning to Give.

Ten "Fear Nots" Of The Bible

Some "Fear Nots" of the Bible A PROMISE FOR THE FUTURE.

Bible "Fear Nots," No. 1

"For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee. Fear not: I will help thee" (Isaiah 41:13). A tender-hearted surgeon was walking through the large ward of a big hospital when he saw a little one, with bandaged eyes, in distress and waving her hand about. He went up to her and grasped that outstretched hand. Instantly there was a change-the little one was comforted and became restful and contented. And that child, may be, is a picture of some reader of this chapter-in a spiritual darkness that may be felt, with a sense of loneliness and desolation, and yearning, oh, so much, for the touch of a vanished hand, and full of fear and dread concerning the future. Just hold out your hand to the dear Lord, and he will welcome and grasp it, "saying unto thee. Fear not, I will help thee."

"Noa then, lad, tha mun howd on!" In a small village near Manchester, where I was conducting some evangelistic services, a quarryman lay dying. He was an Atheist. A farmer, the head of the local body of Free-thinkers, hearing of his friend's serious condition, and fearful lest at the approach of death he would send for the minister and turn religious, had hastened to his side and urged him to die game. But the dying man replied, "It's a' reet axin me to howd on, but, mon, aw've nowt ta howd on tee!" Once again Atheism was weighed in the balances of human need and experience and found wanting. When you come to the death valley will you have "nowt ta howd on tee?" Would you not rather be amongst the redeemed ones who, having washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb, have something solid and enduring to hold on to? Yes, better still, have Someone holding on to them, for it is written: "I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not, I will help thee." An engine-driver of the old L.B. & S.C.R. lay in the Mildmay Hospital at Bethnal Green, London, awaiting an operation for appendicitis. Though a Christian man, as he thought of the ordeal awaiting him, he naturally shrank in fear and was troubled in soul. This, of course, we can quite understand. He was made ready for the operation, and, as he was about to be carried into the operating theatre, the nurse, observing his timidity and fear, said, "When you are put on the operating table, look at the wall and you will find there a message from God for you." He did so, and he found painted on the wall, "I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not, I will help thee." "Praise God," said he to me afterwards, "that was just the word I wanted, and I was rested and comforted." The "Fear Nots" of the Bible are many and varied, and form a wonderful study.

Observe, before He speaks He grasps. He first grasps that outstretched hand, and then speaks the assuring word. He does not only sit upon His throne in the heavens dictating and forwarding messages of comfort to our souls, but He comes at the call of dire need right to us and grants direct and personal contact. "No distant God have we, Who loves afar to be! Made flesh for me, He cannot rest until He rests in me." And what does His grasp mean? Seven mercies and blessings:

1. Salvation. "He sent from above, He took me, He drew me out of many waters" (Psalms 18:16). What a graphic picture we have here of man's utter helplessness. Sinking amidst the swirling waters, battered and bruised by the buffeting waves, with no firm standing ground, is there no help? Yes, if there comes that Petrine cry, "Lord, save me!" The help comes from without and from above. He sent from above, He took me, He drew me out." "And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand and caught him," and he was saved from death.

2. Security. "They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." (John 10:28). What a glorious security is ours when He grasps the hand.

3. Friendship. As a pledge of love, the hand is held in a vice-like grip: "I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand." Becoming my Saviour, I am in a position to learn and know Him as Friend.

4. Confidence. The little one is full of fear and trembling, and you say, "Give me your hand," and that means good-bye to fear. So is it between the Lord and the soul. An abiding confidence is ours as a result of His hold of our hands.

5. Assistance. The hand is offered to assist: "I will help thee."

6. Strength. "The arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob" (Genesis 49:24). With His firm grasp there comes the impartation of strength Divine.

7. Submission. This is to be willing to be put anywhere, and to be used anyhow. That is not so difficult as it sounds. What matters where we go and what we have to do if only His hand leadeth!

PROMISED HELP.

Bible "Fear Nots," No. 2.

"Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; He will come and save you" (Isaiah 35:4). Surely this is one of the strangest "Fear nots" of the Bible! We have to strengthen the weak hands, confirm the feeble knees, and establish the faint-hearted by the declaration of His sure and imminent coming to wreak vengeance! And this thought is by no means confined to the Old Testament Scriptures, for it is to be found in the New Testament: "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

I. For the Oppressed. It is a message to the downtrodden and oppressed, to those writhing under cruel wrong, smarting from oppression, indignant through some gross injustice. Brooding over the wrongs they suffer people are tempted to take vengeance into their own hands, and, moved by hasty and unrighteous impulses, make mistakes over which they will long mourn. "Avenge not thyself," is the Divine command. "Vengeance is Mine: I will repay, saith the Lord." Justice will be meted out some day to those oppressors by the God of Righteousness, hence be patient, and fret not thyself because of evildoers. Let not the wrongs you have suffered sour you. There comes to mind a tragic instance and illustration of this. A young woman who should have benefited largely under her father's will, was cruelly defrauded of most of her money by a solicitor who had to do with the estate, and from a position of affluence she sank into a state of extreme poverty. She so brooded over the cruel wrong she had suffered, that her whole life was ruined thereby. She

cherished hard thoughts of God, questioning His justice, cultivated a spirit of suspicion toward all mankind, and allowed herself to be so overwhelmed by bitterness that she became a bugbear to all her fellows, and this was so pronounced as old age crept on, that she was avoided by all. Remember, persecuted, defrauded, or oppressed one, that the eyes of God are upon you; He knows all. He will now bind up your broken heart, soothe your bruised and troubled spirit, granting ample compensations even in this life, and will most certainly, sooner or later, mete out justice to the oppressors, eye for eye, tooth for a tooth.

II. For the Sympathetic. This is also a message to those who, though not smarting under wrong done to themselves, yet are appalled at the sight of cruel oppression and wrong inflicted on others. There are many tenderly sympathetic souls who suffer more from the wrongs inflicted on others than if they personally were the aggrieved ones. Noting how these oppressors seem to flourish, and how slow the wheels of God grind, they are liable to become "hasty of heart" (A.V. margin for "fearful"), rush to rash conclusions, even going to the length of denying either the existence or the power of God. A sympathetic naturalist so brooded over the present conditions of the world-the work of nature, red in tooth and claw, and the world of men at strife and enmity one with another-that he was so moved with indignation as to exclaim that, if he had been the Creator of the world, the patent facts would break his heart. He spoke truer than he thought, for the Creator of the world died of a broken heart on account of the sin of the world. No, no, we must not lose heart or patience. God still observes, and will most certainly rectify wrong, and mete out punishment to the oppressors sooner or later. Therefore "Be strong, fear not; behold your God will come with vengeance."

III. For the Jew. This is a message particularly for the Jew. Many members of this people of the "wandering foot" have so brooded over the wrongs Israel has suffered now for two millenniums, that they have thrown overboard their faith, and have become rank atheists. Certainly no nation has suffered such cruel oppression and wrong. But if we read prophecy aright, Israel has yet a far more awful ordeal to pass through, "the time of Jacob's trouble." But the Lord is neither forgetful nor unobservant of His people. He is quietly noting everything. Even now, blessed are those who bless Israel, and cursed are they who curse. But "behold your God will come." And His coming will mean salvation for Israel, vengeance on the enemies of Israel, and recompense for the friends of Israel.

DIVINE ASSURANCE.

Bible "Fear Nots," No. 3.

"Fear not, I have called thee by thy name" (Isaiah 43:1). In a great prison an amazing scene took place. By the intervention and intercession of a man of influence, a free pardon was secured for a noted criminal who had spent a long time in that gaol. The Governor of the prison intimated to the prisoners assembled that he held in his hand a free pardon for one of them, and after a few remarks, called out the name of the fortunate individual. But the man moved not; he could not believe the pardon was for him, but for another who may be bearing the same name; and it was only with the utmost difficulty that he could be persuaded that it was really for him. Those who witnessed the occurrence said it was an unforgettable and amazing scene.

True is it that the Lord is Redeemer. But is it for me? Can I have a share in that redemption? It may be for others; but, oh, has it anything to do with me? Surely this message settles that difficulty: "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine." He called me! And He came to assure me that it is a call for and to me. He calls me by my name. The more one ponders over this "Fear not," the more pregnant it seems with meaning:

1. He Lives. "I have called thee." It surely declares that He lives. He died. That death was redemption's price. But death did not permanently hush that voice. He still speaks; therefore, He still lives.

2. He is Near Me. "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart." It surely declares that He is near. He calls-not shrieks or shouts. "He shall not strive (lit., squabble) nor cry (scream)" (Matthew 12:19). He is quite near, and therefore gently and lovingly calls.

3. He Remembers Me. It surely declares that I am not forgotten: "I have called thee." "How long wilt Thou forget me, O Lord," cried the Psalmist. Ah, He never forgets. And I'm not lost in the crowd either. He knows my name.

4. He Longs for Me. It surely declares that He asks for my friendship. To call me by my name speaks volumes. We never call strangers or casual acquaintances by their names; that is the sole prerogative of friendship. Being my Saviour, He desires to become my friend and adviser. Connect 1 Timothy 6:1 with 1 Timothy 6:7 : "I have called thee by thy name," "Even every one that is called by My name." He calls me by my name in order that He might put His Name upon me. A middle-aged woman was so wrought on by the Spirit of God at a Lancashire cottage meeting I once conducted, that she interrupted the service by kneeling down, and crying for mercy. She sought the Lord earnestly and perseveringly. But was redemption for her? That was the trouble. It seemed too good to be true. And so she spent several days strangely incredulous. Calling one day, she inquired if there was such a text in the Bible as "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee," as it had flashed into her mind that morning whilst she had been troubling over the matter of her soul's salvation, and she could not remember having seen it before. I was glad to point her to Isaiah 43:1, assuring her it was without doubt the Lord's own message to meet her present need. This she recognised, and immediately began to bless and praise the Lord, and lived in full assurance of faith the rest of her days. THE LAME PRINCE.

Bible "Fear Nots, No. 4.

"And David said unto him, Fear not, for I will surely show thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake" (2 Samuel 9:7).

How welcome this royal "Fear not" must have been to the trembling and fearful prince, Mephibosheth! How unexpected it was! What a surprise it was to him, being altogether different to what he really expected. The King's "Fear not" would fall on his ears as a peal of silvery bells. But who was this Prince Mephibosheth? He was Jonathan's son, the last survivor of the royal house of Saul. When news of the death of King Saul and his sons on the fatal battlefield of Gilboa reached the royal palace, the nurse, snatching up in her arms this infant son of Jonathan, fled with him to Lo-debar. In the hurry she let him fall, when his feet were permanently injured. Sixteen years had passed when, upon David inquiring, "Is there any that is left of the house of Saul that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" and hearing of the survival of this lame prince, sent and had

him brought into his royal presence. Tremblingly must Mephibosheth have made that journey; and, at last, ushered into the king's presence, must have expected his death. When lo! nothing but grace was meted out to him.

It is a lovely picture of salvation. Convicted of sin, and aware of your lost and ruined condition, do you feel you dare not entertain any hope of securing His grace and favour? Then listen and take to heart this story.

I. He was the King's Enemy, owing to his relation to Saul, though, thank God, the king was not an enemy of the poor trembling prince. We are by nature at enmity with God, though God is not at enmity with us, and is ever beseeching us to be reconciled to Him.

II. He was Lame Through a Fall. And so is it with us. What moral and spiritual weakness and sickness and infirmities are ours by the Fall.

III. He was in a Far Country, away from the king. Far, far away from Jerusalem, the place of blessing, of peace and worship, at Lo-debar, "the place of no bread." We, too, are by nature in the far country, away, far away, from God.

IV. He was Sought Out by the King. No, it was not a matter of Mephibosheth seeking the king, but the king seeking him. Wherein do you think our Christian faith differs from all other faiths that have ever been or are? In this, and this alone, all other faiths represent man, in the first instance, seeking God (which is not true, for man, left to himself, does not want God), but the Christian faith represents God as seeking man, which alone is true to fact. Man is indifferent to God; but God is not indifferent to him.

V. He was Received In his Deformity, just as he was, without any attempt to improve himself. Ah, that we must remember:

"Just as I am without one plea,

But that Thy blood was shed for me,

And that Thou bid'st mo come to Thee:

O Lamb of God, I come."

VI. He was Received for Another's Sake, for the sake of Jonathan. And we are received for Another's sake, for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Accepted in the Beloved."

VII. He Learned to Estimate Himself Aright, but only after he came to David When Mephi-bosheth said, "What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?" he may have simply indulged in an Eastern's habit of self-deprecia-tion in the presence of his superior. Yet it may have been a genuine and sincere expression of his deepest feelings. But, pray note, he only expressed this view after he came to David. It is only after we come to the Lord Jesus that we take low and truer views of ourselves, and get to see sin in the light of Heaven.

VIII. He Got in David More than he had Lost. What he had lost he regained, plus David's friendship and fellowship. We gain more in Christ than we lost in Adam.

IX. He Dwelt with the King in the royal palace, and upon royal fare: "For he did eat continually at the king's table." Oh, what blessed news! And we, too, may leave the pit and the dunghill and dwell in the holiest of all by the Blood of Jesus.

Poor conscience-stricken sinner, fearful of just and deserved judgment, listen to our blessed Lord's "Fear not, for I will surely show thee kindness for Jesus' sake." Dare, therefore, to entertain hope of finding mercy, and cling to the Rock of Ages.

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THE FEARFUL.

Bible "Fear Nots," No. 5

"But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, Fear not, for I have redeemed thee" (Isaiah 43:1). Strange fears possess the souls of many Even some great ones of the earth have not been free from them. Dr. Johnson, with all his philosophy, was very careful not to enter a room with his left foot foremost. If by any chance he did so, he would immediately step back and re-enter with his right foot foremost. He was terribly afraid of death, too, and would not suffer it to be mentioned in his presence. Julius Caesar, to whom the shouts of thousands of the enemy were but sweet music, was mortally afraid of the sound of thunder, and always wanted to get underground to escape the dreadful noise. Marshal Saxe, who loved to look upon the ranks of opposing armies, fled and screamed in terror at the sight of a cat. Peter the Great could scarcely be persuaded to cross a bridge, and whenever he placed his foot on one he would cry out with fear. The number thirteen is considered, by some an unlucky number, and the breaking of crockery, but particularly glassware, is a harbinger of misfortune. Some fishermen on their way to their boats return home and will not sail that day should they meet either a woman or a cat. These are superstitious fears, with no foundation in fact, and sensible folk, but especially Christian people, ought to get rid of them. The Lord says to such: "But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, Fear not." Suffer not such fears any longer to enthral you.

Other fears possess the mind at times. Strange fears of impending disaster, or coming sorrow, of threatening calamity; fears sometimes that remain inarticulate, but which weigh like a load of lead upon the spirit. These sometimes spring from an overwrought nervous system, from a deranged physical constitution, from a diseased or weakened body. One evangelist, well known to the writer, had periodical fits of depression and despair, when strange fears took a grip of him, and when he thought the Lord was angry and displeased and had turned His face from him. But his friends knew very well that he was then troubled with his liver, and when he had emerged from a bad bilious attack, all was well-the Lord's smile had again been gained, and the Lord again presented Himself. But, as a matter of fact, the Lord had been with him all the time; only his deranged physical system had called up phantoms of fear and despair. The Lord loves to speak to such, saying, "Fear not." And He will come and quieten and soothe the nerves and give rest and quietness. A friend who occasionally suffers from a restless and fearful spirit, gained great comfort and help from the words: "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures," and trusted the Lord to exercise the sweet compulsions of His grace, making aim restful and quiet. "He maketh me." But there is another fear, that is the common possession of man, a fear that springs from superstition or a fear of God and of the future. We are going to say that this fear is natural to man, but we would check ourselves and say that it is unnatural-this fear was born when sin came into the world, and death by sin "I was afraid. . and I hid myself," confessed the first man Adam, to a Holy

God, after he had sinned Ah, this fear is not groundless, but rests upon a fact; for as sinners we have every reason for fear. But to be redeemed means three things in the Sacred Records. In Exodus 13 13 it means:

I. Deliverance from Death. This is a solemn thought indeed. But the Divine One exclaims: "Fear not, oh sinner, for I have paid the price of thy redemption from certain and awful eternal death." He tasted death that we might drink the cup of salvation. In Exodus 6:6 redemption is spoken of in relation to

II. Deliverance from Bondage, the awful Egyptian bondage. Israel were not only to be saved from death by the destroying angel because of the sprinkling of blood on the lintels and doorposts, but taken right out of galling bondage. Many, alas, who know something of the value of the sprinkled Blood, are yet in bondage to the world. But He assures such, "Fear not, oh sin-bound believer, I will snap thy chains, and lead you into the glorious liberty of the sons of God." In the Book of Ruth redemption is spoken of as

III. Deliverance from Penury. Ruth by marriage was related to Boaz, and he had to do the kinsman's part, and that meant buying back the inheritance and marrying the widow. Redemption meant for Ruth and Naomi good-bye to poverty. And our Heavenly Kinsman says, "Fear not, oh bankrupt soul, I have redeemed thee; I will unite Myself with thee, and thou shalt share My wealth. IN TIMES OF DARKNESS.

Bible "Fear Nots," No. 6.

"The Lord hath said that He would dwell in the thick darkness" (2 Chronicles 6:1). "Lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him (Abraham), and He (the Lord) said unto Abraham." (Genesis 15:12, Genesis 15:15). "Fear thou not, for I am with thee" (Isaiah 41:10).

Walking through the conservatory of a friend one day, my attention was drawn to a small plant completely covered by a flower-pot. "Do you know why I have put this slip in darkness?" he inquired. "It is because I want it to strike a deeper root." Evidently darkness was necessary, however unpleasant, for the striking of a deeper root.

How puzzled young Christians are with experiences they never anticipated. When they first sought the Lord, and received from Him pardon, justification and life, what joy fell to their lot. "O happy day, when Jesus washed my sins away," they sang and shouted exultingly. Their sun shone with great intensity, and the Lord was near. But sometimes the joy departs, their sun goes down, the face of the Lord is hidden, and darkness is their lot. Why the darkness? Sometimes sin is the cause-and quick confession will restore the gladness; sometimes a week and ailing body is the cause of such soul-travail-when rest, suitable food, or medical attention will cause the sunshine to break forth once again; often, yes, very often, none of these reasons explain, but this-the darkness was thought necessary by the Divine Husbandman for the young convert to strike a deeper root, and get a firmer hold of God. But whatever the cause, we beseech of you to cling to the fact that "the Lord hath said that He would dwell in the thick darkness." He is with you in the darkness saying, "Fear not, for I am with thee." A lady was endeavouring to assist a young Christian in a similar experience many years ago, when they met Sir Arthur Blackwood, who gave a message that was just the Lord's own word. "I remember meeting him (Sir Arthur Blackwood) one day, when C.T., who was with me, and was then a young Christian, was in low spirits, from which I could not

raise her. As we went round the railings of the Parish Church we suddenly came face to face with him; and seeing our downcast faces, he said to us, 'Who is among you that feareth the Lord that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the Name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.'" (Isaiah 50:10). It was just the word for them.

How bewildered newly consecrated souls are with experiences they never anticipated! After they had fully surrendered to their beloved Lord and Master, and laid themselves upon the altar of sacrifice, they expected, and indeed received through the incoming of the Holy Spirit, a changed heart, and consequent deliverance from all the power of the enemy, they were conscious of a profound inward peace, and a very lively sense of the presence of the Father. Joy was full, communion deepened and uninterrupted, and a new delight experienced in prayer and the study of the Sacred Scriptures. So far, everything had happened just as they were led to expect. But by and by a change took place-all deep emotional experiences ceased, and, while still conscious of an inward calm,, the soul seems shrouded in darkness.

Some of the darkness of the dreary past can well be understood. Then it was either the outcome of repeated failures in the daily walk and conversation, and the consequent upbraidings of a self-condemn ing heart, or it may have been caused by a tired and jaded body. But not so in this case. Now, unconscious of anything done to grieve their Lord, in the passession of a conscience void of offence toward God and man, and a body in good health, the cry is raised in agonising tones: "Why this darkness?" May not the solution to this difficult problem be found in the story recorded above? May not His purpose in the darkness be the striking of a deeper root, a firmer hold of Himself, a deeper and grander knowledge of the Divine? Verily this is so. The darkness sometimes is but the Father's loving method of weaning His child away from everything else, to find in Him his or her all. He sees the subtle temptation to be taken up with mere emotional experiences, and not with the Lord Himself; to rest in the blessings of the deeper life, and not alone in the Blesser. And, as He can never be satisfied until our whole undivided attention has been gained, He has by darkness shut us in unto Himself, until we are able to say:

"Once it was a blessing, now it is the Lord; Once it was the feelings, now it is His Word; Once His gifts I wanted, now the Giver own; Once I sought for healing, now Himself alone." But what must we do when passing through such dark experiences? What can we do but sink into the arms of Infinite love? Pray remember, He has not forsaken thee, for "the Lord hath said that He would dwell in the thick darkness." Oh, never, when in the darkness, harbour a doubt of the Divine presence! This was the most fruitful source of Israel's murmurings, for it is written: "They tempted the Lord saying, Is the Lord amongst us or not?" (Exodus 17:7). The Husbandman is never so near the vine as when he is pruning it. A short while ago a journey was made by rail. In the same compartment were other two passengers, a mother and her little girl. The wee one was very busily engaged with some toys upon the seat. By and by a long dark tunnel was entered, and one wondered that no cry of fear had escaped from the lips of the frightened child. Emerging into the light of day, the mystery was solved: the child had forsaken her toys and was clinging with her little arms around her mother's neck. Canst thou not do likewise? Rejoice in that He has counted thee worthy of dwelling with Him in the darkness, thank Him that though "a horror of great darkness" has fallen upon you, He speaks a comforting word, and in so doing thou shalt have "songs in the night." THE PROMISED PRESENCE

Bible "Fear Nots," No. 7.

"My Spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not" (Haggai 2:5).

The two strong foes of Christian service are depression and discouragement. These two enemies have ever worked sad havoc, but never more so than at the present moment. We are entering upon the spiritual harvest-time of the Christian year. Whilst the Christian worker must sow beside all waters, labouring and reaping in season and out of season, the season of greatest opportunity is now on us. And never was there greater need for Christian witness than at the present. But when the Christian warrior should be buckling on his armour for the fray, and when the sower and reaper should be girding up their loins preparatory to labouring in God's great field, depression and discouragement are paralysing the Lord's servants, or causing the hands to hang down, and the knees to be enfeebled. Of course there are sufficient causes for depression and discouragement to-day. As we look around us and note worldliness and vice at full flood, and the deadness and fruitfulness of much Christian ministry, with the apathy and indifference concerning the perishing multitude on the part of many of the Lord's people, and the steady decline in Church membership and Sunday School attendance, we feel our hearts and spirits drooping, are tempted to hang our harps on the willows, and thrust our sword into its scabbard. It was so in the days of Haggai. By Divine intervention and the clemency of Cyrus, King of Persia, a remnant of Israel had returned from the Babylonian captivity, and with zeal had commenced the work of national restoration. But political intrigues had stopped the rebuilding of the Temple, and the enthusiasm of the first return had died away in the face of the prolonged difficulties. The two brave leaders, Zerubbabel and Joshua, still survived, and kept alive their own zeal; but the mass of the people, dismayed by past events, were now more concerned about their comforts than about the restoration of the House of the Lord. Depression and discouragement had paralysed all godly effort, and the work of the Lord had ceased. The Lord's people were in great need of a tonic, and the Lord sent His prophet Haggai to administer it, which he did most effectively. "Fear ye not," was one of his messages. When such a word fell upon their ears they might have replied: "Fear ye not! Why, look at our feebleness, our defencelessness, our adversaries, and our sad condition; we cannot but fear if we open our eyes!" But there are two antidotes in (1) the Lord's promise, and (2) the Lord's presence. His gracious promise-"According to the Word that I convenanted with you"-is indeed a grand encouragement, and His presence-"My Spirit remaineth among you"-is indeed the great source of cheer and strength.

Observe the duty of strength "be strong," twice repeated. But how can the feeble be strong? Note the fountain of strength-the Lord's presence and Spirit. The purpose of strength certainly is work: "Be strong. . . and work."

Christian worker, despondent because of the present serious decline in Assemblies and diminution in Christian service, remember the Lord's own word, "My Spirit remaineth among you, fear ye not." He is with you as your ally, partner and, enduement. Remember that following Paul's sad prophecy concerning the "perilous times" and dark days in 2 Timothy 3, comes his urgent appeal to redouble Christian service: "Preach the Word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine... Do the work of an evangelist" (2 Timothy 4:2, 2 Timothy 4:5).

It seems fully clear by Acts 18:5, and a study of 2 Corinthians 1:8; 2 Corinthians 2:1,2 Corinthians 2:4, 2 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Corinthians 4:8-9; 2 Corinthians 6:10; 2 Corinthians 7:5-6, that Paul was at that moment suffering depression.

"Grief beset the spirit of Paul," is the Arabic version of Acts 18:5. Reasons for discouragement and depression can easily be seen. He was alone in a strange city, and solitude was a hard trial to so sensitive a nature; he had no money, and had to engage himself to a tent manufacturer; he was not well, was overworked and persecuted, and failure seemed to dog his steps. Yet he did not allow this mood to silence his voice in Christian testimony, or paralyse Christian effort, for "he testified" boldly for his Master.

Fellow-pilgrim, are you mourning over some besetting sin, and smarting under a sense of failure and shortcoming, and feel it is no use trying to live the Christian life any longer? Just take heed to His own Word to you: "My Spirit remaineth among you, fear ye not." And in that indwelling Spirit you have all you need for victory over sin and holy living. Just let Him have His own way with you, and all will be well. He will then tread down the enemies within and lead you to victory.

Unsaved one, if His Spirit no longer remains with you, then you would have every cause for fear. But He is with you. The very existence of good desire within you, and regret over the unsatisfactory past are so many proofs that the Spirit of God is striving with you. Let the Holy Spirit lead you to Christ, and to the precious Blood, then He will become in you the source of purity and power. WHEN DANGERS ASSAIL.

Bible "Fear Nots" No. 8.

"Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them" (2 Kings 6:16). This is a "Fear not" for those overawed at the magnitude of the forces arrayed against them. It was truly an appalling sight that Elisha's man-servant saw. Dothan, their residence just then, lay on an isolated hill in a wide plain. Rising up early one morning to perform his accustomed tasks ere his master arose, he saw a great host of the enemy surrounding the town, and they were utterly undefended and apparently at the mercy of the besiegers. No; we are not at all surprised at the man's alarm and dismay. It verily was a fearsome sight. The King of Syria was at war with Israel. His method of warfare was not by a regular continued invasion, but by dashes across the border on undefended places. But he found himself forestalled at every point. Whatever place they decided to attack they found their plans were known, and the carefully planned surprises were defeated. No wonder he suspected treachery, and, calling his servants together, challenged them on the matter. Their prompt answer implied that Elisha's intervention was well known by them. They declared that Jehovah revealed those carefully made plans of theirs to Elisha, who instructed the King of Israel. Therefore the Syrian king determined to send an expedition for the capture of Elisha, never dreaming that this servant of the Lord, who knew all his former schemes, might know of this one too.

No; we are not at all surprised at the servant's fear. And there is no wonder that we, too, are appalled as we remember the forces arrayed against us. Worse foes ring us round than those whose armour glittered in the morning sunshine at Dothan. A recently retired business man, in a letter, said: "These are terrible times we are living in, and it seems as if Satan is allowed to put forth tremendous powers in these last dark days." How true are these words. All the Satanic forces

seem to have united in one desperate onslaught upon the forces of righteousness and truth, and against the Lord's own people. Of the reality of those mighty enemies and of their bitter and fierce attacks, the Lord's people are not ignorant. Are we not as helpless to cope with them as this servant was? Then why should not we fear? Ah, this incident teaches us that we are not alone and deserted even when we seem most to be. And that, like Elisha, it is our duty, not so much to pray that the Lord and His host might be with us, as to recognise their presence. Elisha did not pray that the Heavenly guards might come, for they were there already. The manifestation was the miracle. God's messengers are ever near us. Let us remember this, and thus, ever recognising their presence, and, above all, the presence of the mighty Lord, be delivered from all fear. For "greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them." WHEN TEMPTED TO FEEL LONELY.

Bible "Fear Nots," No. 9.

"Fear thou not, for I am with thee" (Isaiah 41:10). The children had been some time in bed. All was quiet in the home, with the mother alone in the kitchen sewing. Suddenly a wee voice was heard at the top of the stairs: "Are you there, mamma?" One of the little ones could not sleep, and, troubled at the quietness below, feared they were alone. On being assured that mother was indeed present, the timid little one went off again to bed and was soon fast asleep.

You doubt the existence of God. Is there any wonder, when you have never taken the trouble to go to the stairs and inquire, "Are you there?" You have read, and meditated, and considered with others on this matter, airing your rusty old views, but you have never seriously inquired directly of Him. Shame on you! If you will but seek Him He will assuredly manifest Himself to you. Or may be you are a true Christian. For long He has been a blessed reality. But there has not been much traffic between Heaven and your soul of late, and He seems to have withdrawn His presence, and there is a strange and ominous silence. "Are you there, Lord?" Is that your heart-broken inquiry? Here is His answer: "Fear thou not: for I am with thee: be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee: yea I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness." Oh the blessedness of that gracious presence! This is one of the most familiar of texts; this is one of the most familiar of truths. But do we live up to it. Ah, that is quite another matter. If I am truly born of His Spirit, and a member of the family of faith, having my sins pardoned, and justified by faith, am a partaker of the Divine nature, then He is with me. This is a fact, whether I have the enjoyment of that presence or no. We must depend less on moods and more on facts. Moods are transient whilst facts remain. And the enjoyment of the fact depends very largely on its clear and persistent recognition. You feel the Lord has forsaken you, and you are greatly troubled. But what saith the Lord? Listen, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee;" "Fear not, for I am with thee." It is wonderful to think that He is within call. It is glorious to think that I can go to the foot or head of the stairs, and in response to my inquiry, "Are you there. Lord," hear His voice saying, "Fear thou not." But this message for the lonely one means infinitely more than that he is within call; its full significance is that He is by my side. And He is with me to "strengthen," to impart strength, to "help"-to do practical service, to "uphold," to accompany and support us daily in the heavenly pilgrimage. This was the Lord's most repeated message to His people. For it was not only what they needed most, but also what they needed to be reminded most of. This was His message to a backslidden people. Israel had been carried away captive. The Lord had been compelled to so chastise them. But if He had felt it necessary to send them into captivity, He had

gone with them into the foreign land, and was sharing their hardships and heartbreaks. And all the while they were unaware of that gracious presence. Having forsaken Him, they thought they were forsaken of Him. But they were mistaken. He was sharing the strokes He had been compelled to lay so heavily upon them. He had gone with them into captivity, and was near enough to not only hear, but help. This was His message to faint-hearted and fearful Israel at Kadesh Barnea (Numbers 14:9). And the recognition of this was the secret of their own unfaltering confidence. They passed the message on, but it was unheeded, hence the judgment of the forty years' wanderings in the desert. This was His message to a Christian worker about to undertake serious responsibilities (Deuteronomy 31:8). What a stupendous task awaited Joshua! Not merely was the task huge owing to the fact that he had to lead three millions of people, but because he had to succeed one so great as Moses. But the Lord's presence was His sufficiency. This was His message to a peace-maker, who felt his loneliness in the midst of enemies (Genesis 26:24). What a splendid peace-maker Isaac was, to be sure, but what need there was just then of a cheery word from his Lord.

Yes; His presence with us is a fact. Do we live up to that fact? If we did, for one thing there would be freedom from anxiety. How often we quote Php_4:5-7 : "Be careful for nothing," or, as R.V., "In nothing be anxious." This freedom from carking care seems impossible. But read on: "The Lord is at hand," i.e., "The Lord is close by you," a reference not only to His imminent advent, but to His present nearness. A sea captain, who had just arrived from a voyage, said: "We had a terrible storm coming up channel. I was on the bridge continually; but when the pilot came on board I went straight to bed, and in two minutes I was sound asleep." Precisely. The presence of the pilot made all the difference in the world. But, if believers, our Heavenly Pilot is already on board. Shall we not recognise that gracious presence and find relief from overwhelming care?

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR INTERCESSORS.

Bible "Fear Nots," No. 10.

"Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand and to humble thyself before thy God thy words were heard: and I am come for thy word's sake" (Daniel 10:12, R.V.).

There is much that is strange and mysterious about this incident in the life of Daniel that great statesman, saint, and prophet. He was now an old man of eighty-nine. Seventy-three years had passed since his deportation from his beloved land of Judah. Two years had gone since the imperial monarch, Cyrus, had permitted the faithful remnant of Israel to return to Jerusalem. For some reason or other Daniel began a season of special prayer. What particular petition he offered we know not. Maybe he was praying for the remnant on receiving a report concerning the difficulties they were meeting in the rebuilding of Jerusalem, and the restoration of their national life, and probably he desired to know what would befall his people in the future (see Daniel 10:14). He had been engaged in earnest and persevering prayer for three weeks before an answer came. Though no doubt puzzled and bewildered at this long delay, the aged prophet continued his supplications. Then a vision was granted. "A Man" appeared. Comparing Daniel's description of the appearance of this august Person with that given by John in Revelation 1, we are bound to conclude that it was the Lord. Daniel's servants that were with him "Saw not the vision, but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves," leaving their master alone. The

effect upon God's aged servant was overwhelming. "And I Daniel alone saw the vision. . . and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength." But in his fear and distress the Lord spake this most comforting and cheering "Fear not," which is bound to be an inspiration to all the Lord's praying people.

I. Prayer is Heard at Once in Heaven, though the sensible answer may seem to be delayed. That is, of course, prayer offered from a humble and trustful heart. How significant is the phrase, "Set thine heart," not only to "understand," but also to "chasten," i.e., humble, "thyself before thy God." Our S.O.S. signals are always noted, and an account of the same kept before the Lord. Never for one moment allow the enemy to persuade you that your cry has gone unheeded. No; a thousand times, no. "For from the first day. . . thy words were heard."

II. Delays in Answering Prayer are Not Always Due to God. Some delays are due either to un-preparedness or unfitness on the part of the suppliant or the petition. But not all delays. Delays do not always mean denials. The Lord in the vision explained to the aged intercessor how it happened that he had received no visible answer to a prayer that had been offered with success three weeks previously. And the explanation was that there had been a conflict between the powers of light and darkness, betwixt the invisible powers which rule and influence nations and peoples. Strangely fascinating is this subject, yet how little we know or can know of it. The veil hiding the invisible is here slightly withdrawn, revealing titanic opposition to the performance of the commands of the Lord. As to the ultimate success of the powers of light there can be no doubt, for Satanic powers are not omnipotent; but the delays through opposition are trying and testing times to the eager and anxious souls. In Daniel's experience a suitable explanation was given him for the delay, but the Lord is not able to explain to all of His servants. And what then? Well, surely we can trust even when we cannot trace. And we can persevere in our entreaties until our prayers are answered. Daniel persevered in prayer three weeks; let us persevere for three, thirty, or three hundred weeks. Pray through. Never give up, however sorely tried you may be with Heaven's silence. Prayer conflict is an experience not to be trusted to all the Lord's people, but only to the ripened and mature saint. Jacob's determined reply to the Lord, "I will not let thee go except Thou bless me," is to be commended. Many a lost battle would have been won if perseverance had been practised a little longer on the part of the combatants.

88. "Excepts" Of The Bible

"Excepts" of the Bible

CONCERNING YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Bible "Excepts," No. 1.

"For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom" (Matthew 5:20). In other words, except you are better men and women than those whom you consider to be the very cream of your society, you will not enter the Kingdom. Then what kind of men were these referred to by our Lord? The general idea is that they were hypocrites; but this is a mistake. Without doubt there were some who merited that designation; yet not all. "Pharisee" meant one "separated," and described those who had severed themselves from all wrong and questionable things. They were great religious teachers and leaders of that day, and therefore they must be taken as types of the

highest conformity with the Law which the Old Testament affords. Luke 18:11-12 gives us a good description of them. By this we learn that they were punctual in attendance at Divine worship, believed in and practised public and private prayer, were temperate in eating and drinking, were generous and benevolent, supported the house of prayer, and read and studied the Sacred Scriptures. What more could be desired of them? And yet our Blessed Lord declares that there is no hope for us unless we are better than they!

"No, I cannot say that I am a Christian; but I am doing my best." Are you? Do you pray three times a day, read and study the Word of God, frequent as often as possible the meeting place, and support well its honoured institutions? "No!" Then cease talking about "doing your best." But granted that you are. Here was a large class of individuals who really were doing their best, and yet our Lord said that that was not sufficient. If you reflect for a little upon this, you will be compelled to exclaim: "This is staggering." Surely this word of the Lord's ought to bring despair to the hearts of all who are honestly doing their best. Why, He states in another place (Isaiah 64:6) that, in His pure eyes, even our best is as filthy rags! Then if that is His estimation of man's best, what must His opinion be of man's worst?

Verily, our Lord's words would be terrible if they stood alone, but, thank God, they do not. Just before He made this astounding statement, He declared that He had not come to destroy the law, but to fulfil it. That is to say, He has perfectly fulfilled all God's righteous claims. Thank God for that! If my best is not sufficient, God's best is more than enough; if my righteousness will not pass muster, there is another righteousness that will see me through There is an excellent righteousness-the righteousness of the Lord's own providing-which becomes ours through faith.

Let us trace the great contrast between man's righteousness and God's righteousness.

I. The Former is Prospective, whilst the Latter is Possessive. "The righteous man under the law became righteous by doing righteously; under grace he does righteously because he has been made righteous." What an amazing difference! The one hopes to gain God's favour by becoming righteous through desperate struggles, whilst the other begins working after gaining God's favour in Christ. A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. Far, far better, to enter into present possession of God's righteousness than vainly strive to work out one of your own.

II. One is Only External, whilst the Other is Both. This is described for us in Matthew 23:28. Man's righteousness is confined entirely to the life that is seen by man, but the righteousness of God is both concerned with the external and the internal, because it is both imputed and imparted.

III. Whilst the Former is Ceremonial, the Latter is Spiritual. The Scribes and Pharisees had made the observance of ceremonies the be-all, and end-all, of religion. Now ceremonies are all right in their place, yet vital godliness is not a series of ceremonies, but a deep inward spiritual reality.

IV. One is One-Sided, whilst the Other is Full-Orbed. Righteousness is not only a state of being right with man, the fulfilling of every relation in which we stand to others, but also a state of being right with God, the fulfilling of every relation in which we stand to God-not only a character man approves of, but a character God approves of, too. This the Pharisees lost sight of, for they narrowed their conception of righteousness to man, and left God out of the reckoning, and this was fatal.

V. One was, and is, an "It," whilst the Other is "He." Ah, this is the crux of the whole matter: "The Lord our righteousness" (Jeremiah 23:6). It is what the Lord is for me, and within me. This is a Living Righteousness. And what the Lord is in Himself, He proposes to make us, if we will but trust and rest in Him. When He becomes my righteousness (which far, far exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees), this will see me through. Blessed be His Name for ever and ever!

NECESSITY OF REPENTANCE.

Bible "Excepts," No. 2.

"Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3, Luke 13:5).

In Scotland there is a ruined tower known as the Tower of Repentance. A sceptic passed by it one day, and seeing a shepherd-boy reading his Bible, scoffingly asked: "Can you tell me the way to Heaven?" Instantly the lad replied, "By way of yonder Tower!" It was the right answer. The boy had certainly read the Book of books to profit. Repentance was our Lord's first message on commencing His short earthly ministry, and it is His first word to all sinners. What He asks first of us is not our appreciation, but our repentance.

"Do you mean to tell me that there is no chance of me getting to Heaven unless I weep and wail; this is quite ridiculous."

We quite agree with you.

"How can you? You have just said that my repentance is essential, and is not repentance being sorry, mourning, and weeping?" By no means. Our definitions are often woefully astray. To repent is to be sorry for our sins, is often said. It is nothing of the kind. It is quite distinct from it: "Ye sorrowed to repentance" (2 Corinthians 7:9). Here sorrow is spoken of as something quite apart from repentance, though leading up to it. Mere sorrow is not repentance. If so, then what about Esau? "He found no place for repentance, though he sought it (the blessing) carefully with tears." Judas, the betrayer of our Lord, was filled with sorrow and remorse on accomplishing his dastardly work, yet he went out and hanged himself. Don't forget the lesson of Acts 2.

Under the mighty preaching of Peter at Pentecost, the people were pricked to the heart, and cried, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" There was most certainly real and genuine sorrow, yet the preacher replied, "Repent." There can be sorrow without repentance, yet no repentance without genuine and heartfelt sorrow. The events which gave rise to this pronouncement are unrecorded. Who these Galileans were is uncertain. They were fiery and turbulent people, often in rebellion. Probably many of them came to observe one of the feasts at Jerusalem, and Pilate, who had long desired to arrest some of them, surprised them whilst they were offering sacrifices, and slew them. The Tower in Siloam incident is unknown. It is evident that the people foolishly sat in judgment upon these unfortunate individuals who had so suddenly lost their lives, assuming that they must have been wicked to have merited such fate, and self-righteously imagined that they were much better because they had not so suffered. This statement of our Lord's proved to be prophecy, and was, literally fulfilled thirty-five years afterwards in the siege of Jerusalem, when over one million perished. Multitudes of the priests, who were going on with the sacrifices, were slain, and their blood mingled with the blood of their victims; and multitudes were buried under the ruins of walls, houses, and temple. But this word is for all, dear reader. "Except ye repent, ye shall. . . perish."

Awful word, dreadful in its significance! It is unfathomable. Twice over our blessed Lord repeated this "Except," and the repetition is impressive, emphasising its importance.

Repentance simply means "a change of mind." This was the first great truth that Luther discovered, and from which the Reformation came. It means a change of mind leading to a change of heart and purpose. First, a change of mind about myself, about my spiritual state, and the right object in life. I discover that instead of being all right I am all wrong. This will most assuredly lead to great sorrow; and if my eyes do not weep, my heart will. Second, there will be a radical change of mind about sin. Sin, that seemed so light a matter before, is seen as a hateful thing, something to be detested and dreaded. Then there will be a change of mind about God. I shall see God as an outraged Being: a Divine One of infinite love and compassion.

It is, of course, a change of mind leading to a change of conduct. Some years ago we were much impressed with the statement of a cultured Jew, who said that "the chief difference between Jewish ethical books and Christian devotional writings is that in the former repentance does not mean weep but return." Of course, he was labouring under the erroneous definition so many give of repentance. Return to God; that is the fruit of repentance. There is often a return, but not to God: "They return, but not to the Most High" (Hosea 7:16). This may be a return to some duties or spiritual exercises; but these, instead of a return to God will be of no avail. And what is the producing cause of repentance? The goodness of God as manifested in the Cross (Romans 2:4). This is well illustrated in the account of Dr. Pentecost's conversion. Impressed by some revival services, he tried, but in vain, to produce what he imagined to be repentance. In a despairing mood he went again to church, but at the close of the sermon he was so devoid of feeling as not to recollect the subject. But as he stepped into the aisle, the dying love of Jesus was made real to him. In a moment he saw that Jesus died for him. Justification by faith, which at that time he had never heard stated, was as clear as it had been ever since. Darkness was gone, and all deadness of heart. He was not thinking of himself, but of the work of redemption wrought out by the Redeemer, fie knew that he was saved, not through his efforts, or resolves, not even on account of faith, but because Jesus had put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Said he to himself: "If God is satisfied with what Christ has done for me, I ought to be, and I am." With a glad, peaceful heart he went forward; and so may we.

COMING TO CHRIST.

Bible "Excepts," No. 3.

"No man can come to Me, except the Father... draw him" (John 6:44).

If that is so, why urge me to come to Jesus if I do not feel the drawing power of the Father? Why bother me about coming at all if all who are drawn do come? You see, I will come if I am drawn, for I won't be able to do anything else. And why should I be condemned for not coming if I am not drawn? Where does moral responsibility come in? And where would the justice of God come in if He punishes me for not doing what I could not possibly do?

These are by no means imaginary difficulties, put up simply for the sake of demolishing them: for ages souls have encountered and wrestled with these fears and doubts and difficulties, and many a sore combat have they had with these giants of imagination and reason.

We have often remarked that many spiritual spectres exist solely through lack of Bible knowledge, and through careless reading of the Holy Book. Here we have a striking proof of this failing. To all who are the victims of the doubts and views we have just expressed above, we would say, "Read on!" The text printed at the head of this paper was not the whole of our Lord's utterance at that time. Read John 6:45 : "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God." In other words, God draws men through teaching! That at once simplifies matters. There is no mystery about that. God is seeking to draw men by the teaching of His Son, and of His gracious Spirit, through the sacred Scriptures, and the ministry of His redeemed ones. Thus it resolves itself into whether men will listen or not. In our Lord's discourse He had spoken of bread from Heaven which Jehovah would give, and they then asked for that wondrous Bread of which He spoke. He offered Himself as that Bread. But this offended them. How could He be that Bread from Heaven, seeing they knew (or imagined they did) all there was to know about Him! Our Lord's reply was not a defence of Himself, but a revelation of the reason of their blindness. In John 6:44 He declares man's utter helplessness; He then produced a prophecy from Isaiah, remarking that God was now teaching men, and seeking through that teaching to draw them. But that teaching of God was not done personally by Him, but through His Son who had seen the Father. The Jews were not to expect the Father would teach them personally, for none had seen the Father but His beloved Son; they must expect to be taught by His Word, and by His Spirit, and by His ministers.

"Draw," it is a beautiful term, denoting the secret work of Divine love upon hearts and minds of men. God loves to draw. And His method of drawing men by teaching is.

I. In Harmony with His Movements in Nature. The tides are caused by the drawing power of the moon; evaporation, and in consequence the fertilising shower, is the result of the drawing power of the sun; the growth and position of plants and trees and flowers depend upon the alluring and attracting power of the same sun; all nature proclaims that God loves to draw. As in nature, so in grace. Of course His method of drawing in grace differs from His method of drawing in nature. And that leads to our next thought, viz., that God's method of drawing men by teaching

II. Honours and Ennobles Man. If He draws by teaching, then it proves that man is not a block of wood or stone. A block of wood or stone cannot take in knowledge. But man is a rational creature, possessing amazing mental and moral powers and reasoning capabilities. This the Lord recognises in this method of drawing, and thus He honours and ennobles man. You have lost the key of a box or drawer-if you think little of the box or drawer you will prise it open; but if you value it you will not damage it by using force, but try the gentle art of persuasion or send for a locksmith. God will not force, but draw; not compel, but persuade; all out of respect to man.

Then again, this method of drawing men

III. Honours and Uplifts His Word. Archbishop Leighton said: "The outward means of drawing is by the Word; it is the sound of that harp that brings the stones of this spiritual building together." Building by music and melody? Yes; the music and melody of the Word. The Scriptures thus become the instrument and agent of the drawing of the Lord. What an honour is thus conferred upon the Word! This method of drawing men also

IV. Honours and Exalts the Son. The Ancients declared that their god Jupiter had a chain of gold which he could at any time let down from Heaven, and by it draw the earth and all its inhabitants to

himself. Only a fable, yet it is true that our God, the only wise and true God, has a Golden Chain, the Lord Jesus Christ, which, in the fulness of time. He let down from Heaven to earth to draw His erring creatures to Himself, Did He not say of Himself: "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." The lifting and drawing power of the Word of God is the story of the Cross it declares and proclaims. It is that, and only that, that wins men and women. This method of drawing men also

V. Honours and Glorifies God. We have said that the Lord draws by the Word, but it was He who caused all Holy Scripture to be written; we have also stated that He draws by His Son-but He gave His Son; we say that He appeals to intellect-but He gave man his reasoning faculties. There is only one conclusion possible, that God's method of drawing men and women through teaching honours and glorifies Himself.

All these facts impose a serious responsibility upon man. Bishop Hooper wrote: "God draweth with His Word, and the Holy Ghost, but man's duty is to hear and learn; that is to say, to receive the grace offered." "If a man cannot come without being drawn, and the drawing consists in being taught of God, we come to the root of the difficulty, when we raise the question: Why cannot men be taught of God? Why do they not receive His instruction? Plainly not for want of mental capacity. 'Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life,' tells the simple and the whole truth in the case. Learning comes before coming: but you have learned of Him-will you not come? Remember it is written: "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."

CONVERSION.

Bible "Excepts," No. 4.

"Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 18:3).

After a long and dreary voyage, a ship, battered and torn by many a storm, was nearing home. Suddenly the captain discovered by the chart that the steersman was heading the vessel straight for some hidden rocks. What do you think he did? Set the men to the pumps, scrub the decks, tend the sails, or paint the woodwork? Verily no. Of course, these things are good and necessary enough in their place, but if the ship is to be saved the course must be changed, the helm must be altered.

We are all on the ocean of life, sailing one way or the other. If unconverted, then the frail barque of life is heading for destruction. This fact can be discovered by consulting the chart-the Book of Books, the Bible. If the course is wrong, what must be done? Try self-improvement, casting evil habits overboard, and cultivate the good? All this is right and proper in its place, but, if the soul is to be saved from shipwreck, the course must be altered-you must turn! That is precisely what the above text declares. Remember this, that if you do not turn, you will never reach the happy goal. Conversion is thus an absolute necessity.

"But I have tried to turn, and though succeeding for a while, I find I'm soon back again in the old way." That may be so; but it proves that you have not yet learned the all-important secret. If the helm will swing back into its original position, then there must be two at the wheel. That has to be done in many a storm at sea. One at the wheel cannot keep the vessel heading in the right direction. Ah, that is why so many fail in the spiritual voyage of life-they have never felt the need of

the pierced Hand. And have never invited the Pilot to come on board! The fact is, a mere turning is not sufficient. There is what is called "Turning over a new leaf," but that is not conversion. The word "Convert" is a Latin word in English dress-"vert," to turn, "con," together; that is to say, a turning, not alone and unaided, but in company with another. Acts 3:26 illustrates beautifully this point. "God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." There is the truth of conversion-He will do the turning with your consent; He will put His hand on the helm of your life, and not only turn you into the right course, but keep you there, and that is the blessing needed. Like the prodigal, you are in a far country; unlike him, you are not left to find your way back to the Father alone, for the Lord Jesus is there, anxious to accompany you back. "Wilt thou go with this Man?" That is the all-important question. Look again at the text at the head of this page: "Except ye be converted." That signifies the work of another. And that Another is none other than the Lord. Henry Martyn declared that the conversion of a Hindu is a greater miracle than the raising of the dead. But then every conversion is a miracle, and a miracle the Lord alone can accomplish. Thus is clearly shown the true nature of conversion.

If converted, then the fact will be shown in many ways. A Chinese farmer, who spoke of his faith in Christ, was asked to give some real concrete proof of that conversion. After a moment's reflection, he said: "I believe I have a little proof. When I used to clear the stones off my fields, because it was more convenient, I just tossed them over into my neighbour's fields; but I don't do that now. I carry them and throw them into a gully or some other place, where they will not harm anybody." That was indeed a most convincing proof of conversion, and it would be well if more could give a similar testimony. Be that as it may, there will always be some convincing proof of the reality of conversion in all genuine believers. But pray notice that something else besides conversion is needed: "And become as little children." Our Lord not only speaks of the necessity of conversion, but also of childlikeness. May we not take this childlike spirit as one fruit of conversion? This was our Lord's reply concerning greatness in the Kingdom. There was nothing wrong in the mere asking of this question or the desire to get on; the error lay in the spirit which actuated the query. Our Lord's answer must have appeared to the questioners as a dash of cold water. Before you become concerned as to the greatness in the Kingdom, make sure first that you have entered into that Kingdom.

How strange our Lord's reply seems: to become great you must become little-in fact, you become great by becoming little. This must have startled His disciples. This was certainly the very first time that a teacher had ever dared to lift up such an ideal. But it is true. The motto of the kingdom of this world is to be found in Genesis 3:5; the motto of the Kingdom of Heaven is our text. To see them in their true light just put them together: "Ye shall be as gods." "Become as little children." Satan declared that the path to happiness and blessedness is by becoming great; the Lord said that the path not only to blessedness and happiness, but also to true greatness, is by becoming little. Which is true? You have only to look at the exponents of these two views to find in their lives and destiny the truth or falseness of their claims. The Lord was, and is, the greatest Preacher and pattern of humility, and Satan was, and is, the greatest preacher and pattern of pride. "The one great ambition of Satan was to become a god, and he became a devil; one of the supreme acts of the Son of God was to become a child, 'Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name.' So in our case. Seeking to become gods, men became devils; seeking to become as little children, they become Divine, the partakers of Divine nature." In

cases of serious illness, how glad are we when the doctor can say, "He has got the change for the better." As the Great Physician considers your case, dear reader, can He say that you have had the change for the better? Have you been converted yet? If not, just put yourself into His hands, and He will pull you through.

SEEING AND BELIEVING.

Bible "Excepts," No. 5.

"Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe" (John 4:48). This does seem a strange way of treating a wealthy man who had travelled twenty-five miles to seek healing for his son! Fancy, hastening all that distance in an effort to secure the aid of the Healer, and then to meet with such a rebuff!

It was a nobleman that was in distress-the rich have afflictions as well as the poor; it was a boy who was sick unto death-illness is no respecter of persons, coming to young and old alike; it was a father in dead earnest about bringing the Saviour and his son into touch with one another. Oh, that all parents were as anxious and determined to do the same.

Yes, we must admit that there does seem a certain amount of severity in our Lord's reply. But there was a needs-be for such conduct. What was wrong with the nobleman? Some think the gentle Saviour was severe because He came to the Lord not for the Lord's sake, but for his son's sake, driven there by the strong constraint of an outward need, rather than drawn by the desire of the soul. No doubt there is a little truth in this explanation, yet it does not fully meet the difficulty. The satisfying answer is our Lord's anxiety to purify and strengthen faith. The rich man possessed faith in the Lord Jesus, but only a faith in His presence, and not in His Word; it was a faith which rested only on the miraculous. The Lord was seeking to show His pupil that His word was as effectual as His presence, and to lead him into the deep meaning of the Old Testament utterance, "He sent His Word and healed them." Thus our Lord's conduct was designed, not to extinguish that little spark of faith, but to blow it into a fierce flame; and the method adopted had the desired result.

"If God wants me to believe, why does He not put a sign in the sky?" That is how some speak and think. Our Lord's treatment of this nobleman is the answer. True faith is a matter of the heart, and not merely of the head; and real faith is called into being not by any miraculous sign but by the Word of the Lord. Besides, as a very eminent writer so forcibly points out: "If belief was to depend upon a visible sign in the sky, a standing miracle would have to be worked in each generation to give that generation a fair chance with the others-a supposition which is contrary to all of God's ways of working. It is, further, extremely doubtful whether such a sign would accomplish its object. 'If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.' We can imagine without much effort, the brilliant article in the next magazine, which would prove that it was a comet; and even if the explanation did not satisfy the intellect, such a mere 'nine days' wonder' would have no effect upon the heart."

How precious then is faith in the estimation of the Lord, and what pains He takes to produce, purify, and strengthen it. That may be one explanation of many of His strange dealings with the sons of men. His great longing is to lead us deeper into the life of faith.

"But what is faith?" Strange that, though folk exercise faith every day of their lives, yet they are frequently making this inquiry. The first occurrence of the word "Believe" is in Genesis 15:6. Abraham "Believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness." According to a competent authority, the word "believed" literally means "to steady oneself by leaning on something or someone." This gives a vivid illustration of what faith really is-"as a man lays his trembling hand on a staff, so we lay our weak and changeable selves on God's strength."

Pray notice (1) that true faith has God for its origin and object. "Abraham believed God." In John 6 the Lord calls it a "work of God," hinting at a deep thought that it is God who gives the true inclination of mind to trust. Then (2) notice that faith is an act and not a mere sentiment. It is not something that comes to a man apart from himself, and outside of himself, without reference to him. There is a very close connection between faith and the will. In the strictest sense of the word faith is the exercise of our most inmost nature-it is an effort of the will.

Three stages may be discerned in faith, for faith is a progressive act or series of acts. The first stage is a belief in Him, a mere acceptance of His revelation. But there is no saving element in it. It is possible for a person to have this kind of faith and yet be lost True faith is something more than this. It is imperative that the next stage be reached, viz., a belief on Him. This is where the saving element comes in. If I am weary and tired and believe that the chair is able to bear my weight, merely believing that will not rest me, I must believe on it, let it take my weight. And what then? There is a third stage, believing into the Lord. I may believe on a chair or staff, and be rested, but the chair and staff and I remain separated and distinct. Not so with Christ and the soul. Believing on Him will lead to believing into Him, becoming one with Him, united to him by ties of life and love. What a blessed union is this! Words cannot describe it fully. Let us pray:

"My faith looks up to Thee,

Thou Lamb of Calvary,

Saviour Divine."

EATING HIS FLESH.

Bible "Excepts," No. 6.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you" (John 6:53).

"This marking is terribly one-sided-why, the most important text of all is not marked; may I mark it?" By special request, one day I called to see a blacksmith who had just returned from the London Brompton Hospital for Diseases of the Chest. I was delighted to find him deeply concerned about spiritual things, and anxiously inquiring his way to Zion, with his face thitherward. What had awakened him was a printed text of Scripture attached to a bouquet of flowers a Christian lady visitor had given him: "By grace are we saved. . . not of works." I found him ripe for the Lord, and soon had the joy of leading him to the Saviour. What a change could be at once noticed in him-he was rejoicing in a present and eternal salvation. Seeing that he had not a light and handy New Testament, and as all spiritual babes must have food I gave him a marked copy of the Book of books. A day or so after, I again called on him-but what a change! I had left him bright and rejoicing, but now he was sad and bewildered. On asking the reason for this change, he replied:

"Just after you left the other day, Sister--- (referring to a High Church worker) called. I told her you had just been and showed her my new treasure. Upon examining it, she exclaimed: This marking is terribly one-sided. Why, the most important text of all is not marked; may I mark it?' Of course I assented, and taking out her fountain pen she deeply underlined, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you.' She then explained it to mean that unless I partook of the blessed sacrament I would not be saved. Now, which of you is correct?" No wonder the poor fellow was puzzled, and in doubt and distress. But I was soon able to satisfy him, and never again did he doubt his safe and secure standing in Christ through faith. On this lady's finding, we are meditating on "the most important text of all." As is well known, this sacramental view of the Lord's, Supper" is held tenaciously by adherents of both the Romish and High Church. According to their belief, everything depends upon the eating and drinking of the sacred elements. Suppose they are correct, see in what a most serious position they place themselves. If their view is the correct one, and this is to be understood literally, then all the Roman Catholic laity, and some High Church members, too, are lost, for only the priests drink the wine! This is a startling and sobering thought, but it is one all who view this Scripture statement sacramentally should seriously consider. Besides, how could our Lord mean the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, seeing it was not instituted till quite a year after this! No; this passage does not refer to the Lord's Supper at all.

What scattered the doubts and difficulties in the mind and heart of the blacksmith referred to, was a quotation from that devout and loyal churchman, Bishop Ryle; and it may not be out of place to give it here. He says: "Few passages have been so painfully wrested and perverted as this. The eating and drinking referred to here do not mean any literal eating and drinking. Above all, the words were not spoken with any reference to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. It means that reception of Christ's sacrifice which takes place when a man believes on Christ crucified for salvation. It is an inward and spiritual act of the heart. . . whenever a man, feeling his own guilt and sinfulness, lays hold of Christ, and trusts in the atonement made for him by Christ's death, at once he eats the flesh of the Son of Man and drinks His blood. Faith in Christ's atonement is a thing of absolute necessity to salvation." A very poor and illiterate woman lay dying. She was so ill and weak that the doctor forbade visitors. But a ritualistic curate managed to make his way into the sick room. "You are very ill, Mrs.---, would you like to partake of the holy sacrament? You see you cannot be saved unless you do, for the words of our Lord in St. John 6:53 are sufficiently clear on that point. Besides, it will help you to die happy." The poor soul was almost too ill to speak or listen, but as she had given herself to the Lord a good while before this at a Mission Hall with which I was connected, she knew better. "I hope you will excuse me, sir. I am a very ignorant woman, and cannot tell where it is, but somewhere in the Bible it says, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,' and 'He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life,' and that's enough for me." Armed by the Word of God, she was more than a match for the astute' theologian, and he left her as a bad case. Oh, the importance of clinging to the Word of God in all its simplicity!

DRINKING HIS BLOOD.

Bible "Excepts" No. 7.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you" (John 6:53).

These words formed part of our Lord's great discourse, following the miracle of feeding a multitude with but five barley loaves and two small fishes. There was a pause in our Lord's teaching, and the Jews, mystified with our Lord's remarks, took advantage of this pause to dispute among themselves. In answer to a fresh question, our Lord introduced a new statement, which we have in the Scripture at the head of this study. The figure is made repulsive on purpose, in order to provoke thought. It is sometimes difficult to make people think. But attention is at once arrested by some unusual remark. So in this case. The thought of drinking blood was more repulsive to the Jew than to us. He had a religious horror of touching or tasting anything in which blood was; in fact, they were forbidden to touch blood, much less drink it. This statement proved too much for many of His disciples (John 6:66) and they left Him. They made the blunder so many are making to-day, in taking what He said literally. What He meant was a spiritual eating and drinking. This they ought to have clearly seen. The fact that He said they had no life in them unless they did eat and drink should have shown them this. They had natural animal life, but no spiritual. Ralph Erskine once said: "Christ is the food of my life; I would die if He did not feed me with His flesh and blood." He well understood the meaning of our Master's words. Let us carefully trace the meaning and force of our Lord's strange statement.

I. Spiritual Life begins by Drinking in the Meaning of the Blood-Shedding. That was the comment of a Scotch minister on John 6:53, over one hundred years ago, and is suggestive. Drink, drink, drink again and again of the great ocean of truth connected with the Lord's atoning sacrifice. To hear some people talk one would think there was but a trickling stream of truth they had long ago exhausted. Ah, no; the ocean of blood-shedding truth is vast and deep, and we can never say the last word on that subject. If we keep on drinking in the meaning of the blood-shedding, we must also keep on eating-appropriating-the meaning of the broken body. Yes; oh, so true! Spiritual life does commence in the soul of man as soon he begins, by faith, to drink in the meaning of the blood-shedding.

II. Spiritual Life can only Come to Men through the Atoning Death. The figure used by our Lord is suggestive of a way into life only through death and sacrifice. His flesh and blood could only be available by death. Only by His vicarious sacrifice alone can eternal life be obtained. Bread can only become bread by crushing and the furnace, so that when our Lord likened Himself to bread He was in effect emphasising the necessity of His atoning death.

III. Spiritual Life can only be Received by a Definite Appropriation of Faith. This is implied in the figure of speech used, in the, reference to eating and drinking. These acts are definite and clear; and, moreover, they are simple. We do not wait until we understand all the mysteries of digestion before we satisfy the craving appetite; nor should we postpone acceptance of Christ until we are able to fathom the mysteries of redemption. No, no, even a child of tender years is able to eat and drink. Oh, how important is this thought! So many are postponing decision until they axe able to understand Divine things clearer. They fail to note that the mere natural man cannot understand the things of God, for they are only to be spiritual discerned. We beseech thee, friend, lay hold of Christ-stretch forth the hand of faith and take Him-eat and drink of Him, and all will be well.

IV. Spiritual Life can only be Sustained by Dwelling in His Presence. Drummond well says. "A person who abides in the presence of Jesus Christ in some mysterious way appropriates, unconsciously and unavoidably, the life and character of Jesus Christ, so that he is built up like

Him." This is a fine thought.

Here is a true story I have read somewhere. A soldier was given up to die. On his parents being notified, his old father hastened from a long distance to his bedside in the hospital, carrying with him a bundle-handkerchief with something wrapped in it. The poor soldier lay half conscious, and nothing that father or attendants said could rouse him, until the father exclaimed: "Here is a loaf of your mother's bread which I have brought you." "Bread from home," said the dying man. "Bread from home! Give me some;" and from that hour he began to improve, to the surprise of all. Oh, dying soul, we have to offer you bread from home, bread from Heaven-Won't you say, "Give me some?" If you do, and you thus eat His flesh and drink His blood, life, Eternal Life, will be yours. THE NEW BIRTH.

Bible "Excepts," No. 8.

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3, John 3:5).

If one "except" and one "verily" be impressive, what shall we say of two "excepts" and four "verilys"? Thus our attention is drawn to something of tremendous importance. And truly this has to do with vital realities. In the third chapter of Genesis we read how man lost life; in the third chapter of John we discover how man can get it back again.

There is no narrative in the New Testament better known than, this, and yet none so misunderstood. Of course the doctrine it proclaims is misunderstood-indeed, unless one has experienced in their own lives the sublime truth it enunciates it cannot possibly be understood. But even the plain facts of the story are misunderstood. Poor Nicodemus could bring most of us up for libel. True, he came to Jesus by night, yet that does not make him a coward. Surely caution is not cowardice. Perhaps he came at night because he knew it was the only time he was sure to find Jesus at leisure for a quiet hour's talk. All who brand him a coward should remember that it was Passover time, and the bright Passover moon would be shining, making the streets almost as light as they would have been by day. The reply of our Lord to the greeting of Nicodemus is most significant, and ought to have our closest attention. The repetition of the words, "Verily, verily," amongst Jewish writers was considered of equal import with the most solemn oath. Here are some great lessons from our Lord's reply to Nicodemus.

I. It is not Mere Direction but Disposition, not Teaching but Life, that man Needs. "We know that Thou art a Teacher come from God." Nicodemus thought that all that Israel and the world required to elevate them was a teacher, and teaching, but our Lord's reply shattered that idea. The deepest need of man is not to know, but to be helped to do. It has been well said that the worst man knows more than the best man practises. It is life man needs, and this is his first need.

II. Until Man has this Position through the Gift of Life, he cannot Understand, much less Follow the Directions. Regeneration is essential to a true understanding of the things of God. Except a man be born again he cannot see."

III. Regeneration is a Universal Need. "Except a man," not a Jew or a Gentile. All need this stupendous change. And please note the nature of the change. In the Reptile House at the Zoo we notice the snakes at certain times of the year cast off their skin. Yet notwithstanding this change,

they remain snakes. Men may change the form and habit of their lives without having a change within, and be a sinner still. Our Lord-insisted upon a radical change from within.

IV. Baptism with Water alone is Not Sufficient to Bring About this Great Change. "Except a man be born of water and of the spirit." The former was the only new birth the Rabbi knew anything of. Those converted to the Jewish faith were baptised, and were known as those who had been born again. Cranmer, in 1553, significantly wrote: "All that be washed with water, be not washed with the Holy Spirit." You have been baptised with water; have you been born of the Spirit?

V. The New Birth takes Place at the Cross. There are two "musts" in this chapter, both imperative. In John 3:7 we have the "must" for the sinner, and in John 3:14 the "must" for the Saviour. There is indeed a very close connection between Regeneration and the Atonement. The Cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is the true birthplace of the soul. As is well known, the greatest obstacle to the progress of the Gospel in India is the caste system. Individuals cannot marry, eat, or work only within their own caste. The Brahman is the highest caste. As a rule, there is no way of entering this caste. The Rajahs of Travancore belong to one of the lower castes, but that he might be admitted to the sacred caste, a most extraordinary ceremony has been invented. The cow throughout India is a sacred animal. To be born of a cow in a future state is considered a high honour and privilege. A golden cow, made of gold according to the weight of the Rajah is made; in it is put the five products of that animal (milk, curd, butter, urine, dung), and in this mixture His Highness bathes, remaining for the prescribed period, and when the ceremony has been performed the prince is regarded as being born again. One ceremony cost £25,000. What a vain attempt to invent a royal road to regeneration. Ah, there is only one way, and that is God's way. And that way is pointed out so clearly in John 1:11-12 : "As many as received Him, to them gave He the power to become the sons of God." Thus regeneration follows, and is the result of a definite acceptance of the Lord Jesus as Saviour and Lord. Will not you receive Him here and now!

FRUITFULNESS.

Bible "Excepts." No. 9.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24). All nature each Autumn sounds a loud Amen to the declaration of the sweet singer of Israel-"Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness." The fields, orchards, and gardens are laden with fruit. The Lord's crown of goodness then lies gloriously heavy on the brow of nature. The fruit, and much fruit, gladden both the heart of God and man. But in the rejoicing of the "harvest home" let us not forget the important "except" of fruitfulness. One of the most familiar facts in nature is that, in plants and seeds, life comes by death. The principal event which renders the seed corn valuable to man is its death. There could not possibly have been fields laden with golden grain had there not previously taken place in secret a great surrender, and a dying to self. This is a great principal in the moral as well as in the natural realm.

"And there were certain Greeks among them." I wonder if they had been amongst those who had welcomed Jesus as King of Jerusalem? If so, they were not satisfied by admiring the Lord Jesus, but longed to come into a more personal knowledge of Him. Would that all the Lord's admirers would do likewise! There are so many who imagine that the good opinions they entertain of the

King of Glory will prove a sufficient passport to eternal bliss. What a vain hope is this! No, No, nothing can take the place of personal faith and vital contact with the Lord Himself. Let all mere admirers pray, "We would see Jesus."

Why these Greeks should seek Philip's mediation we know not. We do notice that Philip's name is more purely Greek than any of the other disciples. Does not this indicate that probably he had Greek relatives and connections? "Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus." How blessed it is when Christian brethren unite in bringing others to the Lord Jesus.

Undoubtedly the Lord had Himself in mind when He gave expression to this great fact of nature. Their request was as a narrow window through which Jesus' yearning spirit saw a great expanse, nothing less than the coming to Him of myriads of Gentiles, the "much" fruit of which He speaks. But before that could take place death on the Cross must be His.

There are several words in this verse pregnant with meaning. "It abideth alone." Here we have one reason why the Lord came down to be a man and die-He could not bear to be alone in the glory, alone with the Father and the holy angels. Without the sons of men, He felt He would be alone. And He desired us to share His glory. Oh, verily this is the language of love!

"Except a corn of wheat fall." Ah, that is a familiar word, is it not? Man has fallen, and to lift him up the Corn of Wheat, the Lord Himself, must fall, die and fall into the ground.

"And die." Man died at Eden. The Son of Man must die to give man life. Here is the great fundamental principle of the Gospel. Christ's death was and is the source of spiritual life of the world. He fell to the ground in His incarnation, and seemed buried alive in the world, so much was His glory veiled. He died; this immortal Seed submitted to the laws of mortality. And He lay in the grave like the seed under the clods. But He arose; and from His Cross and Passion sprang up a mighty harvest of benefit to mankind. The first fruits were seen at His resurrection. "Christ died alone; He arose again with many," so wrote the venerable Bede. But there is an important lesson here for all who have received life through that atoning death. What was true in respect to the Saviour is equally true respecting His own dear children. If we are to be fruitful in life and service we, too, must die to self as well as to sin. One has very forcibly pointed out that the key to the application of the words of the Saviour is the Greek present. "For five centuries the Greeks had marched at the head of humanity. The whole world gathered round the torch of Greek genius. Yet they failed to regenerate society. Why? Their master words were self-culture and self-enjoyment. This was, according to the Greeks, the chief good of human life, the supreme aim. The gods of Olympus were represented as beings who lived only to enjoy themselves. When they came to earth they came only for the sake of pleasant adventure, or selfish amusement, caring nothing for the sorrows and sins of humanity. And the character of the gods was reflected in the worshippers. But Christ calls upon them to substitute self-oblation for self-culture, self-sacrifice, for self-gratification. In other words, He asks them to reverse the whole bent of their thought and conduct." How startled they must have been when they heard this great principle enunciated. They were well aware of its force in nature, but they never dreamt it ought to be applied to their own lives. We now know differently. But do we act up to our knowledge? Remember, if we live for self we live in vain.

SUFFERING.

Bible "Excepts." No. 10.

"And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom He hath chosen, He hath shortened the days" (Mark 13:20). That is to say, however dark the days might be, and however heavy the weight of sorrow pressing upon us and the bitterness of the cup of suffering we are drinking, things not only might be, but would be, worse, were it not for the controlling hand of an almighty and loving Heavenly Father. God's people are always the special object of His care. "But for the elect's sake"-"but for the sake of God's own people those days will be cut short" (Weymouth Version). Ah, yes! there is always an "except" in suffering. There is a Hand on the affairs of this world, controlling the events of life, working, scheming, and planning on behalf of His people. The Lord's own are never left to the mercy of the enemy of souls, or to circumstances. The days of darkness and of sorrow have been shortened for our sakes. This will be actually the experience of all who will be called to pass through the awful Tribulation days; it is the present-day experience of all the Lord's own, for it is through much tribulation we enter the kingdom. Let us illustrate this from real life.

Bending over the suffering man of God, just then in the grip of a paroxysm of pain, the doctor, though inured to the sight of suffering, was strangely moved, and exclaimed, "Surely Hell cannot be worse than what you are suffering!" "There is no wrath in this," was the calm reply of the suffering one. Splendid! Not only did the sick one recognise that, through Christ, he had been saved from the wrath to come, but he was assured that for some all-wise purpose the Lord had permitted the affliction. He kissed the Hand that was smiting him. He did not rack his soul by questions of, "What have I done that I should suffer like this?" and the like. He rested on the fact that there was love and not wrath in his cup of suffering. Here was the "except." A worker had just lost his only daughter, a sweet, winsome maid of seventeen summers, the very light of his eyes. Only a wee while before the mother, too, had passed away to the Home beyond. Desiring to speak a word of comfort, a fellow-worker remarked to the bereaved one: "My brother, you have indeed been called to pass under a heavy cloud, and to drink a bitter cup of suffering." "Thank you for your sympathy," was the reply; "there is suffering-true; but, thank God, there is no cloud." Praise the Lord! This is what grace does. There was an "except" in that sorrow: suffering, but no cloud. There was a blessed consciousness of the Master's presence in the valley of suffering, so much so that he could say:

"Days of darkness still come o'er me;-

Sorrow's paths I often tread;

But the Saviour still is with me.

By His hand I'm safely led." The street in which the house stood was temporarily softened to secure quiet, and the sick room was darkened. Bending over the patient, the visitor asked: "What do you do when the paroxysm is coming on?" The reply was: "I abandon myself to pain and-to Christ."

Why that suffering was allowed was a mystery. But there was an "Except" in it, for it is written: "In all their afflictions He was afflicted, and the angel of His Presence saved them;" and again, "I, the Lord thy God, will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not, I will help thee."

It was indeed a bewildering case. After a lifetime of holy and devoted service for God and the people, to be cut down by cancer! and the hearts of many were filled with strange questionings. But not so the sufferer-she was calm and quiet in soul and buoyant in spirit, and to visit her was a real means of grace. Someone had sent her a leaflet, and she handed it to me, assuring me it was indeed her own experience. It was called "Pillows of Comfort," and was as follows: "An aged sufferer dying from cancer, had been made more comfortable by three pillows being placed under his head. A friend, calling and inquiring, 'How are you to-day?' he replied, 'Very comfortable indeed. See! I lie on three pillows. They remind me of three pillows on which my soul is resting.' Putting his hand on the undermost one, he said, 'This is the pillow of God's Infinite Wisdom; the second is the pillow of God's Infinite Power; and the third and top one is the pillow of God's Infinite Love.'" What a glorious "Except" this was in the valley of sorrow and suffering.

He was an out-and-out Christian, and an enthusiastic worker, delighting in deeds of love and mercy, but consumption had laid him low. There he lay upon his bed, weak in body, and though generally bright and cheerful to-day he had a drooping and disconsolate spirit. "You see, it's just like this," said he, "here I am, though quite a young man, yet, so far as service for God is concerned, just a useless log. It does seem hard that I should be denied the privilege of serving God, and doing something for the One Who has done, and is doing, so much for me." And this was spoken in such a mournful tone. "But, my friend, you, and all who make similar laments, are making a great mistake," I replied. "True, you are shut in by your illness, but, thank God, not shut out from service. The fact is, we must reconsider and reconstruct our conceptions of what constitutes true service. Have you not heard Milton's famous lines concerning service, 'Those also serve who only stand and wait.' How true this is! A servant serves her mistress just as much when silently standing in her presence awaiting her pleasure as when bustling about the house. She also serves though she only stands and waits. The time has been when you were able to hurry here and there in happy service for your King; but now He is bidding you to quieter service. Have you not heard of the talent of silence? In past days you exercised other talents; now He is calling you to trade with this. It is now your inexpressible privilege to wait upon your God in a happy, listening silence. Then another branch of service is open to you. In Luke 2:37, we read of one who, though of a great age, and consequently unable to buzz about in "busy service, yet 'served God with fastings and prayers night and day.' Perhaps you never thought that praying for others was real and valued service, yet such is indeed the case." Ah! this sad soul found there was an "Except" in his cup of suffering, and, though he had to spend his days lying on his back, discovered that he, too, could render important service.

DEPENDENCE.

Bible "Excepts," No. 11.

"Thou couldest have no power at all... except it were given thee from above" (John 19:11). A retired merchant, who formerly lived in Southport, hit upon an ingenious plan of keeping himself humble and ever in remembrance of his indebtedness to, and dependence upon God. Amongst the many elaborately furnished rooms in his costly mansion was one furnished in simple style-sanded floor, old fashioned hearth-rug, settle, fender, and chairs-just a copy of the humble cottage home he first had when he began married life as a labourer. In this room he frequently sat just to remind himself of his once lowly position, and to keep himself humble and lowly before the

Lord, Who had so wondrously blessed his commercial labours with such conspicuous success.

We all need to be kept lowly respecting our mental, physical, and spiritual attainments. It is good for the Lord's people to frequently sit before Him, and recall to mind their once loathsome and degraded condition, giving all glory to the One Who alone has made them different to others. It would be well if we, as a nation, would sit in reflective mood; and, remembering our once uncivilised and degraded condition, and how, through the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and all its attendant blessings, we have so been lifted up that now we form an empire on which the sun never sets, and have also become one of the dominant nations of the world and then give all the glory to Him. The study of national history is one method of cultivating the humble and lowly spirit. Think for a moment of the prevalent popular watchword in connection with the late lamentable war, viz., that all we required for the successful prosecution of the war were men, money, and munitions. As we saw this placard everywhere, we asked ourselves the question, "What about God? Is He not needed?" Oh, in our eagerness after the material forces required by our beloved King and country for the successful completion of the war, we were in grave danger of forgetting the one real essential-God, GOD.

Pilate boastfully spoke to our Lord of his power and might, when the Master broke silence by a sudden flash of bold rebuke to remind the proud and arrogant Roman governor, and all his tribe in all lands and all ages, of man's utter dependence upon God. "Thou couldest have no power at all against Me except it were given thee from above." And it seems as if this bold reminder that all power is derived from God, and that its exercise should be guarded and guided by His will and used for His purpose, sobered and somewhat subdued the haughty Roman. Ah, it does not do to forget this "Except" of dependence upon the Lord! Are you, in the enjoyment of physical power, revelling in bodily health and vigour? Pray remember it was God Who gave you your being and Who sustains you in health daily. The very breath you breathe is a gift from Him. One gentle snap of the silver cord by that Divine Hand and you cease to live. Pray forget not that thou couldest have no bodily strength and vigour at all except it were given thee from above.

Perhaps you possess great mental powers, and have, or are, acquiring vast stores of knowledge hidden to others. Problems that baffle those of lesser mental calibre form no difficulty to you. Whence has come these great receptive powers? Here is the Divine declaration to you through His Word: Thou couldest have no mental power except it were given thee from above. Surely you will bow before Him in humble acknowledgment of this fact?

Maybe you hold some position of trust and responsibility, having others under you; you may be either a manager, magistrate, or ruler of some sort, or an employer of labour. Pray, what think you, is the meaning of this Scripture: "Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south." Then where does it come from? "From above." Thou couldest have no governmental power except it were given thee from above. It was the Lord Who raised you to your present position. This is applicable to the Lord's people. Perhaps you are a Christian and rejoice in the fact that you are not living in the shallows as so many are, but that you are living the deeper life, and possess a knowledge of the Word and of Divine things hidden to many. Give Him the glory. To sum up: Success, promotion, knowledge, authority, growth of influence, are all gifts which God keeps entirely in His own keeping. Have you recognised that "every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above?"

DELIVERANCE.

Bible "Excepts," No. 12.

"How can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house" (Matthew 12:29). As my Aunt Matilda Jane said when the doctor told her she had a nasal catarrh: "It is a common cold in the head, and I haven't sent for you to christen it, but to cure it." In the moral and spiritual world there is far too much christening and too little curing. Of course the christening is all right and good in its place. A satisfactory christening is really the first step to curing. A doctor cannot prescribe for a patient until he has made a right diagnosis. But it is quite one thing to christen, and another thing to cure, as thousands sorrowfully know. In dealing with the sins and ills of mankind, our adorable Lord makes at the same time a perfect diagnosis, and proposes to make a perfect cure. In this "Except" we have a clear illustration of this. The trouble with the unregenerate is that the mighty evil one is strongly entrenched in the citadel of the natural heart, and the only hope is in the coming of a stronger than he to put him to flight. That One has come, and is ready to deliver all who come to Him in repentance and faith. This "Except" is really a simple little parable. Here is a house or palace tenanted by a strong man armed; before possession can be secured, and his goods cleared out, the strong man must first be overcome and expelled. A poor man, blind and dumb, was brought to the Lord Jesus. He was in this deplorable state through demon possession. The Lord cast the evil one out and the dumb spake. Our Lord's enemies had to admit that a miracle had indeed taken place, but they tried to explain it away by an absurd and preposterous statement. In reply, our Lord pointed out the folly of division (Matthew 12:25), how unlikely that Satan would blunder thus (Matthew 12:26), and that, instead of co-operating with sinners, he was arrayed against them (Matthew 12:29). Our Lord's heart overflows in pity for these reckless slanderers who made so hideous a charge, and He warns them that they are coming near the edge of a precipice-that their blindness is hurrying them towards a sin which hath never forgiveness (Matthew 12:31). In this declaration our Lord throws a dim light into the dark world of supernatural evil, and by thus lifting the curtain a little we see the dark beings at work. The strong man is Satan; the stronger than he the Lord Himself; the house, both this world and also the unregenerate heart.

I. The World is the Strong Man's House. We usually say that Satan resides in Hell; by Ephesians 6:11-12, we see that the earth and the air form his present abode. Satan got possession of this world at Adam's fall. In Adam's fall Satan gained the crown God had placed on Adam's brow. And our Lord did not deny the usurper's claim to have the right to give all the kingdoms of the world (see Luke 4:5-8). How can he be ejected? Our "Except" is the answer. Satan suffered an awful defeat at the Cross (John 12:31). The sentence upon the enemy has been pronounced and made known, and by and by, when the Lord Jesus comes again, will be executed. The final victory is certain. The Stronger is coming again, and will bind and expel him (see Rev. 20). May that day be hastened!

II. The Human Heart is the Strong Man's House. In our "Except" we have a solemn view of the condition of unredeemed man. The sinful soul is a palace, though in ruins (Luke 11:21). Mankind through sin has become the very home and dwelling place of Satan. Why, the presence of his goods proclaim the fact of his presence. Have you ever pondered over 1 John 5:17, R.V.: "The

whole world lieth in the evil one." The word "in" is the same word used elsewhere of Christians when they are said to be "In Christ." Just as the Christian is united to Christ, so the natural man is united and possessed by Satan. Then note the word "lieth." It could be rendered "lieth asleep." It is a condition of unconsciousness. The saved ones are in the Lord's everlasting arms, whilst the great mass of unsaved humanity is in the arms of Satan, lulled to a false sense of security. Is not Ephesians 2:1-2 very impressive: "The spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience?" "Thus Satan imparts his wisdom and strength to the unbelieving in the same manner as the power of God is imparted to the believer by the Holy Spirit. This impartation of energising power from Satan is not toward a limited few who might be said, because of some strange conduct, to be possessed of a demon; but is the common condition of all who are yet unsaved."

DELIVERED IN THREE TENSES. In a prayer meeting one with fervour prayed: "Lord, make us grammatical Christians!" when he really meant "genuine." No sooner was this petition presented than another prayed: "O God, Thou hast blessed us in the past tense; Thou art doing us good in the present tense, and in the future tense Thou wilt save us to the end." All who really trust the Lord Jesus become "grammatical" Christians by being saved in three tenses.

I. Threefold Deliverance in Relation to sin.

1. Our Past. Deliverance from guilt of sin, through Christ's atoning death.

2. Our Present. Deliverance from power of sin, through His intercessory life in the Glory.

3. Our Future. Deliverance from the presence of sin, when He comes for us.

II. Threefold Deliverance in Relation to Trouble.

As Paul, so are we, often in trouble of various kinds. Yet He delivers in all three tenses. The Great Salvation.

SAVED WITH DIFFICULTY.

"And if the righteous scarcely (with difficulty) be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear" (1 Peter 4:18).

It has been thought that, as Peter wrote his first epistle ten years before the destruction of Jerusalem, the above was a prophecy. We do know that when Cestus Gallus came against that city, many of the Lord's people were shut in it; when strangely he raised the siege for a little while, the Christians immediately departed to Pella, in the dominion of King Agrippa, an ally of Rome, and there they were in safety. They had barely time to leave the city when the Roman army returned under the command of Titus, and never left the place till they had destroyed the temple, razed the city to the ground, and slew upwards of a million of its wretched inhabitants. This may be so, yet we are quite sure that the verse has a much deeper application than the one just referred to. It has a reference to the subject of salvation, and points out that we are saved with difficulty.

"Scarcely" does not mean that there is the least degree of uncertainty about our salvation. The believer's salvation is assured in Christ; he is in present enjoyment of salvation, and is as sure of reaching the home beyond as if he was already there. Neither does it mean that though our ultimate salvation is assured, we shall just to say get there, as a shipwrecked mariner scarcely

gains the shore on a plank. No doubt that will be the character of the home-going of many, but it is not God's ideal for us. Read 2 Peter 1:11. He desires that we should have an abundant entrance-to go sweeping through the gate, not crawling through. As one has well said, if there are any back seats in Heaven, they were all taken up long, long ago. The word "scarcely" really means "with difficulty." That is the rendering in the Scofield Bible. "If a good man is only saved with difficulty" (20th Cent.). "And if it is difficult even for a righteous man to be saved" (Weymouth version). The word "scarcely" is used in Acts 14:18 and Acts 27:7 in the sense of something only done with difficulty. And there are three difficulties we may mention.

I. Attributes. God had a difficulty about our salvation with Himself, on account of His attributes. In the Lord's parable of the wicked husbandmen there is a single sentence pregnant with meaning: "What shall I do?" Here God is portrayed as in a dilemma. We often speak of the simple plan of salvation, and thank God, it is simple and plain. But there is a danger of thinking slightingly of it on that account, a danger of forgetting in the thought of the simplicity the difficulty of salvation. Simple things often cost a great deal. It takes a genius to produce a simple commodity that becomes a boon and blessing to mankind. The simple plan of salvation was only wrought out after much trouble. The difficulty lay within Himself. He had no difficulty in loving us, neither had He any difficulty in inducing Himself to lay bare His arm on our behalf. The trouble lay with His attributes, particularly those of Mercy and Truth. Mercy clamoured for man's salvation, whilst Truth and Justice demanded man's condemnation. In Psalms 85:10 we are told of the meeting of Mercy and Truth: "Mercy and Truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." This is a prophecy that was fulfilled at the Cross. In the parable we have already referred to, that of the Wicked Husbandmen, the problem was solved by the sending of the Son. Oh, the wisdom of God! Well might Paul in Ephesians 1:7-8, magnify the prudence of the Lord in the evolving of the scheme of redemption. So wise and prudent has He been in solving this great difficulty that Heaven marvels and Hell quakes. Even the Devil cannot find a flaw in the Divine programme of redemption. Every Divine attribute is now at work for man's salvation.

II. Stubbornness. God solved the great difficulty concerning His attributes, only to be confronted by another, the difficulty with the unrighteous owing to their stubbornness. He desires the salvation of man, but man, left to himself, desires it not, though in desperate need of it. And pray remember our Lord's delicacy. He never forced Himself upon any man. "About the fourth watch of the night He cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them" (Mark 6:48). "And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went, and He made as though He would have gone further" (Luke 24:28). Yes, He would not force Himself upon them, but waited their invitation. But the difficulty with man's stubbornness He has solved in the case of multitudes to-day, thank God. By His Holy Spirit and by His mighty Word, and by His servants, He lays siege to the city of Mansoul. Have you surrendered yet to His love?

III. Waywardness. God has also a difficulty with the righteous, owing to their waywardness. If the stubbornness of the unrighteous presents a formidable difficulty to the Lord, what shall we say of the difficulty owing to the waywardness of the Lord's own saved people? Lot vexed his righteous soul through living in Sodom, but was also a sore trial to his Lord, and only with difficulty could be rescued from the doomed city. And what a trouble the Lord had with wayward Peter: and what a lot of trouble He has with all of us, too. The statement in the Scripture at the head of this article settles, once for all, the question of salvation beyond this life. If God finds the salvation of the

individual so difficult a matter now, with the Holy Spirit's co-operation, and the aid of the Holy Book and good men, what hope can there be of salvation in Hell, where there are none of these aids?

SAVED THROUGH FAITH.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). "Because thou hast seen Me thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29).

How often the words of Mrs. Luke's children's hymn, "I think when I read that sweet story of old," are on our minds and hearts, Especially have we lingered on the sentence:

"I wish that His hands had been placed on my head.

That His arms had been thrown around me;

And that I might have seen His kind look when He said,

'Let the little ones come unto me.'"

Under the influence of the thought that the contemporaries of the Man, Jesus Christ, were more fortunate in seeing and hearing Him than we of the present day, with a sigh of regret, feeling that though the highest blessedness cannot be ours, the second-best may be, we say:

"Yet still to His footstool in prayer I may go.

And ask for a share in His love." But are we right? Listen to the Lord's own declaration: "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." This surely demolishes the common and prevailing notion. Christ counted all those then living who had not seen Him and yet had believed as more blessed than the others who believed because they had seen. Thomas saw and was blessed, for every one who believes is blessed. Yet this was not the supreme blessedness. The highest blessedness of all is reserved for those who cannot see Him with the eyes of flesh. And for reasons we shall presently notice.

Before considering the nature of the blessedness, shall we not put in a good word for Thomas, for surely he has been hardly dealt with. His name is now synonymous for doubt and for unbelief. Pray, remember, that when he said, "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe," he was only asking for the same evidence the others had received. They had seen the Lord and the tragic marks of His passion, and believed, and he desired the same evidence. Instead of scolding him, we ought to pity him. By absenting himself from the gathering of disciples, he missed the sight of the Lord: and, unable to accept their testimony, for eight days he was sad and sorrowful whilst the others were rejoicing. Sometimes we wonder what had kept him away from that gathering. Being of a pessimistic turn of mind, perhaps he was away nursing his grief and disappointment over the capture and death of the Lord. What a mistake is this! Yet how many absent themselves from the meeting for prayer or worship for the very same reason. It is well to notice that he did not get relief from his crushing sorrow until he gathered together with his fellow-believers. Irregular attenders at the house of prayer-listen! Christ did not appear to Thomas until he was in the company of his fellow-disciples! We must attend the place of assembly even when we feel least inclined to do; and most certainly we shall not return to our homes empty, for the Lord will meet with us and speak the comforting and delivering word.

This incident is of great dispensational interest. For Israel, as a nation, stands now precisely where Thomas stood. Though many Gentiles and individual Jews have believed and are believing in Him Whom they have not seen; yet Israel, as a nation, Thomas-like, will only believe when they see. This is the teaching of Zechariah 12:10-14 and Revelation 1:7. But theirs will not be the highest blessedness. That is ours. Those who see not, yet believe, are most blessed, because 1. Their faith is the real and genuine article. A faith which exists by seeing is not of the most robust nature.

2. It is a faith which honours Christ, because it is satisfied with the evidence of His resurrection and being which He counts as quite sufficient.

3. It is a faith which honours the Word. We sometimes say that the world hangs upon nothing. True. And yet it is better to say that the world hangs upon the "Word of God, for "He upholdeth all things by the Word of His power" (Hebrews 1:3).

4. It is a faith which leads to sight, to spiritual vision. Thomas considered sight as an aid to faith; he was mistaken, for faith is an aid to sight. Some speak of "a blind faith," but this is wrong, for real genuine faith has eyes to see, hands to grapple with, and feet to run by. How suggestive are the words of the Psalmist: "I had fainted unless I had believed to see." Seeing is not believing. The believer sees more on his knees than the non-believer of keenest intellect can discern by standing on tiptoe.

5. It is by faith which leads to the blessed state of justification and salvation.

SAVED BY GAZING.

"And it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live" (Numbers 21:8).

Life for a look. True; but what kind of a look? Remember, sight is a gift, but seeing is an art. There is a great difference between a glance and a gaze. Your attention is drawn to something in which you have no interest; you look and turning away, immediately forget what you have seen. That was a mere glance. You are walking in a picture gallery. A friend draws your attention to some notable work of art. You glance at it, then taking a seat, gaze upon it, and your gaze discovers what is entirely hidden to a mere glance. The bitten Israelite received life not for a glance, but for a gaze. According to Dr. Young, the word in the original translated "beheld" in 1 Peter 4:9, is very strong and definite, and could be rendered "when he beheld attentively." No; the Lord has promised life not merely for, but in a look. This Dr. Watts recognised. When did he say the Cross became wondrous to him, and for which he counted gains of losses? When he had surveyed it.

"When I survey the wondrous Cross

On which the Prince of Glory died."

You know what it is to survey. You have seen men with measuring lines and rods, and delicate instruments on tripods, measuring and surveying every inch of the ground, and noting every hill and dale. Have you ever surveyed the Cross? You have, of course, given it a passing thought; but have you ever, after reading the account of our Lord's passion recorded by the four evangelists, closed the book, and shutting your eyes, given one hour to gazing at it with the eyes of the mind? If so then let me tell you what first happens-you will be bitten, for

I.There is a Bite for a Gaze, the bite of an awakened conscience. In the case of the Israelites, only bitten ones looked; in our case, we are bitten by looking, bitten by an awakened conscience, by the Word of God, and by the Spirit of God. It is at the Cross all true penitence begins. It is when we see the goodness of God as revealed in the Cross, that we are led to genuine repentance. It is strange but true, that we need, for our soul's awakening, to see our sins, not in ourselves, but in another. Let us illustrate. Here is a young man, who has never realised his sins though he has often suffered from them, and has often been reprimanded by his parents. But one day, whilst sitting at the fireside, he notices a look in his mother's face, sees the lines of care about the mouth and brow, and the truth flashes upon him: That is what my sin has done; she is suffering because of my sin. And his heart is broken. Have you ever asked why He went to the Cross? Not for His own sin; not because He could not avoid that bitter experience. Gazing at that marred visage, has not the truth flashed into your mind: "That is what my sin has done." It is as we gaze at the Cross that a sword pierces our very soul, and we know for the first time what is true penitence.

II. There is also a Death for a Gaze. We sometimes say, "He died that we might live." Quite correct. Yet it is equally true to say that He died that we might die. It is finely expressed in that verse:

"Once I was dead in sin, and hope within me died; But now I'm dead to sin, with Jesus crucified."

Cowper wrote a haunting sentence: "The Cross once seen is death to every vice." The young fellow referred to who saw what his sin was doing in his loved mother would surely have done with sin. Repentance is not mere sorrow for sin, but being sorry enough to quit it. It is at the Cross we loathe our sins and turn from them to God.

III. There is Life for a Gaze. "And it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live." It did come to pass in the experience of multitudes that day; and it still comes to pass in the experience of all who similarly look to the Cross to-day, for our Lord claims this as a picture of the salvation we find in Him. Looking is the simplest thing in the world. Almost all knowledge comes through looking. We look at the physical world, and are taught what nature has to teach; we look at books, and learn what printing has to teach us; we look at the Cross, and by gazing upon it there is life, life eternal. Therefore we are bidden to do what all can easily do.

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One,

There is life at this moment for thee;

Then look, sinner, look unto Him and be saved,

Unto Him who was nailed to the tree.

Look! Look! Look and live!

There is life for a look at the Crucified One,

There is life at this moment for thee."

SAVED AND JUSTIFIED.

"Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Romans 4:3). "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31).

A large tenement house was on fire some years ago. It was thought that all had been saved, when, to the horror of the rescuers and spectators, two children appeared at the topmost window. The staircase was a roaring furnace, and all means of egress was thus cut off. What could be done? Quickly strong men got hold of a stout blanket, and holding it taut to break their fall, shouted to the children to jump. But all that the bairns did was to look out with frightened eyes. Meanwhile the fire was hissing and roaring, and leaping from floor to floor, until it seemed to clasp the entire fabric in its fiery embrace. "Jump! Jump!! Jump!!!" yelled the people until they were hoarse, but all to no purpose. Just then a man came round the corner. In a moment he took in the whole situation. Stepping quickly forward he cried, "Jump!" and the children instantly obeyed, and they were saved. Going up to him, the would-be rescuers asked how it was that the children had jumped directly he gave the command, whilst all their entreaties were useless. "I'm their father," he said.

What was it that saved the children? Blankets? Hardly. Obedience? Not altogether. It was faith in their father that led them to trust his word. It was through faith they were saved. Believing in their father they were enabled to believe on him. The faith that saves is the faith that believes on and not merely in: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." In the Gospel specially written in order that men might believe, viz., John, in the R.V. in every instance but one (John 14:1) the confidence we are exhorted to place in Him is faith on Him. Many say they believe in the Lord Jesus, but they have never yet believed on Him. This is the one vital step.

How subtle is the enemy. In the biography of Dr. Andrew Bonar, is this confession: "I resolved to enter upon the study of Divinity. My chief motive was the indistinct hope and belief that thereby I should be more likely to find salvation." He soon found out his mistake and saw that faith was necessary. He was then tempted to trust his own faith. "He showed me I was resting my hope upon my belief, not upon the Object of that belief, and not drawing joy from that Object."

"That whosoever believeth, may in Him have eternal life" (John 3:16, R V.). I have sometimes been inclined to think that faith is greater than love. Love is sometimes given to the unworthy, but that is never true of trust. As soon as trust finds that it has been misplaced it dies. The prodigal son or daughter is loved by the suffering parents though they may not be able to trust them. But 1 Corinthians 13:13 is decisive. Yet faith has the precedence. An Irish class leader, in the middle of last century, called three times on a poor woman, and on his third visit she said: "Oh, sir, I do not love God." "What have you to do with loving God," he replied. "He requires it not in your present state, but to fear Him. How can you love until you apprehend His love to you? This you cannot do until you believe. It is folly to think of loving God before you obtain pardon and get the virtue of the covenant blood to wash away sin." She said: "Sir, I never understood it before." Like many others, she thought it was necessary to love God before she could trust Him; whereas faith must precede love to God. Have you ever noticed the value of the conjunction "and" in relation to faith. The first blessed result of faith is shuddering. "The devils also believe and (literally) shudder" (James 2:19). Salvation begins with a shudder. When the sinner trembles at the thought of personal sin and uncleanness, and the goodness and holiness of outraged Deity, there is great hope. The Second blessed result of faith is justification. Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Romans 4:3). The third blessed result of faith is salvation. "Believe on the Lord

Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Many have a difficulty about faith. So had Frank Crossley, that great engineer and philanthropist, of Manchester. A great sorrow led him to pray, and, says his biographer, "through the praying there came believing." And soon he was rejoicing in the Saviour.

SAVED BY HOPE.

"For we are saved by hope" (Romans 8:24).

Is this correct? I thought we were saved by faith! To say the least, one cannot help being startled when first this statement is read and noticed. What a man Paul was for gripping the attention of his hearers and readers! There is nothing commonplace in his writings. And it is good thus to have our attention arrested, and our thoughts gripped. Remember, this is the statement of one to whom the doctrine of Justification by Faith was no mere doctrine, but a blessed personal experience. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," was his word to the Philippian jailer. Salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus was so preached by the apostle that none have ever excelled him. Not only is this a statement by one loyal to the Doctrine of Justification by Faith, but it is a message to those already in a justified state, as its position in the Epistle indicates. Thus are we introduced by St. Paul to the sweet and loving ministry of hope. Hope is the great lever that lifts the world. Rob a person of hope, and at once you paralyse the mainspring of action. Let us definitely hope. Hope has to do with the unseen future. It is a God-given assurance concerning the future. "Faith appropriates, but hope anticipates; faith looks backward and upward; hope looks onward. Faith accepts, but hope expects." Hope has been called "the balm and lifeblood of the soul," so vital is it. The various renderings give three tenses. "For we are saved by hope" (A.V.). "For by hope we were saved" (R.V.). "It is in hope that we have been saved" (Wey.). "For our salvation lies in hope" (C. & H). "In this hope we were saved" (20th Cent.). Thus we have the three tenses, past, present, and future. All are right, though what harmonises with the context is the ministry of hope concerning the future.

I. What Hope has Done in the Past. "For by hope were we saved." Hope has a very great deal to do in our salvation. The apostle does not say "we hope we are saved," but "we are saved by hope," which is an altogether different thing. There is no such vagueness concerning the salvation Paul referred to-he speaks of a salvation already received and enjoyed. "Saved" is a medical phrase; to save means to make or to keep sound. The first condition of recovery is hope in its possibility. Despair often renders the skill of the best physician unavailing. Faith has no chance of doing us any good if hope has not visited us beforehand. Like the man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, the sinner lies battered and bruised by the highway of life, despairing of ever being healed and saved. But hope comes as a ministering angel whispering words of encouragement, pointing out the glorious possibilities. Then, when the angel of hope has kindled hope in the breast, faith comes along and easily leads the once hopeless one to the Saviour. Most sinners come to Christ supported on one side by faith and on the other by hope. Praise God, "None need perish. All may live, for Christ has died."

Now note, what hope has to say about the future: "For our salvation lies in hope." Hope, having led the sinner to Christ, does not leave him, but speaks constantly of a glorious future, declaring that though our salvation has not yet been fully realised here, it will be in the great time to come. In God's great scheme of redemption there is not only a new heart for us (which all His people have

now), but a new body. We possess much, but there is more to follow both here and in the great future. It is always "more to follow."

II. What Hope Does in the Present. "For we are saved by hope," i.e., Kept saved by hope. To be saved means not only to be made, but to be kept, sound. "For we are saved by hope," that is to say, kept, preserved, sustained in our trials by hope. Richard Baxter, the Puritan preacher and writer, suffered all his life with a weak and ailing body. Often he was tempted to wish he had never been born. What kept him from it? Listen to his testimony: "What should support and comfort me under my bodily languishings and pains, my weary hours, and daily experience of the vanity and vexation of all things under the sun, had I not a prospect of the comfortable end of all? I, that have lived in the midst of great and precious mercies, have all my life had something to do to overcome the temptations of wishing that I had never been born; and had never overcome it, but by the belief of a blessed life, hereafter." Richard Baxter was saved by hope. So will it be with the Lord's people. They have to meet many storms and suffer many hardships, but are cheered at the bright prospect ahead:

"Hope, like the gleaming taper's light.

Adorns and cheers our way;

And still as darker grows the night,

Emits a brighter ray."

SAVED BY REGENERATION.

"According to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5).

It was indeed a pitiful case. There the young woman lay in the great hospital apparently dead to all around her. She had a loving husband and comfortable home, but her life and strength seemed ebbing away. At last the doctor decided that the only remedy left was transfusion of blood. But who would submit to this weakening operation? Her husband, a strong, healthy man, out of love to his wife, willingly offered himself. Warm, rich, vigorous blood was taken from him and infused into the almost lifeless form of the patient, and she recovered- saved by transfusion of life.

Something like that was in the mind of the writer of Titus 3:5. By nature ours is a pitiful case. Unlike the poor woman referred to, we have not even a spark of spiritual life in us; we are dead through trespasses and sins. Not only are we "without strength," but we are also exposed to the righteous wrath of an outraged God. We have seen how to be saved from the sword of Divine Justice. It is the Blood of Christ that maketh atonement for the soul. Saved by His out-poured life, we need to be saved by His in-poured life. "Men's lives have been prolonged by the transfusion of blood from vigorous frames. The value of the blood of Jesus Christ thus passes into our veins. The Church chose for one of its ancient emblems of the Saviour the pelican, which fed its young, according to the fable, with blood from its own breast. So Christ vitalises us. He in us is our life." For recovery of the soul He not only has poured out His life for us, but in regeneration, He pours His life into us, making us partakers of the Divine nature. We, too, require to be saved by transfusion of life. We have faint illustrations of this in nature. As by infusion of new life by the grafting process, the crab-apple tree is saved from its bitterness and use-lessness, and the common dog-rose made a

thing of beauty, so the soul and life is by the life of God made sweet and beautiful and useful.

Pray observe that this is not "the regeneration of washing," but "the washing of regeneration." The words in each sentence are the same, but in different order, and order here is a vital matter. By way of emphasis, let us repeat that sentence; not "the regeneration of washing," a fiction man is so prone to idolise, but the "washing of regeneration," i.e., the cleansing which we get when we are regenerated, or born again, the cleansing that the new life gives, a life which is given on the ground of the shed Blood. All the baptisms of water in the world cannot cleanse the soul; it is the washing of the Spirit which alone is effectual.

It is important to notice that there must be the application of the precious Blood of Christ before we can receive the life of God. In the Tabernacle and Temple this truth was zealously guarded. Before the great Laver was reached the brazen altar of sacrifice must first be approached. There is no doubt whatever that the Altar was the first thing encountered. In Leviticus 4:7, it is called "the altar at the door."

Why are the instructions respecting the Laver not given after the altar in Exod. 27, but reserved until chapter Exodus 30:18? To guard the great doctrine of Atonement. Atonement must come before cleansing; the cleansing of the blood before the cleansing of regeneration.

He saves not only by regeneration, but also by renewal. What is meant by renewal? In the words of T. Binney: "By regeneration we understand the commencement of the life of God in the soul of man, the beginning of that which had not an existence before; by renewal the in-vigoration of that which has been begun; the sustenation of a life already possessed."

Nature in Spring undergoes a mighty renewal. The long, cold, trying winter has gone, and at the call of spring the naked trees put on their garb of glory and beauty, and life in its freshness and attractiveness is peeping through the scarred surface of the ground. Nature is having its periodical renewal. And does not the Christian soul need renewal? Verily, that need is great. Let us seek for an outpouring of His grace, and then we shall be able from experience to say and sing:

"There is Springtime in my soul to-day.

For when the Lord is near.

The dove of peace sings in my heart.

The flowers of grace appear."

SAVING BY LOSING.

"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life, for My sake, shall find it" (Matthew 16:25). In other words, if we are" to save either soul or life we must lose them. What, save my life by losing it! This does, indeed sound strange! Who would have thought this? Every one of the evangelists record this utterance, and this is both a proof of its importance and of the effect it had upon them. Verily, God's way of salvation is altogether different to man's. Here a great principle is enunciated: What I keep I lose; what I lose I retain.

"But how can this be?" you exclaim. We would like to associate John 12:24 with this Scripture: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth

much fruit." Here is a farmer who has a good store of precious grain. He desires to save it, but in order to save it he must lose it. What the farmer sows he keeps; what he keeps in his barn deteriorates by keeping, or is eaten by vermin. If a corn of wheat be not cast into the ground it will for a time abide alone, and then presently cease to exist. The only way of saving the corn of wheat is by losing it. As in the vegetable world, so in the moral and spiritual world. In Luke 17:33 our Lord applies this principle to the subject of our salvation, and in Matthew 10:39 to the subject of Christian service.

I. To Save my Soul I Must Lose It. No one seems to know where the word "soul" came from. Some think it to be an Icelandic word for the sea, meaning that, like the sea, it is mighty, mysterious, unfathomable, and perhaps, billowy. Others say it is from the verb "to see," suggesting that it is the part of our being that thinks, reasons, loves. The soul is that immortal and eternal part of my being; it is "my think;" it is myself. In the old days of the pirates, when pursued by those sea-pests, to save gold, silver, and valuables, the captain and passengers threw them overboard, where they would be able to find them again; they lost them in order to save them. In times of danger, precious treasures are deposited in banks, and diamonds in transit are put into the captain's care for safety; lost, in order to be saved. Friend, have you yet discovered that you possess a Jewel of immense value? That jewel is your soul. Many treat their souls as the people of the transvaal formerly treated diamonds, when, not knowing their value, they gave them to their children to play with, and even built them into the mud walls of their farmsteads. The soul is a precious jewel, indeed, and for safety must be lost in God. As the farmer, in order to save his corn, commits it to the keeping of God by placing it in the earth, so we, in order to save our souls, must in the words of Peter, "Commit the keeping of their souls to Him as unto a faithful Creator." Of course we commit our souls to God, not to be lost in Him in the sense that the Buddhists and Pantheists believe, viz., to be entirely absorbed in Deity, for we ever retain our personality and identity.

Many things lost are never found; not so with our souls. But they are not found as they were lost. The lost seed is found in a glorious harvest. This is also true in respect to our bodies. If the Lord tarries, we may have to lose them in the grave, but on the Resurrection morn we shall have a glorious find (see 1 Corinthians 15:42-44). But quite as great a change now takes place in the soul hidden in God. Pearls, when they have lost their lustre, regain their brilliancy by being buried in the sea. When we are hidden in God, the lustre of whiteness and purity is regained by His grace.

II. To Save my Life I Must Lose It. There is the dread possibility of a saved soul and a lost life. That was the case with the dying thief-his soul was saved, but his life had been wasted in the service of sin, and was therefore irretrievably lost. What a grand thing it is for young lives to surrender to the Lord Jesus, and to be lived in His blessed service for His glory! Yet many who turn to the Lord in their youth lose their lives because that, though their souls are saved, their lives have not been fully yielded up to God. Do you know the difference between a piece of coal and a costly diamond? The latter receives the light and then gives it forth, whereas the former takes in and absorbs all the light, and gives none. Our Lord said that John was a "burning and a shining light." We cannot shine without burning, that is, without losing. Samson's wife, in order to save herself and family from burning, betrayed her husband, but the very evil she wished to avoid overtook her. And so, in His application of this principle to service, the Lord, in effect says: "If to follow Me seems to you, as it is, very dangerous, and you decide in order to save your life, not to deny self and take up the Cross and follow Me, the very evil you wish to avoid will overtake you."

SAVED BY HIS LIFE.

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Romans 5:10).

What, saved by His life? I thought we were saved by His death! This is indeed a startling statement. Saved by His life-which life? The life He lived before the Cross, the life poured out on the Cross, or the life He is now living since the Cross? The answer to these questions gives the message of this study.

If you will carefully scrutinise the text and context you will see that this is a message to reconciled ones, to those who have already been saved by His death. Let this be very clearly understood: the apostle is not referring to the life our Lord Jesus lived before the Cross. That is how some view this text. Many teach that in studying the life of Christ, and seeking to imitate and copy it, we shall be saved. It sounds rather philosophical and attractive to the generality of men, but it will not work in actual experience. As a matter of fact, contemplation of that life, instead of saving, only condemns. All honest endeavourers have to confess:

"Dear Master, in Whose life I see, All that I would, but fail to be."

Contemplation of His life always leads to shame, and is powerless to help. It is also quite clear that the apostle is not referring here to either salvation through the poured-out life, or the poured-in life, though these are glorious truths. This is a message to those who have already been saved by His death, and by infusion of His life.

Rightly understood, this is a sample of Paul's close, clear, and keen reasoning. Look at the Lord Jesus on the Cross, so weak and frail; see what a mighty work He did for us in that weakness. But He lives. If He accomplished so much for us in that weakness, what can He not do for us in His untiring energy and unlimited and Almighty strength! You see the apostle is drawing attention to the work the Lord Jesus is now doing for us in the Glory. We do not think as much as we ought of the life He is now living for us. He died to save us; He lives to keep us saved. Let us illustrate this in various ways:

I. As a Patient is Saved by the Life of his Doctor. On the death of a friend or relative, have you never heard the remark that, humanly speaking, if only the old family doctor had been alive, the deceased would have been saved from physical dissolution. And there is a great deal of truth in the assertion. Here is the doctor who has known us all our lives, has attended and pulled us through serious illness, and therefore understands our physical frame as no one else can.

What a desperate state we were in when we first called the Great Physician in! We proved indeed that His touch has still its ancient power, for He healed us of our spiritual disorders. But remember that He still lives to keep us well. Verily His own are saved by His ceaseless skill and care.

II. As a Child is Saved by the Life of the Mother. Humanly speaking, many a motherless child dies prematurely through lack of a mother's loving care. The only sister of a young man known to the writer passed away at the age of sixteen. The mother died eleven years before. She had been grossly overworked and neglected, and he constantly affirms that had his beloved only sister known a mother's care she would have been alive to-day. Praise God, He Who saved us when we first trusted Him ever lives to keep us saved. We are ever the objects of His tender regard.

Constantly He is mothering those who trust Him.

III. As an Absent Official is Saved by the Life of a Friend at Court. In Eastern countries enemies plot the disgrace and ruin of an absent official, and happy is he who has a friend at court to defend his interests. Satan is well called the accuser of the brethren, and Job 1:6 hints at the possibility of his admission to the court of Heaven. The adversary could do us immense injury there, but for the fact that we have a Friend at Court.

"There for me the Saviour stands. Shows His wounds, and spreads His hands."

He ever liveth to make intercession for us, and we are saved by His life of intercession from dismissal and disgrace. Ah, thank God, we have indeed a Friend at Court!

IV. As an Army is Saved by the Life of its Commander. History records many a battle lost, and many an army defeated and annihilated, when the General fell mortally wounded. But no shaft of death can ever harm our ever-living Commander. He has passed through the gates of death to immortality; and, as earthly Generals usually select a hill from which to watch the tactics of the enemy, and send reinforcements to any section over-pressed and in danger, so our General is now seated on Mount Zion with His eye upon us, to succour us in times of danger and pressing need. Saved by His ceaseless vigilance.

"Hold the Fort, for I am coming,

Jesus signals still;

Wave the answer back to Heaven,

By Thy grace we will." A man in delirium complained he was deserted, unloved, and uncared for, and all the while his loving wife and the skilful nurse were anticipating every wish, and crying because of his ravings! "But," you say, "the poor fellow was in delirium, and not responsible for his ravings." Yet there are thousands of poor sinners guilty of the same folly. "No one cares for me," they moan, when the Lord died for them, and is now seeking to save, Yea, worse still, sometimes the Lord's own people in despondent moods take up the same complaint when all the time, he knows, and loves, and cares, and is living His ascended and glorified life specially on their behalf. NOT SAVED.

"The harvest is passed, the summer is ended, and we are not saved" (Jeremiah 8:20). A Devonshire farmer, reporting to the writer the condition of the crops in his part of the country, said: "Round my way the grass is saved, and the oats and wheat are saved." We thought the expression suggestive.

Surely no one from Devonshire can wonder what it means to be saved! For the crops to be saved means that they have been severed from the earth and carried to a place of safety for future use; not to be saved means to be left rooted in the ground, left out at the mercy of wind and weather, to die, and to rot. To be saved by the Lord means that you have been separated from the world, having ceased to draw nourishment from that quarter, and are housed in God's precious barn-Christ-for safety and for service. "The harvest is passed, the summer is ended," and then we hold our harvest thanksgiving services throughout the country because "the crops have been safely garnered and are saved," and we do well in thus acknowledging the goodness of the Lord in

this time of the nation's need; but is it possible that any reader, whilst thanking God for the saving of the harvest, has to confess, "Yet I am not saved!" More concerned about the salvation of the crops than the salvation of an immortal soul! Alas, alas, that is only too true in many cases! When shall we place first things first?

Jerusalem was besieged. The inhabitants, pressed beyond measure, had waited deliverance, but in vain. They expected the Egyptians to come to their relief, and that in the dry summer season when travelling was easy; but the golden opportunity has passed, and immediate destruction now stared them in the face. "The harvest is passed, the summer is ended, and we are not saved," was therefore the wail of these disappointed inhabitants of Jerusalem. And they merited such disappointment, for they had no right to seek the help of Egypt; and they had done so in spite of all the prophet Jeremiah's warning. But this will also be the experience of all who do not look to the right place for salvation, for none but the Lord Jesus can do helpless sinners good. Where are you looking for salvation? It is sad to see the lock on some people's faces when you ask them that personal and important question, "Are you saved?" There is often not a look of concern, but of contempt, which is often accompanied by a sneer and mocking laughter. There may be sometimes a look of pity; but it is a pity that you should demean yourself by troubling over such matters. Two evangelists had conducted a successful mission in a country town, and many had received Jesus Christ, and were rejoicing in their new found rest and peace. Two companions out for a walk encountered some converts, and one said sneeringly: "These people say they are saved!" "Oh, indeed," said the, other, "I wonder if they got a special revelation?"

More truth is said in jest than some imagine. They had received a special revelation of themselves and the Cross, and also had the threefold witness of the Word, the Spirit, and their changed lives. Ah, that word "saved," once the subject of jest, is now sweet and precious to many of us.

It is sad to think that many a harvest time has come with its golden opportunities, but in many cases the confession yet is, "Not saved." Special evangelistic missions have been held, bringing golden opportunities for deliverance, the harvest time of opportunity had come, a time of ingathering had arrived, yet it passed, and finds you still as you were. Less than twenty years ago a farmer herded a handful of sheep on the golden soil of the Colorado district in the loneliness of a mountain wilderness, and the whole district might have been his almost for the asking. But there he lolled and dreamed away his days, neglectful of the riches over which he trod. Others came to find there one of the richest goldfields known to man, for the gold seems inexhaustable. It is reported that the farmer still lives. He lost his opportunity. "What a foolish man!" you say. Yet there are many greater. Within your reach now is Christ and His unsearchable riches, aye yet you go on in your spiritually impoverished and destitute condition! But one more golden opportunity has come. If we accept Christ now we will be able to say: "The harvest is passed, the summer is ended, the crops are saved; and I, too, am saved, thank God!"

LOOKING (Hebrews 12:2).

1. To Christ, for Salvation-A definite act.

2. At Christ, for sanctification-a definite habit.

3. For Christ, for glorification-a definite hope.

Chapter 91

Some Old Parables

Some Old Parables. THE PEARL OF ALL PARABLES.

Part I. Luke 15.

In this series of re-studies of the parables of our Lord, first place must be given to what has been called "The Pearl of all Parables," found in Luke 15. At first we hesitated to use this title, for, as all parables are equally inspired of God, each separate parable is a pearl. There is a danger in attempting to exalt one portion of Holy Scripture above another. Even the portions of Holy Writ that have not made any special appeal to us individually, are as precious as those that have spoken loudly. The whole of the Divine Library is one big priceless pearl. Yet it hath pleased the Lord to use Luke 15 in Gospel ministry more than other portions, save perhaps John 3:16. Where is the evangelist who has not found this earthly story with a heavenly meaning of tremendous service in winning the lost. The stammering beginner in Christian service finds it to be the simplest of all subjects to take; the well-seasoned Gospel warrior finds it to be the most profound of all narratives; for in it there is a simplicity of application that appeals to the babe in Christ; and yet, at the same time, there is a whole world of truth that provides thought for the philosopher. A few general observations are necessary before placing our microscope upon it.

Please observe, in Luke 15, we have but one parable in three sections: "And He spake this parable unto them" (Luke 15:3). Pray note, our Lord called it a parable, not parables. This is important. Even if there were no doctrinal significance, it is wise to follow closely the exact words of Scripture. But there is an important truth at stake. It is one parable in three sections, each portraying the work of one of the Three Persons in the Blessed Trinity. In the story of the Lost Sheep we have a picture of the work of God the Son; in the story of the Lost Coin we have a picture of the work of God the Holy Spirit; and in the story of the Lost Son we have a picture of the work of God the Father.

"Very well," you say, "but should not God the Father come first? Should we not re-arrange the sections, putting the lost son first, the lost sheep second, and the lost coin last?" The way you have presented the question appeals to us, for God the Father should always come first, as is so in the great Apostles' Creed. Yet we must not tamper with the order in which our Divine Lord Jesus related the incidents, even if we do not appreciate the significance. As a matter of fact, there is a deep and vital truth in the order. For in actual experience the sinner's first concern should be the work of the Son, our Divine Saviour; then the Person and glorious offices and ministries of the Holy Spirit; and, finally, the revelation of the Father. Why, our Saviour Himself declared that He was, and is, the way to the Father, and that "no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." This threefold parable has been much misunderstood. Our Lord's object in relating it was not to show who is, or is not, a child of God, but how willing God is to receive all who come to Him; not to show the basis of true forgiveness, but the readiness of God to pardon and receive the most unworthy if truly penitent. To say that this parable declares that every human being is a child of God, and that He is ready to forgive without any atonement, is to put into the chapter what the Lord never

intended, and to be guilty of the sin of both adding to, and subtracting from, the Word of the Lord. To read into this parable what our Lord never intended is simply shocking, and imperils the souls of men. The immediate object of the parable was to justify Christ's conduct in associating with outcasts. "Then drew near all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him" (Luke 15:1). These Jewish pariahs recognised in the new Teacher a new Friend; they detected in His discourses a new note of sympathy and interest. There was freshness and power in His utterances. Instinctively they were attracted. "And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying: This Man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them" (Luke 15:2). Wondrous statement! He not only received them, but He ate with them. That is to say, He not only desires to save me from my sins, but to save me to His friendship. To receive me and speak the word of forgiveness is amazing grace; but that is but the beginning of the disposal of the riches of His grace; for He desires my friendship and fellowship. To eat bread with anyone means a very great deal in Eastern lands. It is a pledge of friendship; a covenant sign full of significance.

Now in these three sections our Lord pointed out to His objectors how they ought to have acted as the shepherd sought the strayed and lost one, as the woman sought and rejoiced in the recovery of the lost coin, as the father welcomed and received the prodigal; so ought they to have rejoiced over the return of the publicans and sinners. But instead, they had acted as the elder brother; our Lord Jesus was holding up a mirror so that they might behold themselves. By the way, here is the rightful point to stress most in this threefold parable. The interest in the parable has mainly centred upon the lost sheep and the lost son, whereas it is clear our Lord meant us to place the emphasis upon the elder brother. But this point must be left for a future study. A wee girl had parents who never frequented public worship, but insisted upon her attendance, and, moreover, bringing home the preacher's text. One morning she rushed home exclaiming: "Oh, mama, my name is in the Bible!" "But that cannot be," expostulated her parents. "But it is! Why, the preacher announced it. 'This Man receiveth sinners, and Edith with them.'" Only a faulty pronunciation? Ah, more. Can you put your name there? "This Man receiveth sinners, and --- with them." THE PEARL OF PARABLES.

Part II.

Only One Lost. Luke 15.

"What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness?" (Luke 15:4), so begins our Lord's matchless story of the lost sheep, the first portion of the Pearl of all Parables. But why make all that fuss about one, seeing he had ninety-nine left? If he only possessed two sheep, and had lost one, we could have excused his concern and trouble over the lost. But to lose one out of an hundred seems an insignificant loss. Yes, that is how we sometimes reason, but it is false. The immediate occasion of this Parable was to vindicate our Lord's conduct in associating with outcasts! The Scribes and Pharisees were the unfriendly critics, and the parable was spoken "unto them." He reminded them how the shepherds invariably acted, and that is precisely what I am doing, He said, in receiving, pardoning, and restoring the wanderers. In likening wayward men and women to sheep, our Lord was using a suggestive and tender figure. For no sheep goes intentionally astray. It just wanders thoughtlessly on and on. In the story of the Prodigal Son, we have the aspect of willfulness. Whilst there are some who deliberately go astray, the major portion just ramble on. Absorption in the quest for food

is one of the causes. With head down, and seldom a look up, the creature wanders on and on, far, far away from the safety of the fold. Absorbed in the quest after pleasure or gold, the majority of mankind just wander through life, hopelessly lost.

We must return to the question: "Why make all that fuss about one? There were ninety-nine left!" Behind such a question is a devastating thought. We hear of some parents who have lost a little child, one of a large family, and we remark: "Ah, well, they have quite a number of children left, and the loss cannot be as great as if they had only one." In other words, the greater the family, the less the value of the individual. Is that so? If it is, then the thought saddens and disturbs, for I shall begin to think that, because the human family is so great, one can easily be missed; that I am like a needle in a haystack. But that is a false philosophy. The size of God's family does not effect the preciousness of the individual. That is so in daily life. However large the family, father and mother love and care for each one just as if they were their all. What a comforting thought this is. Though God has millions of human beings under His providential care, He cares for each individual as if that individual was the only one in the world. God's love is not only general, but particular, not only does He love and care for a world, but it is possible for each one to be able to say: "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Ah, the shepherd missed the one, and went after it. And this leads to another thought: What is the distinguishing peculiarity of our Christian faith? Not the Incarnation, for other religions have taught that their gods became manifest in the flesh, though there is actually a world of difference between what they term incarnation and that of our Gospel. Not sacrifice, for other religions have their sacrifices. Not worship or Sacred Literature, for worship is common to all religions, and other faiths have their sacred books.

Here is one of the great outstanding peculiarities of our Christian faith-it is the only religion among men that has ever represented God as seeking man. Other faiths represent man as seeking God, which is not true. It is tragic yet true, that "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God" (Romans 3:11). Man apart from grace, does not desire God, so that, when we find within us longings for God, it is a proof that the Spirit of God is at work. In the parable, it was not the sheep that sought the shepherd, but the shepherd who went after the sheep.

How utterly helpless is the wandering sheep. For the sheep differs from all animals in this respect, that when once it has wandered from the flock, it can never find its way back. And our Lord likens man to a sheep. What a suggestive simile. Man, apart from Divine aid, can never find his way back to God. Ah, but the Good Shepherd went after the solitary lost one "until He find it." Oh, what patience and perseverance! "And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing"-what wondrous truth we have here. The shoulder is the strongest part of man, teaching that all the strength of Omnipotence is exerted on behalf of every found one, and that until "He cometh home," until He bears us safe over to the other shore, to the Land of never-ending spring and gladness. THE PEARL OF PARABLES.

Part III.

Lost in the House. The piece of silver was lost in the house. "Well," say you, "there is nothing remarkable about that, for it is no unusual happening for things to be lost in the home." Quite so; yet when you recognise what the House signifies, you will be startled: in the Church, in the Assembly, and yet lost! That is one startling part of the second portion of the Pearl of Parables (Luke 15:8-10). This charming threefold parable was our Lord's apology for loving and receiving

the sinful and erring ones. The duty and joy of seeking and finding, He proves three times over to be universal. Now it was most unusual for our Lord to multiply references at one time. This He did, not only to convey the thought that such joy was universal, but for another purpose which we must specify.

One of the most striking features of our Lord's teaching and work on earth was His vindication before men of the worth of man. In those days the value of a man as man had sunk very low. Human life was of so little value that it was thought fitting for men to die by the score in the Coliseum at Rome and elsewhere, simply to amuse a holiday crowd. Those were the days when slavery in its worst form flourished. How cheap was human life? This parable three times over declares the value of one soul, and wherever the Bible is loved and taught, and wherever the God of the Bible is trusted and loved, human life begins to rise in value.

Now it was not merely the Pagan and the Heathen who undervalued human life. The Scribes and Pharisees of Israel esteemed a Publican and others of the despised classes, as of less value than one sheep. Consequently the first portion of this parable would have no weight with them. Quite true, they would remark, that a shepherd would be justified in going after one wandering member of his flock, but that does not justify your association with publicans and sinners, for we esteem one sheep as worth far more than one publican or sinner. Very well, our Lord said in effect, but surely you will admit that a small silver coin worth 7½d. is fitting to represent the value of one publican? "What woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost." But what a fuss to make over a lost sixpence! Fancy, being so concerned over its loss that a spring cleaning was set in operation in order to its recovery, and when eventually found, calling her friends and neighbours to celebrate its recovery! Is there a woman to-day who would make such a turmoil over a lost coin?

Yes; if that lost piece of silver was to her as to the woman in the parable. In those days at marriage, instead of a gold ring as to-day, the bridegroom presented the bride with a necklace of ten silver coins. To lose even one of those pieces was considered as equal to, or suggestive of, unfaithfulness. Then no wonder the poor woman in the parable became troubled when she discovered her loss, and no wonder her neighbours shared her concern, and no wonder that great exertions were made to discover the lost piece. Now, the lost coin represents the lost sinner.

I. Lost through Severance. In some way or other, it became disconnected and lost. The union existing between God and man ceased when sin came into the world. Sin cut man from God.

II. Lost, though Still Bearing the King's Image. The King's image and superscription makes the coin of value. Man is precious because he bears the image of his Maker. He bears and possesses the spiritual attributes of thought and will and moral consciousness, by which he resembles God. The image is worn, marred, and almost obliterated by the Fall, yet still there. Though lost, man still bears the image of God.

III. Lost, though in the Home. The sheep was lost through straying away from the fold; the coin was lost in the fold. That is the one startling feature of this second portion of the Pearl of all Parables. It points out the dread possibility of being a member of a Christian Church, or attending

the meeting place, and yet being lost. Lost, yet in the House!

IV. Lost, yet of Real Value to the Former Owner. The great mother-heart of God yearns and longs after His lost ones. And the Holy Spirit is busy seeking the lost, through the candle of God's Word, and by the ministry of up-setting and disturbing Providences.

V. Lost, yet Can be Found in the House. All the holy ministries of the House of Prayer are bent to achieve this purpose. THE PEARL OF PARABLES.

Part IV.

The Lost Son.

We must ever remember in the reading of the Sacred Book that it has an Eastern background. For example, if in our country a younger son came to his father with the request that he should now receive "the portion of goods that falleth to him" under the terms of his Will, strong words would be spoken and harsh measures taken. In our day division of the paternal estate only takes place on the death of the testator. But in the East, the younger son's request would be considered as quite a proper thing. "A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country" (Luke 15:11-13). Nothing wrong in leaving home! Seldom does a youth leave home simply because he has tired of it; still more rarely because he wishes to lead a life of mere self-indulgence. More frequently it is an honourable purpose. Some leave home for school or college; others to learn a trade in another town, or for marriage. But this young man left home with a wrong motive; he wished to get away from all its wholesome restraints and holy examples. His leaving home was:

I. The Fruit of his Wish to be his Own Master. He wanted to be:

"Lord of himself-that heritage of woe."

II. It was Prompted by an Erroneous Conception of Life. He imagined true life to consist in a round of pleasure-seeking, in throwing away of life.

III. It was Prompted by Youthful Rashness and Inexperience. Experience is a hard master, and his fees are heavy.

IV. It Led to the "Far Country" and to Beggary. "But," you say, "I am not guilty of prodigality or profligacy; I am not eaten up with vice. I am not bankrupt in money or character; I am not a 'waster.' This can have no application to me!" Not so fast, dear friend, have you ever pondered on Augustine's definition of the Far Country? "The far country is forgetfulness of God." This is startling! We may be decent, yet there is a forgetfulness which is the certain proof of spiritual estrangement. Forgetfulness of God is a common malady and a proof we are far from God. "I remembered God and was troubled," was the confession of the Psalmist. But "he came to himself." What a strange journey! It means, surely, that he had been away from himself; in other words, beside himself-mad. "At last he came to his senses" (20th Century New Testament). In his years of riot he was not himself. It was not the prodigal who was the real man: the real man was the penitent. His coming to himself was followed by coming to his father.

"But while he was holding afar off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and running fell upon his neck, and tenderly kissed him" is Rotherham's rendering of Luke 15:20. He started back home quickly, and allowed no grass to grow under his feet until he drew near the old home, when he hesitated, and came to a standstill-"holding afar off." Why? He had squandered his father's gift, had disgraced himself, and was clothed in rags. Then there was the harsh elder brother. But let us ever remember that whilst we have sinned in departing from God, we sin more by remaining away from Him. The great sin is departure from the living, loving, merciful God, and this never ceases until we return.

What were the father's gifts to the returned prodigal? Remember He is not satisfied by merely pardoning. God's giving begins and always follows His forgiving. The first gift was the kiss of reconciliation; literally, "He kissed him again and again." Kissing in the East is a pledge of reconciliation and peace. The father gave the kiss before the prodigal uttered a word. Of course his very return was a confession. The father gave the kiss to the prodigal just as he was, in all his rags and filth. He did not postpone the kiss until he had made himself more presentable; no, just as he was he was welcomed. But that was not the end, but the beginning of the gift. The second gift was the best robe. That glorious New Testament expression: "Grace reigning through righteousness" is exemplified here. To forgive him in his rags was grace. But the father could not in righteousness have the prodigal at his table in his rags; he must be clad and decked in a manner suited to that blessed position. The prodigal was quite prepared to be merely "a hired servant," so unworthy did he feel. But the two following gifts, the ring and the shoes, proved conclusively that he was to be treated as a son. No servant wore a ring, or entered the presence of master or mistress clad in shoes. The slave went unshod and without a ring. Captives had their shoes taken from them (Isaiah 20:2). When captives were restored to freedom their shoes were restored (2 Chronicles 28:15).

There is further significance in these two last gifts. The ring surely speaks to us of assurance and delegated authority (Genesis 41:42; 1 Kings 21:8; Esther 8:10, Daniel 6:17; James 2:2), and the shoes of equipment for the walk of life. Truly the forgiven one must walk as becometh the children of God.

Observe, these gifts were all bestowed at the same time, and when a prodigal returns to God now, he receives as much the first day as ever afterwards. His "afterwards" will be spent in more and more discovering the wealth already bestowed, and living in accordance with that wealth. THE PEARL OF PARABLES.

Part V.

The Elder Brother. Who is the Elder Brother? This was a question raised at a Ministers' Fraternal. Like many questions-not so easily settled. Mark you, the question is "Who is?" not "Who was?" There is no doubt whatever regarding what was in our Lord's mind. Luke 15:2-3 is quite sufficient: "And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured. . . and He spake this parable unto them." Our Lord had the Pharisees and Scribes in mind when He related this pearl of all parables. No; the question is not "who was" intended, but "who is." We have come to the conclusion that in this story we believers have a warning signal. There is a dread possibility of believers becoming like the Elder Brother. He represents the carnal Christian. With most, the interest in the parable is mainly centred in the Prodigal. When you think of Luke 15, what first comes to your mind? I think most would say,

"The story of the Prodigal Son." We are sure that our Lord meant the emphasis to be placed upon the elder son. In the first two portions of the parable our Lord showed the Scribes and Pharisees how they ought to have acted; in the elder brother he holds the mirror up to them in order that they might see themselves, for as he acted so had they. To-day, the elder brother stands before us as a representative of carnal believers. Who is the Elder Brother? The self-righteous sinner? No. He was a son: "Son, thou art ever with me." "I know him, I met him yesterday," declared an old minister at the Ministers' Fraternal, and on his ministerial brethren earnestly urging him to disclose his identity, exclaimed, "I myself," and he then explained that on the previous day, hearing that a very ill-conditioned person had received a gracious visitation of God's goodness, he had felt not a little envy and irritation. Dear fellow-believer, how do you feel when you hear of other brethren, not so well-educated as you, yet their ministry seems more acceptable and much more fruitful than yours? How do you feel, dear fellow-believer, when you learn of another sister's husband making a bigger success in life than yours? What is your feeling, fellow-Christian, when you hear of some notorious Prodigal Son coming to God? Let us answer these questions as in the searching light of God's presence. The elder brother's spirit is very manifest. "Who is the elder brother?" The carnally-minded believer, not living up to his privileges, and who has lost his first love and his passion for souls. Observe, the elder brother in the story was a member of the family and a servant of his father; and yet what saddens one is his utter joylessness, and he seems scandalised at the gladness shown by others over the returning prodigal. And note the price he had to pay. Such people are shunned. Observe how long the younger brother had returned before the elder brother came in from the field. How long does the killing, dressing, and cooking of a calf take? A few hours must have passed, and yet not a single servant thought it worth their while to go out and inform the elder brother of the return of the wandering one.

I. What are the Symptoms of the Disease and Malady of Carnality?

1. A Lost Sense of Indebtedness. "Neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment." Is it possible for a boy to grow up into manhood, without ever being guilty of a single act of disobedience to his father? Never. He forgot he was a pardoned rebel. He had lost all consciousness of transgression. He was sedate and prudent, very correct and proper, yet self-centred and self-satisfied. He had lost the enjoyment of the Divine forgiveness, and had become a stranger to its thrilling joy. What a sad condition he was in! This exactly is the condition of some believers now in our day.

2. A False Complacency. The elder brother seemingly lived a straight life, but was self-centred. There was a silly, smug satisfaction with himself, in which no one else shared. This is a feature only too common in our day.

3. The Foolish Forgetfulness of his Possessions. "Thou never gavest me a kid that I might make merry with my friends." Had he any friends? Such gloomy, morose individuals are shunned. "Thou never gavest me a kid." Why, he had two-thirds of his father's kids, and two-thirds of all his father's property. Pray remember that when the younger brother asked for his portion of goods we read, "And he divided unto them his living," that means that whilst the younger brother got one-third of his father's possessions the elder received two-thirds. How easily carnal believers forget the infinite resources of God's grace, and in consequence live poverty-stricken lives.

4. The Loss of Sympathy for the Fallen. Losing a sense of indebtedness he had no patience with the fallen, and therefore no sympathy. Observe how coarse he had become. In the Divine record of the younger brother's waywardness we read, "And there wasted his substance with riotous living;" but the elder son must be coarse and cruel, and declared to his father, "This thy son-which hath devoured thy living with harlots." Oh, the coarse ness! Why are many believers out of sympathy with special evangelistic missions, and out of place in the warm atmosphere of a Revival? They are carnal.

5. The Lack and Loss of Filial Love. In this elder brother of the parable the dreadful feature of his character is the apparent lack of affection on his part towards his aged parent. He therefore failed to understand his father. He was a loveless creature. Self-excommunicated; self-punished.

6. A Stranger to the Joy of Loving Service. Have you ever noticed the word he used for service? Said he to his father, "Lo, these many years do I slave for thee," as it could be rendered. In Weymouth it reads, "I have been slaving for you." He served most diligently, but only as a slave. His obedience and service all along had been servile, prompted by fear and dread. It was neither filial love nor filial service; it was all irksome, tiresome duty. What a picture of heaps of carnal believers.

II. And What is the Cure? How did the father in the parable seek to overwhelm and win back his stern, hard, elder son?

1. He Reminds him of his Sonship. "Son." Oh, what a world of meaning the father put into that one word! May believers never lose the sense of wonderment in their sonship in Christ, and never forget that they are members of the family of Faith. Don't forget the very high honour He has conferred upon you. Oh, carnal believers, grubbing in the dust of the world, hear the Heavenly Father's reminder-"Son!"

2. He Reminds him of his Personal Love. "Son, thou." He loves all; He loves the world; but He particularly loves you. His love is individual in character.

3. He Reminds him of the Abiding Presence. "Son, thou are ever with me."

4. He Reminds him of the Blessed Enrichment. "And all that I have is thine."

5. He Reminds him of the Existing Relationship, for in answer to the elder brother's, "This thy son," the father replies, "Thy brother."

III. And What shall be my Reply? Should it not be, "Father, Thou art ever with me and all that I have is Thine, for ever and for ever."

WHAT ABOUT THE FUTURE?

Questions concerning the future are of perennial interest. It is a favourite newspaper stunt in the quiet season, when on account of the lack of tragic happenings, circulation of newspapers seem to be declining. When a correspondence on such a question as at the head of this page is raised, at once letters pour in and the circulation increases. There is no question more popular and more appealing to even "the man in the street."

Some imagine that the Bible has little or nothing to say about the future. What a sad mistake. Why go to so-called Spiritualism for knowledge on these matters? Let us turn to the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, found in Luke 16:19-31. But is this a parable? Our Lord begins: "There was a certain rich man." Is He not giving history? It seems like it. But though the story may be true, yet it has a lesson for us to-day. Let us note that our Lord does not rebuke possession of wealth, but its heartless, selfish use. Dore, the great artist, most assuredly made a mistake when in seeking to depict this scene he placed a whip in the hands of the rich man. No, there is no hint of cruelty in the story on the part of the rich man towards Lazarus, but of callous indifference. He did not treat the poor man inhumanly, he simply ignored him. In fact the dogs were more sympathetic than he. The story is soon told. "There was a certain rich man." There is no doubt whatever about his wealth, for he was able to clothe himself with the most costly of garments. "He fared sumptuously every day." "And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus." That name is significant. It is a contraction of "Eliezer," which signifies the help or assistance of God, and declares that this poor man had faith in God. He was not only poor but diseased. "And It came to pass that the beggar died." He died first. No wonder, when we remember his privations and disease. Then the rich man died. There is no account of any burial for the poor man, for probably he was just cast out on the city rubbish heap, but the rich man "was buried." No doubt a very elegant funeral. And that is the end of things? No, that was only the beginning.

It is very striking that although our Lord Jesus knew all about the unseen as no one else did, yet He was silent save for two or three references. In this parable He is most definite. Let us approach the parable with questions and seek for an answer from the narrative.

I. Is there Another Life? Do we survive after death? Man revolts at the idea of being dead and done with. He knows there is another life; the knowledge of that being part and parcel of his make-up. What does this story contribute towards this question? Both the dead bodies were left on this earth, but they themselves, the real individuals, were found in another life. They survived after death. They were living, throbbing personalities.

II. What Happens at Death? The godly are carried by the angels into the presence of Christ. The angels are most solicitous for our welfare during life, as Hebrews 1:14 declares, but they take special care of us at the hour of death, ushering us into the Divine Presence.

III. Are we Conscious in the Other Life? In this story they were very conscious. Neither of them were asleep; the rich man painfully conscious of his sufferings, and the poor blissfully conscious of his enjoyment. All the Scriptures have to say about sleep only has application to the body, and not to the soul. The Holy Book declares here consciousness to all, and that immediately following death.

IV. Is there any Difference in the Abodes of the Departed? Most certainly! This story teaches that there are two places; a place where the dead out of Christ go, and a place where the dead in Christ are found. Abraham's bosom was a Jewish phrase for Paradise. Now we know that Paradise is in the third Heaven, and not as in this story, in the heart of the earth. Study Matthew 12:40; 2 Corinthians 12:2-4. Without a doubt the transference of Paradise from the heart of the earth to the immediate presence of God took place at our Lord's resurrection, as is shown in Ephesians 4:8-10.

V. Will we Know One Another in the Other Life? A clergyman's wife asked her husband this question, to which he at once replied: "Why, dear, we know one another down here, and do you for one moment imagine that we shall be bigger fools up there than we are here?" The rich man knew Lazarus. The three disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration recognised Moses and Elijah as the companions of our Lord in that wondrous scene, though Moses had been dead hundreds of years, and hundreds of years had passed since Elijah's translation. Most certainly we shall know one another in the other life. Though the rich man had left his body down on this earth he had eyes with which to see, and a mouth with which to speak.

VI. Any Hope of a Second Chance? There are many who teach that a second chance of salvation will be given after death. What do we learn from this story? That the rich man in Hell did not desire salvation for himself, nor ask for a single spiritual mercy, yet he did desire spiritual mercies for his relatives. There seemed to be no desire whatever in him for any spiritual grace: "As the tree falls, so shall it lie."

VII. Can the Dead Communicate with Us? How can they? Pray read that graphic sentence: "And beside all this between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot: neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." That states no hope of a second chance and no thought of the dead communicating with us. What takes place in Spiritist Seances is not the communication of departed ones with their friends, still in the flesh, but demons who impersonate the departed and deceive mankind.

VIII. Would an angel or a resurrected person sent back to this earth lead to the conversion of others? The idea that the answer should be in the affirmative is very common, but our Lord put into the mouth of Abraham a very definite word on this matter: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." How the Word of God is honoured here! Oh, the importance of hearkening to the Word of God. How the Bible is exalted in this parable.

IX. In conclusion, will you please notice that the rich man:

1. Awakened to eternal verities, but too late!

2. He saw his own danger, but too late!

3. He prayed, but too late!

4. He became concerned about the salvation of his relatives, but too late!

PRUDENCE.

Luke 16:1-9.

The problem parable is that found in Luke 16:1-9. It is the most difficult of all the Lord's parables. Few can agree regarding its interpretation. It seems to commend a piece of deliberate roguery as a pattern for Christian people to copy. Hundreds of explanations have been offered, few of which give complete satisfaction. Many have given up in despair all hope of solving the problem, declaring a solution to be impossible. Is there a single thoughtful Christian man or woman who has not sought to puzzle out some sort of solution to this problem? What is the parable? An unnamed

rich man had a steward. Eastern stewards have almost unlimited power, because full authority is delegated to them. This master received such convincing proof of his steward's faithlessness that he determined on his dismissal, without the formality of a trial, and intimated this to him. By silence the steward admitted his guilt. This dismissal greatly agitated the steward, and he debated with himself as to "What shall I do?" Apparently his defalcations had not benefited him one bit; by it he had not a nest egg, nor had he feathered his own nest, having probably dissipated it in riotous living. "I cannot dig," he sadly reflected, either having developed his brain at the expense of his muscles, or his intemperance had weakened his body. "To beg, I am ashamed"-but not ashamed to defraud. False shame leads him to prefer fraud to poverty. Now at last his mind was made up. Calling his master's debtors together, in order to curry their favour, bade them reduce their debts by half in one case, one-fifth in another, and so on. "And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light."

Now it is in this commendation that the problem is created. Surely our blessed Lord does not desire us to act unjustly and dishonestly to those without and within? Never! Who commended the unjust steward? That is no unimportant question. It was the steward's master, not the Lord Jesus. You will observe the word lord in Luke 16:8 is spelt with a small l. When the rich man heard of his servant's cuteness and cleverness it amused him greatly, and he admired the prudence and cleverness of the rogue. We admit that our Lord related the parable in such a way as to show there is something in the story He commends for our imitation. Yet we must press the point that the one who commends is the earthly master, not the heavenly.

I. Was he deducting over-charges when the steward bade his master's debtors to reduce the accounts owing? That is how many Eastern people view it. It is wise to remember that it is an Eastern story. In that fact may lie an easy solution. The fifty measures of oil, and the eighty measures of wheat to which the steward reduced the amounts formed the actual debts, the rest being simply over-charges with which the steward himself had cruelly and fraudulently burdened them. In that case the expedient to which he resorted in the emergency was not an act of trickery and dishonesty, but the first signs of real repentance, and an act of justice.

If this is the correct view, it is no wonder that he was commended by his master, for by robbing by over-charges his master's debtors, he had impoverished them, and so had indirectly injured his master by rendering them less able to pay their debts.

II. Was he deducting his commission in order to get back their favour? We know that in the East large commissions for sales is the order of the day. Stewards, cooks, or servants in responsible positions are thus bribed by tradesmen to take to them the orders of their master or mistress. This is an explanation worth pondering over.

III. Have we not here a Parable of Prudence? After all we have said, let us look again at the story for another explanation. What is praised is not the dishonesty, but the realisation of the facts of the case, and the immediate action taken. The world can teach believers many lessons. Our Lord Jesus points to the wisdom of this knave as an example we should copy, only we should apply it to a higher purpose. Observe in this steward certain characteristics worth emulating. He certainly was a-

1. Man of Resource. If not a man of muscle, he was a man of brains, and he used them. He was in a dilemma, but he quickly reasoned the thing out. There is a place for resourcefulness in the service of the Lord. Observe, he was-

2. A Man of Promptitude. He not only made up his mind quickly, but he acted promptly. There are many who purpose altering their methods, or of adopting some new stratagem in the Lord's service, but they procrastinate until the golden opportunity has gone for ever. Now he was-

3. A Man of Audacity. There was something like genius in the cool daring of this steward. Instantly he called his master's debtors before him, and in each others presence openly reduced their debts. It was not done in a private room, each apart from the other, but openly. Is there not room for a little more cheek and audacity in the Lord's service? We are so shy and proper and reticent. Oh, for more holy boldness in His blessed service!

There remains the application found in Luke 16:9-13. Luke 16:9 has puzzled many. The Weymouth version has been a help to many. "But I charge you, so to use the wealth which is ever tempting to dishonesty as to win friends who, when it fails, shall welcome you to the tents that never perish." That is, those who have wealth are urged to use it aright so as not to rouse the envy, or embitter the less favoured, and if that wealth should take to itself wings, and fly away, as has happened so often the last few years, they will not be left friendless. How often those who have made a parade of their wealth when the evil day comes, find themselves without a friend.

Bengel has drawn attention to the fact that Luke 16 follows Luke 15. That obvious fact has not been noted as it should. Luke 15 tells of the returned, welcomed, and feasted prodigal. But life cannot be spent in music and feasting. We (the pardoned and justified) are stewards to whom our Master has entrusted the talents of time, money, gifts, and a glorious Gospel message. Are we being faithful to the trust He has committed to us? We shall have to give an account sooner or later of our stewardship. God grant that we may merit His "Well done, good and faithful servant." A SELF-CONFESSED MATERIALIST.

Luke 12:13-21.

One of the greatest thinkers, of a past generation has remarked that "A single thought of thankfulness to Heaven is the most perfect prayer." Whilst there are few of us who would go quite so far as that, yet there is a great deal in the statement. Ingratitude is most assuredly a crime. Old Testament legislation is proof of the high value the Lord placed on thanksgiving. In the parable of the Rich Farmer found in Luke 12:13-21, we have an illustration of this. In your study of this narrative what do you most miss? A single expression of indebtedness to the Most High!

"I think," said an old gentleman toward the close of his busy and successful career, "there are three questions that will be put to us in the Day of Judgment: 'Did you make all you could? How did you make it? What use did you make of it?'" The rich man in the parable could easily answer the first two. He was a success, a very great success, and had most certainly made all he could. And he assuredly had made his money honestly. There is not a single hint to the contrary. He was not a bad, vicious man; there was no glaring vice or evil in him. But the third question unmasked him. Here he had failed. For he had lived utterly for himself, and the riches God had given him he proposed to continue to lavish upon his own miserable self. By the way, have you ever observed here an unmannerly interruption? Take up the Scripture. Our Lord had been discoursing on deep

and solemn truths. A re-reading of Luke 12 will be sufficient to show its profundity. And all the while, this man was so absorbed in his own little petty concerns that he never heard a word, and at a pause in the conversation blurted out his concern. Of course he did right in referring this injustice-imaginary or real- to the Lord, but he was wrong in allowing the thought of the injustice to deafen him to religious instruction.

It is almost unbelievable, and yet it is a fact, that a man sat for years under the silver-toned preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, listening to those mighty Gospel discourses, and yet on his death-bed discovered that he had never accepted the message for himself. It is very urgent that all our hearing should be mixed with faith as is urged in Hebrews.

Going back to the self-confessed materialistic farmer, what was wrong with him? And why do we all unite in condemning him in spite of his honesty, industry, and prosperity?

I. He was taken up with the gifts but forgot the Giver. Look carefully at the Scripture record again, and you will be struck by the absence of any reference to God. There was a selfish and arrogant sense of possession by right, and not by grace. This is particularly inexcusable in farming, for no occupation is so dependent upon the faithfulness of the Creator, yet he made not a single expression of gratitude to God, and there is no hint at all of any consultation with the Most High as to what he should do. But what about the writer and the reader? What an amazing number of gifts we have received from God-health; loving partners in life; children; homes; friends; success; are we absorbed with these to the exclusion of our great Heavenly Benefactor? Alas! alas! in so many cases it is so.

II. He failed to distinguish between the soul and the body. As proof, observe that he put the wrong address on the envelope, for he said: "Soul-thou hast much goods laid up for many years"-soul; goods-you cannot benefit nor satisfy the soul with material things. "Soul," why, he meant his body. The soul is myself, and my body is only the material part of my nature. What a blunder! And yet it is a common one. Alas, that it should be so.

III. In thinking and planning for this life he forgot the next. "Laid up for many years," and the verdict fell, "this night." In thinking of time, he forgot Eternity. In thinking of the future he failed to remember his mortality.

IV. In thinking of himself he forgot his neighbour. Observe the personal pronoun: "My! My!! My!!!" but never once "my neighbour." If his barns were bursting, there were many other barns empty. Yes, there were other barns waiting, without pulling down his own-the bosoms of the needy, the houses of the widows, the mouths of orphans and of infants. There were empty purses of less fortunate fellow-mortals.

It is very striking to see that he was condemned not for what he had done, but for what he thought of doing. Observe, "He thought within himself." Thus "we are here admitted into the inner council chamber of a worldling." What should he have said? If he had been a wise man he would have exclaimed: "Soul, thou hast been long neglected! The time has come when thou and I must attend to the needs that make for thy peace." But he did not. Instead, as one has remarked, he went to learn in Eternity what he had not learned in time, that he was a self-made pauper. But, thank God, we are still spared. We may learn in time so as to benefit throughout Eternity.

RENT DEFAULTERS.

Luke 20:9-18.

Before the Great War we frequently heard of "moonlight flitters"-families so deeply in debt, and so hopeless so far as payment of debts was concerned, that some night they removed their goods, quietly and secretively, to another town or entirely strange neighbourhood, beginning life afresh. So scarce have houses been since the war, that insolvent householders have had to resort to other stratagems. In Luke 20:9-18, we have rent defaulters, who resorted to murder as a way out of debt. The householder in the parable was more than owner of this vineyard, for he had planted it, and thus stood in a close and personal association to it. In the East there is no property so valuable, nor which yields returns so large, as vineyards. This man planted the vineyard, protected it by a wall, ornamented it by a tower, then let it out to husbandmen on the understanding that part of its proceeds would be handed over as rent. For three years the fruit was, according to ancient custom, ungathered; in the fourth year it was all holy unto the Lord; in the fifth year the tenants and owners could eat and begin to benefit by its growth (Leviticus 19:23-25).

During that long period the husbandmen contrived to forget that they were tenants and not owners. And when the owner sent his servants for his just due, ill-treated them, driving them empty away. The patience of the owner is wonderful-a representation of the wonderful and infinite patience and longsuffering of God. At last we have his dilemma, enshrined in those four simple words, "What shall I do?" But even his beloved son was rejected, and his murder decided upon. The history of Israel is summed up in this dark picture. The One who planted the vineyard was God; the vineyard, the land of Israel; the husbandmen, Israel, particularly the leaders of the nations; the servants, the prophets; the son, the Lord Jesus Christ. But there is an application of this parable to you and me. What we have belongs to God-our very life, possessions, time, friends, all. There is no time when God does not demand of us His rightful dues. He sends us His servants-more, His Son, the Lord Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. Have we sent them empty away? Be warned, there is a limit to His patience, when judgment will fall. THE PARABLE OF UNLIKENESS.

Luke 18:1-8.

How will the parable known as that of the unmerciful judge in Luke 18:1-8, look re-christened? Suppose we call it the parable of unlikeness! At any rate that brings out the principal lesson it conveys.

We are informed as to why our Lord related it. There are lots of things we ought to do, and here is one: "Men ought always to pray and not to faint." The judge in this parable was a reckless and desperate character. For he had no respect for God or the opinions of his fellows. This combination is rare. Even the worst have usually some regard for the opinions of their fellow-mortals. Not so this official. A widow is in the case. The exceeding desolation of widowhood in the East has often been noticed. Yet the Bible has a tender regard for them. God has been pleased to reveal Himself as "Father to the fatherless, and Judge of the widows," and Jeremiah 49:11 has been a comfort to many a dying husband and father. Being weak, she could not compel the judge to do her justice; and being poor, with no bribe to offer which should induce him to brave, for her sake, the resentment of formidable adversaries-what a helpless condition was she in to be sure. The self-pleasing indolence of the judge, and the helpless yet desperate condition of the

suppliant-what a contrast! Is that Judge a picture of our God? Is that why our Lord related it? Never. There is only one answer to that question, an emphatic "No!" Blessings are not to be dragged out of Him. He is not unwilling to come to our aid. We have not to "Wear me out" (as R.V.) before gaining our requests. The strength of the parable lies in the unlikeness of this judge to the Judge of all the earth. There may be, and indeed are, times in the experience of the very best of us, when God seems to be deaf to the earnest pleadings of His people. Certainly the Lord's people usually expect a speedier deliverance than the Master vouchsafes to give. Yet we can trust. The great point in the parable is this: If a bad man will yield to the mere force of the importunity which he hates, how much more certainly will a righteous God be prevailed on by the faithful and believing prayers which He loves.

Yes, verily, this is the Parable of Unlikeness!

TRUE NEIGHBOURLINESS.

Luke 10:25-37.

"I would dedicate the nation to the policy of the Good Samaritan," was a statement of President Roosevelt, of the U.S.A., in his inaugural address, so much had the parable of the Good Samaritan (in Luke 10:25-37) impressed him. Regarding a good man of God, his biographer remarked concerning his philanthropies, "He never stopped to ask, Who is my neighbour." Precisely; real love to God and man never does. Unmeasured service to all, the outcome of true love, is the order of the day to a real man or woman of God in following the example of the Good Samaritan, our Lord Jesus Christ. And by the way, note how wonderfully, by this glowing parable, our Lord has rescued from reproach the word, Samaritan. It was the name given in derision to the mixed folk who colonised Samaria after the deportation of the nine and a half tribes to Babylon, and was never repeated by a Jew but in scorn and hatred. To be called a Samaritan was considered a great insult. But our Saviour, by this charming parable, has rescued that word from the pillory.

Another good service has our Lord accomplished by this famous story. The good people of that day had divorced worship from practical service. By this parable our blessed Master united again in holy wedlock, these two branches of Christian conduct, so that we now never conceive them as apart, but the one united with the other. Who is my neighbour? The rabbis of that day taught that Jews were to "love thy neighbour-in the Law," three words that meant all the difference in the world. By this matchless parable the Lord Jesus taught that every needy one whom we can help, is my neighbour; that neighbourly responsibility has nothing to do with race, church, creed, and social status; that neighbourhood is not a matter of geography, for we can live in close proximity to other folk without being neighbourly. Truly, sorrow, need, sympathy, and help, are of no nationality. This parable forbids all limitations to mercy.

I. The Case.

1. "He went down." This is geographically correct, for Jericho is six hundred feet below the Mediterranean.

2. He was stripped before being wounded. This would never happen in our country. The one attacked would be felled, then robbed. But there is no mistake here. The bandits did not want the

garments damaged, as they formed an important part of the spoil. How true to Eastern life. This road was so dangerous that it came to be called "The Red Road"

3. The Silent eloquence of the battered and bleeding body.

4. The Priest would be on his way back from exercising his priestly office in the Temple at Jerusalem. Twelve thousand priests resided at Jericho. Why did he pass by? Was he so eager to reach his home after his absence? Was he unwilling to be ceremonially defiled, as he may have been? Or was he looking after the safety of No. 1, deciding that the robbers, who had maltreated so seriously this poor fellow, would be lurking behind some of the local rocks, ready to pounce upon any one dismounting to render first aid?

5. The Levite. This is the only mention of the Levites in the Gospels. He did go up to the poor fellow, looked, and then passed by, thus he was guilty of aggravated cruelty.

6. "By Chance." The only time in the Gospels that our Lord used the word, indeed the only occurrence in the New Testament of the word. Our Lord seems to use it with a touch of irony. Really, it was a loving ordering of God. There is no chance in the Christian vocabulary.

7. The Samaritan. The genius of true love is shown in his acts. He ignored the possible lurking robbers; he was swift, cool, deft in his actions; he was ready to spend and be spent; he cheerfully sacrificed the use of his beast; the care for the patient at the end of the journey is touching, and we all admire his prudence in not leaving a great sum of money in the host's hand, and his wise hint that he would await his account on his way back. What a combination of compassion blended with shrewdness.

II. The Application. Ah, there is no problem in the story. Even a child can understand it. The poor man is-well, you and me; and the Good Samaritan is none other than the Lord Jesus. Man has gone down, left the City of Peace for the City of the Curse, turned his back on the Temple and on God, and stripped of holiness and goodness, left lifeless. The Law, symbolised by the priest, cannot help; and ceremony, in the person of the Levite, is of no avail. But our Good Samaritan has come to the rescue. "What daring intelligence would ever have suggested that the Lord Jesus Christ should, find 'His neighbour' in a fallen world? Who would ever have thought that God would have chosen us to be His 'neighbour?' That He should come where we are, that He should bend over us with a heart glowing with love, and pour into our wounds the sweet solace of His own anointing oil, or breathe into our lifeless being the supernatural energy of His own eternal life. Not less than this, Divine love has actually effected." THE CROSS AND THE INDIVIDUAL.

What fierce attacks have been made for centuries upon that great fundamental fact of our Christian faith, the substitutionary aspect of the death of Christ. The enemies of our faith know full well, that with the fall, or even the obscuring of that aspect of His atoning death, our Christianity will collapse. But, thank God, the Cross it standeth fast, Alleluia! Yet we cannot hide the fact that the silence of our college professors, and our present-day preachers, is giving us very great concern. When, think you, did you last hear a discourse in your Assembly Chapel, or Church, on the atoning death of our Saviour? But further, you who minister the Word, what is the date of your last discourse on the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ? The replies in many cases will be disconcerting. Verily, the fall of the Cross will mean the fall of England, or of any other professedly Christian country. The same is true of each individual. We, too, shall either stand or fall according

to our relation to the Cross. Yea, we are already either still unsaved fallen creatures, if we have not yet realised and received Christ and His atoning death. This is clearly seen in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, found in Luke 18:9-14; the difference in these two men is in their relations to the Cross, or rather to the truth that the Cross stands for. In the first, whilst there is much to admire, we note the utter absence of all consciousness of sin, and of feeling the need of the Atonement, and he was and remained an unsaved person. In the other, there was a plea for mercy through the atonement-God's way of salvation. This is clearly seen by consulting the Revised Version where, instead of merely, "God be merciful to me a sinner," we find, "God be propitiated to me, the sinner," or as a reliable Greek authority has pointed out, it could be very literally rendered, "God show mercy through sacrifice to me, the sinner." This we shall develop.

Please observe that this is not a parable about prayer, but about justification. The parable of prayer is in the first few verses of this chapter. To whom was this parable addressed?

(1) Those who" trust in themselves"-not the Lord.

(2) To those who despise others, not because of a hatred of sin, but because of an imagined moral superiority over others. The late Mark Guy Pearse told of visiting a home, where the father and husband, a man of culture and education, sat drunk and acting like a fool. As he was leaving the house, the wife with tears exclaimed, "Oh, pray to God for me, that I may be kept from despising him!" It was not this kind of despising, our Lord had in mind; it was what spiritual pride prompts one to think, and act, and say.

Prayer reveals character. True character always comes out in this way. Let us see how the characters of these two men were revealed by their prayers.

I. The Pharisee.

1. He was a good man. He could say that he was "not as other men." Somehow the very name of Pharisee is suggestive to us of hypocrisy, but that is a mistake. A hypocrite is an actor-one who pretends to be something he isn't, and knows it. A good many profess to be what they are not, and they are quite unaware of the fact that they are not what they profess to be. Such are self-deceived, but certainly are not hypocrites. So with the Pharisee. This Pharisee really thought he was a good man, and he was, according to mere earthly standards.

2. He Was an honest man. He was "not an extortioner." That he could truthfully say. Now the Publicans (the name in the Bible for the tax-collectors) were notorious for this. The late Professor Henry Drum-mond considered that "dishonesty is as great a sin as drunkenness," but this Pharisee was an honest man.

3. He was a just man. He could say he was "not unjust," that is to say, he was fair in his dealings with his fellows. The Golden Rule he admired and practised. He did unto others as he wished to be done to.

4. He was a virtuous man. He could say that he was not "an adulterer," for he had full control over his passions, and not only respected but obeyed the law.

5. He was a temperate man, because he could say that he "fasted twice in the week." Moses only appointed one fast in the year, in connection with the great day of Atonement, but this man

improved upon the Mosaic instructions, and had such wonderful control over his own healthy legitimate appetites that he was able to fast twice in every week!

6. He was a benevolent man. "I give tithes of all that I possess." Now Moses only enjoined the tithing of the fruits of the earth and the increase of the cattle, and therefore the Israelites was not commanded to tithe all; but you will observe that the Pharisee could say truthfully that he gave tithes of all that he possessed.

7. He was a grateful man. "I thank Thee," and he had much to be thankful for. By careful training, and by the wholesome restraint of the law and society, he had been saved from much outward sin. There are thousands of young people associated with our assemblies, mission halls, churches, and chapels, who have similarly been preserved from outward sinful excesses, who have never done as much as the Pharisee, for they have never yet thanked God for this wholesome and blessed restraint.

Having said all this, the reader might express astonishment and say, "Surely the Pharisee was a model citizen, and what more could be expected of him?" Ah, there was an utter absence of any consciousness of sin or of personal unworthiness. His prayer was weighted with pride, and did not rise any higher than himself. You will observe that whilst he was grateful, he presented no request for grace, and he received none. This unfortunate state of mind and soul was undoubtedly brought about by a wrong idea of sin, and a wrong idea of religion. He evidently knew sin simply as transgression, whereas that is only one aspect of it, for it is written, not only that "sin is the transgression of the Law," but also that "All unrighteousness is sin." Then his idea of religion was a mere round of duties to be observed and practised. Take care there is no latent Pharisee in any of us.

II. The Publican. Seven is the perfect number, and it is to be observed that in our Authorised Version his prayer consists of only seven words; yet the Authorised Version rather clouds and hides several important truths. The late Bishop Daniel Wilson of Calcutta directed in his will that on a tablet to his memory in the Cathedral, should be engraved these words in Greek as so much more emphatic than the English. The Revised Version marginal rendering is to be commended, "God be propitiated to me, the sinner." What do we learn from this prayer?

1. He accounted himself unworthy of approach to God. "He stood afar off"-in the Court of the Gentiles. Though a Jew, he dare not venture any further than the Court of the Gentiles. He was "conscious that his sins had distanced him from God. But, blessed be the Lord, though the Publican stood afar from God in conscious unworthiness, God did not stand afar from him. He is nigh unto all that are of a broken and contrite spirit

2. He confessed himself to be the worst of sinners. Not "a sinner" as in the Authorised Version, but "the sinner," as in the Revised Version. He recognised the heinousness of sin, and his cry was that of a soul terrified by the horror of sin, and a sense of punishment.

3. He acknowledged the only channel of mercy to be the atonement of God. Without doubt he had brought his sin offering, and after it had been killed, was being offered up on the altar, and he prayed in effect that God would show mercy through that substitute already being offered, to him a sacrifice that prefigured the great one our Lord was to offer. Might we suggest to all respectable sinners that both these prayers be united. Gratefully thanking Him for all the restraints with which

He has surrounded you, and for so mercifully preserving you from sowing the wild oats, then cry for His pardoning and justifying mercy through the atoning death of Jesus Christ. "God be propitiated, through sacrifice, to me, the sinner."

RECEIVING!

One has splendidly pointed out that:

1. To Look is receiving with the eyes.

2. To Hear is receiving with the ears.

3. To Take is receiving with the hands.

4. To Taste is receiving with the mouth.

5. To Come is receiving with the feet.

6. To Trust is receiving with the heart.

7. To Choose is receiving with the will.

Chapter 92

Bible Readings

Bible Readings.

Fruitfulness

FRUITFULNESS.

I. Before Fruit there must be Life. "Severed from Me," says Christ, "ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). He is the Living One, and is come that we might have life. We never look for fruit from a dead tree. A soul dead in sin (Ephesians 2:1) can never bring forth the fruits of righteousness. There must first be a planting into Christ (Romans 4:5). "He that hath the Son hath life" (1 John 5:12).

II. There must be Entire Surrender to the New Conditions. If the roots of the tree do not strike out into the new soil in which it has been transplanted it will not prosper. In Php_3:9-10 Paul speaks of being found in Him, the source of life, then he says: "That I may know Him"-a growing acquaintance with Him. The branch must be entirely passive to the power of the vine. Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead (Romans 6:13). The fruit of the self-life is corrupt. Crucify the flesh with its lusts; grow in the knowledge of God. This whole-hearted surrender to the grace and power of the Spirit of God opens the way into the heart and life so that God can enter in and work mightily (Ephesians 3:16-17).

III. Fulness must come before Fruitfulness. The branch will not bear fruit until it has been filled to overflowing with the sustaining sap. The cup will not run over until it has been filled. If rivers of water are to flow out of us the unfailing spring must rise up and fill all within (John 7:38-39). A dissatisfied heart will bear but a poor, dissatisfying testimony for Christ. If the roots of our being are spread out by the river, by the way of the Holy Spirit, then we shall not cease from yielding fruit (Jeremiah 17:8).

IV. The Character of the Fruit.

1. It will be new fruit (Ezekiel 47:12). It does not belong to the unregenerate man. It is not the fruit of the flesh; not the outcome of an energetic self-life. The corrupt tree has been made good by being created anew by the Spirit of God. It is fruit unto holiness (John 1:13).

2. It will be fruit according to the nature of the tree. You cannot gather figs from thorns, or grapes from thistles. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, etc. (Galatians 5:22), not the fruit of the Christian. The fruit of the Spirit, you observe, is just the likeness of Christ. Ye are partakers of the divine nature. As fruit is the result of the living, moving sap within, so the image and characteristics of Christ are wrought in the believer by the living, moving Spirit within. From Me is thy fruit found. It is the work of God, and the evidence of a soul being fully possessed by Him. Where there is the fulness of the indwelling Spirit there must be the manifestation of the Christ-likeness. Death is the way to life and fruitfulness. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24).

Chapter 94

A Bible Christian

A BIBLE CHRISTIAN. A sect called "Bible Christians" had their origin in England in the year 1815. They took this name because they professed to stick fast to the Bible. Every Christian is a "Bible Christian," holding fast to Christ and His Word of truth. Every other Christian is a sham. A "Bible Christian" is a Christian after the order of the Bible. He is-

1. One who Trusts in Christ (Ephesians 1:12). One who has been convicted by the Spirit, made to feel his need of Christ, and who has, by a deliberate act of His own will, transferred all his confidence to Him. He has a settled faith in Him as the almighty and infallible Son of God.

2. One who has Life through Christ (John 6:37). He was alienated from the life of God, but now he is by faith engrafted into it. Through receiving Him who is the "Living Bread" life has been imparted, a new creature formed-born of God-partaker of the divine nature. This is life eternal.

3. One who has Love to Christ (1 John 4:19). Love is the first evidence of a regenerated heart. When the love of God is shed abroad in the heart it will rise up in all its strength and fulness to Him from whence it came. It is a love that now believes and rejoices with joy unspeakable (1 Peter 1:8).

4. One who has Fellowship with Christ (1 John 1:3). This fellowship is sweet because there is intense love on both sides. "Lord, to whom can we go?" (John 6:68). There is none on earth the new-born soul desires besides Him. "If Thy presence go not with us, carry us not hence" (Exodus 33:15). "Abide in Me" (John 15:4).

5. One who Works for Christ (2 Corinthians 6:1). "Whose I am, and whom I serve" (Acts 27:23). Belonging to Him and living for Him it is his privilege not only to work for Christ but to work with Him. This is the more excellent way: God working in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. Delivered to serve.

6. One whose Resources are in Christ (Colossians 2:9-10). All the fulness of the Godhead is in Him, and ye are in Him. Abiding in Christ he receives, as a branch in the vine, all the fulness of Him who is his life, his strength, his power, his all. The unsearchable riches of Christ! What are they? All is yours, for ye are Christ's.

7. One who will be Rewarded by Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10). Every Christian will be saved, but every Christian will not be rewarded. Rewards are only given for works done in His Name and for His glory (1 Corinthians 3:13-15). Salvation is a gift. Rewards must be earned. Christ Himself will fix the value of every deed done (Matthew 25:19-25).

8. One who will Spend Eternity with Christ (John 17:24). This great privilege is promised in John 14:3, prayed for in John 17:24, and realised in Revelation 5:9. A little girl said she lived where mamma lives. Our fitness to be with Him will be our likeness to Him (1 John 3:2). For ever with the Lord.

Chapter 95

Visited And Redeemed

VISITED AND REDEEMED.

Luke 1:46. A PROPHETIC SONG.

I. The Visitor. The Lord God. (1) The need of a Visitor. -Man's lost and helpless condition. (2) The Promise. -"I will surely visit you" (Exodus 3:16). (3) The Wonder. -"What is man that Thou visitest him. ?" (Psalms 8:4). (4) The manner. -"God was in Christ reconciling the world" (2 Corinthians 5:19).

II. The Visited. His People. (1) They knew Him not (John 1:11). (2) They knew not their time of visitation (Luke 19:44). (3) They rejected Him (John 19:14).

III. The Purpose. To Redeem. (1) Who? Thy Maker is thy Redeemer (Isaiah 54:5). (2) How? By giving Himself a ransom (Matthew 20:28). (3) What from? (Titus 2:14). (4) What to? To God, to holiness, and to service (Luke 1:74-75).

Chapter 96

Visited And Redeemed

EZEKIEL'S CALL AND COMMISSION.

There are four distinct positions in which we find Ezekiel that seem to characterise the state and privilege of the Christian in a very striking way.

I. We see Him as an Exile. "I was among the captives" (chap. Matthew 1:1). He had his place among those who were helplessly shut out. This is a humbling position, but we must take our place among sinners and rebels if we would see the salvation of God. No good can come by denying that we are captives. It is no use boasting of liberty when we know that our lives are enslaved by lust and sin, by the pleasures and fashions of the world. While among the captives he said, "The heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God" (chap. Matthew 1:1). The heavens will always open and visions of God be given to those who acknowledge their true state before God and look up. The sum of the likeness was "the likeness of a man" (Matthew 25:5). All satisfying vision is in the revelation of Him who is the Man Christ Jesus. In Him we get a vision of God. He is the image of the invisible God. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). What a vision this is! It is the opening up before our eyes of the love, mercy, power, and glory that dwell in the great and gracious heart of God. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8).

II. We see Him as an Ambassador. Having seen God, he is now to be prepared as a messenger for God. We testify what we have seen.

1. He is Called. "Stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee" (chap. Matthew 2:1). He is now face to face with God, and must have to do with His Word. God speaks to us before we are sent to speak for Him.

2. He is Helped. "The Spirit entered into me when He spake unto me" (Matthew 25:2). The Spirit always enters when God speaks. His Word is with power. The result of both is a setting up. We are never properly set up till we have heard the Word of God in the power of the Holy Ghost. After this we are in the right attitude to hear (Matthew 25:2).

3. He is Commissioned. "And He said, Son of man, I will send thee" (Matthew 25:3-4). The commission comes after being taught of God by the entering of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Ghost-the great Teacher come from God- 'rested upon the early disciples before they became witnesses for Him. The secret of authority and power for service lie in these words, "I send thee."

4. He is Filled with His Message. "Son of man, eat this roll, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee" (chap. Matthew 3:1-3). Even the Word of God will not have much power at our lips if we have not eaten it for ourselves The truth as it is in Jesus must be in us as the strength and satisfaction of our own hearts if it is to influence others.

5. He is Encouraged. "Son of man, be not afraid of them, neither of their words" (chap. Matthew 2:6). It is so needful that the servant of God should find all his succour in Himself, because the

words and faces of those to whom He is sent are often very stout. He is to "speak My words, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear" (Matthew 25:7).

6. He is Led and Empowered. "The Spirit lifted me up, and I went in bitterness, but the hand of the Lord was strong upon me" (chap. Matthew 3:12-14). Filled with the Word of God, and led by the Spirit of God in bitterness and sorrow. How Christlike is this experience before us here. Ezekiel was obedient to the guiding Spirit, and the hand of almighty power was upon Him. The willing servant will have his reward (1 Corinthians 9:16).

III. We see Him as a Watchman. In chapter Matthew 3:17 we hear God saying to him, "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman." To be a watchman for God we must have the eye-opening, soul-transforming vision of God (Acts 9:1-15). We must be lifted high up by the Holy Spirit, far above all principalities and powers. Those in the valley cannot see afar off. We need to be raised and seated with Christ in the heavenlies before we can see men and things as they really are in the sight of God. The work of the watchman is-

1. A Work of Warning. "To warn the wicked of his wicked way" (Matthew 25:18), and also to warn the backsliding righteous man (Matthew 25:20). Sinners are to be warned to flee from the wrath to come, and Christians to beware of becoming a stumbling-block by an un-Christlike life. It also is-

2. A Work of Great Responsibility. "His blood will I require at thy hand" (Matthew 25:20). Are our hands and garments clean?

IV. We see Him as a Sign. "I have set thee for a sign" (chap. Matthew 12:1-7). In these verses the words "in their sight" occur seven times. Ezekiel was to live before the people as a sign for God. Ye are epistles of Christ, known and read of all men. Every Christian is to be a sign to the world of the grace and power of God. The life is the light. A sign is a silent testimony. It may be the look of love, or the sigh of sympathy. A tear has often melted the hardened heart. God commanded the prophet, saying, "Sigh, therefore, thou son of man; sigh before their eyes" (chap. Matthew 21:6). It is easier to be a watchman than a sign; easier telling men what they ought to do than sighing over their sins and wickedness. Paul was a true sign when he wrote, "I tell you, even weeping" (Php_3:18). The men who sigh and cry are marked men (chap. Matthew 9:4). "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4). May God by His Holy Spirit lift us up into the compassion and tenderness of Him who wept over Jerusalem!

The Image Of God

THE IMAGE OF GOD.

It is interesting to notice how the image of God is connected with four prominent men in the Scriptures. Observe-

I. The Image of God Created in the First Man. "The first man Adam was made a living soul" (1 Corinthians 15:45). "God created man in His own image" (Genesis 1:26). He did not rest satisfied until His own likeness was manifested. This was the great end of creation, to reproduce the image of Him who created. The first man was to save all who believe (1 Timothy 4:10); He came like God-

1. In being a Spirit. His life was a separate thing from the mere animal creation. God created the beasts, but He did not breathe into them the breath of His own life, as He did to man. Adam only was capable of knowing God.

2. In being Immortal. The deeper and more real life of Adam was independent of outward and material things. In receiving the breath of God he was a partaker of the divine.

3. In being Holy. He was, as yet, an utter stranger to anything unlike or displeasing to God.

4. In being Satisfied. Between the Holy Creator and the new created likeness there was perfect harmony and mutual delight. God saw Himself in man, and man saw himself in God. In each other's image there was complete satisfaction.

5. In having Dominion. Adam was the crown' of creation, exalted high over all, ruling in the power and authority of the Almighty Maker of all.

II. The Image of God Destroyed in the Old Man. In Ephesians 4:22 we are told, "Put off the old man, which is corrupt." Compare the first new man Adam with this old man. What a change! Where is the holiness, the happiness, and the harmony? Sin has poisoned and polluted all. Nothing left but an immortal spirit at war with God. This old man is so utterly ruined that there is no hope for him. We are to put him off with his deeds (Colossians 3:9). Where are we to put him? The only place fit for him is the cross. "Your old man is crucified with Him" (Romans 6:6). The absence of the image of God means corruption and death.

III. The Image of God Manifested in the Second Man.

"The Second Man is the Lord from Heaven" (1 Corinthians 15:47). As if all who came between were unworthy of the Name. In Jesus Christ the image of God reappears in perfect beauty. He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His Person (Hebrews 1:3). He is the image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15). Man lost the holy likeness; God alone could restore it. When we see Jesus we see the Father, and see what man should have been and what man should be, walking in holiness and in humble, joyful, unbroken fellowship with God. Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost. By His death, resurrection, and holy Spirit He renews,

restores, and rejoices.

IV. The Image of God restored in the New Man.

"And have put on the New Man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him" (Colossians 3:10) We put on the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 13:14), and are created in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:10). "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Take note that this restoration work can only be done by the God whose image is to be created, and that it is a creation rather than a reformation. Those who go about to establish their own righteousness will never establish themselves in the likeness of God. This is not a matter of so many deeds or actions, but a renewing of the spirit of the mind by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, "Ye must be born again" (John 3:7). Let your prayer be, "Create in me a clean heart, 0 God, and renew a right spirit within me"(Psalms 51:10).

Chapter 98

The Church

THE CHURCH.

There are two great wonders in the world-the Jew and the Church. The first is a witness to the Christ rejected; the second to the Christ risen.

I. Its Marvellous Character.

1. It is a Distinct Body. There is the Jew, the Gentile, and the Church of God (1 Corinthians 10:32). The Church is neither Jew nor Gentile, although both may be in it. The Jew looks for a coming Messiah; the Church for a Bridegroom. The Gentile cares for none of these things.

2. It is His Own Making. "Upon this Rock I will build My Church" (Matthew 16:18). He Himself, as the Christ, the Son of the Living God, is the foundation laid in Zion-a stone tried, precious, and sure (Isaiah 28:16). He also does the building by His Holy Spirit, planting believing souls into Himself, as living stones into the living foundation. It is God that worketh in you.

3. It is Called out for His Own Name. "God did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His Name" (Acts 15:14). The Church of God, like His people of old, have been formed for Himself to show forth His praise (Isaiah 43:21). This work of out calling has been committed to the Holy Ghost, is going on just now, and will continue until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. Make your calling sure.

4. It is Filled with His Fulness (Ephesians 1:22-23). Each individual member of His body is brought into contact with the power and wisdom of the Great Head. Grow up into Him in all things (Ephesians 4:15). All fulness dwells in Him. Abide in Him. The world cannot see the invisible head, but it does look upon His visible body. How needful that it should be true to Him!

II. Its Present Privileges.

1. It Occupies till He Comes (Luke 19:12-15). It has been left in the place of service, entrusted with gifts, to be used during the Lord's absence, and to be accounted for when He comes. Its true position is "In Christ's stead" (2 Corinthians 5:20), occupying Christ's place till He come. Is the mind and purpose of our absent Lord being fulfilled in us now? Are we occupying for Him, or for ourselves?

2. It Suffers for Him. Suffering is part of the heritage of the Christian. "Even hereunto were ye called" (1 Peter 2:20-21). If any man will live godly he must suffer. The members of the body are so closely connected with the rejected head that they must suffer. Blessed fellowship. "If ye be reproached for the Name of Christ, happy are ye, for the Spirit of Glory and of God resteth upon you. Therefore glorify God on this behalf" (1 Peter 4:14-16).

3. It is a Co-Worker with Him (2 Corinthians 6:1). "Labourers together with God" (1 Corinthians 3:9). Surely the members of the body ought to labour together with the head. What if they should not? If the service of the hand or foot is not controlled by and in harmony with the will of the head,

what is it worth? As Eve was to be an helpmeet to Adam, so the Church is to be to Christ. His will is to be done in us and through us. The head has no other means of working but by the use of the members of the body.

III. Its Future Prospects.

1. It Looks for Him. He has said, "I will come again." "This same Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go" (Acts 1:11). They wait for His Son from Heaven (1 Thessalonians 1:10). The Bride longs for the Bridegroom. Love yearns for fellowship.

2. It Expects to be Caught up by Him. The Lord Himself shall descend, and we shall be caught up together to meet the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:16). In olden times powerful men would steal away their brides. It will be a rapturous experience to be caught up in the arms of our Beloved and borne to the home of eternal rest.

3. It Expects to be Made like Him. "We look for the Saviour, who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body" (Php_3:20-21). We are to be like Him now in the inward spirit, fashioned by the Holy Spirit. Like Him then in outward form, when the sons of God are manifested (1 John 3:1-3).

4. It Expects to be Married to Him. "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready" (Revelation 19:7). Just now the Church, like Rebekah, is on her way through the desert to meet and marry the Father's beloved Son, into whose hands all things have been committed (Gen. 24).

5. It Expects to Reign with Him. "They shall reign with Him" (Revelation 20:6). "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world" (1 Corinthians 6:2). "Thou hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth" (Revelation 5:10). What a high calling this is! He that hath this hope in him purifieth Himself, as He is pure, a hope that maketh not ashamed.

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