

PASTURE FOR THE FLOCK OF GOD

by H.H. Snell

A collection of articles and writings by H.H. Snell from Pasture for the Flock of God, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

27 Chapters

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Pasture for the Flock of God

Preface

This volume is sent forth with the hope of helping souls. It contends for the authority of Scripture, and calls attention to important parts of divine truth. Most of the papers are notes of addresses given in various places. With all their defects, the desire has been to comfort and edify God's dear children, to whom, we trust, by God's grace, they may not be altogether unacceptable.

In these days, when uncertainty as to the things of God is pervading so many minds, when ignorance and unbelief are sacrificing the essential doctrines of Christianity to modern ritualism and philosophy, when almost every thing civil and ecclesiastical is being shaken, it seems of all importance that those who are born of God should be established and built up in Christ. Those who love the truth, who enter into and enjoy their present standing and acceptance in Christ, who realize the personal indwelling and operations of the Holy Ghost, and the blessed hope of the coming of God's Son from heaven, find much comfort and blessing; and, moreover, escape many snares which those who are looking to men and their opinions must necessarily fall into.

To the gracious and abundant blessing of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, these pages are now prayerfully commended.

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Safety Through the Blood; or, Israel in Egypt

For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt (Ex. 12:12, 13).

God's sentence of judgment had gone forth. Death was declared against the firstborn throughout all the land of Egypt. His testimony by Moses had been again and again rejected; and now God's hand must smite and cut off. His long-suffering had run its course. He had repeatedly manifested His displeasure, but it had been unheeded. His patience could no longer endure. He said,

All the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die . . . and there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt {Ex. 11:5, 6}.

Thus death was threatened throughout all the land. God declared it should be. This was enough. His word must stand. The result we know.

And so now the word of God speaks of coming wrath and judgment. God's message of abounding grace in the gospel has been sounding for a long time in men's ears. Many have rejected it. Few believe the record God has given of His Son; and inevitable judgment is pending.

The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness {Rom. 1:18}.

The solemn verdict has been announced,

Now is the judgment of this world {John 12:31};

and the Executioner is coming.

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 Thess. 1:7-9).

It is certain, then, that the wrath of God is coming, and that it is only a question of time as to its execution. Then surely will be sudden and everlasting destruction, and they shall not escape.

Nor could it be otherwise; for men are not only by nature unclean, but practical transgressors, rebellious, unfit for God's presence. Every trial has only proved their unclean and insubject condition. God tried man first in innocence; then as having a conscience and without law; then under law with many privileges, priesthood, prophets, kings; after this by the personal ministry of His beloved Son; and now by the ministry of divine grace by the Holy Ghost. But all have proved man to be evil and insubject to the will of God. Early in man's course

God's testimony was, that

the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of man are only evil, and that continually {see Gen. 6:5};

and still the divine declaration is, that

the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God (Rom. 8:7, 8).

This is God's verdict, and the sentence is final. Whether men agree with it or not, it is God's righteous estimate of fallen man. And if men in their natural state do not and cannot please God, how can they be fit for His holy presence? The ways of men invariably prove the willful and insubject state of their hearts; for if God commands, he disobeys; if God loves, man hates. If God sends His Son to bless and save, they hate Him without a cause; they reject Him, saying,

This is the heir; come, let us kill Him, that the inheritance may be ours {Luke 20:14}.

If God preaches peace and remission of sins, they will not believe. As, therefore, the judgment of God upon the Egyptians could no longer be withheld because of their hatred of God and His people, and rejection of His word, so the coming wrath is inevitable because of man's enmity, and willfulness, and continual insubjection to God and His truth.

But let us not fail to notice that before the judgment actually came upon the firstborn in Egypt, God did, in His great love and pity, proclaim by His servant the way of safety. So He does now by the gospel, blessed be His name! The people of Israel were told to search for and take a lamb without blemish. This was the first thing. It must be without a spot, in order to be a fit type of Him it was intended to represent, who would hundreds of years after this be found here as the holy, pure, and perfect Lamb of God. Then, observe, this spotless, unoffending lamb must be killed, because nothing could meet our need less than the death of the holy Son of God. Most pure and perfect as His life was, yet had He stopped short of death, whatever other sufferings He had endured, no one could have been saved. It was absolutely, imperatively necessary that Jesus should die; for the wages of sin is death; and, blessed be God, Jesus did die — He

died for the ungodly {Rom. 5:6}.

This was His perfection, He was

obedient unto death, even the death of the cross {Phil. 2:8}.

For this, too, He came down from heaven; for He

was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death {Heb. 2:9}.

Then, on the cross bearing sins, and forsaken of God because our sins were upon Him, He suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. However precious the life of Jesus was — and most precious it was to God, and is to us — yet His death, the shedding of His blood, the laying down of His life, became necessary to meet the holy and righteous claims of a just God against sin to deliver us from its guilt and condemnation, in order, too, that

we might be made the righteousness of God in Him {2 Cor. 5:21}.

But all this in the antitype God has provided. He has found a Lamb without spot, and according to His own purpose and counsel He has been slain. He died that we might live —

“The Prince of life in death hath lain,

To clear me from all charge of sin;

And, Lord, from guilt of crimson stain

Thy precious blood hath made me clean.”

And it is the death of Jesus that the apostle Paul first calls attention to when speaking of the gospel which he preached —

I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:3).

But true and blessed as it is that Christ has been delivered for our offences, died for our sins, and shed His blood for many, it may now be asked what benefit has it been to us? Many will tell you that they know that Christ died, and shed His blood; but if you press them as to what it has done for them, they will perhaps be unable to say. Why is this? Because they only know these points as historical facts, and have never availed themselves of that precious blood for their own soul's safety. Hence we are further told that the Israelites used the blood. This was their faith. God told them to take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood, and sprinkle the lintel and the two side-posts of their houses with the blood, and then to go inside and rest in perfect peace. This is the vital point in this most beautiful narrative. We should not fail to notice the places where the blood was to be sprinkled — the lintel and side-posts of the doors. It was to be exalted by them, looked up to as is certainly the case now with all who really value the blood of Christ. We know that mere professors would put it on the threshold, because, with all their boasted profession, they practically trample underfoot the Son of God, and count His precious blood unsanctifying. The Israelite had to place it as it were between him and God, and to know its protecting power also, both on the right hand and on the left. And what can be more assuring to the true believer now, than knowing that he looks to the blood of Christ as between him and God, and that God looks upon him as under its precious sin-cleansing and justifying safety?

But suppose they had said, “The blood is not enough,” or, “It cannot be expected that they would be sheltered only by it,” would it not have betrayed rank unbelief? But they believed God. They availed themselves of the blood. They gratefully took God's way of shelter. Their safety was in the blood. They sprinkled the lintel and door-posts of their houses, and were safe — unquestionably, perfectly safe. However sinful, ignorant, and unworthy, yet being underneath the shelter of the blood they were safe. However pious they might have been, their safety was not in their piety, but in the blood. Kind and benevolent acts and self-sacrificing ways, however commendable in their place, did not in the least help their security; for it was only through the blood. For God had said,

The blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt {Ex. 12:13}.

Thus their safety was wholly in the blood; it was to be to them “for a token.” And God declared that when He saw the blood He would save all who were under its blessed shelter. How charming and how simple this is! God did not say, when I see your doings, or feelings, or hear your prayers — no; but “when I see the blood.” No bars or locks, however numerous or powerful, could have excluded the messenger of God’s judgment; but the blood on the lintel and side-posts was enough. The people might have been young or old, moral or immoral, learned or ignorant, but, having taken refuge beneath the blood-sprinkled lintel, they were perfectly safe. How anxious every believing Israelite must have been to get all his household inside the house marked with the blood! Cannot you imagine some of them asking why they might not go outside the door? and the loving parents saying, “Because God’s terrible judgment is coming, and He has promised safety to those only who are in houses which have been marked with the blood of the lamb.”

Again, you may easily conceive there were some inside the blood-stained door-posts who were the subjects of doubts and fears, and otherwise lacking comfort. Why? Because they forgot that all their safety was in the blood. If they were taken up with self, their own doings, feelings, fitness, and the like, they would surely be unhappy; but if their minds and hearts rested on the two things God had given them — the blood for a token, and His word for assurance — they would find it an effectual remedy for all doubts and fears. Trusting, then, wholly in the blood, and relying only on what God said about it, would be enough to keep them in perfect peace. And so now, God declares that Jesus has made peace by the blood of His cross, and He now proclaims peace to every one that believeth. And those who do believe, trusting only in the blood of Christ, and relying on what God says, that

whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish {see John 3:15 16},

they have peace with God. Oh yes, God’s testimony to the all- cleansing virtue of the blood of Jesus is the remedy for all doubts and fears. That precious blood withers up all fleshly confidence, and silences every accusing of conscience; for it tells of sins judged and cleansed. The blood speaks to us of God’s perfect love, even when we were dead in sins; it tells us of peace made, of redemption accomplished, of a new and living way into the holiest, of title to everlasting glory.

Being sheltered by the blood is the vital point. Many stumble here, and the mistake is fatal. They are lost, for ever lost, because they reject the blood of Jesus as the only ground of peace and safety; for

“Nothing can for sin atone,

But the blood of Christ alone.”

They say they are sinners, and that Christ is the Savior; but they do not avail themselves of the value of His death. They do not take shelter in His blood as the alone way of safety. This is unbelief. It is refusing to hear Him that speaks from heaven, God has declared that

without the shedding of blood is no remission {see Heb. 9:22};

that

it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins {Heb. 10:4};

that

in Christ we have redemption through His blood {see Eph. 1:7, Col. 1:14};

and that

the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin {1 John 1:7}.

Therefore it is clear that no sin is too black for that precious blood to wash away. Oh no;

it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul {Lev. 17:11};

and happy indeed are those who, taking shelter before God in the blood of Jesus, so rely on His testimony to its perfect efficacy as to be unquestionably assured of perfect safety. Oh the blessedness of God saying to us, Ye are

NOW JUSTIFIED BY HIS BLOOD {Rom. 5:9}!

Remember, then, what God said to those who took Him at His word, and relied on the sheltering power of the blood of the lamb. He told them two things. First, that the blood (mark, not their feelings, nor opinions, nor even prayers, but the blood), and the blood only, was to be the token to them of their perfect safety. Come what might, they were to think of the blood, and be in peace, because they were sheltered by it.

The blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are {Ex. 12:13}.

This is most blessed. It is the perfect cure for every doubt, or question, or suggestion of the enemy. The divine assurance was of perfect safety, because of the blood. Secondly, God said,

When I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt {Ex. 12:13}.

Thus God acted in virtue of the blood. He did not say, when I see your feelings or doings. Oh no; but "when I see the blood, I will pass over you." Thus we see that the blood answers every claim of God, as well as meets every need of our souls. They were not only in their houses perfectly safe, but they were also entitled to know it, and to be in perfect peace about it.

And what then? Did God leave these people thus safe to do their own will, follow their own opinions, and live as they liked? Or did He prescribe occupation for them as thus secure and separated off for Himself by the blood? Most assuredly He did. He set three things before them, all of which have a solemn voice of instruction to us.

First, they were to put away all leaven out of their houses. Now leaven in Scripture will always be found to represent what is evil. They were thus to separate themselves from all evil. They were to hold to nothing that was unsuitable to God.

His word is,

Be ye holy: for I am holy {see Lev. 11:45, also 1 Pet. 1:16}.

So now, being purchased by the blood of Jesus, we are God's; to be for Him always; to show forth the characteristics of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. We are to

depart from iniquity, to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God. Whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, to do all for the glory of God.

Secondly, they were to

eat of the flesh of the lamb roast with fire {see Ex. 12:8}.

This was their happy occupation, and it loudly admonishes us as to the need of communion with Him who

loved us, and gave Himself for us {see Gal. 2:20}.

Nothing can go right with us if communion be neglected. We are called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. They might have remembered the sufferings, death, and bloodshedding of the lamb, they might rejoice in their present safety, but they were to be occupied with and feed on the lamb that had been slain. Particular parts of the lamb were specially noticed as provided for them —

His head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof (Ex. 12:9).

And we cannot fail to notice in these words of the Holy Ghost, that it is our privilege to have communion with our blessed Lord as to His mind, as we understand “his head” teaches us. Thus should we be not ignorant, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. Intelligently entering into His counsels, purposes, and thoughts, as revealed to us in the word and by the Holy Ghost, is one of our highest present privileges. To be able to say, without fear of contradiction, that

we have the mind of Christ {1 Cor. 2:16},

and

know the things that are freely given to us of God {1 Cor. 2:12},

because

the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God {1 Cor. 2:10},

was what an apostle was wont unhesitatingly to pronounce as characterizing the saints of God. Oh the blessedness of thus having communion with the Lord as to His mind and will!

By “his legs” we understand His walk. This also, by the Spirit, through the word, it becomes us to enter into; for He hath left us an example that we should follow His steps — walk as He walked. And I ask, Can any exercise exceed the blessedness of tracing the steps of the blessed Son of God while here? At one time we see Him in a solitary place, or spending a whole night in prayer; at another preaching early in the temple. Sometimes we behold Him disputing with doctors, or in controversy with rationalistic Pharisees, or infidel Sadducees. Again, He is found by the side of the lake of Gennesaret or walking Jerusalem’s streets, exposed to the temptations of Satan or the hatred of wicked men; He is sitting down in a Pharisee’s house to meat, or talking to a crowd of thousands; or sitting alone on Samaria’s well with an enquiring sinner, or sailing along the sea of Galilee in a boat. In public or in private, every step was obedience to the Father’s will; every word that escaped His holy lips the Father gave Him to say; every act was such a manifestation of the

Father that He could say,

He that hath seen me hath seen the Father {John 14:9}.

Ah, this was true and perfect; all was fruit in due season; but to enter into it, enjoy it, and gather comfort and strength from the believing contemplation of it, is a privilege indeed!

But they were to feed on the “purtenance” also — the inward part. And so the affections of Christ are laid open to us in the precious word of God, and the Spirit delights to take of the things of Christ and show unto us. We know that He did love indeed; that whom He loved when He was in the world, He loved them unto the end; that He loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; and that it was when we were enemies, ungodly, sinners, that He so loved us as willingly to die for us. We know that His heart is so set upon us that He is always in spirit with us, and will never leave nor forsake us; that the same loving heart, though now beating on the throne of God, is ever and unceasingly occupied in ministering to us and caring for us. And so ardently does He long to have us in the glory with Him, that He has not only promised to come again to receive us unto Himself, that where He is we may be also, but His heart still says,

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).

It is thus entering into the affections of Christ, and enjoying His love, that our hearts are lifted up in adoring worship, and rise superior to all the distressing circumstances which may cross our path. Let us not fail to see, then, that during this present time, before the coming of our Lord, it is our happy privilege to be occupied with the thoughts, the walk, and the love of that Lamb who is now in the midst of the throne as it had been slain.

Thirdly, there is also another point of deep practical importance. They were to eat it in haste; not as those who were settling down in Egypt. On the contrary, they were to be ready to move at the Lord’s command. Their position was to be one of entire subjection to the will of God, ready to go at His bidding. We read:

Thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the Lord’s Passover {Ex. 12:11}.

They had to feed on the lamb with girded loins, staff in hand, and shod feet. They were a distinct and practically separated people from the Egyptians — consciously the Lord’s, and in a position ready for whatever He pleased. True it is there was no singing in Egypt as there was afterwards on the other side of the Red Sea, nor was there fighting as when beyond Jordan; but there was conscious peace, shelter from judgment, separation from evil, feeding on the lamb, and the expectation of leaving Egypt for ever and dwelling in the land flowing with milk and honey.

And how is it, dear fellow-Christians, with our souls? Are we peacefully enjoying the shelter of the blood, and resting on the precious assurance of God’s unerring word? And in the sweet comfort of this, is Christ everything to our hearts — our strength, our joy, our never-failing resource? Are we truly realizing that because we are the redeemed of the Lord we are ready to go, to stay, to wait, to serve, to be wholly and unreservedly His? Oh the blessedness of this rest of soul! nay, more, the enjoyment of the thoughts, the love, the ways of Christ Himself! And though all our joys here, however pure and spiritual, are mixed with human elements of bitterness — bitter herbs — yet we

must find Him to be the spring of joy, the strength of life, the true never-ending source of all that is pure and blissful. Thanks be unto God for

the precious blood of Christ {1 Pet. 1:19}!

“The perfect righteousness of God

Is witnessed in the Savior's blood;

'Tis in the cross of Christ we trace

His righteousness, yet wondrous grace.

“God could not pass the sinner by;

His sin demands that he must die:

But in the cross of Christ we see

How God can save, yet righteous be.

“The sin is laid on Jesus' head;

'Tis in His blood sin's debt is paid;

Stern justice can demand no more,

And mercy can dispense her store!

“The sinner who believes is free,

Can say, 'The Savior died for me';

Can point to the atoning blood,

And say, 'This made my peace with God.'”

Deliverance; or, the Red Sea

The Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians;

and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore (Ex. 14:30).

To be safely sheltered from the judgment of God by the blood of the lamb, was the precious lesson taught by the passover. But many a soul has great distress, and becomes subject to the assaults of the adversary, even after having taken refuge in the blood of Jesus as the only shelter from the wrath to come. To be really trusting in the atoning work of Christ, as the alone foundation of peace and safety, is one thing; to know deliverance from self, and the world, and Satan, is another. Hence many souls have deep conflict, and are longing for deliverance, as they say, from the plague of their own heart, because they do not see how wondrously God has wrought this for them in the work of Jesus on the cross, as their substitute. It may be through much soul-conflict and distress that some are brought so entirely to look out of self as to fix the eye of their heart only upon the Lord Jesus; but this very sorrowful experience is usually turned to good account. All who are taught of God must surely be instructed according to the divine word, that

the flesh profiteth nothing {John 6:63},

and sooner or later learn in their experience something of the truth, that

no flesh shall glory in His presence, and he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord {see 1 Cor. 1:29, 31; 2 Cor. 10:17}.

Conscious shelter then from the wrath to come some have, who know not the enjoyment of the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free. It is this latter subject which this chapter brings before us, and it is of the deepest importance to our souls to learn clearly from Scripture the Lord's own mind concerning this great deliverance. It is most remarkable that the place of the occurrence of this scene should be Pihahiroth, for it means "the entrance into liberty"; and the end of this chapter, and the singing which followed, tells us what a time of unprecedented happiness and rejoicing it was.

They had learned in time of deepest trial the safety afforded them by the blood of the lamb, according to the word of the Lord. He had indeed passed over them. While death, with its attendant miseries, by the messenger of God's judgment, was in every other house, yet in virtue of the blood of the lamb they had been preserved. Thus kept in safety by the blood, and brought out of Egypt by the power of God, under His peculiar guidance, the pillar of cloud over them by day, and pillar of fire by night, it was not till they came to the borders of the Red Sea that their fears and anguish appear to have began. What immediately gave rise to it was lifting up their eyes and seeing the hosts of Pharaoh, his mighty men with their chariots and horses hotly pursuing them. The waves of the Red Sea rolling before them, and the king of Egypt with his armed soldiers immediately behind them, they found themselves in such circumstances of peril and distress as they never expected, and for which they were totally unprepared. At once their minds became

occupied with themselves, their dangers, and their enemies; in fact, their circumstances. Their misery was intense. They wished they had never left Egypt. They murmured against Moses. We read,

When Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the Lord. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness (Ex. 14:10-12).

Such were the expressions of distress and misery which the children of Israel now gave forth, and it reminds us of another utterance of later date,

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me? {Rom. 7:24}.

Their case seemed to them so hopeless that they contemplated dying in the wilderness, and regretted they had ever left Egypt; they said that they actually preferred the cruel bondage of serving the Egyptians, to their present fear and anguish at the prospect of being wholly exterminated by Pharaoh and his hosts.

But is it possible that these are the same people who only a short time before had personally experienced that they were objects of divine favor, and before whom went to lead them, the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night? Yes, they are the same people; and though they called unto the Lord, when they lifted up their eyes and beheld the vast multitude of Egyptian soldiers marching after them, they murmured against Moses, despondingly spoke of dying in the wilderness, and wrongly judged themselves worse off than when made to serve the Egyptians with rigor at the brick-kiln. In short, they never were so miserable before. It is a vivid illustration of what many a soul passes through now. The picture is not overdrawn. It is a life-like delineation, for it is drawn by a divine hand, and abounds with most instructive lessons.

The fact is, that what at first usually brings a soul to realize its need of the Savior is the sense of guilt on account of sins committed. The burden of known transgressions, and therefore of deserved judgment, is so intolerable that the distressed heart cries out,

What must I do to be saved? {Acts 16:30}

and is rejoiced to find shelter in the blood of Jesus shed for the remission of sins, The joy is often very great at finding in the cross of Christ that God is both

a just God and a Saviour {Isa. 45:21},

and hope therefore of eternal salvation lights up the dark scene where before only gloom and despondency had occupied the soul. Like the children of Israel in Egypt, they happily experience the sheltering value of the blood, and flatter themselves with the idea that they will never be unhappy again. So on they move in their Christian career. They tread a new path. They realize, too, that God is with them. Their backs are turned upon this Egypt world, and with their faces toward the promised rest —

the land flowing with milk and honey {see Ex. 3:8, 17; 13:15; Jer. 11:5; Ezek. 20:6}

— they go onward, according to their knowledge of the will and guidance of God, little suspecting what is so soon and so deeply to try them.

A question, as yet unknown to them, must sooner or later exercise their consciences before God. Hitherto it was the transgressions they had knowingly committed against an infinitely holy, sin-hating God, as we have noticed, that had distressed them; and this they knew had all been met for them, and their souls were happy in believing in the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus. But now the question is about the flesh (prefigured by the Egyptians, men of flesh), the nature from which all transgressions spring; or, as Scripture calls it, our “old man.” The fact is, the old nature, that which is born of the flesh, is totally unfit for God’s presence or His service; and to learn this experimentally cannot but be very distressing. To accept the doctrine because we see it in Scripture is simple enough; but to work it out in God’s sight, that

in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing {Rom. 7:18},

is very humiliating. This was not in the least suspected by many of us when we first gladly accepted the shelter which the precious blood of the cross gave to our sin-stricken souls. Still, it has to be learned that the nature that did the sins, the old man, is so totally and irremediably bad — not subject to God, neither indeed can be — that the only way which God could deal with it was to judge it, and put it thus away out of His sight. The distress connected with this second lesson is often far greater than the distress of the first. Still, it is the way of learning deliverance, and the only way, as I judge, of entrance into the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.

When the soul that has known remission of sins through the blood of Jesus finds within, every now and then, an innumerable host of lusts, and pride, and murmurings, and complainings cropping up, and even if they do not break out, are ready at any moment to do so, the heart is ready to say, “Am I a Christian? Am I not deceived? I thought Christianity would make me always happy, and yet I am so miserable! I never supposed a real Christian could have known such abominable and unclean workings within as I have. Surely I am worse now than when I was in bondage to sin, and Satan, and the world. Besides, resolutions do not drive these things out. Neither do ordinances eradicate them. They recoil after the severest bodily mortifications and self-denial. They boldly intrude in my prayers and holiest exercises. Now and then they lie dormant, but spring up again on the smallest occasions. No one knows this but myself and God; for I am speaking of workings within. I cannot overcome them. So that, distressed and almost ready to give up my profession of Christ’s name, I cry out, ‘O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’” Now, observe here, this is not, “O wicked sins that I have done!” but,

O wretched man that I am! {Rom. 7:24}.

It is

the flesh, with its affections and lusts {Gal. 5:24}

— the nature that did the sins. And when our souls realize these evil workings within, headed by the power of Satan, threatening to have dominion over us, it becomes to us as clear and formidable an host as Pharaoh and his horsemen and army were to the timid and distressed children of Israel. And as nothing could pacify them but deliverance from this mighty power which

was against them, and contrary to God, so nothing less than the setting aside in judgment of these hosts of evil within could meet the requirements of our consciences, because we know that nothing less could satisfy an infinitely holy God. And this, as we shall see, is what Scripture teaches us has been done. Blessed be the God of all grace!

Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will shew to you to- day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace (Ex. 14:13).

Here we see that God Himself would deliver them from this mighty host of flesh, and from Pharaoh its leader, and that by His own power, without any help whatever, or struggle, or interference of man, He would do it all completely, and for ever. It should also be their comfort and blessing to look and see what God did; and so when a soul has learned its thorough helplessness for overcoming flesh and Satan, and mastering self with its ten thousand forms of deceitfulness and desperate wickedness, and at last gives completely up, and cries out,

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? {Rom. 7:24}

he is taught by the Holy Spirit that God has delivered him through Jesus Christ our Lord. And looking back upon Him when hanging on the cross, and viewing Him now as risen from among the dead, he is led triumphantly to reply to his own question,

I thank God through Jesus Christ {Rom. 7:25}.

He really knows what it is to “stand still” to “see” by faith a risen Savior, who was crucified, and he gives praise to God.

It is well to see how fully God has met our need in the accomplished work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Not only did Jesus once suffer for sins the just for the unjust, but He, the holy One, was made sin for us; and we are told that God condemned

sin in the flesh {Rom. 8:3}

in Him. So that not only sins, the fruit unto death of an evil nature, have been suffered for, in that Jesus shed His blood for many for the remission of sins; but “sin in the flesh,” the nature that did the sins, has been so judicially “condemned” by God, and set aside as no longer to have a place before Him, that the Holy Ghost declares that our

old man

(observe here it is not old sins, but old man)

is crucified with Him {Rom. 6:6}.

And so completely is this recognized in Scripture that believers are now said to be “not in the flesh,” but “in Christ Jesus.” But what I want now to trace in Scripture is, that God has not only judged sins on Jesus on the cross, who purged them by His blood, but that He has judicially set aside as only fit for judgment our “old man” in Jesus our substitute, as truly as He swept away in judgment Pharaoh and all his hosts, so that the children of Israel might see them dead, and for ever after reckon them dead, and no longer living.

In tracing the narrative in our chapter, we shall see that all is accomplished by the power of God. It is redemption by power. In Egypt it was redemption by blood. In Christ crucified, risen and ascended, we have both.

In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace {Eph. 1:7}.

The blood must be the basis of all our blessing.

Without the shedding of blood is no remission {see Heb. 9:22}.

But we want more than remission of sins; we need to be brought to glory, and it is the work of Jesus to

bring many sons to glory {see Heb. 2:10}.

It needed the power of God to bring those who had been sheltered by blood, not only clean out of Egypt, but to deliver them from Pharaoh and the Egyptians, by bringing them through death and judgment on entirely new ground. Just as we are now, in Christ risen, not only rescued from this present evil world, but delivered from the dominion of sin and Satan, and put on entirely new ground, the other side of death. Looking back upon the cross, we see it has all been accomplished through death and judgment; so that death and judgment are now behind us; risen life in Christ possessed by us, for we are risen with Christ; and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. We, who were of the world, in our sins, in the flesh, and it may be under law, are now spoken of in Scripture as ever entering the land. But by the power of God the waters of the Red Sea were divided so as to form a dry path, with a liquid wall on either side. The children of Israel were commanded to go forward {Ex. 14:15}.

All now that was needed was faith, in order to avail themselves of the value of this work of God, to pass through according to His word. This they did.

By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land {Heb. 11:29}.

They gladly accepted God's way of deliverance.

The children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on the right hand, and on the left {Ex. 14:22}.

Thus they crossed the Red Sea. But what of their enemies which they so feared? The very work of God that was to His people their deliverance and salvation, was the very work that for ever put away through death and judgment their enemies from their sight, so that they never saw them living afterwards. And does not all this bring home forcibly to our soul's remembrance the accomplished work of Jesus? When we think of deliverance from sin and Satan, death and judgment, where do we look? Did He not

through death destroy him that had the power of death {see Heb. 2:14},

which is the Devil? Was not our "old man" — the flesh, with its mighty hosts of affections and lusts, crucified with Him? And now, having life in Him who is out of death, risen with Christ, cannot we see death and judgment behind us, as surely as Israel saw the tumultuous waves of the Red Sea

rolling behind them instead of before them?

But let us never forget that God judged Pharaoh and the Egyptians, the men of flesh. With hearts filled with bitter enmity to the things and people of God (for such is the flesh — see Rom. 8) the Egyptians hotly pursued after Israel. Like the carnal man still, they rushed madly and unconsciously into the very jaws of God's devouring judgment. So fatally ignorant and dark is man. They appeared to succeed for a little while. The counterfeit of faith in those men of flesh seemed, too, to prosper for a moment. But, alas! alas! God was against them, and not for them. They had not believed God. They had not the shelter of the blood. God marked their evil ways, and, as usual, He took the wise in their own craftiness; for God will save His own, and He must judge the wicked. How awfully solemn this is! We read,

God looked unto the host of the Egyptians;

not of the world {John 15:19, 17:14, 16},

washed from our sins {see Rev. 1:5}, not in the flesh {Rom. 8:9},

God

troubled the host of the Egyptians, and took off their chariot wheels,

but

not under law {Rom. 6:14, 15; Gal. 5:18},

in Christ {1 Cor. 1:30; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 1:1, 2:13; Phil. 1:1; 1 Pet. 5:14}.

until they said,

Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians {see Ex. 14:24, 25}.

We also read that

All this may be traced in this scene of the Red Sea, the waters of death, forming to man's eye an insuperable barrier to his

the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea {Ex. 14:27}.

Thus God wrought.

How very blessed is the contemplation of this double aspect of the work of Christ, in executing judgment upon all our enemies, and bringing us out by His mighty power in raising Christ from among the dead, and giving us life and liberty for ever in Him. Glorious triumph! All is of God; to Him be all the glory! It was indeed the salvation of the Lord. This is the first time, if I mistake not, that the word "salvation" occurs in Holy Scripture. It was a salvation from death and judgment, from Pharaoh and all the Egyptians. They saw the salvation of the Lord. And we read —

Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore {Ex. 14:30}.

They were now looking at these great enemies of their souls as dead upon the sea shore, set aside for ever by the judicial hand of the living God. And so, believing what God says, that

our old man is crucified with Christ {see Rom. 6:6},

we are enjoined to reckon ourselves to have died indeed unto sin, and alive unto God in our Lord Jesus Christ. As long as we reckon the old man to be living, and strive against him and his actings, we give him importance; but when, in virtue of the substitution-work of Jesus, we see that we have died, we give the flesh no place, no importance, we do not recognize it, have no confidence in it, so that our eyes are taken off self altogether, and fixed upon a risen Christ; or, if we think of the old nature and its actings, we only see it dead, we reckon it to have died in the cross of Christ, as having been under divine judgment. As long as a believer is thinking of old self and its lusts, watching against, and providing against it, he is reckoning the old man to be living, and not dead, and fear, and distress, and weakness, and failure of various kinds come out in consequence. We read that

they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts {Gal. 5:24}.

And when? Was it not when they accepted God's judgment of it in the cross? We are therefore never told in the epistles to crucify the flesh, or to mortify the flesh, and for this reason, because God in His abundant grace has condemned it already — it has been crucified with Christ. But we are told to mortify, or put to death, the members of our body — the unclean actings of this old nature still in us, which we are to reckon to have died. We are also taught to mortify, or put to death, by the Spirit, not the flesh still in us, but its actings,

the deeds of the body {Rom. 8:13}.

All this is known only in the way of faith. Faith sees that God has done it, and believes God when He says He has done it. This is simple enough. To the apostle it was such a reality that he said,

I am crucified.

And if you ask, "When?" he replies,

with Christ.

And lest we should suppose it to be an alteration merely of the old nature, he adds,

Nevertheless I live; yet not I (not the old nature improved), but Christ liveth in me {Gal. 2:20}.

It is a new nature that lives; it is Christ his life living in him;

for he is a new creation in Christ Jesus.

We do well then to remember the wide contrast in Israel's experience when they looked at the Egyptians as living and when they looked at them as dead. So we may be assured that if we look into the workings of flesh in us, and be occupied with it as if living, we must not expect to be otherwise than very wretched. The most miserable people on earth, perhaps, are Christians who have given themselves up to self-occupation, and the more so because they are God-fearing and conscientious; for, having learned the folly of the world's resources, they have nothing to lift them outside self, or to keep them from being occupied with it; and surely the happiest people on earth

are those who

rejoice in Christ Jesus, worship God in the spirit, and have no confidence in the flesh {see Phil. 3:3}.

Blessed are those, who, knowing they have risen life in a risen Christ, do reckon themselves to have died indeed unto sin, and alive unto God in our Lord Jesus Christ. Such worship and adore God as their God and Father, and praise Him for all His wondrous grace to them in Christ Jesus, and through His precious blood.

We therefore find when Israel had got the other side of the Red Sea how happy they were. It was a joyous moment; for they were entirely occupied with God, and what He had done. They were not occupied with self, nor with circumstances, but, I repeat, with God.

Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation: He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt Him. The Lord is a man of war: the Lord is His name. Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath He cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea.

. . . Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy {Ex. 15:1-6}.

What a burst of triumph this is! And what a change from the sore distress they were in such a short time before! But now they had seen God's salvation, and His great deliverance from the formidable host of the Egyptians, which threatened to swallow them up in their wrath. They were thus in liberty and on new ground. God had delivered them, God had given them the victory; and now they are taken up with Him, praising Him, and giving the glory due unto His name, ascribing all the power and glory of their deliverance to Him. How simple, and yet how very blessed, this is! What secrets are unfolded, what resources are opened up to us, in the contemplation of a crucified and risen Savior!

And where, dear Christian friends, do we take our place before God? Is it on the Egypt side of the Red Sea, or the other? You cannot be happy in the former position. There was no singing in Egypt, though perfect safety; for they were sheltered by the blood of the lamb. But after that, when they arrived at Pihahiroth, perhaps they never had such fear and distress of soul. And yet, if you had asked them, Have you not been under the shelter of the blood? they would have replied, "Yes." Have you not been brought out of Egypt, and into the wilderness, by the direct power of God? "Yes." Is not the token of God's care and presence in the cloudy pillar by day, and the fiery pillar by night, continually with you? "Yes." Then why this deep, this bitter distress? The inquirer would immediately be directed to Pharaoh and all his hosts, who were so hotly pursuing them, shut in as they were by the Red Sea. Deliverance, they would say, we want; and nothing but a mightier power than any they had ever known could effect it. Oh the misery, the self-occupation, the lack of joy and gladness of those who take their place, though secure no doubt, on Egypt's side of the Red Sea!

And, oh, how rich the blessing, when assured by the infallible word of God, and we see the accomplishment in the finished and triumphant work of Jesus through death, of deliverance judicially from the “old man,” from the world, from Satan, and know we have the present possession of eternal life in Christ risen! We praise and give thanks. We rejoice in Christ Jesus our life. We look back upon the Egypt world as a long way off, and as knowing that the waters of death and judgment, which have swallowed up all that was against us, roll between us and it. Thus have we peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; we are consciously objects of divine favor, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. If when in Egypt we were met, through the grace of God, by the blood of the Lamb, it is at the Red Sea we have to do with Christ risen out of death, who is our life. And this makes all the difference. Blessed as it is to know the shelter of the blood, it is more blessed to know that we have resurrection life — a life that lives the other side of death and judgment, an imperishable life, a life that naturally springs upward and onward, a life that has tastes, feelings, joys, and habits suited to God, and cannot rest the sole of her foot in the region of sin and Satan. Of such, too, it is written,

When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then ye also shall appear with Him in glory (Col. 3:4).

We may joyfully sing —

“O Lord, Thou now art risen!

Thy travail now is o’er;

For sin Thou once hast suffered —

Thou liv’st to die no more!

Sin, death, and hell are vanquished

By Thee, who’rt now our Head;

And, lo! we share Thy triumphs,

Thou First-born from the dead.

“Into Thy death baptized,

We own with Thee we died;

With Thee, our life, we’re risen,

And shall be glorified.

From sin, the world, and Satan,

We’re ransomed by Thy blood;

And here would walk as strangers

Alive with Thee to God.”

Possession; or, the Other Side of Jordan

Joshua 5, 6

It was by the power of God that the people of Israel were brought into the land. The only way for them out of Egypt to Canaan was by the blood of the lamb, and by the mighty power of God bringing them through death and judgment, as set forth by the Red Sea, and Jordan. Their feet are now in the land where God's eyes and God's blessings always are. All is of God. They now possess what they had so long desired. They did not hope to be in the land, for they were there, and every inch they stood upon was for their own enjoyment. This is to us like the truth of Ephesians, where we are looked at as now made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ. This is beyond being dead and risen, it is ascension truth — in Christ, who is in the heavenlies. This is where the grace of God has set every believer. He may not know it, but He is accepted in the beloved, blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, and sitting in heavenly places in Christ. To know this as a divine reality gives true rest of soul. We are then, as to spiritual life and standing, in Christ in heavenly places, or, according to the type, in the land now. To know it as a doctrine of Scripture is one thing; for our souls so to believe it as to enter into the holiest, inside the rent veil, and thus joyfully possess the good land, so to speak, is quite another thing. But we fall short of the blessings God would have us now embrace, if we do not enter upon, possess, and enjoy this blessed nearness to God now; for He who is ascended into heaven, and sitting on God's right hand, being our life, righteousness, and sanctification, we are alive for ever-more — righteous as He is righteous, and as near to God as He is, because of the abundant grace and power of God to us-ward in Christ. When consciously near, entering where God has set us, we do not try to get near, and strive to be there, but rejoice that He has set us there. It is all His own doing, by His almighty power, and the exceeding riches of His grace. There is no effort in this; we see Jesus our Lord, our Head, our Life, our Righteousness, and rejoice that we are in Him there; yea, filled to the full in Him, who is the Head of all principality and power. As we sometimes sing with reverence and joy –

“So near, so very near to God,

Nearer I cannot be;

For in the person of His Son

I am as near as He.

“So dear, so very dear to God,

More dear I cannot be;

The love wherewith He loves His Son,

Such is His love to me.”

Such is the height to which the grace and power of God in Christ, through His precious blood, have brought us, so that we wait for nothing less than the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body, at the coming of our Lord. It is more than being sheltered by the blood of the Lamb, as Israel in Egypt sets forth; more than deliverance from the power of flesh and Satan, through death and judgment, and having risen life in the wilderness; it is being already in the possession and enjoyment of heavenly places by faith, in spiritual life and power. Every Christian is there; but how few seem to know it! We may say all Christians are in some sense in all three places. As a fact, we are still in this Egypt world, though not of it; as to experience, we are passing through a wilderness, a region which is dry and barren, and can yield nothing for our souls; and as to faith, we are in spiritual life, and standing in Christ Jesus in heavenly places. Only notice in Joshua, that after they entered the land it was not all peace and joy, but, on the contrary, conflict; for they had to fight hard in order to stand where God had brought them, and enjoy what God had given them. And so with us, for we who have entered upon our present possession in the heavenlies have to wrestle with wicked spirits in heavenly places in order to stand there, and enjoy the blessings given to us of God. And such only, be it observed, know this sharp and terrible conflict — a conflict not against flesh and blood,

but

against wicked spirits in high or heavenly places (Eph. 6:12).

The first thing the children of Israel were enjoined to do, after they had passed through Jordan, carried twelve stones into the land, and set up twelve in the midst of Jordan, to the praise of God, was to make

sharp knives {Josh. 5:2},

and to circumcise again the second time. It is an injunction of all importance; for “the flesh” cannot be used in the service of God, cannot be recognized as having any place in the heavenlies. It must be wholly and decidedly renounced. Whether it be the flesh in its moral, intellectual, or religious phases, (alas, how deceitful it is, and desperately wicked!) it must be wholly denied. Its wisdom as well as its righteousness, its ways of refinement as well as of violence and corruption, its iniquity, both ecclesiastical and social, must be entirely set aside — its claims, its pretensions, its pride, its lusts, in short, the “old man” must be completely “put off.” It needs a sharp knife; but it must be done. The attempt to be something in the flesh denies the work of Christ on the cross, and that we have died with Christ. To set it up in Christians in any form is to undermine the real value of the cross, and sooner or later to lose the present enjoyment of that work in the soul. In short, to reckon ourselves to be living in the flesh, instead of having died with Christ and alive in Him, is to deny that we have either crossed the Red Sea or Jordan, and practically to confess that we are still in Egypt among the “hoppers to be saved,” instead of possessing and enjoying our true place and new relationships and privileges as seated in Christ Jesus in heavenly places.

Secondly, they celebrated the ground of their deliverance and present blessings in keeping the passover. The passover was never forgotten; it was celebrated in Egypt, in the wilderness, in the land. So with us, it should be and will be had in everlasting remembrance, that the death and blood-shedding of the Lamb of God is the alone foundation of all our blessings. If now we have entered inside the veil, it is by the blood of Jesus. Our title to be there for ever is, that Jesus has

entered into heaven itself by His own blood. This is never to be forgotten, for

“Our every joy on earth, in heaven, We owe it to His blood.”

The passover then was celebrated by them after they entered the land. Now we are told that Christ our passover was sacrificed for us; and do we ever enter into the real purport and value of the Lord's supper, unless we eat it as those who are already in Christ in the heavenlies, and therefore look back upon His death upon the cross? that is, we see Him now crowned with glory and honor, and remember Him as He was in death for us on the cross. We remember Jesus, and show His death till He come. And, seeing that we owe all our present and eternal blessings to the never-ending virtue of His precious blood, how can we ever forget such rich, such abundant mercy, in thus loving us, washing us from our sins in His own blood, and making us kings and priests unto God and His Father? (Josh. 5:10).

Thirdly, they feasted; they ate of

the old corn of the land (Josh. 5:11).

They were no longer dependent upon the ministry of a daily supply morning by morning, faithful and unfailing as it was; but they now had a continuous unceasing supply always at hand. So, now, souls who are consciously in heavenly places in Christ can feed unceasingly on Him; they enjoy not merely a living Christ who came down to die, but a risen and ascended Christ gone up on high. They feed on a triumphant, glorified Christ — the true corn of wheat that belongs to heaven. They know the fullness of Christ is theirs. They can now enter into God's thoughts, God's estimate of Him, who raised Him from the dead, and said,

Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool {see Matt. 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42; Acts 2:34}.

They see Him crowned with glory and honor. He is the object of their desire, as well as the accomplisher of their eternal salvation. They see in that Man in the glory, in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, the all-worthy One, to whom angels, and principalities, and powers are made subject. They gaze by faith on Him, are attracted to Him, commanded by Him, satisfied with Him, rejoice in Him — their strength, their sufficiency, their righteousness, their glory. They find Him enough to fill their hearts and minds; and so ardently do they long for unbroken fellowship with Him, that the fervent utterance of their hearts is —

“O fix our earnest gaze

So wholly, Lord, on Thee,

That with Thy beauty occupied,

We elsewhere none may see!”

They feed, then, upon “the old corn of the land,” the fullness of an ever-living, ever-loving Savior in the glory. It is on Christ Himself they now feast, and draw their strength and comfort in blessed consciousness that they are in Him who is their everlasting life and righteousness.

Fourthly, this life of faith qualifies us for the fight of faith. Feasting first, then fighting. This is the divine order; and for this the captain of the Lord of hosts appears as their strength. They had to take possession of what God had given them, and all on which the sole of their foot rested, and only so much could they enjoy. Conflict, then, sharp conflict with the enemies in the land, was before them, and it would have been overwhelming did they not know that the Lord of hosts was with them. Joshua, when near Jericho,

lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man with a drawn sword in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come.

This was a most affecting reply to Joshua; for he fell on his face and worshiped, and said,

What saith my lord unto his servant? And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And he did so {see Josh. 5:13-15}.

And what is this but the Lord appearing to His servant as the Commander and strength of His people? How forcibly it reminds us of the divine injunction by the apostle:

Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might {Eph. 6:10}.

And besides these points, do we not see what exercise of soul we need in order to fully place ourselves in the hands of the Lord, and realize that He is for us and with us? Thus we should encourage ourselves in Him, and lean not on fleshly energy, but on His almighty arm, and faithfulness and love. It cannot, I believe, be too strongly impressed upon our souls, that we need divine energy to take possession of, and to enjoy our blessings in heavenly places in Christ — that Satan's chief aim is to keep us from being inside the veil, the true ground of worship and communion, and the true power for all service. Severed from Christ, we are perfect weakness; we can do nothing. Abiding in Him, we can do all things through His strength; so that to be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might," we must have to do with the Lord Himself, as those who reckon ourselves to have died indeed unto sin, and to be alive unto God in our Lord Jesus Christ {see Rom. 6:11}.

Then we look to the Lord for all, trust in Him about all, see Him in all, and lean on Him concerning all. True Christian life is, therefore, living a life of faith upon the Son of God, abiding in Him, having all our resources in Him. Then, like in Israel's history, the victory will be ours; and when fleshly confidence is relied on, instead of the strength of the Lord, we shall bitterly feel that the enemy will triumph. May we know, beloved, day by day, more the constant practical reality of being strong in the Lord; for it is written,

Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee {Psa. 84:5}.

"Though numerous hosts of mighty foes,

Though earth and hell our way oppose,

He safely leads His saints along:

His loving-kindness, oh how strong!”

Thus far we have considered the enjoyment and exercise of soul Godward in those who had crossed the dried-up Jordan and taken possession of the land. Of necessity their feelings and experiences are different from what they were in Egypt, or in the wilderness. But having traced a little their exercises and ways Godward in the fifth chapter, let us now look at their ways manward as set forth in the sixth chapter.

Firstly, notice the distinct place of separation they necessarily took before men, because of their having been separated unto God. The two will doubtless always go together, for the sense of nearness to God will throw us off from that which we know to be contrary to God. They were outside the Jericho-world, for it was doomed; it was exposed to judgment, and only waited for the time of execution. This the men of Jericho did not believe; but it did not alter the fact, any more than people saying the world is getting better does not alter the verdict passed upon it —

Now is the judgment of this world {John 12:31}.

But, observe, this is not all; they were outside with the ark — type of Christ. A Pharisee or a monk can separate himself from society; but to look at this world as a great system reared up by men and Satan, and see people too (unbelievers) exposed to the judgment of God, having rejected Christ, and to take a place with Christ, outside of it politically, religiously, socially, is the true path. It is because we are in Christ up there, and for ever united to Him by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, that we are necessarily linked with Christ down here, and that must be in separation from the world, for they have rejected Him, and still reject. The answer was, and still is,

We will not have this man to reign over us {Luke 19:14}.

No marvel, therefore, that the Holy Ghost enjoins us, when speaking of unbelievers, to

come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty (2 Cor. 6:17, 18).

Secondly, they took the place of obedience. And how can it be otherwise with us, if we realize the fact that we are united to Him in the heavenlies? When Paul, going up to Damascus, unexpectedly caught a sight of Jesus in the glory, and heard from His own precious lips,

Why persecutest thou ME,

was not the immediate response of His deeply-moved heart,

Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? {Acts 9:4-6}

for he surely felt at once, that nothing less than full surrender to the Lord’ s claims would be consistent with the exceeding grace that He had manifested. If we then are really conscious of our nothingness in the flesh, as having died with Christ, and enter into and possess the blessing and enjoyment of being one with Him who is in the glory, how can we have lower thoughts than that

“Love so amazing, so divine,

Demands our sou1, our life, our all”?

All this is beautifully set forth in the charming picture we are contemplating. It is a divinely-illustrated scene. The people now standing on the promised land, now enjoying the long-promised, long-looked-for region flowing with milk and honey, having feasted on the old corn, and conscious of the captain of the Lord's host being with them, they surrender themselves entirely to the appointed guidance, and take the place of obedience so plainly marked out for them, whether to walk or rest, to be quiet or to shout, to sound the horn or not, according to the word of the Lord. And this proved to be the path of blessing. Their testimony was simply owning the Lord, hearkening to His word, doing His will, though it were to manifest to the people of Jericho a spectacle of weakness and folly. But if the priests made a long blast with "rams' horns," and for six days all the men of war compassed the city once each day with them and the ark, and on the seventh day seven times, it was according to the word of the Lord; and what could be a truer testimony? If they neither shouted, nor made any noise with their voice, neither let any word proceed out of their mouth, until Joshua bade them shout, according to the word of the Lord, it was in obedience to the will of the Lord. We know what success followed. And surely the path of obedience must always be with us the path of blessing. We are sanctified unto obedience. We realize the presence of the Lord with us only in the path of obedience. To speak of union with Christ in the heavens, and our present blessings and standing in Him, while our hearts are unexercised as to obedience to the Lord in our present circumstances, is only to show that we traffic in high-flown doctrines, and know little of their true meaning in our souls. Or, it may betray the solemn fact that the natural mind has been amusing itself with an intellectual gratification on the doctrines of Scripture, without the heart in any way grasping their precious heaven-born, unfathomable, eternal realities. The great proof of love to our Lord Jesus Christ now is, that we keep His commandments, prize His sayings, and treasure up His words; and to such, and to such alone, He has promised to manifest Himself, and make them know that He and the Father have taken up their abode with them. Precious, profoundly precious realities for our enjoyment! and suited surely to such as have been rescued from this present evil age, who have died with Christ, and now live in Him, and who are characterized as not walking after the flesh, but after the Spirit. It is this entire consecration to the will of the Lord, which is so needed in these times of laxity and carelessness — whole-hearted dedication to Him, full surrender to His never-failing guidance, and the paramount authority of His holy word at all cost. Such hearts can truly sing

"While here, to do His will be mine,

And His to fix my time of rest."

Thirdly, let us look at their service. What was it? Was it to do what they could to improve Jericho? Was it to endeavor to elevate the masses of the inhabitants of this strongly-fortified and well-built city? Was it to tell them that the world was getting better? Certainly not; for none of these things would be true. But it was to save sinners out of this already doomed city. God's testimony had gone out against it. The city, the king, and all the men of valor were given to Joshua for destruction; but there were some to be saved out of it — some who would not come into judgment, and the faithful servants of God were intent on saving them. A harlot among them there was; but she was a woman of faith, had shown it by favoring the people of God, and openly confessed her faith by putting the scarlet line in the window. Little could the wise and mighty men of this famous city suspect for a moment what the scarlet line meant, even if they had seen it. Not so, however, with God's people. For when the wall had fallen down flat, the city was taken, and the process of

utter destruction was about to begin, at Joshua's command

the young men that were spies went in, and brought out Rahab, and her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had; and they brought out all her kindred, and left them without the camp of Israel {Josh. 6:23}.

And they burnt the city with fire. We are told that

Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had, . . . because she hid the messengers which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho {Josh. 6:25},

at whose command she had bound the "scarlet line" in the window. (See Josh. 2:18; 6:22-25.)

And does not this exquisite picture again read a further lesson of precious instruction to us? For if the world through which we are passing is under condemnation, if Jesus meant what He said when He uttered the solemn verdict,

Now is the judgment of this world {John 12:31},

and if there be not one line of Scripture enjoining us to improve it, what is our position toward it, but as separated ones by the grace of God to minister to souls, and seek to bring them out? to do good to people in it, and expect no good thing from it? Hence the Holy Spirit pointedly marks out the faithful servants of the Lord Jesus as those who

went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles for His name's sake {see 3 John 7}.

And surely, if our place now is oneness with Christ in the heavenlies, what can our position here be but separation unto the Lord in fellowship with every member of His body (the only membership in the New Testament), as those who warn men of their danger, and seek to save believing Rahabs? Thus God's way has been, and still is, in judgment to remember mercy. And how blessed this service is to

"Call them in" — the Jew, the Gentile;

Bid the stranger to the feast;

Call them in — the rich, the noble,

From the highest to the least.

Forth the Father runs to meet them,

He hath all their sorrows seen;

Robe, and ring, and royal sandals,

Wait the lost ones — "call them in,"

But here is also a solemn word of warning against lust and covetousness; for we are beset with snares on every hand. One of those who had professed faithfulness to God saw a Babylonish garment and a wedge of gold, and coveted them. Accordingly, he took them, and hid them in his house; but God saw him, and His judgment fell heavily in consequence. And the common baits of Satan to professing Christians now we all know to be love of dress —

the Babylonish garment,
and the possession of wealth —
the wedge of gold {Josh. 7:21}.

And it is very remarkable that corrupted Christianity, the Babylon of the Apocalypse, is likened to a woman arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls. Joshua warned the people to keep themselves from the accursed thing, lest they made themselves accursed; but Achan heeded it not, and by his sin brought misery and defeat upon all the people, as well as swift destruction upon himself. May the Lord graciously keep us true to Himself in heart and purpose, and from loving the world, or the things of the world. But, for this, we need to have our souls happily occupied with Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us.

And now, beloved fellow-Christians, let us see how far we have entered into this place and character of blessing and testimony into which God has so mercifully brought us. Do we habitually take our place before God as those who are already brought nigh to Him in Christ Jesus in heavenly places? Are we struggling to get near through the workings of a spirit of bondage and unbelief? or do we bless and praise God that our

old man was crucified with Christ {see Rom. 6:6},

and that we are a new creation, and have life, standing, righteousness, and nearness to God in Christ ascended? We have it, I say; for God has given it to us; He has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Blessed rest for our souls! solid and abiding peace too! Well, being then in all the acceptance of Christ Himself, in whom we are made accepted, do we know what it is practically to put a sharp knife to “the flesh,” and to rejoice in Christ Jesus, in the precious remembrance of His body given and His blood shed for us? Do we know what it is in God’s presence, in the holiest of all, to feast on an ever-living, ever-loving Christ — “the old corn of the land”? and, having feasted, do we realize strength to fight against Satan and his hosts for the possession of those heavenly blessings which God has given us in Christ now to enjoy? And, as to our position here before men, do we maintain the place of separation with Christ as not of the world, because it is doomed to judgment? And do we seek to tread the path of obedience, and bear the testimony of the Lord, whatever reproach and censure it may bring upon us? Do we labor to bring souls out of it, by the power of the precious blood of Jesus, the true “scarlet line”? And do we steadfastly decline the fashionable and costly attire, and the will-be-rich spirit of this present age? These are solemn, all- important questions for our consciences, beloved fellow- Christians, on which our present joy or sorrow, as well as the glory or dishonor of the Lord, hang. May we unhesitatingly grasp and delight in our present blessings, in the spirit of communion and worship, in Christ inside the veil, and know them as deep and unfading realities, so that we may be found in the true place of separation and faithfulness before men as to bring praise and glory to God.

Have You the Spirit?

If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His (Rom. 8:9).

Have you the Spirit? is then a question of vital importance; and from this and other Scriptures we gather, not only that every child of God has the Spirit of Christ, but that he should know that he has this blessed One dwelling in Him, We have repeatedly heard it said, "I know that I have the Spirit of God dwelling in me, because Scripture says so"; but while this is perfectly true, ought it to be enough to satisfy us? Is it possible that God the Holy Ghost can dwell in us without our having some sense of His almighty, ever-living activities in our souls? And are there not many operations of the same Spirit? Are we not also told that

the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God {1 Cor. 2:11}?

How important, then, it is to have clear and intelligent thoughts, as revealed in Scripture, as to the Holy Ghost Himself, and His indwelling and operations in us!

In tracing this most blessed subject a little, we may notice first what Scripture says we have not received. We are told we have not received

the spirit of the world (1 Cor. 2:12),

which we know only occupies itself with things of earth, and time, and sense, matters bounded by death on every hand. Nor have we received

the spirit of fear (2 Tim. 1:7),

that spirit of dread and torment ever brooding over painful uncertainties and gloomy forebodings. Nor have we received

the spirit of bondage again to fear (Rom. 8:15),

connected with legal observances and ritual ceremonials, which never can deliver from the fear of death. But we are distinctly told that we have

received the Spirit of God, that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God {see 1 Cor. 2:12};

that we have received

the spirit of love, and of power, and of a sound mind {see 2 Tim. 1:7};

and that

we have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father {see Rom. 8:15}.

All therefore of the workings within, of the love of the world and of bondage, legal fears and dreadful apprehensions, are not of the Spirit of God. Nor can that Holy Spirit produce thoughts in

us for the dishonor of the Lord Jesus; for

no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed {1 Cor. 12:3}.

We have in this way the ground cleared as to what the Spirit of God doth not produce in us; and also of the love, liberty, and conscious relationships He gives us to enjoy.

And further, we are told that

the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us {Rom. 5:5}; thus producing in us a happy sense of our being objects of divine love. And as to intelligence, we now know what prophets declared they did not know. If a prophet said,

Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him {1 Cor. 2:9},

we reply,

But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God (1 Cor. 2:9, 10).

Thus we see at once the actions of the Spirit, both in the heart and in the mind, according as it is written,

I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more {Heb. 10:16, 17}.

But the important question may be asked by some, What do you mean by having the Spirit of Christ? This expression is only used once more in Scripture as far as I remember, and then in reference to the Old Testament prophets, who testified of the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow, by the Spirit of Christ which was in them (1 Pet. 1:11). Elsewhere the prophets are said to have spoken by the Holy Ghost. By the Spirit of Christ, then, we are now to understand the Holy Ghost, that other Comforter which Jesus promised to send after His departure out of this world, and which, we are also told, could not be given till Jesus was glorified. And so important was the coming down of the Holy Ghost, that the disciples were told to tarry in Jerusalem for Him. And after Jesus had been raised from the dead, and had been seen of His disciples forty days, He charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, for they should be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence. Now observe, they were not thus put to wait for the new birth, or to be made God's children, for that they were already; nay, more, they had received risen life too, for so I understand, when Jesus breathed on them, saying,

Receive ye the Holy Ghost {John 20:22};

that life in the Spirit — risen life — was then communicated; but they were waiting for the Holy Ghost Himself; to indwell them, and unite them to their glorified Head in heaven in the membership of His body.

It was, then, after Jesus had gone into heaven with His own blood, having set us there before God as cleansed and justified by His blood, that the Holy Ghost came down and took up His abode for ever in such as were cleansed. First, made sons by being born of God, and cleansed from all sin,

and then,

because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son in your hearts, whereby we cry, Abba, Father {see Gal. 4:6}.

These two operations — the new birth by the Spirit, and the subsequent indwelling of the Spirit — are clearly distinct, and the latter succeeds the former, i.e. the Holy Ghost indwells those who are born of God.

Observe also, it is not an emanation of the Spirit merely that is given. Scripture is quite plain as to this. It is “the Comforter” which is “the Holy Ghost.” Nor do we read of our having the Spirit merely in the way of influence, though He does influence our hearts, and minds, and consciences. The idea of an influence sets aside the reality of His indwelling, and makes us think of one outside us, acting upon us, like the sun in the heavens sheds his genial rays upon us, rather than the fact of His being in us. Such thoughts also obscure the glory of His divine person, and rob souls of the happy enjoyment of His presence and operations. When one looks only at Scripture, it is unaccountable how Christians should be praying for the Spirit, and for His influences, as if He had not come.

Before the day of Pentecost it was well enough to pray for the Spirit, and to look for His coming; hence in the gospels, our blessed Lord said,

If ye then, 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).

But since He has come, there is no such idea in Scripture as that of Christians praying for the Spirit; but, on the contrary, in the epistles, there is the constant recognition of the fact that He is here.

To pray to the Spirit, as some insist on, is far more excusable, because the Holy Ghost is God; but even doing this betrays ignorance of the order of Scripture teaching; for the Spirit being the power of prayer, and the One who teaches us how to pray and what to pray for, who makes intercession for the saints according to God, we are spoken of as praying in the Spirit instead of to the Spirit.

But to pray for a fresh baptism of the Spirit is wholly unscriptural, and entirely without excuse. In Acts 1 the saints were instructed to wait to be baptized with the Holy Ghost. In Acts 2 the Holy Ghost came down and filled them. In 1 Cor. 12:12 we are told, that

by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body.

Baptism of the Spirit is clearly then the Holy Ghost indwelling God's children, and connecting them in the unity of one body with Christ their glorified Head in heaven. If, then, believers are once for all united to Christ in glory by the Holy Ghost, how can this be re-done? What meaning therefore can be attached to the expression so common among many Christians, of praying for a fresh baptism of the Spirit? It is very sad.

Again, we sometimes hear, from those too of whom we should least expect it, of our having received only a measure of the Spirit. But where does Scripture say this? Where do you find it? It is said that

the Father giveth not the Spirit by measure:

unto him is in italics, and therefore not in the original. (See John 3:34.) And if one only thinks of it for a moment, it becomes apparent, that if it be only a measure of the Spirit we have received, then the Holy Ghost Himself has not come. It is also thought that the idea of our having the Spirit only in measure is strengthened by the expression in Eph. 5,

Be filled with the Spirit,

because they suppose to be filled with the Spirit is to have a greater measure. Such, however, is not the case. The apostle there puts it in the form of an exhortation or command, saying,

Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit {Eph. 5:18}.

That is, do not feed on that which excites the flesh, do not strengthen it, for that grieves and hinders the Spirit's working in us; as Peter says,

Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul {1 Pet. 2:11}.

Be not then drunk with wine, wherein is excess;

or do not strengthen, but abstain from fleshly lusts, but

be filled with the Spirit {see Eph. 5:18}.

Or, so let that which is carnal be reckoned dead by you, that the Spirit may be ungrieved, unhindered, so that He may fill every faculty of your heart and mind. Thus to be filled with the Spirit is not having more of the Spirit, but the Spirit of God who indwells you, so ungrieved as to fill all your mind and heart with Christ.

But all these mistakes about the Holy Ghost arise from not knowing Him.

Ye know Him,

said our blessed Lord,

for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you {John 14:17}.

The eternal Godhead of the Holy Ghost is plainly and abundantly set forth in Scripture, and the attributes and sovereign actings of God are ascribed to Him. He is called the eternal Spirit. The psalmist speaks of His omnipresence, saying,

Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? {Psa. 139:7}.

The apostle Paul alludes to His omniscience —

He searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God {see 1 Cor. 2:10}.

In Acts 5 He is called God. In the third verse Peter charges Ananias with lying to the Holy Ghost; and in the next verse says to him,

Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God {Acts 5:4}.

The sovereign actings of the Holy Ghost are seen in Acts 13:2, in saying,

Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them;

and in Acts 16:6 He forbids them to preach the word in Asia. And when they assayed to go into Bithynia, we are told that

the Spirit suffered them not {Acts 16:7}.

Thus we see that the Holy Ghost dwelling in the church is called God; and we also see His sovereign actings with the servants of the Lord in regard to their work. We have noticed also some of His divine attributes. Who else but God could thus act?

His personality also calls for a few words; for though He be God the Holy Ghost, He is not God the Father, nor God the Son; and yet these three are One. Though the Father and the Son are One in divine essence, so that Jesus could say,

I and my Father are One {John 10:30},

yet in person they are distinct. Hence we read that the Father sent the Son, that

when the fullness of time was come God sent forth His Son {Gal. 4:4}.

And so of the Holy Ghost Jesus said,

Whom the Father will send in my name (John 14:26);

and again,

Whom I will send unto you from the Father (John 15:26);

and further,

If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you (John 16:7).

Also His personal actings were referred to by our Lord —

He shall teach you all things. He shall bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you. He shall testify of me. He shall guide you into all truth. He shall glorify me: and shall receive of mine, and shew unto you {John 14:26, 15:26, 16:13, 14}.

What language could more plainly convey to our minds the reality of personal actings? And who, I would ask, but One who was God, could teach all things, and guide into all truth? It is “He,” “He,” “He,” all through. Thus the Godhead and personality of the Holy Ghost are plainly taught in the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. Let these precious truths be solemnly pondered by us.

His operations occupy a large place in Scripture. From Genesis downward His actings are constantly seen. At creation He

moved upon the face of the waters {Gen 1:2}.

In the wilderness He endowed Bezaleel with wisdom to make various parts of the tabernacle and furniture, so as to typify the person and work of the Lord Jesus. The anointing oil in figure set Him forth. He came upon prophets to speak and write the words of God, to set forth the sufferings of

Christ and the glories which follow; and He loosed the tongues of men and women to praise and magnify Jehovah at the birth of the Son of God, who had been conceived by the Holy Ghost. He came upon Jesus, the perfect One, in bodily shape as a dove, when the Father's testimony of Him was,

This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased {Matt. 3:17}.

It was by the eternal Spirit that Jesus offered Himself without spot to God, and after death and burial was quickened by the Spirit. The same Holy Ghost came down to form and indwell the assembly of God at Pentecost, and has been here ever since as the other Comforter to abide with us for ever; and He is the power of all blessing.

With regard to His present operations, Scripture speaks of them as both individual, and collective; for He dwells in the Church as well as in believers individually. (See Eph. 2:22; 1 Cor. 3:16; and also 1 Cor. 6:19.) On these subjects the instruction is large and varied, a knowledge of which is of the highest importance for our soul's comfort and blessing. But as Scripture we are considering looks at the individual as possessing the Spirit, our remarks must for the present be confined to this point.

1. We are distinctly taught in Scripture, that where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty. As we have before seen, He does not bring us into bondage or servile fear, but sets our souls in the enjoyment of the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and points us to Him now seated in the heavenlies, as there because He did by His one offering perfect for ever them that are sanctified. Hence we sing—

“Our doubts and fears for ever gone,

For Christ is on the Father's throne.”

2. It is by the Holy Ghost which is given to us that the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts. Thus we are not merely informed of the truth intellectually, but are given a feeling sense, an enjoyment of the fact that we are objects of divine love. Our hearts are melted with God's love, and we can say with the apostle,

We love Him, because He first loved us {1 John 4:19}.

3. The Holy Ghost being given to us as

the Spirit of adoption {Rom. 8:15}

after we were born of God, filial feelings are produced in us, so that we love God as our Father, and our fellow-believers as brethren. The Spirit, no doubt by the truth, bears witness with our spirits that we are children of God, and gives us also access through Jesus unto the Father. Thus we can in some measure even now enter into these precious words of Jesus,

I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God {John 20:17}.

This marvelous relationship we know by the Spirit dwelling in us, which causes our hearts to flow out in worship to the Father, and in love and sympathy unto His children.

4. It is also by the Spirit that we can truly know and own Jesus as Lord; for we are told that

no man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 12:3).

It is remarkable in Christendom, while many talk so glibly of “our Savior,” how comparatively rare it is to find a person ready to confess that Jesus is his Lord, the One now owned by him in the place of exaltation and honor; thus demanding both his adoring gratitude and subjection of heart and will.

5. The Holy Ghost is our Leader.

As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God {Rom. 8:14}.

In gentleness He leads (not drives or coerces) us; but like a nurse leads her little ones across a path of defilement and danger, so He graciously gives us to hear His still small voice within us saying,

This is the way; walk ye in it {Isa. 30:21}.

It is an important fact to notice, that those who are led of the Spirit are not under the law. Happy are they who, in meekness and confidence, wholly and unreservedly commit themselves to His sure guidance.

6. The Holy Ghost strengthens the new nature; hence the apostle prays that we may be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man {Eph. 3:16}.

But He dwells in our bodies and in our hearts.

Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you? (1 Cor. 6:19).

God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your heart's,
crying, Abba, Father (Gal. 4:6).

7. The fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22)

stands in wide contrast with

the works of the flesh {Gal. 5:19}.

It is

love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law (Gal. 5:23).

8. The Holy Ghost is our Teacher; He guides into all truth. God has now revealed precious mysteries by His Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things; yea, the deep things of God. Jesus said, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you {John 14:26}.

What a precious Teacher! How astonishing that we do not more implicitly, and more habitually, yield ourselves to be taught by Him! Perhaps nothing shows more what self-confidence lurks in us than our shortcoming as to this.

9. The Holy Ghost who dwelleth in us is the other Comforter, the Paraclete — the One who manages everything in us, even as Jesus is the Advocate, or Paraclete, above, and manages everything for us up there. We are filled with joy in the Holy Ghost, we abound in hope by the power of the Holy Ghost, and are taught to cry,

Come, Lord Jesus {Rev. 22:20}.

It is by His gracious ministry that the word which testifies of Christ is often brought to remembrance so suitably to our heart's need, that we are comforted when cast down, or gently reproofed when inclining to that which is evil in His sight. It is by His effectual working that the personal glories, accomplished redemption, triumphant work, fitness and fullness of Christ, are brought home to our souls for comfort and blessing. He is the power of our fellowship with the Father and His Son, and the helper of our infirmities in prayer. He is ever attracting us to Christ, drawing us up to where He is, and setting our minds on things above. He glorifies Christ, and takes of the things of Christ and shows unto us, and teaches us as to ourselves that in us, that is in our flesh, dwells no good. He is always associating our souls with Christ; as another has said —

“He never leads a man to say,

Thank God I'm made so good,

But turns his eye another way,

To Jesus and His blood.”

10. It is the Holy Ghost dwelling in us who is the power of all ministry. When, through the exercise of faith in the Lord Jesus, we drink in the blessed satisfaction, enjoyment, and rest that He gives to needy, thirsty souls, and it sinks down in deep reality in us, then it gushes forth from us in blessing to others; as Jesus said,

If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified) {John 7:37-39}.

Thus in the early part of John's gospel we have the three great actions of the Spirit set forth. In the third chapter, the new birth, or being born of the Spirit; in the fourth chapter, what it is to be indwelt by the Spirit, who is always drawing the heart upward:

Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life (John 4:13, 14).

Then, as we have just seen, in the seventh chapter, the action of the Holy Ghost flowing out in blessing to those around from deeply-felt power of Christ's preciousness. But it is important to observe that each of these operations is connected with the Lord Jesus Christ.

11. The Holy Ghost is also the One by whom we are sealed unto the day of redemption. He is the earnest, until we come into the actual possession of the inheritance, and the anointing or spiritual power whereby we are fitted to live according to the Lord's mind:

After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory (Eph. 1:13, 14).

Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things (1 John 2:20).

Besides these, there are many more operations of the Holy Ghost the Comforter, who has come down to dwell in us; and it is well to see that He is in us, and is to abide with us for ever. Many a timid soul says, "I am afraid I shall so grieve Him that He will depart from me"; but Scripture says quite the reverse.

Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption (Eph. 4:30).

But they say, Then why did David so fear this that he cried out,

Take not thy Holy Spirit from me {Psa. 51:11}?

But it is certain that David never had the Spirit dwelling in him as we have; and if he only knew what it was to have the Spirit coming upon him, and moving him now and then to prophesy,

&c., no wonder that he so ardently cried out, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me." It is, however, sufficient to show that the teaching of the epistles is not, Do not grieve Him, lest He depart; but, Do not grieve Him, because He will not depart, but will abide with you for ever.

Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption (Eph. 4:30).

12. But there is a point that ought not to be overlooked. It is this. Our Lord assured His disciples that when the Holy Ghost came they would know three things; the personal glory of Jesus as in the Father, and also that we are in Christ, and that He is in us. And about these precious realities there would be no doubt, when the Holy Ghost came.

In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you (John 14:20).

The importance of this divine statement cannot be overrated, for it shows the character of spiritual intelligence that every believer should now possess. And no doubt these precious facts would be both known and enjoyed, if believers were more simply deriving their information from God's word, instead of from the teachings and traditions of men. Alas! how many souls are doubting their salvation, instead of enjoying by faith the blessed realities of their being in Christ, accepted in Him, complete in Him, made the righteousness of God in Him! One thing, however, is certain, that the Holy Ghost teaches all true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ that we have redemption in Christ, and through His blood; that we are children of God, and not under the law; that we are in Christ, and that He is in us. Enough has been said to show that those who have known a power outside flesh and blood bringing them as sinners to Jesus as Savior, who know Jesus in the heavens to be Lord, who have God's love in their hearts, who are conscious of having life, a new life in Christ, enjoy the liberty wherewith Christ has made them free, and who realize that One is teaching, guiding, leading them into God's truth, and obedience to it, for His glory, have the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Christ. Oh the depth of the riches of the grace of God to us!

"What moved Thee to impart

Thy Spirit from above,
Therewith to fill our heart
With heavenly peace and love?
'Twas love, unbounded love to us,
Moved Thee to give Thy Spirit thus."
Are We Waiting?

the Coming of the Lord Practically Considered

In the Old Testament Scriptures, no such idea as the Lord's coming from heaven for His saints to be caught up to meet Him in the air is recorded. A great deal is there found about Messiah's coming to the earth and reigning over it, sitting in David's throne, and reigning in mount Zion and in Jerusalem before His ancients gloriously, because in the prophets we have blessings promised to God's earthly people. The true expectation of the Jews therefore is, that Messiah is coming to establish them in blessing on the earth; and in this they are right. But since Christ has been raised from among the dead, and has sent down the Holy Ghost to form the Church, which is His body, another hope, suited to a heavenly people, has been set forth in clearness and detail. True it is that the blessed Lord did say, on leaving His disciples to go unto the Father,

I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also {John 14:3};

but we should have had considerable difficulty in entering into the true character of this expectation had not other revelations been subsequently brought out. The Thessalonian saints were taught simply

to wait for God's Son from heaven {see 1 Thess. 1:10},

in blessed assurance that they had by Him been delivered from the wrath to come. But so little did they understand the true character of the hope, that when they saw their brethren die they began to sorrow about them with despondency, because they had not remained alive till the Lord came. We find, therefore, that the apostle communicates a revelation which he had received from the Lord on the subject:

This we say unto you by the word of the Lord {1 Thess. 4:15}.

About this it is not the Lord's mind that we should be in ignorance. He says,

I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. . . . For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord {1 Thess. 4:13-17}.

This account of the dead saints rising, and the living joining them, and all being translated together to meet the Lord in the air, though meeting the present distress of the Thessalonian saints as to how it would be with their departed brethren, (those who had died in Christ,) when the Son came

from heaven, yet even here we have no instruction as to the change, the character of body we shall have at that time. For this another revelation was needed, and it was afterward given. In 1 Cor. 15:51, the apostle further communicates what had never been known before. Up to that moment the state we should be in, and our bodily fitness for the Lord's presence, had been shrouded in mystery; but here it is clearly unfolded. The apostle says,

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality {1 Cor. 15:51, 53}.

Now here observe, we have clearly set forth that the bodies will be changed in a moment both of the living saints and of the dead saints; and while it is plainly asserted that all saints will not die or sleep, but that some will be alive upon the earth when the Lord Jesus comes, yet then, in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, our mortal and corruptible bodies will put on immortality and incorruptibility. How blessed this is, and how simply the Lord in His Word has marked out every step in this heavenward way, so that no room may be left for question or doubt, but that every soul may intelligently and happily wait for God's Son from heaven! The first stage, so to speak, then, is this wondrous change — changed in a moment — our bodies of humiliation changed and fashioned like unto His glorious body, thus giving us capacities for untiring service and unwearying delight, while gazing on Him in the bright eternal glory of God and the Lamb. Being changed, then, in a moment, we are at once translated —

This we may call the second stage. After this He will present us to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but being holy and without blame. Yes,

“There we shall see His face,

And never, never sin;

There, from the rivers of His grace,

Drink endless pleasures in.”

It would be interesting to trace what is before us still further as to our manifestation at the bema of Christ, our rewards, the bride making herself ready, the marriage of the Lamb, our reigning with the Lord Jesus, the judgment of the wicked dead, and consider also what is revealed as to the eternal state; but our present object is rather to look at the practical way in which Scripture sets this blessed, soul-stirring, comforting, purifying hope before us.

Now hope is something more than knowledge of doctrine. Hope is a living, active energy of the soul. Many know, as a Scripture truth, what they call the Lord's second coming; but for the heart to be going out to Him in bridal, fervent expectation is another thing! Hence it does not say in Scripture, He that hath the knowledge of the doctrine, but

He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure (1 John 3:3).

This hope, then, is eminently sanctifying and practical, enabling us to detach ourselves from that which is impure; for when hope is true and lively in the soul, the eye of the heart is fixed on its

desired object. The affections thus become occupied with our blessed and adorable Lord Jesus, and therefore separated from what is unsuitable to Him.

Again, as we have before noticed, the early saints waited for God's Son from heaven. They expected this blessed person to come from heaven. Their posture of soul was that of looking for Him, that blessed One whom God had raised from the dead, even Jesus which delivered them from the wrath to come. They were thus in the activity of their souls gazing up into heaven, and waiting for God's Son. And what was their Christian life? Were they careless in walk, shut up toward others, and indolent in the work of the gospel? Most certainly not. Quite the contrary; for they were proverbial for their works of faith and labors of love, and from them sounded out the word of God to all around. The very fact that they were waiting for God's Son from heaven kept them in such communion with Him, that they were strengthened by divine power to be thus earnest, loving, devoted, and faithful in the gospel. Perhaps, if we wanted a practical exposition of those words of the apostle John, "He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure," we should scarcely find it told out in more living energy than in the life, and ways, and service of the Thessalonian saints, so sweetly recorded for our comfort and encouragement by the Holy Ghost.

I again notice that they waited for God's Son from heaven; and elsewhere we read of others who looked for the Savior. This is the truth of God in active power on the heart. It is reality — a living person at the right hand of God; a man in the glory; Son of God and Son of man — looked for and waited for. Can anything be more blessedly simple, or more profoundly real? It is intensely individual, powerfully practical — the soul patiently looking out for the object of its expectancy. Observe, it is not to be fulfilled on earth; not some peculiar feeling to come over them, but the Lord Himself. Not death or judgment, but the Savior Himself to come and change their bodies, and translate them to glory. Is it possible that such a glorious, blessed, comforting hope could possess the soul without decided practical action? Impossible; though it can be readily seen how easy it is for the doctrine to occupy the intellect without the affections being called forth in suited response to His

Behold, I come quickly {Rev. 22:7}!

If we turn to some parts of the Old Testament, we shall find touching incidents, which may be used to illustrate the practical effects the truth of the Lord's coming for us will necessarily have when He is really thus the hope of our hearts.

If we look first at the ordinance of the year of jubilee, as recorded in Lev. 25, we shall find an instructive and searching lesson on the subject. I do not say that the sounding of the jubilee trumpet was typical of the Lord's coming for us; for I believe it to be typical of the time when the Lord will appear to the Jews as their Messiah, and bring His ancient people into their promised liberty, and give every tribe in the land of Israel its own proper possession, according to Ezekiel's prophecy. But as an illustration it is striking, not only as setting forth the marvelous and eternal blessings into which the coming of the Lord Himself will introduce us, but also as showing that the value we attach to everything here is in proportion to our sense of the distance or nearness of the Lord's coming.

And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years. Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family. A jubilee shall that fiftieth year be unto you: ye shall not sow, neither reap that which groweth of itself in it, nor gather the grapes in it of thy vine undressed. For it is the jubilee; it shall be holy unto you: ye shall eat the increase thereof out of the field. In the year of this jubilee ye shall return every man unto his possession. And if thou sell ought unto thy neighbour, or buyest ought of thy neighbour's hand, ye shall not oppress one another: according to the number of years after the jubilee thou shalt buy of thy neighbour, and according unto the number of years of the fruits he shall sell unto thee: according to the multitude of years thou shalt increase the price thereof, and according to the fewness of years thou shalt diminish the price of it: for according to the number of the years of the fruits doth he sell unto thee {Lev. 25:8-16}.

Observe here, that the jubilee trumpet sounded on the very day of atonement, which reminds us that in Scripture the Lord's coming for us is in virtue of His atonement, and not because of any merit whatever in us. It is the consummation of His own way of grace to us, and not in the least degree dependent on our faithfulness. If you remember, our Lord said,

This is the will of Him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting

Here you see that our Lord is pledged to raise up all who look to Him for everlasting life; and nothing can be more false than the doctrine promulgated, alas! so extensively in our day, that only those of the Lord's servants who have been faithful will be caught up at the coming of our Lord. Scripture plainly says,

They that are Christ's at His coming {1 Cor. 15:23};

and again,

The dead in Christ {1 Thess. 4:16},

and

We which are alive and remain {1 Thess. 4:17}.

It is happy, then, to be clear on this point, and to think of the coming of the Lord for us, and our being caught up to meet Him in the air, as the completion of His blessed work of redemption; His application of its power to our bodies, even as already it has been to our souls, as it is said,

In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace {Eph. 1:7}.

Elsewhere we are told that while now groaning in these bodies, and having the Spirit of adoption, we are waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our bodies {see Rom. 8:23}.

But in this jubilee ordinance three characters of blessing were joyfully anticipated — liberty, possession, and family gathering; concerning which I only notice, firstly, that for us to be with the Lord will be to enjoy everlasting liberty in His most blessed presence, without any let or clog as we now have with these groaning bodies, and their various infirmities. Secondly, that we shall possess the glorious object which our hearts have so long and so adoringly longed for; for we shall see His face, and thus be entirely and for ever satisfied. Thirdly, then also the whole Church of God will enjoy its perfect unity in unbroken fellowship, and in everlasting, undisturbed love and rest. What a glorious prospect our God here spreads out before us, beloved, for confidence and hope!

“O may the heavenly vision fire

Our hearts with ardent love,

Till wings of faith, and strong desire,

Bear every thought above!”

Another point to notice is, that the year of jubilee was not the time for sowing and reaping. Now we know that this time is so, and is in every sense of the utmost importance for us to well consider. For, however rich, and suited, and abundant the grace of God is to usward in Christ, yet are we not the less subjects of the government of God, and that too in connection with all our ways,

for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap {Gal. 6:7};

but then it will not be sowing and reaping, though in a more perfect way praising and serving. But the important lesson for us to learn in this ordinance of the jubilee year, is that the value of their land was in direct proportion to the fewness of years, or number of years before the trumpet would sound; and this because the land would then return to each one according to his family. This surely shows us, that just as we are really waiting high price, does it not show that we are counting upon some years of enjoyment of them, and in our hearts saying, “The Lord will not be here yet,” or,

My Lord delayeth His coming {Matt. 24:48, Luke 12:45}?

This jubilee ordinance therefore very sweetly illustrates the fact, that those who are really waiting for God’s Son from heaven will be valuing their earthly possessions at a low price, save as to the exceeding privilege of using them in the Lord’s service. I ask then, beloved, Are we consistent? What is the true character of our testimony? If the world see us very careful to add field to field, and assiduously labouring to improve the appearances and value of our earthly possessions, must we not seem in their eyes, after all, like citizens of this world, and like people who do not mean or believe what we say, when we declare that the Lord Jesus may come for us at any time? It truly is a solemn question for our hearts, as to how far we show that we are real in saying we are waiting for God’s Son from heaven.

Again, if we turn to Jer. 32, we shall find another practical illustration of the subject. Jeremiah was in prison for the truth’s sake, and evidently not a poor man; but he was God’s servant, and one to whom God had communicated His mind as to the present state of His people, and His future dealings with them and their land. He knew that Nebuchadnezzar would besiege the city, and

carry the people away into captivity, and that they would be captives in Babylon for seventy years. He also knew from God, that at the end of that time the people would return to their own land, and again have Jehovah's blessing with them in it. But did Jeremiah believe this? Was the future blessing of the Jews to him a certain reality? Did God mean what He said about this prospective blessing? Most assuredly He did. Jeremiah believed it because God had said it, and he showed forth the reality of his faith and hope by laying out his money now, with no hope of benefit through it till then. His uncle came to him to buy a field when he was shut up in prison, because the right of redemption was his, when he knew full well that neither he nor his seed would have it in possession, till God brought His people again into their promised and expected blessing. All the details too as to the conveyance of the property in a truly lawful, unquestionable way, only shows the reality of Jeremiah's acting in the whole transaction; for, he adds,

Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land (Jer. 32:15).

And I ask, beloved, does the light of the future glory, which we are called to be partakers of at our Lord's coming, so bear upon the present scene, as to make us feel that the only right use of our means is to lay them out for the Lord, so as to ensure His

Well done {Matt. 25:21, 23}

by and by? And are we thus employed because we believe that time is short, and that the Lord may come at any moment? Is it so? Where are our hearts at this moment, beloved brethren in the Lord? for we are told that where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also? If we can truly sing,

"Jesus shall our treasure be

Now and through eternity,"

it is quite clear that one proof of our really waiting for Him will

corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal.

Take another illustration from 2 Sam. 19. Mephibosheth was deeply attached to David; for the king had showed

the kindness of God {2 Sam. 9:3}

to him; and though he felt himself in his own eyes to be only a loathsome creature —

a dead dog {2 Sam. 9:8}

— yet the king brought him into such nearness to himself, as to set him at the royal table as one of the king's sons. But during the king's absence, in consequence of Absalom's conspiracy, when God's beloved one was rejected by many, the heart of this object of David's peculiar mercy was deeply affected. His interests, affection, sympathy, and desires were after the absent king. He keenly felt that the king was away, and he longed to see him again. Slandered and deceived as he was, and misrepresented too, during the king's absence, yet we are told that he went forth to meet him, and that he neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed till the day that he came to him again in peace. And with what joy of heart

did this devoted one meet the king on his return! He felt so satisfied that he desired nothing else, Gifts are valuable; but what are the best gifts when compared with the giver?

Thou and Ziba divide the land, said David. No, said Mephibosheth, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house (see 2 Sam. 19:24-30).

And could it be otherwise with us, beloved, only in a truer and spiritual way, if we really felt, as we ought, that our adorable Lord has been hated and cast out from this scene by the princes of this world, and that, with trimmed lamps and girded loins, we have turned our backs upon it, and are going forth to meet the Bridegroom? If our interests, affections, and sympathies were so undividedly on Him, whom having not seen we love, as they ought, how ardently should we be looking for His coming again!

“To dwell with Him, to see His face,

And sing the glories of His grace.”

And will not our affections and interests be always with the real object of our hearts? Can the hearts of men be objectless? Is it not contrary even to nature to be so? And what is the object that engages our affections and interests, beloved? Let us thoroughly judge ourselves as to this. Is it the Lord Himself who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood? And can we be really waiting for God’s Son from heaven, if our interests, affections, and sympathies are not with Him? Let us ponder this lesson, beloved, and deal unsparingly with ourselves as to the present object of our hearts in the presence of God, where we can afford to do so because of the perfectness of divine love, and where Jesus our Lord is, who went in there by His own blood!

We may profitably turn to another Scripture illustration on this weighty subject. You will find it in Genesis 24. Rebecca had heard the report of Isaac, and though not having seen him, she had believed the testimony, and her heart was won for him. And when the question was raised as to the real object of her soul, neither country nor kindred could detain her from going forth to meet him. She allowed nothing to impede her course; for it was so longing to see, and to be with. Her heart was so truly set upon him as her one object, that she unhesitatingly left all behind, and joyfully went on her way, till she saw him face to face, and knew the real enjoyment of his own love. And does not this brief but touching narrative strikingly teach us, beloved brethren, that those who have the hope of the Lord’s coming at heart will neither allow the pleadings of friends or kindred, nor the professed claims of country, to impede them one moment in their heavenward course of going out to meet the Bridegroom? Feeling as we should the infinite worth and attractiveness of the Lord Himself, what else could vie with Him? Losers as to present things we may be, sufferers in this present time we must be; but will not separation in affection unto Christ Himself always be connected with separation from all that is not according to His will? But the claims of Christ are paramount. His divinely moral excellencies outshine every other glory. His infinite worth incomparably surpasses all else that the heart can value. A glimpse of this living, incorruptible Conqueror of death, Satan, and the grave, now Head of all principality and power, dims the eye to all else. The knowledge too that His heart is set upon us, that He ardently looks forward to our being with Him; and His sweet words,

A little while {John 16:14, Heb. 10:37, &c.}, I will come again {John 14:3},

and

I come quickly {Rev. 3:11, 22:7, 12, 20},

when they fall upon us by the Spirit's power, so move the heart's desires of those who are born of God, that we cannot but look up and say,

Come, Lord Jesus {Rev. 22:20}!

What short of this, beloved, could be truly called

the hope which purifieth us even as He is pure {see 1 John 3:3}?

Who else could be rightly said to look, and

wait, for God's Son from heaven {1 Thess. 1:10}?

Should it be otherwise than a living reality in us? Oh, let us not suppose that knowledge of the doctrine, blessed as it is, can necessarily be the same as hope! It may be that many of us may have to judge ourselves as to this; some, too, in whom perhaps this blessed, joyful, sanctifying hope was once bright and powerful, in whom may scarcely now be traced little more than the knowledge of the doctrine. Oh that we may arise and trim our lamps afresh, and address ourselves to the few steps of the wilderness that are yet before us with girded loins! Then, as we have seen, things here will diminish vastly in our esteem; we shall gladly lay out our means in hope of future recompense at the resurrection of the just; we shall so sympathize with Christ, who is still rejected by the world, as to let nothing be in our souls comparable with Him. Our affections will be so singly set upon Him, of whom we have heard such a glorious report by the gospel, as to allow neither country nor kindred, circumstances nor friends, to hinder us from going forth to meet Him. Lord, be thou our sufficiency in this for the glory of thy holy name! Then will our song be —

"I'm waiting for Thee, Lord,

Thy beauty to see, Lord,

I'm waiting for Thee,

For Thy coming again.

Thou'rt gone over there, Lord,

A place to prepare, Lord;

Thy home I shall share,

At Thy coming again.

"Mid danger and fear, Lord,

I'm oft weary here, Lord;

The day must be near

Of Thy coming again.

'Tis all sunshine there, Lord,
No sighing nor care, Lord,
But glory so fair
At Thy coming again.

"Our loved ones before, Lord,
Their troubles are o'er, Lord;
I'll meet them once more
At Thy coming again.

The blood was the sign, Lord,
That marked them as thine, Lord,
And brightly they'll shine
At Thy coming again.

"E'en now let my ways, Lord,
Be bright with Thy praise, Lord,
For brief are the days
Ere Thy coming again.

I'm waiting for Thee, Lord,
Thy beauty to see, Lord;
No triumph for me
Like Thy coming again."

God Our Refuge, Our Resource, and Our Stay

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: He uttered His voice, the earth melted. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations He hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; He burneth the chariot in the fire, Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge — (Psa. 46).

It is impossible to apply this psalm literally to ourselves. No doubt, like many other psalms, it gives us precious lessons of spiritual instruction; but it contemplates a people on the earth conscious of Jehovah having shaken the earth, wrought desolations in it, and brought a time of peace and blessing into it, having made wars to cease unto the end of the earth, broken the bow and spear, and burnt the chariot in the fire. The faithful here are on the earth; and knowing that this time of peace and blessing has been brought about by judgments, they are conscious of the presence of Jehovah of hosts with them, and that the God of Jacob is their refuge. There can be no question, then, that the people here referred to are Jews, the faithful remnant so often spoken of by the prophets, brought through the time of Jacob's trouble, and celebrating their glorious deliverance. It is clearly a glance at millennial days, with the realized presence of Jehovah of hosts with them.

As I have said, this psalm reads us profitable lessons, not only as setting forth the goodness and faithfulness of Jehovah to His earthly people, but also because it brings God before us as the refuge, the resource, and the stay of the hearts of His faithful ones in time of trouble. This has always been true. Dispensations have varied; but Jehovah changeth not. Both to His earthly people Israel, and to His heavenly people, the Church, God has ever been the alone source of blessing and deliverance; so that the word abides immutably true,

Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him {Psa. 2:12}.

Let us now look a little, as the Lord may help, at the precious lessons suggested to us in the three practical points — God our Refuge, God our Resource, and God the Stay of our hearts.

1. GOD OUR REFUGE. In time of trouble, the heart is often ready to turn anywhere for help rather than to God; but faith always looks to God, and to God only. The heart that has thus to do with God finds that His love attracts, His faithfulness encourages, and His power to usward in Christ emboldens us to count upon Him, and that too when all is dark and hopeless on every hand. When God is really our refuge, the triumphant utterance of the soul is —

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? {Rom. 8:32}.

Happy indeed are those who thus in unfeigned faith make God their refuge! We read that when Asa, king of Judah, relied on Jehovah, he was delivered from a great host of the Ethiopians; but when he relied on the king of Syria, and relied not on the Lord his God, he was rebuked by the prophet for it, and had constant wars in consequence (2 Chron. 16:7-9). When Jehoshaphat trusted in God, he had great success, and God gave him rest round about; but when he sought to strengthen himself by making affinity with the wicked king of Israel, we are expressly told that the Lord broke his works (2 Chron. 20:37). Again, while David trusted in God, the strongest fleshly foe fell before him in the great Goliath; but when, in unbelief and self-occupation, he

said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul (1 Sam. 27:1),

he pursued a course very dishonoring to God and disastrous to himself; but it is beautiful to perceive in the divine record, that when he again

encouraged himself in the Lord his God (1 Sam. 30:6),

the result was most prosperous, and he became more than conqueror (1 Sam. 18; 27:1; 30:6). And so in a later day, an inspired apostle marks out the Christian's path as calling for constant exercise of faith, when he says,

We walk by faith, not by sight {2 Cor. 5:7}.

And when his heart was well-nigh fainting because of the trouble which came upon him in Asia, he writes,

We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us (2 Cor. 1:9, 10).

But such as really know God as their refuge find Him also their strength, and a very present help in time of trouble. And how blessed for such as are conscious of their own weakness to know where to turn to find real strength; for it is not less true now than in Isaiah's day, that

He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength {Isa. 40:29}.

To rely on self, or friends, or any other arm of flesh, is sure to bring forth, sooner or later, its bitter fruits. To be strong in self-confidence, is only the exhibition of thorough weakness; but to be

strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might {Eph. 6:10};

strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus {see 2 Tim. 2:1};

strong in faith, giving glory to God {Rom. 4:20},

is strength indeed, though always accompanied with the deepest sense of creature weakness. It is also the path in which the Spirit leads us, the sure way of present blessing. Difficulties thus become bread to faith, and faith grows by being exercised. When the energy and contrivances of nature are called into action in divine things, it will need such trying but salutary lessons of

correction from the Father of spirits, as shall produce in us the sense of utter helplessness, and compel us to cling to God for strength. In this way we learn the vastly important lesson, that God's strength is made perfect in weakness; so that when we are weak, and then only, are we really strong in the Lord. God then is our refuge, not man. Men should know our moderation (yieldingness); but we should tell God our need.

In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God (Phil. 4:5, 6).

Is it not well, dear Christian reader, to deal closely with our hearts, in the presence of God, on this deeply-practical and momentous subject? It is easy to speak of our own weakness; but do we so feel it day by day and continually, that we are compelled to look to God for strength? Is it a realized fact with us, that in us, that is, in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing; and because of this, are we cast upon the power and goodness of God? Surely it is a precious reality to have God for our refuge and strength, waiting on and for Him, because He has been, and is, and will be,

a very present help in trouble {Psa. 46:1};

and such always prove that

blessed is the man whose strength is in thee {Psa. 84:5}.

If God be our refuge, we shall find either that He will give us deliverance from the trouble, or help in the trouble; but blessing it will be, present blessing, in some way or other. It may be painful to find every other refuge fail us, all other streams dry, every cistern broken, and lover and friend stand aloof; but God being really our refuge, we shall find Him our strength, and a very present help. Trials, more or less, we must all have; but what unspeakable blessing there is in making God our refuge! What relief! What rest! How truly the following lines express the utterance of many tried souls who cleave to God in their sorrow:

"Other refuge have I none;

Hangs my helpless soul on Thee:

Leave, oh, leave me not alone!

Still support and comfort me.

All my trust on Thee is stayed;

All my help from Thee I bring;

Cover my defenceless head

With the shadow of Thy wing!"

To have the sentence of death in ourselves so thoroughly as to reckon ourselves to have died indeed unto sin, and to be alive unto God in our Lord Jesus Christ, will necessarily bring forth such exercise of soul as to cast us upon God, His power and goodness, and prove that He is our

strength, and a very present help in trouble {Psa. 46:1}.

Surely policy is not faith, nor are human contrivances the Spirit's path. Faith casts each care upon Him who careth for us, though pride and unbelief may take it up again.

2. GOD OUR RESOURCE.

There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, &c. (Psa. 46:4).

It may be that many who have proved the blessedness of making God their refuge have little acquaintance with Him as their resource. It is when barrenness and disappointment are seen stamped on every thing around us, that the heart is fairly tested as to what it is really living upon. The life of faith is upon the Son of God. He has so made known God, that we now know

the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent {see John 17:3}.

God is love, and He has manifested His love in sending

His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. 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}.

God is light, and every thing is naked and open before His eyes; and He has set forth His infinite hatred to sin in forsaking His own Son when bearing our sins, and in condemning sin in the flesh in that spotless One. Thus it is that God is now known; so that instead of being dreaded by us, He is really our hiding-place; and instead of seeking to be away from His presence, we know that He hath reconciled us to Himself, made us stand in His holy presence complete and accepted in the Beloved; and that He abounds in thoughts and purposes of love and grace to us, so that His perfect love not only dismisses all terror from our hearts, but gives us access with confidence. Thus it is that a believer is never so happy as in the conscious enjoyment of God's presence; for God is our resource, the fountain of living waters to our souls. As the apostle expresses it,

We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation {Rom. 5:11}.

We know God as having sent His Son, spoken to us by His Son, given His Son to be a propitiation for our sins; and we know that He came to do the will of God —

Lo, I come to do thy will, O God {Heb. 10:9}!

and this will was, that we should be sanctified and perfected for ever by the one offering of Himself. This is God's love, and this love He commends to us; and thus it is that we have peace with God, and, as we have seen, can now joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. This is not joy in self, or creatures, or circumstances, but in God, who never disappoints those who thus look to Him. If a prophet with his poor and feeble knowledge of God could say, when there was no blossom or fruit on the vines, the fields and olive-yards barren, and no herd in the stalls,

Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation {Hab. 3:18},

how much more does it become us to

rejoice in the Lord always {Phil. 4:4},

and find all our springs of consolation and gladness in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. When we thus deal with God as our resource, we rise above every circumstance, painful or pleasant, and can heartily sing —

“My God, the spring of all my joys,

The life of my delights;

The glory of my brightest days,

The comfort of my nights.

“The opened heavens upon me shine

With beams of sacred bliss;

Jesus proclaims that He is mine,

And whispers I am His.

“Soon shall I leave this world of clay,

At that transporting word,

Run up with joy the shining way

To meet and see my Lord.”

If then a remnant of God’s earthly people will know God, and His rich blessings to them, so that they can say,

There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High {Psa. 46:4},

how much more can we triumphantly rejoice in the aboundings of divine grace to us? As a river becomes wider and deeper the further its windings are traced, so surely does the rich and marvelous grace and goodness of God to us in Christ Jesus become more vast and wondrous to our souls.

I saw,

said John,

a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb (Rev. 22:1).

And if another has said, when contemplating the future,

“There from the river of His grace

Drink endless pleasures in,”

why not now by faith delight our souls in the unutterable goodness and blessing of God to us in Christ?

Beloved, what do we know of God as a resource? Are we happy in the Lord, rejoicing in Christ Jesus, worshiping God in the Spirit, having no confidence in the flesh? Do we know the blessedness of dwelling in the secret place of the most High, and abiding under the shadow of the Almighty? Are we happier in God's presence than in the presence of any one else?

3. GOD OUR STAY.

Be still, and know that I am God {Psa. 46:10}.

It is a great thing for the heart to be steadily looking to God, and quietly waiting on and hoping in Him. We read,

Thou wilt keep Him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee {Isa. 26:3}.

When the people of Israel were well-nigh overwhelmed by the enemy at Pi-hahiroth, they were told to

stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord (Ex. 14:13).

Faith is quiet before God, and casts all care upon Him; but unbelief is restless and plodding. Mary sat at the feet of Jesus, heard His word, and obtained strength for service. Martha's service was well meant, and prompted no doubt by love to the Lord; but her busy activity soon broke down. A prophet of Israel told the people that

their strength is to sit still (Isa. 30:7).

What an unspeakable privilege is it thus to be quietly stayed upon God, remembering His word,

The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace {Ex. 14:14}.

A careless walk with unjudged sin cannot know this. The lofty workings of an unsubdued imagination knows not this blessed place. But to those who know God to be their refuge and strength, and who find their springs of joy in Him, it seems natural to be quietly stayed upon Him. They wait only on and for God, for their expectation is from Him. Such know that God will be exalted, and that our happy privilege is to give unto Him the glory due unto His name.

Dependence, Communion, and Hope

Psalm 16

It is when the soul enters upon and takes possession of its new standing and relationships, as in Christ Jesus in heavenly places, that it necessarily becomes exercised as to the character of our walk down here. The reason is this. As long as the soul— a true believer, no doubt — found all its felt need met by the cross, as to sin and guilt, the question of walk was mainly as to morality, or propriety, and consistency in the world. But when he learns, through the teaching of the Holy Ghost, that the cross of Christ also declares the complete end of the first man — the Adam nature — as there put under the judgment of God, and he discovers also that the world, in thus rejecting the Son of God, had its doom sealed, he has a different exercise of soul. For all resources thus being cut off by the judgment of God in the cross, both as to man and the world, his confession is that he has no confidence in the flesh, and that he is not of the world. And all this becomes more and more real, as he is able to see that, in a risen and ascended Christ, God in His grace has given him righteousness, life, and completeness before Him; and not only sees, but enters upon and enjoys it in the presence of God. The conscience then becomes exercised about a walk down here suited to Him up there — a walk, not in the flesh, nor according to this present evil age, but suited to the calling and standing given us in Christ — a life and course fed and strengthened by Him in heaven, in whom God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. The walk now will be in the Spirit, and the life one of faith upon the Son of God, who loved us, and gave Himself for us. It will therefore be characterized by dependence, communion, and hope, which three points are blessedly brought out in the sixteenth psalm.

This psalm sets forth some of the perfect ways of our blessed Lord in passing through this scene. It is sweet to see that in it there was one object for His heart's delight — His saints, in whom was all His delight. These, too, He distinguished from the apostate people who were hastening after another god. And if His heart's affections flowed out so blessedly to the faithful little remnant in Israel, what must be His heart's love now to us who are

members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones {Eph. 5:30}?

Again, taking as He did everything from the hand of His God and Father, and walking always in the perfect sense of obedience to the will of Him that sent Him, He could say,

The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places {Psa. 16:6}.

And no doubt the great secret of our going through this world in the enjoyment of the peace of God is walking in the path of obedience, and taking everything, painful or pleasant, out of the hands of our gracious God and Father.

For the reasons above stated, our path necessarily must be one of absolute dependence upon the Lord Jesus. In the days of His flesh, He voluntarily took this place. He was truly God; all fullness was pleased to dwell in Him; but we are told that He, being found in fashion as a man, humbled

Himself, took upon Him the form of a servant, and became obedient, &c. We could not take upon ourselves the form of a servant; for we are servants, and never were anything else. In this way it is that the blessed Lord trod the path of faith perfectly, and has left us an example that we should follow His steps. Hence we are told that

when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously {1 Pet. 2:23}.

And so in this psalm, the first words are,

Preserve me, O God: for in Thee do I put my trust {Psa. 16:1}.

How wondrous is the love and lowliness that could take the place of such entire dependence! Surely when hungry for forty days and nights He could have commanded bread to be brought forth, and it could not possibly be withheld; but He chose this place of dependence, and replied,

It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God {Matt. 4:4}.

Again, on another occasion, when men were seeking to swallow Him up in their cruel hatred, could He not have prayed to His Father, and He would presently have given Him twelve legions of angels? (Matt. 26:53). Most assuredly He could; but He chose rather the path of dependence and obedience as Jehovah's servant, and in this He has left a perfect example for us to follow. I gather, therefore, from this psalm, that a life of absolute and constant dependence will characterize those who follow Christ. As the apostle Paul forcibly puts it,

Having nothing, and yet possessing all things {2 Cor. 6:10};

having no resources in self, no stock in hand, but unceasing and thorough dependence on Another for all our help. And I doubt not that the true effect of entering into our perfect standing, and full character of blessing in Christ, will be to seek to bring the power of all that into this present scene, as alone suited to Him whom having not seen we love. It is comparatively easy and natural to make God our refuge in great emergencies, and in peculiar trials; but to trust in Him at all times as the constant habit of our lives, in all the details of our brief sojourn here, is another thing. To look to Him about every matter, whether rough or smooth, painful or pleasant, and to go forth day by day watching His hand, obeying His voice, leaning on His arm, associating all the almightiness of His power, the infiniteness of His wisdom, and perfectness of His love with all our affairs, great or small, at home or abroad, things spiritual or temporal, must mark the character of those who thus live in dependence on God. So perfectly and unceasingly was this path of dependence trodden by the Son of God that we hear Him saying,

I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, He gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. . . . Whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak (John 12:49, 50).

Here we see the perfectness of the blessed Lord in thus depending on the Father for every word He should speak; and His seeking a solitary place in the wilderness for prayer, getting up a great while before day and going out into a desert place to pray, spending a whole night in prayer, and being usually engaged in prayer before any great event, such as choosing His apostles, the

transfiguration, &c., all show the reality of the life of dependence which this perfect One lived. From all this, and other Scriptures, we learn how faith, prayer, and thanksgiving must ever accompany our exercise of real dependence upon God.

Communion, unbroken communion with Jehovah, also marked the path of the blessed man Christ Jesus, the true Son of David. He could surely say,

I have set Jehovah always before me (Psa. 16:8).

Not a moment of unbroken communion did He know, until our sins were laid on Him, and He as the sin-offering was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. Then He who is of purer eyes than to behold evil must abandon His own well-beloved Son, because sins, our sins, were upon Him. Hence that bitterest of all cries was wrung from His holy, pure, and loving heart in deepest agony and distress —

My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? {Psa. 22:1, Matt. 27:46, Mark 15:34}.

It could not be otherwise; for God is holy. But, except that time, when His soul was made an offering for sin upon the tree, He was always in uninterrupted communion with the Father. This was His perfectness and joy. He could under all circumstances say,

I do always those things that please Him {John 8:29}. I have set Jehovah always before me {Psa. 16:8}.

So should it be with us; for we are called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, and He has sent forth the other Comforter, the Holy Ghost, to dwell in us, not only that we might know the things that are freely given us of God, but that we should enjoy them in the communion of the Holy Ghost. With us we easily allow a trifle to come between us and our adorable and loving Lord; and then a process of self-judgment, humiliation, and confession may be called for, in order to our enjoyment again in faith of the unclouded sunshine of His blessed presence inside the veil. In fact, the moment we allow anything to come between us and the Lord, we get away from Him, and our communion becomes interrupted. It is well, therefore, to habitually receive everything from Him, to refer every matter to Him, to cast all our care upon Him, and to know that all our springs are in Him. As long as He is consciously known as our fountain of living waters, the broken cisterns which come in our way will have little attraction for us. The question should not be so much with us in this day — How much do you know? as, “How much do you enjoy?” It is impossible to know the Lord Jesus as the satisfying, commanding, absorbing object of our souls, without having that deep, calm joy which is more easily felt than described, and is known in no other way. And there is another point here; He could not only say,

I have set Jehovah always before me;

but could blessedly add,

Because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved {Psa. 16:8}.

And there is an important connection in these two sentences, and highly instructive to us. The Lord always realized the presence of God and power of God with Him — the right hand of Jehovah. And do not we realize it in our measure, too, according as our hearts are looking to Him? But if we

grow cold and careless, it is no marvel that we have little sense of the power and presence of God with us. Instead of this, such souls must necessarily be walking in darkness; and when they need the “right hand” of God to sustain and comfort, they do not find it. Instead of this the Spirit is grieved, and there are questions as to the state, the walk, the conduct to be settled, before the soul can be restored to the enjoyment of His holy presence who is light and love, and again know the present power of the Father of mercies and God of all comfort with them. Oh the blessedness of being able in a goodly measure to say,

I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved!

May our souls realize this, beloved, more and more, and our affections be drawn and fixed upon the Lord Himself, by His mighty and irresistible attractiveness! Surely, Mary made a wise and happy choice when she took her place at Jesus’ feet to hear His word; and it was not less pleasing to the Lord than needful and profitable to herself. She learnt that this place of dependence was the secret of comfort and power, as well as the only way to get into the circle of His thoughts and the current of His affections. With what a holy dignity and style we see her afterwards breaking the alabaster box, and pouring the very costly ointment on this precious object of her heart, until the whole house was filled with its sweet fragrance, and she realized the Lord’s approval! What a vast range of blessing even now may be known by those who unfeignedly take this place of dependence, and set the Lord always before them! May those of us who have somewhat tasted it know it better; it is wise, I am sure, and

wisdom’s ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace {Prov. 3:17}.

Blessed Lord, it is Thyself, Thy perfectness, Thy glory, we long to see, and now enjoy by faith, through the power of the Holy Ghost! for we do say —

“What in Thy love possess I not?

My star by night, my sun by day;

My spring of life when parched with drought,

My wine to cheer, my bread to stay;

In Thee, my strength, my safe abode

Now made the righteousness of God.”

But there is a third point to notice in this psalm; it is “hope.” The blessed Lord knew every step of the path of suffering He would have to go. He knew all things that would come upon Him, and could see beyond it all. For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross and despised the shame. His hope was in His God. He could look through all the sufferings and death on Calvary, and the reality of the sepulcher too, and say,

Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory (or my tongue) rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (hades); neither wilt thou suffer Thine holy One to see corruption {Psa. 16:9, 10}.

Hence our adorable Lord could contemplate His own death, the actual separation of soul and body, the soul going into hades (the place of departed spirits), and the body into the sepulcher, where all others go to corruption. But this He knew could not be the case with Him; for it was not possible that this spotless, stainless, holy One of God could be holden of death; and we know that He saw no corruption. But more than this, His confidence was in Jehovah the God of resurrection. He knew that, as He said, He would rise again the third day, and that He would be raised again from among the dead by the glory of the Father; nay, more, that He would be seated at the “right hand” of the Majesty on high. Hence He says, referring to resurrection,

Thou wilt shew me the path of life

— a path which, though beginning from the sepulcher, would extend to the right hand of God, as He so blessedly adds:

In thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore {Psa. 16:11}.

What a triumphant path in the power of faith and hope! And surely our privilege, too, is to be rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, yea, to be abounding in hope by the power of the Holy Ghost; for we triumph in His victories, we look forward to eternal blessedness based upon His already accomplished work. And though our destiny is to share His glory, yet how different is the path of hope for us from what it was to Him! But if He went down into death and the grave, and grappled with sin, Satan, the grave, and judgment, what was it for, but to give us present and everlasting triumph over all these enemies and intruders into God's once fair creation? Our hope, then, is not to follow Him into death; but, because of His having accomplished that triumphant work for us, it can now be said,

We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye {1 Cor. 15:51, 52},

desire our house from heaven, not, as the apostle says,

that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life {see 2 Cor. 5:2-4}.

Our precious Lord therefore, by His death, and triumph over death, Satan, and the grave, has given us a near way into glory at His coming — a momentary journey, a rapid flight, like a lightning-flash, changed and translated, and so to be for ever with the Lord.

“Then shall we fully know,

Not till then, how much we owe.”

Oh the perfect bliss of this hope, based on the atoning work, and made certain to us by the risen Jesus having gone into heaven by His own blood! How divinely real it is! A curtain only, as it were, between us at this moment and the positive and unchanging possession of eternal glory! The Head in heaven and members on earth, already joined by one Spirit, soon to meet in the air! How very near this may be! We know how intensely the heart of Jesus looks forward to it. His desire is, that we should be with Him, and behold His glory. The thrice-repeated

I come quickly,

of Him who is
the Bright and Morning Star,
should nerve our souls to hearty, loving response; for the Spirit indites the cry in us —
Come.

The Spirit and the bride say, Come {Rev. 22:7-20}

Happy those who so know the blessedness of the life of faith, as to tread the path of dependence,
communion, and hope!

“When faith and hope shall cease,

And love abides alone,

Then shall I see Him face to face,

And know as known.

Still shall I lift my voice;

His praise my song shall be;

And I will in His love rejoice,

Who died for me.”

and

caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and so be for ever with the Lord {see 1 Thess. 4:17}.

We thus

Grace and Service

1 Samuel 22:1, 2; 2 Samuel 23

This time of David's history was somewhat illustrative of our own; there were two parties in the land — Saul's and David's. They were very distinct, and so different that they could not be reconciled. Saul, the natural man of self-will and pride, was the head of the party which represents the world — its greatness, glory, strength, and religiousness. David, however, was God's man, the man after God's own heart, and God was most remarkably with him. The mass of the people was with Saul; only a little flock with David. The royal court and its grandeur clustered around Saul, while David was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains, though anointed and chosen of God. But divine judgment was in store for Saul and his associates, while David, though despised and rejected, was destined by God to be set upon the throne of the kingdom. Those, therefore, at this time whose sympathies were with Saul were among the prosperous and honorable of the world, while those who cast in their lot with David had suffering and conflict before reigning with him. The great, and noble, and wise of this world were trying to satisfy themselves with the social, political, and religious occupations which revolved around the royal throne of Saul; while David was the center of gathering for those who were in relationship with him, as well as a sure refuge for the destitute and distressed. True there was a religious camp in Israel professedly owning the true God; but David was outside it with God. Not the royal throne of Israel yet for David, but Adullam's cave; for he was to shadow forth this present time when Jesus is despised and His rightful claims disowned by the world. The vital question in those days was whether Saul or David should be honored and obeyed. The vital question now is, whether to be of the world, or confessing and serving the Lord Jesus Christ. It must be one or the other. To be subject to the claims of both is simply impossible.

Ye cannot serve God and mammon {Matt. 6:24, Luke 16:13}.

To be of the world is to be thoroughly opposed to Christ. Nothing can be more distinct and sweeping than the divine statement, that

the friendship of the world is enmity with God. Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God {James 4:4}.

We know that Jesus said of His own —

They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world {John 17:14, 16}.

The aged apostle John most solemnly declared —

We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness (or the wicked one) {1 John 5:19}.

Adullam, then, which means "their testimony," was the place where those who were in relationship with the man after God's own heart were gathered. It was really the outside place — outside the

camp — the place of rejection and testimony. David was the attractive center. We are told that his brethren and all his father's house went down thither to him (1 Sam. 22:1).

And so now; it is the One whom God gave and sent, His beloved Son, whom men despised and rejected, and still refuse, who is really the center of gathering for all who are in relationship with Him. We remember His precious words:

Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them {Matt. 18:20}.

This is enough. And those whom He is not ashamed to call His brethren know the blessedness of being thus gathered in His name, and of enjoying His presence as the great and only center of gathering. The Spirit gathers them thus.

But more than this; the poor, and needy, and distressed found a refuge in David. And what could more strikingly show forth the grace of the Lord Jesus in saving sinners, who still calls,

Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely {Rev. 22:17}!

“Welcome, all by sin oppressed,

Welcome to the Savior's breast.”

Hence we are told that

every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them (1 Sam. 22:2).

And is not this the gracious attitude that the earth-rejected Jesus still takes toward guilty man? Is it not sinners, enemies, lost ones, that He receives? “Not the righteous; sinners Jesus came to call.” Is it not toward such that His compassionate heart yet moves? Does not His long-suffering mercy linger over men in their guilt and misery? Is He not the alone Savior, the only refuge and door of escape from the wrath to come? Surely He welcomes and gives eternal life and peace to distressed and anxious souls! Blessed be His name, He still forgives the vilest sinner that turns to Him. He dries up the tear, and delights to hush the groan of the sin-stricken, to make the most discontented heart to find rest and real joy in His most blessed presence. His loving cry to lost and guilty ones is as true as ever,

Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out {John 6:37};

yea, more than this, He brings the soul to know what peace and joy in believing are; for He suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God {see 1 Pet. 3:18}.

How blessed this is! Well might an inspired apostle exclaim,

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 (2 Cor. 8:9).

But observe, it is said that

David became a captain over them {1 Sam. 22:2};

and here we have illustrated the two great principles of Christianity; viz., receiving Christ Jesus as the Savior whom God sent, and then being subject to Him — owning Him as Lord. The latter all, sooner or later, must do; for

at the name of Jesus every knee must bow {see Phil. 2:10},

in heaven, in earth, and in the infernal regions. It is simply a question as to time. Those who now thus bow to Jesus, and own Him as Savior and Lord, have eternal life, and shall never perish. But it is to be feared that many who speak of Him as “our Savior” are going on doing their own will, and not owning His Lordship. This is a fatal mistake. As we have said, all must own Him Lord. No doubt that the great religious system around us, commonly called Christendom, is largely built upon this fatal mistake of the lip confession of “our Savior,” without their ever having gone to Jesus, the true David, as distressed, as in debt, and discontented, and tasted the sweetness of His grace in welcoming them; and therefore, as willing captives at His feet, rejoiced to be subject to Him. And yet having to do with Christ Jesus, both as Savior and Lord, are the essentials of Christianity. Nothing less will do. And it is the attempt to separate these two foundation truths, that Jesus is the only Savior, and Lord of lords, that accounts for the nominal profession and caricatures of Christianity abounding on every hand. As Jude says,

Certain men have crept in, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ {see Jude 4},

or, as it might be rendered,

denying the only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ {see Jude 1:4, New Trans., JND}.

Those, however, who have had to do with the Lord Jesus as their Savior, as the One who loved them, and gave Himself for them, know Him to be precious, and the altogether lovely; and their hearts are constrained to take the place of subjection to Him, and consecration to His will, obedience to His word, devotedness to Him as the commanding and absorbing object of their hearts.

But there is another thing. This is the time when faith is tried, and the Lord is served. Few think what wonderful things are going on. Now we are in great ignorance as to how far people are true to the Lord or not; but the time will come when every one will be made manifest, every hidden thing be unmasked, and every secret matter brought to light. Then every thing will appear in its true value. Those who are thought much of now may be altogether absent then from the list of the faithful; and many whose service is now esteemed at a low value, may then shine forth to the abundant praise and honor of the Lord Jesus. But every thing now hidden shall be disclosed, for we must all be manifested at the judgment-seat of Christ, according to the deeds done in the body, and then shall every man have praise of God. So with David's men. From the starting from Adullam's cave many a conflict was gone through, many a peril endured, many a battle fought; but at the end the worthies appear, according to the real worth of their service and character of their devotedness to David. The record stands in connection with the

last words of David {2 Sam. 23:1},

and remarkable disclosures take place. The service, too, was most varied. Like the members of the body of Christ, each seems to have had a distinct path of service; but the honor of David was

the touchstone, and the center around which all revolved. No doubt every believer has a distinct line and measure of service allotted to him by the Lord now, and which no one can do but himself; for to every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ (Eph. 4:7).

He gave to every man his work. As has been said, "Now we little know what is being done for the glory of God, but by and by all will come out according to its real worth." So it was with David's men; and we find it recorded in 2 Sam. 23. David's career had well-nigh come to a close, and the judgment and glory of Solomon were soon coming upon the scene. It is here, therefore, before the glory of the kingdom, that David's worthies have their honors publicly set forth.

In glancing at the divine record, we may notice that in v. 8 it is said that Adino the Eznite slew eight hundred with his spear at one time. His service therefore stands forth in all its worth; and the detail is most accurate. The exact character of his victories are recorded. And no doubt by and by it will be seen that many servants of Christ have succeeded in vanquishing by the power of the gospel many hard-hearted enemies to God, and in bringing them as willing captives to the feet of Jesus. All this service and its detail will not be forgotten. It is evident that the apostle Paul looked forward to the joy of seeing the persons in glory as his crown, to whom he had been made useful by the preaching of the gospel.

For,

said he, writing to the Thessalonian believers,

what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For ye are our glory and joy (1 Thess. 2:19, 20).

The service, too, of Eleazar the son of Dodo is particularly brought out; for he stood manfully for the claims of David in the face of mighty Philistines, and at a time

when the men of Israel had gone away {see 2 Sam. 23:9}.

His persevering faithfulness is recorded by the Spirit. We are told that

he smote the Philistines till his hand was weary, and his hand clave unto the sword {2 Sam. 23:10}.

It is also noticed that he wrought a great victory, and that others in consequence came after only to spoil {2 Sam. 23:10}.

So it is now. At times, when almost all have turned away from contending for the truth, some valiant servant of the Lord has withstood the foe, his hand cleaving to the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and has accomplished a great victory, of which many a child of God coming after has reaped

precious fruit.

Nor could the service of Shammah be unnoticed; for though it was only a piece of ground full of lentils which he defended and secured for David, yet he determined not even to yield that right of David to the enemy. It is worthy of remark also that the courage and faithfulness of this man came out at a time when the people, instead of standing true, actually

fled from the Philistines {2 Sam. 23:11}.

But both in 2 Sam. 23:10, and 12 the Holy Ghost carefully notices that the Lord wrought a great victory;

for while God accepts the valiant deeds of His servants, and puts them to their account, yet it is all done in His strength, and by the grace He gives, so that to Him all the glory is due. If in one place it is said that

God gave testimony to the word of His grace {see Acts 14:3},

an apostle also speaks by the same Spirit of one whom he had begotten in his bonds, as if he had actually accomplished the man's conversion. But it shows how gracious God is in owning our instrumentality, and making much of our little service and faithfulness, though we can truly add,

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory {Psa. 115:1}.

The devotedness of the mighty men at the well of Bethlehem, also stands forth in brightness and distinction in the records of divine truth. In it we see not so much victory, except it be victory over self, but personal devotedness to the man after God's own heart. They counted not their lives dear to themselves, so that they might cheer and refresh the heart of David. Like another in a later day, each might have said,

Neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I might finish my course with joy (Acts 20:24).

So then these mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem to refresh the spirit, and gratify the desire of their beloved king. But precious as this self-sacrificing service was to him, he would not drink, but poured it out unto the Lord, saying,

Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? therefore he would not drink it (2 Sam. 23:17).

But the devotedness of these mighty men stands out conspicuously among David's worthies.

Abishai's courage also in slaying three hundred of the king's enemies is next recorded; and Benaiah's valor in accomplishing many mighty acts is not forgotten. The two lion-like Moabites, of whom it had been said that not one should enter the congregation of the Lord to the tenth generation, he defied and overcame. Nor did he hesitate in a snowy day to go down into a pit and slay a lion, like the faithful now who have sometimes to enter into closest conflict with Satan under most distressing circumstances, and overcome him by the sword of the Spirit. He slew also an Egyptian with his own spear; as may sometimes now be witnessed, when the worldling, who opposes the servants and truth of God, is vanquished by the very weapon he himself wielded against them. Thus God turns the wrath of man to praise Him. Many other names are also ranked among David's worthies without any special mark of devotedness, or of victories being recorded.

On the other hand, however, it is most solemn to notice the absence of some of the best known among David's men. And why are they not found here? The silence is quite arresting, and bids us search the Scriptures for the reason. It is true that the name of Jonathan does appear in verse 32; but whether it be the Jonathan who loved David as his own soul or not we cannot tell; but certainly,

if it be so, there is no particular record of his devotedness. The reason is obvious; for Jonathan was most earnest and thorough in his attachment to David up to a certain point; but he never broke with his kindred, and the royal court, to bear the reproach of David, nor took the place of rejection outside the camp. Consequently, we scarcely hear of Jonathan after they had made a covenant in the wood, when it is significantly stated that

David remained in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house {see 1 Sam. 23:18},

until we are told of his very solemn death (1 Sam. 23:18). Having left David in the wood, and gone to his home, he went out to battle with his father against the Philistines, and was slain with his father, and their bodies fastened as a spectacle against the wall of Bethshan. Though Jonathan's deep and warm attachment to David remain without the smallest room for question, yet his adherence to the house of Saul by natural ties reads us a most solemn and instructive lesson, because it seems to have cost him his life, and hindered his full character of service to the man after God's own heart.

But however it may be as regards Jonathan who so loved David, other names are entirely absent from the list of mighty men, nor is Scripture quite silent as to the reason why. We may notice that the greatest warrior, the wisest counselor, and one of the chief religious officials are all absent from the list of the king's worthies. We refer to Joab, Ahithophel, and Abiathar.

Joab was nephew of David (1 Chron. 2:18), and commander-general of his forces. He showed much warlike courage, but was revengeful, and all through seems not to have been in communion with the king's mind. He treacherously assassinated Abner to revenge his brother Asahel, whom he had killed in self-defence (2 Sam. 2:23), and he also slew Amasa, whom David had promoted to be his general-in-chief, out of jealousy of his being his rival (2 Sam. 20:10). These, according to Solomon, were better men, and more righteous, than he; and these assassinations, as well as his slaying Absalom with his own hand contrary to the express command of the king, were matters of great sorrow to David. However, Joab went on for many years outwardly and officially espousing David's cause. When many in Israel fell away in the time of Absalom's conspiracy, Joab remained with the king; but in after years, when the king grew old and feeble, he sided with the self-willed Adonijah, contrary to the will of God, and the express desire of the king. Instead therefore of Joab being in the list of David's worthies (though his brother Asahel and Joab's armour-bearer were there), this man of rank and power, of celebrity too among men, fell under the judgment of Solomon when he took unto him his great power, and ruled the kingdom in righteousness. According to righteous judgment he had not been true to David,

had shed the blood of war in peace {see 1 Kings 2:5},

so that his hoar head was not allowed to go down to the grave in peace. Thus was he humbled instead of being honored.

Ahithophel, David's counselor, and highly extolled for his wisdom, is also absent from this list of worthies, though Eliam his son ranked among them. Though he was David's companion and familiar friend, yet in time of temptation he wholly fell away, and showed that, with all his sagacity, his heart was not true to God's anointed. His wisdom was so remarkable, that it is recorded that

the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counseled in those days, was as if a man had enquired at the oracle of God {2 Sam. 16:23};

but no amount of wisdom will compensate for lack of uprightness and true devotedness. Accordingly, in David's time of adversity, when his interests seemed weak and declining, through the people's unfaithfulness in the time of Absalom's conspiracy, he, like another Judas, turned traitor, and afterwards hanged himself and died. Thus we see that the man accounted so wise in Israel was not ranked with David's worthies by the inspired penman, neither with the man so celebrated for his courage and warlike power.

Now let us look at the religious man in Israel, one of the chief priests, the highest character of official dignity in Israel. Why was not his name in the honored list? True it is that David had shown him special favor and affection, in trying to allay his troubled spirit, by saying,

Abide thou with me, fear not: for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life: but with me thou shalt be in safeguard (1 Sam. 22:23).

And is it possible that after this he was not found true to the king? Indeed he was not; for when the usurping Adonijah said,

I will be king {1 Kings 1:5},

he, with Joab, fell away, and helped Adonijah; and when Solomon entered upon the kingdom in righteous rule (type of a greater than Solomon, who will ere long establish His throne in righteousness), Abiathar, instead of being commended, was the subject of public humiliation by being deposed from the office of priesthood.

Thus we see, while the unpretending, devoted, and afflicted Uriah the Hittite (2 Sam. 23:39), and many more remained in time of trial true to David, there were those who stood foremost in Israel for their strength, wisdom, or official religiousness, who were judged and abased instead of commended and exalted when the kingdom was set up in glory. And, in applying this to ourselves, have we not need to cry,

Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe {Psa. 119:117}?

What lessons of peculiar solemnity the record of these people presents to us, and surely awaken in our consciences the grave importance of seeing that we are true to our Lord Jesus during this time of His personal absence and rejection, so that when

He comes we may have His precious commendation —

Well done, good and faithful servant {Matt. 25:23}!

These omissions in the list of David's faithful ones are painfully significant, and forcibly remind us of the prophet's words:

Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in His might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord (Jer. 9:23, 24).

Love

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love Him, because He first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also (1 John 4:7-21).

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is (1 John 3:1, 2).

It is remarkable that the same apostle who was inspired to write so sternly as to the truth should be the instrument employed also to write so elaborately on love. The fact is, we cannot really have truth without love, or love without truth. Both were perfectly blended in Christ.

He was full of grace and truth {see John 1:14}.

To hold both love and truth together, according to God, is our practical difficulty. We say little to each other about love, because we are conscious how little we manifest it. And if it be true, as I believe it is, that we never know any part of God's truth really till we accept it, and walk in it, this may account for our knowing so little, and saying so little, about love. Besides, it often costs us very little to be interested in truth; but to walk in love, while always connected with blessing to our souls, is also contrary to the natural selfishness of the heart. Still we must remember that the subject of love occupies a large and prominent place in the inspired epistles, and it seems to be better and wiser to acknowledge our shortcomings in practicing it than to ignore it in our teaching.

Love is the essential of Christianity. Where this is wanting there is no true Christianity. The subject therefore is vital, and its claims upon our attention paramount. A splendid gift is sometimes very attractive; an intelligent mind, as to the mysteries of Scripture, often highly valued; a

self-sacrificing person greatly extolled; and yet all these things, if love be wanting, are only like so many clouds without rain, or wells without water. The seraphic tongue and riveting eloquence of some men enchant crowds of eager listeners, who hang upon their lips, wondering what the next astounding burst may be, and extol the speaker to the skies; while the quiet, unobtrusive saint, diligently engaged in loving ministry to the souls or bodies of the needy children of God, is a work too small for many to deign to notice; but in God's sight how different! The one may be only an empty noise, no sooner heard than gone for ever; and the other the fruit of the Spirit, having the value of everlastingness divinely stamped upon it. Yea, says the apostle,

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity (or love), I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing (1 Cor. 13:1-3).

Thus we see that love is the essential, the vitality of Christianity. And at the close of the same chapter we find that, important and precious as faith is, and hope also, yet love is there again set forth in its superlative importance as the very key-stone of the arch, and laying hold of faith and hope by its mighty grasp in present reality and power.

And now abideth faith, hope, love; but the greatest {greater} of these is love {see 1 Cor. 13:13}.

In almost all the writings of the apostles the same pre-eminent place is given to love. In the fruit of the Spirit, in all the precious variety which its clusters present, love stands at the top of the list —

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, &c. (Gal. 5:22).

Or, if the wondrous mystery of the Church be unfolded to the Ephesian believers, that marvelous subject which has been brought out in these last days with such clearness to the joy and comfort of our hearts, yet, precious as it is, all the attempts for its practical acknowledgment would be futile unless love were energizing our souls. Hence we read,

With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace {Eph. 4:2, 3}.

And to secure edifying, love is the aliment, the mainspring of all; for by speaking the truth in love, the body edifies itself in love (Eph. 4). And so in Colossians, after the apostle has enumerated a variety of earnest exhortations as to practical

walk, he puts love again in the highest place of eminence. He says,

Above ALL these things.

Mark,

Above (or over) ALL these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness {Col. 3:14};

that is, that no bond can hold things together perfectly that is not wrought by the mighty power of love. Valiant then as Paul was for the truth, the vessel too used by the Lord to communicate to us the mystery of the Church, and other great truths of Christianity, yet can language, I ask, possibly

convey to our hearts more thoroughly the vital and prominent aspect in which he sets love before us?

And now let us hear the instruction of another inspired apostle. Peter owns the love of the brethren as the fruit of obedience to the truth in the power of the Spirit, and encourages them to love one another with a pure heart fervently. And, like another inspired by the same Spirit, after many practical exhortations, he gives love an importance beyond all else that he had said.

Above ALL these things

— Mark again here,

ABOVE (or before) all these things have fervent love among yourselves;

not love merely, but warm, earnest, burning love to one another;

for love will cover the multitude of sins (1 Pet. 1:22; 4:8).

And hear also the third apostle's inspired statement on the all- importance and priceless value of love, who leads us up at once to the same climax by assuring our hearts that

love is of God {1 John 4:7},

and that

God is love {1 John 4:8, 16};

and after solemnly informing us that

He that is of God heareth us, and he that is not of God heareth not us {see 1 John 4:6},

he brings forth love as the vital test of Christianity:

He that LOVETH is born of God, and knoweth God. He that LOVETH NOT knoweth not God; for God is love {see 1 John 4:7, 8}.

The apostles thus stand before us with one voice, writing at various times and to different persons, to assert the vital character of love, and that it is the essential and superlative element of true Christianity, the grand, distinguishing, unmistakable test as to who really knows God, and who knows not God.

1. First of all, let us not fail to notice that we here read that

God is love.

This is not merely that God loves, most precious true as it is, but that His nature is love. It is equally true that

He is light {1 John 1:5}.

His essential nature is light, therefore cannot possibly fail to make every hidden thing manifest; but it is also blessedly true that the activities of His nature are loving; for He is love. We know, too, that God is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works; and, as the cross of Christ most thoroughly sets forth, that He does not sacrifice His holiness to love, or His love to holiness, but

His nature is love. "God is love." This faith receives and enjoys, because it is God's revelation of Himself. But here the fact is turned to practical account; for if God's nature is love, and we are born of God, it is clear that the moral qualities of a child must be according to those of the Father. The apostle therefore says,

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God, He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love {1 John 4:7, 8}.

The exhortation that we should "love one another" is founded, then, on the fact that we are born of God, and therefore have a nature that loves; for God is love. The fact is also stated that the person who loves according to God must be born of God. It is impossible therefore that one who is born of God can be one who loves not. He may be in a bad state of soul, and the divine work in him much obscured by carnal ways and associations, but it is as natural for the new nature which we have, as a new creation in Christ, to love, as for the old Adam- nature to be selfish and to hate. Hence you find the apostle Paul, in writing to the Thessalonian saints, declaring that they are taught of God to love one another. And how many souls, before they were established in Christ, have found comfort from this text, which assured them they were God's children — We know that we have passed from death unto life, because

we love the brethren {1 John 3:14}!

They know this to be true of them. They know well that the poorest man by the roadside, who shows plainly that he is the Lord's, engages His affections and interests more than all the princes of this world who are enemies of the Lord of glory. Every one therefore that is born of God loves, and loves the brethren — they are objects of his tenderest regard, because they are God's; and he knows also that the matters of one of His feeblest children are of more importance to God than the political movements of the whole of Europe. Oh the blessedness of having passed from death unto life, of being born of God, and of knowing God; for God is love!

The nature of God being love, He Himself is the spring of it; for

herein is love, not that we loved God;

that is, that love did not originate in us, but that

He loved us {1 John 4:10};

therefore,

he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him {1 John 4:16}.

Hence the word of the gospel is not about our love, but about His love; and those who have eternal life can say,

We have known and believed the love that God hath to us {1 John 4:16}.

2. This leads us to notice, secondly, that God has manifested His love. It is not only a divine revelation that "God is love," but that He loves, and loves us, and that this has been most blessedly and suitably manifested to us in the gift of Jesus.

In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. 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).

The love of God then to us has come out, both in its richness and freeness, springing only from God (not from us), coming down to us in all our uncleanness and ruin, putting away our sins, and giving us life — eternal life. How exactly, then, this love has come to us where we were, and met our need; and it is this surely which the gospel declares, for

God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8)

The depth, therefore, of this love extended to us when in our sins, and as it were on the brink of hell; it met us by Christ making atonement for our sins, even when we were dead in sins; and God, having raised up Jesus from the dead, and given us life, righteousness, and acceptance in Him, now exalted to His own right hand, the object of the grace of God so far is attained; which is, that we might live through Him. The circle of divine love is thus complete. It is from heaven to heaven. It flows from the throne of heaven down to where we were as dead in sins and guilty before God; and having accomplished atonement for us by the death of the cross, it takes us up in risen life to stand in Him who is gone back into heaven at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Surely this is

“Love that no tongue can teach,

Love that no thought can reach;

No love like His.

God is its blessed source;

Death ne’er can stop its course;

Nothing can stay its force;

Matchless it is.”

The purpose of God then, in thus manifesting His love, was, that we should be fitted for, and able, in the power of a new life — eternal life — to enter into and enjoy His own blessed presence for ever. Christ suffered for our sins, to bring us to God; and divine love will not rest in its activities toward us till we are brought there bodily at the coming of our Lord. Meanwhile we are objects of His love and care; but such are some of the characteristics of this manifested love.

Here, however, again the Holy Ghost, by the aged apostle, insists upon this as another motive for our loving one another. He says:

Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another (1 John 4:11).

And if the question be asked what the measure of our love to one another should be, we are elsewhere told:

Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren (1 John 3:16).

When the standard is divinely set up, it could not be less than what marked the perfect One, who loved the Church, and gave Himself for it {Eph. 5:25}.

But we may be assured that the more we enter into and enjoy God's love in its depth, and height, and suitability to us, the more our heart's affections, sympathies, and ministrations will flow out toward our brethren. Thus we see that not only because we are born of God, who is love, do we love, but occupied in heart and conscience with His love which has been manifested, shall we find it natural to us to love. Moreover, we shall find that practicing loving ways is the path of blessing and assurance for our own souls.

Hereby (that is loving in deed and in truth) we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him (1 John 3:19).

How encouraging, too, to us is the astounding statement:

He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in Him (1 John 4:16).

Who, then, is of the truth? He who loves. Who is dwelling in God and God in him? He who dwells in love. Who is born of God and knoweth God? Every one that loveth. Who have passed from death unto life? Those who love the brethren. How much ought we to love the brethren? To lay down our lives for them, because He laid down His life for us. And if we search Scripture for the great testimony we should bear towards those around, we are told by our adorable Lord —

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another {John 13:35}.

And the measure of this new commandment is —

As I have loved you, that ye also should love one another (John 13:34, 35).

But divine love working in us can never lead us contrary to the truth; for truth is divine also. Hence it is written:

This is love, that we keep His commandments; and by this we know that we love the children of God when we love God, and keep His commandments {see 1 John 5:2, 3}.

True love must always therefore have to do with God its source, who is love, and it flows in the channel of divine truth. Hence love in activity in us and obedience are inseparable; for

this is love, if we walk after His commandments {see 2 John 6}.

As our blessed Lord also taught:

He it is that loveth Me that keepeth My commandments {see John 14:21}.

It would be unsound, therefore, to be putting love against truth, or truth against love. We are taught to

walk in truth {3 John 4},

and

walk in love {Eph. 5:2};

and are told that the closing act of man's impiety will be to receive not the love of the truth. It is, then, a delusion to talk of holding the truth with an unloving heart. It is the highest folly to extol gift when love is absent. And we may be assured it is a snare of Satan to persuade people they have the truth when it has only reached the intellect, and one of his chiefest wiles to get men to hold the truth in unrighteousness. Whatever be the pretensions, it is certain that there can be no godliness without love; for God is love, And how marvelously has His love been manifested to us! Be assured, beloved brethren, that what we want in these last closing days is to be so dwelling in God's presence, who is love, to be so drinking in His manifested love to us in Christ, so practicing love in deed and in truth, dwelling in love, and thus dwelling in God, until every cold recess of our hearts is so warmed as not easily to be chilled; for many waters cannot quench love. Thus fired with divine love, affections will flow upward to God, onward in the truth, and outward to our brethren, and in bowels of mercies to the ungodly. Love is always intelligible to almost the lowest form of the human mind, and can reach the coldest heart, while the truth we utter may pass by them as if they heard it not. How wise, then, is the inspired direction to

speak the truth in love {see Eph. 4:15}!

The gospel, while it is the message of God's love, yet it is also God's truth. Hence we read of the truth of the gospel {Gal. 2:5, 14; Col. 1:5},
and of persons

obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren {1 Pet. 1:22}.

It is divine love that sends forth the truth; and by the truth we have to do with God, who is love, and we therefore love. How truly, then, the gospel is the ministry of grace and truth, because it is concerning Him who is

full of grace and truth {John 1:14}!

And how ruinous the separation must be of those two things which God has joined together!

3. A third point I would notice, in considering this most precious subject, is the kind or manner of love which God has bestowed upon us. In the beginning of the third chapter we read,

Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God {1 John 3:1}.

Here we have the relationship which divine love has brought us into. It would have been deep mercy to save us from hell merely, without bringing us into any relationship with God. Or, it would have been rich grace to have taken us to glory and made us servants. But this would not suit the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. His purpose was to have us as children before Him in love. Hence we are children by calling — not merely named children, but “called” into this nearest and most blessed relationship with God. And this, too, to be known and enjoyed now.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God (1 John 3:1, 2).

Thus the way in which God has brought home His unutterable love to us, is to have us in this highest and most endearing relationship with Himself, both by being born of God and called

children. Hence, elsewhere we are told, that we

have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father {Rom. 8:15}.

And so truly is this relationship recognized, that Jesus the Lord is

not ashamed to call us brethren {see Heb. 2:11}.

It is not, I repeat, a calling and blessing to be known only in the future, but to be known now.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God {1 John 3:2};

and the contemplation of this glorious fact so animated the dear apostle's heart, that he at once soars in spirit right on to the glory, and adds,

It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know, that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is {1 John 3:2}.

Our destiny therefore is to be like Christ,

conformed to the image of God's Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren {Rom. 8:29}.

This present relationship with God as His children necessarily links us on with the glory, and makes us strangers here and unknown by the world; for

if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together {Rom. 8:17}.

How blessed is this relationship! how wondrous the manner of love that has brought us into it! and how precious the thought that by and by the world will know that the Father has loved us as He has loved His Son!

"So dear, so very dear to God,

More dear I cannot be;

The love wherewith He loves His Son,

Such is His love to me."

But more than this. Because we are "children" we are "brethren," and that as an actual relationship formed by divine love. And we shall find, I believe, that all correct conduct flows out of relationship. The wife's ways to her husband, the children's conduct to their parents, the brother's intercourse with each other, and the servant's behaviour to his master, are all different, having different feelings and activities; and the more the reality of the relationship is entered into, the more consistent will be the maintenance of the duty flowing from it.

And first of all let us ask ourselves solemnly the question, Are we in the enjoyment of this precious relationship, formed by divine sovereign grace, of

sons of God {Rom. 8:14}?

It is this which the Spirit of God makes known to us, and gives us to realize; for it is by the Spirit of His Son sent forth into our hearts that we cry, Abba, Father {see Gal. 4:6}.

If we are not habitually dealing with God as our Father, the state of our souls will be most seriously defective. We now know the Father, whose ways are always perfect as a Father toward us. If it be the place of a Father to care for, provide for, comfort, deliver, and bless His children, this He does perfectly for us; as our blessed Lord said:

If ye (with all your love, forethought, diligence, and care) being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him? {Matt. 7:11}.

Do we know, I ask, the habit of taking every thing from our Father, and referring every thing to Him, being assured that

“A father’s hand will never cause
His child a needless tear”?

Surely the divine love that has thus called us into this near relationship would have us practically enter upon it and enjoy it; for what can so encourage our hearts in time of difficulty, comfort us in sorrow, or enable us to rest in the day of adversity, like the sense of the loving and true God being our Father. This, too, will always warrant our expectation from Him; for

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? {Rom. 8:32}.

As we have before observed, this is connected also with another relationship, that of brethren, for all who are begotten of God are brethren; and just, too, as the reality of this relationship is recognized will our practice be regulated; for all being partakers of the same divine nature, and all indwelt by the same Spirit, we cannot but love one another.

He that loveth not, knoweth not God (1 John 4:8).

The world no doubt will hate us; for, because they know not God, they do not know us. They have not this new nature; and, however refined and amiable they may appear, they have no love for God or for His people. Love to the brethren — all those whom Christ is not ashamed to call His brethren — is the proof of vital Christianity. I repeat, how many a dear soul has been encouraged by those precious words, when deeply anxious,

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren {1 John 3:14}?

This, then, is a new, a heavenly, and an everlasting relationship, and becomes another and most powerful motive for love. For when we look on our brethren in Christ, does not the thought often cross our minds, “I shall be with those loved ones for ever”? And if so, how can we fail to minister to them, care for them, or comfort them now? How can the heart thus exercised hesitate to weep with them that weep, and to rejoice with them that do rejoice? If Joseph used the fact of relationship as a motive for unanimity and peace when his brethren departed from Egypt, saying,

See that ye fall not out by the way {Gen. 45:24},

oh, how much more should our hearts flow out in varied forms of suited love to one another, as fruit in season, because we are born from above, and brought into an eternal relationship with God and with each other! If as saints we descend from the spiritual platform on which the grace of God has set us, to become carnal, and walk as men, we shall begin to look at one another with human feelings rather than divine, and thus the flow of brotherly affection, brotherly care, and brotherly sympathy, will be greatly set aside. Thoroughly removed from the heart love cannot be; for

he that loveth Him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of Him {1 John 5:1},

and

he that loveth not his brother abideth in death {1 John 3:14}.

The question may be asked, Is it not possible to love God without loving the brethren? The unmistakable answer of the Holy Ghost is,

If a man say I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? {1 John 4:20}.

The source of love, however, is always carefully marked as God Himself.

We love Him, because He first loved us {1 John 4:19}.

His love is first, not ours.

Thus we have seen that the Holy Ghost, by the word of eternal truth, sets before us three motives for the outflow of love from our hearts; first, being born of God, who is love, we have a new nature, which cannot but love, and that in everything according to God; secondly, that God having so wondrously manifested His love to us when sinners in sending His own Son into the world, that we might live through Him, we ought also to love one another; thirdly, being now brought into new and everlasting relationship to God and to each other, love to the brethren becomes the test of vital Christianity. And the more these motives are pondered in the conscious presence of God, the more our hearts will dwell in love, and our feet walk in love.

4. There is another aspect of love we should notice in this Scripture — the quality of God's love. We have seen that God is love; that He has manifested His love, shown us the highest form or manner of love; and we are further instructed that His love is perfect.

Perfect love casteth out fear {1 John 4:18}.

Perfect love therefore has given a perfect gift; the work, too, He accomplished is perfect — making perfect peace, and perfecting the believer for ever. The love being perfect, it could do nothing less. Nothing can possibly be added to this love. It is perfect in its quality, perfect in its actings, perfect in its depth and height, perfect in its suitability to us, and perfect in its endurance. It met us in the lowest depth of degradation and sin, and raised us up to the highest place of blessing, even in Him who is Head over all principality and power. It surrounds us on every side with constant care and blessing. All things being of Him who loves us, all things are ours, all things for our sakes, and all things work together for our good. Could love be more perfect? Impossible. Could anything be added to it? Is there a thing we could ask more? Is there a desire that has not been met by Him who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ? What quietness and

assurance for ever this gives us! Yea, rather, what praise and thanksgiving engage our hearts while thus dwelling on this boundless circle of divine, perfect love!

It is God's perfect love that casts out fear; for fear hath torment. We have heard that Luther said "he would run into the arms of the Lord Jesus, even if He had a drawn sword in His hand, because he knew His heart." And surely the effect of love is always to inspire confidence and banish dread. See how eagerly a little child runs into his mother's arms; and why? Because he knows his mother's heart. Hence while on the one hand love always dispels distrust, on the other hand, when fear is in any heart, it is because it has not the sense of God's infinite, unchanging, perfect love.

He that feareth is not made perfect in love {1 John 4:18}.

What boldness, too, this gives us in the day of judgment! For does the Father love us? Oh, yes, even as He loves His own Son! Is Jesus the Lord near to God? so are we; for we are in Him. Is He alive again, and that for evermore? So have we eternal life in Him. Is He righteous? We, too, are made the righteousness of God in Him. No wonder therefore that it is added,

Because as He is, so are we in this world {1 John 4:17}.

No marvel, then, that we praise and worship the Father now, and adore Him also who has washed us from our sins in His own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God and His Father. The wonder is that our praises ever cease. But we now know something of the reason why when in the glory we shall ever gaze upon that precious Lamb, and sing —

"Thou art worthy."

Redemption, the New-Birth, and Growth

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by Him do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious (1 Pet. 1:18 to 2:3).

There are two facts put side by side at the close of this first chapter; one spoken of as most frail and fleeting, the other as living and enduring for ever. The former refers to man; the latter to the word of God. As to man, the same testimony is borne by a prophet in olden time, though there specially referring to the nation of Israel, as by an apostle long after. The twice recorded declaration is, that

all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away {1 Pet. 1:24}.

The grass groweth up in the morning and flourisheth; in the evening it is cut down and withereth. The flower attracts the eye, and no sooner charms with interest than it fades away for ever. Such is man — all men, without exception; for “all flesh is as grass.” Man is not only sinful, unclean, and corrupt, but weak, and without continuance; for he passeth away. Rich or poor, high or low, in this there is no difference; he is fragile, and soon decays; and also all he glories in, whether riches, wisdom, or strength, has no continuance; for he no sooner becomes an object of admiration than he passes away. Many will readily admit that they are sinners, who will try to hide from their view both their natural frailty and utter weakness as to the things of God. Still it is blessed to remember that it was for weak and frail ones that Jesus died; for it is written, that

when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly (Rom. 5:6).

But while man so fades, and his glory so rapidly passes away, is it not most blessed to know that God has given us something which endures? It is His own word,

which liveth and abideth for ever {1 Pet. 1:23}.

This gives a solid resting-place for our souls, while conscious of being surrounded with quicksands, and an interminable morass of human opinionism and religiousness. This word we have, blessed be God; and when the created heavens and earth shall have passed away, this word will shine as brightly as ever in all its imperishable clearness and worth. When the saved are in the uninterrupted enjoyment of eternal bliss, and the wicked shut up in everlasting punishment, the word of the Lord will remain the same. The same incorruptible word of truth that will for ever remind the saints in glory of the grace that brought them there, will also strike deepest terror and remorse in the consciences of the lost, making them feel that they are reaping the deserved fruits of sin and rebellion against God.

It is well, then, to remember that God has spoken, and that we have His word, God's own revelation of His own mind and will, written down for our meditation; for He knows our infirmities and need. It is this word which gives certainty to faith, and assures our hearts of realities. Luke, the beloved physician, informed Theophilus that he wrote the gospel that he might know the certainty of those things wherein he had been instructed. The certainty of the word of God is the ground of all stability of soul; for, as Jesus said,

The Scripture cannot be broken {John 10:35};

and again,

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away {Matt. 24:35, Mark 13:31, Luke 21:33}.

The Holy Ghost, too, is given to teach us this word, to

guide us into all truth, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God {John 16:13, 1 Cor. 2:12}.

But more about the value and blessedness of the word of the Lord by and by.

There are three points of instruction brought before us in the Scripture we have just read, to which I desire to call attention, and they are of the utmost importance. They are Redemption, the New-birth, and Growth. The two first are fundamental truths, and bring out the two things absolutely necessary in order to be happy in God's presence; for without redemption it is impossible to be brought to God; and without the new-birth it would be impossible to know God, or to enjoy His presence. It is blessed therefore to find them thus put together.

1. REDEMPTION. The apostle reminds the believers whom he addressed (naturally Jews), that they had not been redeemed from their traditional religion with

silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot {1 Pet. 1:18, 19}.

The silver and gold here no doubt refer to the atonement- money of half-shekel, paid in Israel for every one that was numbered among them from twenty years old and upward. (See Ex. 30:12, &c.) With this ordinance they had been as Jews familiar, and no doubt it stands before us as a remarkable type of the redemption-work of Jesus, inasmuch as this atonement-money was used to make the silver sockets on which all the tabernacle rested, and for hooks on which the curtains

were hung. And surely all our hopes are built, and all our confidence hangs, on this only foundation which has been laid for us in the death and blood-shedding of the Son of God. They were here, then, reminded of the cost and reality of their redemption.

The person of the Lord in His infinite perfectness is also presented to us, by the statement that He was

without blemish and spot.

The Jews had to make diligent search for their sacrifices, to find animals which were without a blemish or a spot. Many creatures might be looked over before a spotless one could be found; but such only might be used in the service of the sanctuary; for such only could typify the Holy One of God, who was holy, harmless, and undefiled. Jesus was God's lamb, the only one that ever walked through this world that could be a sacrifice for sin; for all else had sinned, but He knew no sin. Once and again a voice from heaven bore witness to this by saying,

This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased {Matt. 3:17, 17:5; 2 Pet. 1:17}.

Even the devils styled Him

the Holy One of God {Mark 1:24, Luke 4:34}.

Wicked Pilate declared again and again before all the people that he found

no fault in Him {John 19:4, 6};

and the self-convicted traitor said he had

betrayed the innocent blood {Matt. 27:4},

The mighty angel Gabriel bore witness to the spotlessness of His person, as born into the world, when he said to Mary,

That holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God {Luke 1:35}.

The thief upon the cross, when expiring by His side, exclaimed,

This man hath done nothing amiss {Luke 23:41}.

Thus all intelligences in heaven and in earth — angels, men, devils, saints, sinners, Jews, Gentiles — have borne witness to the fact that He was “without spot or blemish”; while, above all, as we have noticed, the Father's delight was to speak from heaven, saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” This was God's Lamb, holy in nature, harmless, blameless, without rebuke, able therefore to bear the sins of many, and to be a Substitute for those who were dead in trespasses and in sins. It was He who bore our sins in His own body on the tree, who suffered for sins the Just for the unjust to bring us to God. This was God's Lamb, and He finished the work the Father gave Him to do, satisfying every claim of divine justice and righteousness for sin, vindicating all God's ways, and establishing all God's purposes for His honor and glory. This was

the Lamb who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by Him do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory {see 1 Pet. 1:20, 21}.

How then can I be certain that Jesus died for me? Not by what I feel; for our feelings change oftener than the wind. One hour we feel very happy, and another very unhappy. Sometimes our feelings are just as we wish, another time most distressing. My feelings therefore cannot possibly give me certainty as to salvation. Nor can my works assure me of my security; for we never do enough to please ourselves, much less to come up to God's standard. Neither does the quality of anything we do satisfy us, to give us comfort as to evidences of Christianity, as people call it; for our best doings are often connected with mixed motives, and humble us deeply before God. Nor can what I am make certain to my conscience that Jesus died for me; for our state is never up to our standing, our joy always short of what it should be, and our felt weakness and failure every now and then prostrates us in the dust. How then can I be certain that Jesus died for me? We are told here — He was given

for you, who by Him do believe in God {1 Pet. 1:20, 21}.

This is simple and conclusive. How do I believe in God? Is it from what I see in creation? Most certainly I do, and see His handy work in all. But He has manifested Himself since creation, since man fell, since he dishonored God both without law and under law, in the gift of His only begotten Son for our salvation. This is how I know God now. And such as by Him do believe in God that Jesus was the sent One, the Savior, who gave Himself for our sins, shed His blood to cleanse us, whom God raised from the dead, it is by Him they believe in God. It is by Him too that we draw near to God. For those surely who thus know God's love to us in Jesus and His death, and know that He has raised Him from the dead and given Him glory, must come to God by Him; they must praise through Him; they must anticipate glory, the glory of God, on account of Him. Hence such are at peace with God, at home in God's presence, at rest before God; for through Jesus, the sent One and His work, their faith and hope are in God. Can anything, I ask, then be more certain than that Jesus died for me, if I have really thus so believed as to know God, and draw nigh to Him in this only way? Surely such can say,

We have known and believed the love that God hath to us; we are reconciled to God by the death of His Son; we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God {see 1 John 4:16; Rom. 5:10; Rom. 5:1, 2}.

Can you, dear friends, thus assert with heartfelt confidence that Jesus died for you? Is your confidence based, not on what you are, what you feel, or what you have done, but on the accomplished redemption of God's Son? for nothing else could satisfy Him, either as to you or your sins; and, blessed be His name, God's having raised Him from the dead establishes the fact without doubt, that about the sins and persons of all believers He has fully satisfied God; for He glorified Him on the earth, and finished the work He gave Him to do. By Christ all that believe are justified from all things, and it is God who justifies. How blessed then it is to have our eternal security thus based upon the everlasting efficacy of the work of the Lamb of God, the imperishable stability of the word of God, and the unchanging love and faithfulness of the living and true God, who raised up Jesus from the dead!

“Oh gift of love unspeakable!

Oh gift of mercy, all divine!

We once were slaves of death and hell,

But in Christ's image we shall shine;

For every gift a song we raise,

But this demands eternal praise."

2. THE NEW BIRTH. Those who are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ are also born again, and thus have a life and nature suited to enter into and enjoy the things of God. This new nature is strengthened by the Spirit given to indwell us. But while every believer is born again, born from above, born of God, it was on receiving Christ as His Savior.

As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:12, 13).

Again, in the third chapter of John's gospel, where our Lord most emphatically asserts the absolute necessity of Nicodemus being born again, He presents the Son of man lifted up as the alone source of this new life, eternal life, and that too to

whosoever believeth in Him {John 3:15 and 16}.

Here also we are told that it is the Spirit's work, and by the Word — born of water (the Word) and of the Spirit — but that in the way of faith, having the Son of God, who was crucified, as the object of faith. And so in Peter, the Word is the seed, the Spirit the power, and Christ the One by whom we have believed God, Obeying the truth is believing God's word, the word of the gospel; and therefore, as we have seen, coming unto God by Him. All such are therefore cleansed from sin, born of God, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. The activity of the new nature manifests itself in love to the brethren. We read:

Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren. . . . Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever (1 Pet. 1:22, 23).

The word of God, which testifies of Christ, received into the heart by the Spirit, in the obedience of faith, making Christ, who was crucified, risen, and glorified, the object of faith, the soul becomes partaker of a new life or nature, and is "born again."

Now observe here that to be born again is not, as people call it, "a change of heart," or an alteration of a bad nature into a better one; but a new birth, a new creation; made partaker of a new life, a new nature. A believer therefore is a compound of two natures. Hence our Lord said,

That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit {John 3:6}.

And in various parts of the apostles' writings, these two

natures in the believer are recognized. In Galatians we have,

The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things which ye would {Gal. 5:17};

or, as it is more correctly rendered,

And these things are opposed one to the other, that ye should not do these things which ye desire.

The believer is never told to crucify the old man; for God has already crucified it with Christ; but he is told, on account of that, to reckon himself to have died indeed unto sin, and alive unto

God in our Lord Jesus Christ {see Rom. 6:11};

to

put off the old man, and put on the new, &c. {see Col. 3:9, 10}.

And while he is not told to mortify the flesh, because God has already judged it in the cross of His Son, yet he is told to mortify, or put to death, through the Spirit, the actings of the flesh, the deeds of the body, and our members which are upon the earth, uncleanness, lust, &c.; that is, while recognizing the evil nature still in us, we are to put it off, and to deny its actings by the Spirit's power which dwells in us.

It is impossible for a believer to know himself aright, or to account for what he must know passes within him, unless he is conscious of having these two natures; one of which cannot sin, because it is born of God; while the other can only sin, if allowed to break out, because it is contrary to God. Hence a soul taught of God is admonished to "sin not." He is also made to know that in him, that is, in his flesh, dwells no good thing. The believer cannot truthfully say, "In me dwells no good"; for he has a new nature divinely created, and the Holy Ghost also dwells in him; but he can say that

in me, that is, in my flesh, no good is {Rom. 7:18}.

Until a believer understands by the teaching of Scripture that he has two principles working in him, antagonistically opposed to each other, he is always more or less doomed to self-occupation, and this only increased by conscientiousness; for, instead of reckoning himself to have been crucified with Christ, and to have thus died unto sin, he reckons himself as living in the world, and still living in a sinful nature, and tries to excuse his evil, or cover it up, or he is at one moment self-gratified, and at another despondent; but all this is reckoning self to be living, and not reckoning self to have died, not consciously alive unto God in our Lord Jesus Christ. This always gives victory; for such are occupied with Christ in the glory as their life and sufficiency, drawing all from Him, having all their resources in Him, and not in self — in fact, self dead and buried; and now, being the other side of death in a risen and ascended Savior, they live a life of faith upon the Son of God, who loved them and gave Himself for them. As we have observed, the Holy Ghost strengthens the new nature, and the apostle prays that the saints may be strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, &c. And the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, goodness, meekness, temperance, faith, &c.; but the works of the flesh are black and loathsome indeed. Hence we are admonished to walk in the Spirit, that we may not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. Thus we see how fully Scripture recognizes these two natures.

And is it really certain, then, that I was born of God on believing? Most unquestionably; for it is written,

whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God (1 John 5:1).

The word of the truth of the gospel concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, brought to me by the Holy Ghost, led me to look to Jesus the object of faith as my Savior, and thereby to receive life. The effect of being born again is that I love. I love Him who first loved me, and I love the brethren;

for he that loveth Him that begat, loveth Him also that is begotten of Him {see 1 John 5:1}.

How blessedly simple and true this is! and what assurance it gives me that I am in Christ and Christ in me!

Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name {Psa. 103:1}.

3. GROWTH. The third link in this precious chain of divine truth is growth. For Scripture speaks of the inner man being strengthened, of our growing up into Christ, sanctified, or practically separated unto God by the truth, growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Thus the soul makes progress. But two things here are taught us as being necessary in order to grow. One is, that the activities of evil, which we all have in the old man, the flesh, must be unsparingly denied. To walk and act carnally is to produce the opposite to growth; hence in this same chapter we are exhorted to

abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul {1 Pet. 2:11}.

And what Christian is there that has not found this out by bitter experience? Who of God's children does not know that when he has given way to the desires of the flesh and of the mind, that it has chilled his fervor, damped his energies, and checked his comfort? But, you may say, Is it possible that I, who am born of God, redeemed by the blood of Christ, and indwelt by the Holy Ghost, that I can be the subject of such foul activities as here recorded? Indeed, dear fellow-Christian, it is so, What! Can malice, guile, hypocrisies, envies, and evil-speakings be perpetrated by a child of God? Yes; and it is children of God, those who are born of God, that he addresses, and insists on their laying aside all these fleshly activities,

all malice, all guile, all evil-speaking {1 Pet. 2:1}.

Those who see that God has judged both the nature and the fruits of the old man on the cross, and given them a new life, a new nature in Christ risen and ascended, will understand this, and find power from it. But if our souls would make progress in divine things, there must be this absolute, unsparing setting aside of all these fleshly buddings. Yes, "all"; for they are like worthless weeds, which grow up and check the growth of what is really good.

With all this being laid aside, the new life, like a new-born babe, wants nourishment and strength, and for this nothing less than the pure, unadulterated milk of the word will suffice.

Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God shall man live {see Matt. 4:4}.

It is then by receiving with meekness the engrafted word that we grow. And as a new-born babe often turns to its source of nutriment, and takes in little by little as it can digest it, so we are exhorted,

as new-born babes, to earnestly desire the pure milk of the word, that we may grow thereby {see 1 Pet. 2:2}.

In this way the mind of God, the love of God, the wisdom of God, and the ways of God, are made known to us more and more, And when the Scriptures which testify of Christ are neglected, how can there be spiritual growth? Does it not plainly show us why some Christians make so little advance in divine things? and why they have so little joy and gladness in the Lord?

We must not forget that though born of God, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. But we need the power of the Holy Ghost to instruct us in the true knowledge of God's mind, to guide us into all truth; and, blessed be God, this is one of His gracious offices. What another ground for praise and thanksgiving is this!

May we then, Christian brethren, always remember that the true secret of growth is laying aside what is evil in God's sight, and constantly and eagerly drinking in what His own grace has so richly given us in His own word of eternal truth. Without these exercises of soul, how is it possible that we, though redeemed and born of God, can be healthy or happy?

Our Lord's Care for Us During His Absence

John 14:1-20

We must bear in mind, when approaching this fourteenth chapter of John, that it forms part of a most blessed, and, I may say, unique portion of divine truth. It, with the two following chapters, gives us the Lord's farewell address to His disciples before He left the world to go to the Father; and the seventeenth chapter gives us His commendatory prayer to the Father for them. The time it was uttered is very significant; for it was after the supper, and, as we know from Matthew's gospel, after He had formally taken His leave of Jerusalem and her children, when He said,

Behold, your house is left unto you desolate; and ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord {see Matt. 23:38, 39}.

With the cross immediately before Him, the state of the Jewish nation settled by their rejection of Him, Judas having gone out, and the Lord alone with His eleven true ones, whom He was about to leave in the world without His personal care and ministry, He opens up His heart's deep love for them in sweetest, tenderest care. It was, too, the fitting opportunity for Him to announce some of the great principles of Christianity, and to mark out the path of true blessing for all His loved ones, who would have to pass through this present scene during His absence on high.

He is alone then with the eleven; they are objects at this moment of His intensest interest and care; and confining our thoughts for the present to the verses which we have just read, we may observe among other lines of precious instruction three leading points of the utmost importance. I refer, firstly, to the frequent and varied use of the word "believe" in the first twelve verses; secondly, to the gift of the Holy Ghost, the other Comforter; and, thirdly, to the blessed and cheering hope of our Lord's coming again.

Before, however, looking at these points, it may be well to notice that here only in Scripture have we the Father's house set forth. The reason no doubt for its introduction was the fact that Jesus had not long before declared, that the beautiful temple, which the disciples had so long been accustomed to venerate, would soon be reduced to a heap of ruins, a thorough scene of desolation. Jesus said,

There shall not be left one stone upon another which shall not be thrown down {see Mark 13:2, Luke 21:6}.

Their hearts, therefore, being made sad with this humiliating announcement, they are comforted by being assured there is another house incorruptible and imperishable, the dwelling- place of perfect, changeless love — the Father's house. If He left them and went to the Father's house, it was large enough for them also, having many mansions or abodes, and He would go and prepare a place for them, and then come and receive them to Himself. For as they had always been with Him on earth, so they should be with Him in glory;

that where I am, there ye may be also.

Jesus said,

In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, &c. {John 14:2-4}.

Thus their hope being gone of enjoyment and blessing in connection with their beautiful temple on earth, another far more attractive and desirable house is presented to them for their eternal abode, where He was going to prepare a place for them.

Observe, too, here, that the blessed Lord spoke when on this side of the cross, saying,

I go to prepare a place for you {John 14:2}.

And, blessed be His name, He did go, though the only way to the Father's house was by the death of the cross. We are sure that love, divine, perfect love to us, led Him thus. And we know that by that one sacrifice He has prepared us for the Father's house; for

by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified {Heb. 10:14};

and when He rose from the dead, and entered into heaven itself by His own blood, He prepared the place for us. Thus the Father's house is our assured destiny, made sure by Him who is our Forerunner, our Righteousness, and now seated on the Father's throne.

As I have said, among many deeply-precious lessons which this portion teaches us, there are three points which especially demand our attention.

1. Our Lord's earnest desire, that during this period of His absence from us, we should be in the habit of looking to Him about everything, and to expect all we need from Him. He was going to the Father. Though away from us as to personal presence, there would be no change in His love or His care. Nor would His power be less; for He was going to the position of all power in heaven and in earth. He therefore first of all makes a particular request before leaving them; it was this, that they would exercise faith in Him, and not allow their hearts to be troubled. How exquisitely tender this is! What loving concern and interest it manifests! Did the precious Savior say, You will not have trouble? No. Quite the contrary. He said,

In the world ye shall have tribulation {John 16:33};

but twice in this chapter He entreats us not to let our hearts be troubled. How is it possible that my heart should not be troubled, some may say? Jesus supplies the answer. As Jews they had known what it was to believe in God, to trust God; but now they were also to trust Him, exercise faith in Him.

Believe also in me {John 14:1}.

How simple and efficacious is this preventative of heart- trouble! Do we know its blessedness, beloved, in our own soul experiences? Do we so cast all our care upon Him, who careth for us, as to keep our troubles as it were at arms' length, so as not to get under them? How sweet and salutary is this counsel! This trust in Him is something more than believing on the Lord Jesus for salvation; for it is because we are His own, and objects of His everlasting love and care, that we are enjoined to roll every burden upon His Almighty arm, and leave it there. "Believe also in me."

How blessed, then, the thought, that the Lord Jesus, though now in glory, far above all principality and power, desires that in this present trying scene our eyes may be looking to Him, and casting every trouble into His arms of love, so that our poor hearts may be free to love and serve Him, and not be oppressed by grief; but instead of this, as we afterwards read, that His peace in all its calm unruffled sweetness may be ours. I repeat, how loving is our Lord's counsel, and how marvelous His care for our present comfort and blessing in Himself!

In this address, Jesus evidently contemplated this present time — the interval between His going to the Father and His coming again to receive us unto Himself. It is not the assembly, or the Church, as it is called, which He reveals; for the time was not come for the mystery of the assembly, which is His body, to be brought out. This was reserved, as we know, for a later period (Eph. 3:5). But in this address we do find great principles of truth enunciated, which we may call special doctrines of Christianity. And it is remarkable that the Lord seems to have anticipated the fact, that one of the prominent contentions during His absence would be concerning the glory and divinity of His person. He not only therefore expressed His desire, that, during His being at the right hand of God, we should look to Him in faith concerning trouble, but He teaches us also that the true divinity and glory of His person could be known only in the way of faith. This is extremely important to observe. When therefore Philip said,

Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? {John 14:8, 9}.

Here the Lord expressly teaches His essential Godhead as one with the Father. No doubt distinct as to personality, as He elsewhere shows, when He says,

My Father is greater than I (John 14:28).

But the point insisted on is, that He is one in essence and eternal Godhead with the Father. The Father dwelling in Him, and doing the works, and He so manifesting the Father that He could say, He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.

Every one knows what a vital and frequent subject of controversy the personal glory of Jesus has been during His absence; and the striking point to my mind here is, that His person is a revelation, not to be proved by argumentative reasoning, but to be received in faith, according to God's own statement concerning Him. Hence Jesus says again on this point, "Believe! Believe!"

Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? . . . Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me (John 14:10, 11).

The personal glory therefore of the Son as one in essential Godhead with the Father, and dwelling among men in flesh, a perfect man, speaking only the words the Father gave Him to speak, and doing works, in perfect obedience, by the Father dwelling in Him, is a matter only for faith, and not for human reasoning, much less for carnal speculation. How gracious then the tender pity and consideration of our loving Lord thus to arm us against the seductions of Satan, and cunning craftiness of men, and to furnish us effectually with the mighty weapon comprehended in that sweet word, "Believe!" "Believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in me." And truly the expression of our hearts in the contemplation of Him is —

"In Thee most perfectly expressed
The Father's self doth shine;
Fullness of Godhead too — the Blest —
- Eternally Divine.

The higher mysteries of Thy fame
The creature's grasp transcend:
The Father only Thy blest name
Of Son can comprehend.

Worthy, O Lamb of God, art Thou
That every knee to Thee should bow."

But there is another subject for faith during our Lord's absence especially pointed out by Him. It is concerning service; for He knew how our hearts would delight to serve Him here, after He had gone to the Father. He therefore counsels us to exercise faith in Himself as to service, and informs us that the secret of success is believing on Him. The deep importance of this instruction is seen in the double "verily" which introduces it; for it is like pledging Himself to the certainty of the fulfilment.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father (John 14:12).

Nothing can possibly express more strikingly the need of exercising faith in the Lord Jesus in regard to working for Him, or the true secret of success. As to the result, no doubt that Peter's service on the day of Pentecost was numerically greater than anything on record of the Lord's service; but when we think that since the Lord went away, and the Holy Ghost came, a soul brought to the Lord Jesus now is united to Him by the Holy Ghost, and made a

member of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones {Eph. 5:30},

the quality, in this sense, of the service now is greater than in the ministry of Christ Himself. How good then of the Lord, before He went away, thus to encourage our hearts in Himself! and how clearly His warm desire is expressed that during this little while of His being seated on the right hand of God, and of our being left in the world, we should be in constant, personal intercourse with Himself! So that whether we are in circumstances of trial, or thinking of His own blessed person, or engaged in His holy service, in each particular our souls may realize and enjoy the blessedness of exercising faith in Him, whom having not seen we love. It is not astonishing therefore to find prayer immediately coupled with these instructions concerning faith; for though faith and prayer are not the same things, yet it seems impossible that we can live and walk by faith long without being led to pour out our hearts in prayer; for faith is always dependent. We read also of

the prayer of faith {James 5:15}.

But here the allusion to prayer seems peculiarly blessed, because it shows the all-prevalent value of the name of the Lord Jesus in prayer, and warrants our largest expectations in asking in His

name.

Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it (John 14:13, 14).

Further on in this discourse our Lord says,

Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you {John 16:23}.

Prior to this, they had asked nothing in His name; now He was about to leave them He assures them of large answers to prayer in thus asking in His name. Oh the untold blessedness of those who thus take the Lord at His word, and, while deeply conscious of His absence, know the sweet reality of thus having to do with Him!

2. There was another precious consolation for them during the absence of their precious Lord, who had always sought to preserve and comfort them; He would send the Holy Ghost, another Comforter.

I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever: the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you (John 14:16, 17).

Here we have one of the most important truths of Christianity— the gift and indwelling of the Holy Ghost. Though private and personal in His operations on the soul, yet not the less real and effectual on that account. He was then dwelling with them, but He would be in them, and take up His abode with them for ever. The Holy Ghost had always been acting in divine operations. In creation the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters; and when things were to be made in connection with the tabernacle service according to the pattern of heavenly things, and pre-eminently typical of the personal glory and work of the Lord Jesus, it was by the Holy Ghost that Bezaleel was endued with wisdom to make them. It was by the Holy Ghost coming upon and moving prophets that they foretold according to God's mind, and gave needed instruction and testimony to the people. Even Jesus Himself was full of the Holy Ghost, and is spoken of as anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power. And now if Jesus went away, the Holy Ghost who had been with them should be in them. Elsewhere Jesus said to His disciples,

It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you {John 16:7}.

And, prior to this, we are told that the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that

Jesus was not yet glorified {John 7:39}.

Thus we see plainly that the Holy Ghost, the other Comforter, would not come and indwell them unless Jesus went away and was glorified. Now, why was this? The answer is clear. Unless Jesus had gone to the cross, and accomplished redemption, we could not have been cleansed, and therefore suited for the abode of the Spirit; but when Jesus had by His one offering purged our sins, justified and perfected us for ever, and had risen triumphantly from the dead, as having conquered Satan, death, and the grave, and gone into heaven with His own blood — then, and not till then, could the Holy Ghost find cleansed vessels to take up His abode in. And this clearly

explains why the Holy Ghost did not indwell His people as the Comforter before. And if a prophet was only moved now and then to speak by the Holy Ghost, no wonder that David prayed,

Take not thy Holy Spirit from me {Psa. 51:11}.

And if, as is most true, the Holy Ghost now dwells in us for ever, in virtue of our being cleansed and justified by the blood of Jesus, it is equally intelligible why an apostle said,

Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption {Eph. 4:30}.

This distinctive truth of the Holy Ghost's indwelling cleansed ones has been carefully pointed to in the typical instruction of the anointing of Aaron and his sons. If you turn to the eighth chapter of Leviticus, you will see that Aaron (type of Christ) was anointed with oil (type of the Holy Ghost) without being previously sprinkled with blood (Lev. 8:12), thus blessedly showing us that the Holy Ghost would come down and abide on Jesus, because of His intrinsic personal holiness, for He had nothing to be cleansed. Being declared by the testimony of heaven to be the beloved Son in whom the Father was well pleased,

the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him (Luke 3:22).

But Aaron's sons, the priests, typical of those now who are washed from their sins in His own blood, and made kings and priests unto God and His Father, were not anointed until after they had been sprinkled with blood. (See Lev. 8:23-30.) Aaron was afterwards sprinkled with blood, of course, because he was a man of like passions with us, and no one was fit to approach God, or to serve Him without it; an important fact that has been most lamentably lost sight of. The point, however, for our present purpose to notice is, that the Holy Ghost came upon Jesus because of His perfect holiness, and that He indwells us because we are cleansed by His blood, and sons of God by the new birth.

Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, whereby we cry, Abba, Father {see Gal. 4:6}.

Other Scriptures show the personality, Godhead, and operations of the Holy Ghost thus indwelling us, which the limits of this address forbid our entering upon now. There is, however, a point or two that could not be passed over. We are told that the world which rejected Jesus will also reject the Holy Ghost,

whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him {John 14:7}.

We must not expect, therefore, the unconverted to know anything of the Holy Ghost; and certainly nothing can be more plainly demonstrated by the world's religiousness than the entire want of the real recognition of the Holy Ghost, even if He be mentioned by name. But this ignorance was not to characterize believers; on the contrary, it is said of them,

Ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you {John 14:17}.

And again in verse 20, referring to the day when the Spirit would be given,

At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you {John 14:20}.

So that when the Holy Ghost came, we should know, as a matter of spiritual intelligence, that Christ is in us, and that we are in Christ.

It is clearly stated here that believers know the Holy Ghost as dwelling in them. We know certainly that it was by the Holy Ghost working in us that we first had to do with Christ as our Savior; for the natural man neither receives nor knows the things of the Spirit of God. We know Him also as indwelling us, not only because we would not dishonor Jesus, but because from our inmost soul we look up and own Him as our Lord; for welcomed to the right hand of God in glory, the Holy Ghost is sent down, not to establish a religious system and people in the world, but to connect believers with Christ in heaven; and so rescuing them from this present evil world, that they are not of it, even as He was not of the world. We, therefore, serve Christ in it, as those who expect Him to come from heaven at any time to take us bodily out of it, and so be for ever with the Lord. We are not then to marvel if the world hate us, or think it strange if our path be one of suffering and reproach for the precious name of the Lord Jesus. But having Him who is now in heaven, in His exercise of living ministry and constant care over us, to look to and trust, the Holy Ghost down here in us to comfort us, and the hope of our Lord's coming for us, we are to show forth our love to Him by keeping His word.

"Though our pilgrimage be dreary,

This is not our resting-place;

Shall we of the way be weary

When we see our Master's face?

No; e'en now anticipating,

In this hope our souls rejoice;

And His promised advent waiting,

Soon shall hear His welcome voice."

no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost {1 Cor. 12:3}.

Again, we know Him as testifying of Christ to our souls, and often comforting us when cast down by taking of Christ's person, work, words, perfections, fullness, offices, or ways, and showing unto us. It is because of the Spirit of God dwelling in us, who is the Spirit of adoption, that we know God to be our Father — approach Him as such with filial feelings, and have access unto Him through the Lord Jesus Christ. The believer is to know then that the Holy Ghost dwells in him; and he realizes that the truth is not only intelligently known by him or written in his mind, but that he has a feeling sense of the truth on account of its being written on his heart. Is it not most blessed, then, to think of the Holy Ghost as given to be in us, and to abide with us during our Lord's absence?

3. I have already touched a little on the hope; that is, in this address the blessed Lord gave them nothing to look forward to in the way of progress on earth; but, on the contrary, He set His coming again for them, to take them out of the world to the Father's house, as the true expectation of their hearts.

I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also {John 14:3}.

Himself coming again for them, that they might be with Him where He is, was the glorious prospect He gave them. And most glorious it is; for nothing short of this, and nothing but this, could satisfy their hearts. This was not, however, a characteristic of Judaism; for Israel being an earthly people, called with an earthly calling, they were encouraged with expectations of blessing on the earth; whereas Christianity, connected as it is with Christ as rejected by the world, and

Seven Present Blessings Through the Death of Christ

For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshipers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: in burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. Above when He said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt-offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; then said He, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that He had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water (Heb. 10:1-22).

When we think of the infinite and eternal glory of the Son of God — the Word made flesh, who dwelt among us — we can easily perceive that nothing less than manifold and everlasting results must be connected with His atoning work upon the cross. We are not surprised, therefore, to find that not only did He by Himself purge our sins, but accomplished by His one offering all that was needed to give us title to stand before God in perpetual acceptance and righteousness, as objects of His changeless favor and blessing. Redemption being now, therefore, an accomplished fact, and the Holy Ghost having come down, every believer is not only secure and for ever blessed, but he is also entitled to know it, and to rejoice in the Lord always.

From the first, there was a tendency to slip away from the true and present value of the sacrifice of Christ, thus undermining the glory of the cross, and drawing souls away from the sense of the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free; in other words, to turn to one form or other of Jewish ritualism and legality, by forgetting the true worth of that one sacrifice which was once offered, both in regard to what it has really delivered us from, as well as where it now puts us.

In the epistle to the Hebrews, the glory of the person of the Son of God, as necessarily giving everlasting efficacy to His atoning work, is sweetly set forth; and in the portion now before us we find clustered together a sevenfold character of present blessing, which we are entitled to know as resulting from that one offering. But, before considering them, it may be well to take a glance at some of the contrasts here set forth. Under the law, we observe that the sacrifices were many and various, in contrast with Christ's one sacrifice. There was also a yearly remembrance of sins, because the blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sins; whereas by the offering of Christ we have remission of sins, no more to be remembered.

Again, the blood of the many sacrifices and ashes of an heifer gave only a ceremonial cleansing to the purifying of the flesh; but the blood of Christ purges the conscience. Mark also that the many sacrifices, according to the Jewish and only scriptural ritual, could not make the comers thereunto perfect; the precious value, however, of Christ's one offering is so efficacious that it needs no repetition, because it sanctifies and perfects for ever. Further, the Jewish high priest was always standing; he could never sit down, because of the continual repetition of sacrifices; his work was never done; but Jesus, when He had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down, or sat down in perpetuity, on the right hand of God. And, lastly, let us not fail to notice, that, with all the Jewish ritual of priests and sacrifices, the veil was yet standing, so that the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest; whereas when Jesus said,

It is finished {John 19:30},

and bowed His sacred head in death upon the tree, in virtue of that one sacrifice for sins,

the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom {Matt. 27:51, Mark 15:38}.

Thus God showed that His estimate of that accomplished work was such that He could now come down to man in freest love and with richest blessings, and that through the rent veil — that is to say, His flesh — the believer has now access with confidence into God's most holy presence. Precious privilege for our present and everlasting enjoyment! Well may our hearts look up and adoringly exclaim, "What love!"

"'Tis finished! — here

our souls have rest;

His work can never fail:

By Him, our Sacrifice and Priest,

We pass within the veil.

"Within the holiest of all,

Cleansed by His precious blood,

Before the throne we prostrate fall,

And worship Thee, O God."

1. In now turning to this sevenfold cluster of present blessings, we may first look at what Scripture teaches about remission of sins. The reality of this, as a matter of present knowledge and enjoyment, few believe and many deny. But, spite of all men's infidel reasonings, ritualistic observances, and the bold way in which many ridicule the idea, yet nothing is more plainly taught in Scripture, or more truly enjoyed by souls. Our Lord Himself said,

This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins {Matt. 26:28};

and observe, this is not a promise that they shall be blotted out when we come to die, but complete cleansing now, in virtue of Christ's having suffered for sins, and therefore washed us from them in His most precious blood. The prophets of the Old Testament also taught that

it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul {Lev. 17:11}.

Hezekiah said,

Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back (Isa. 38:17).

Micah said,

Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19).

Isaiah, speaking for God, no doubt looking forward to Christ's sacrifice, said,

I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins (Isa. 44:22).

No language could perhaps be used more forcibly to illustrate the complete cancelling of our sins; for where, I ask, is the thick cloud we were looking at yesterday? You will reply, "It is gone, and gone for ever." True, and so completely are our sins now blotted out by God; for He says He will remember them no more.

Our Lord also preached the precious doctrine of present forgiveness of sins; to be known too, not on a death-bed merely, but now, to-day. Did He not say to a palsied man,

Be of good cheer; thy sins ARE forgiven thee {see Matt. 9:2}?

And did He not so insist upon it, that the people might know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins? Did not the blessed Lord also pronounce present forgiveness of sins to another who was broken-hearted and distressed about her sins, and had fallen at His feet behind Him for relief? Were not His sweet, soul-comforting words to this sin-stricken soul,

Thy sins ARE forgiven (Luke 7:48)?

not shall be when you come to die, but are forgiven. No further proof surely can be required by any right mind, that there is such a blessing to be known as the present enjoyment of God having given the believer remission of sins. In fact, the gospel is preached to make this known. It is God's present proclamation.

Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that

through this man (the Lord Jesus) is preached unto you the forgiveness (or remission) of sins (Acts 13:38);

so that to deny the present knowledge and enjoyment of sins blotted out is to deny the true character of the gospel of the grace of God.

But some may say, "I see that God does now remit sins, and it is clear that He does so in virtue of the sacrifice and blood-shedding of Jesus; for it is written,

Without the shedding of blood is no remission {see Heb. 9:22};

but I want to be sure that my sins are remitted, that I am washed from my sins in His blood. Is it possible that I can be certain about this? and if so, how?" Nothing can be more positively declared than that your sins are remitted the moment you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; and you will have the certain assurance of it too when you simply look to Him, and rely on what God says. Your sins are forgiven by virtue of Christ's work, and only in the way of faith. The Israelite put his hand upon the sacrifice, thus identifying himself with it; and when it was killed, and the blood sprinkled, he was pronounced forgiven; so now, all those who simply avail themselves before God of the sacrifice of Christ for the atonement of their sins have at once remission of sins; and that not because of their feelings, or religion, or works of any kind, but through the blood of Christ.

I write unto you, little children, because your sins ARE forgiven you for His name's sake (1 John 2:12).

Again, you will see what God says about it in Acts 10:43. There you read those precious words:

To Him (Christ) give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins.

Receive these words from the mouth of God, and you will doubt no more that all your sins are blotted out by Him. Thus, with many others, you will be able to say —

"Sins against a holy God;

Sins against His righteous laws;

Sins against His love, His blood;

Sins against His name and cause;

Sins immense as is the sea —

From them all He cleanseth me."

Nothing can possibly be more conclusive from His unalterable word of truth, than that God now proclaims by the gospel remission of sins, and gives remission of sins to whosoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ; and that so thoroughly and for ever are our sins thus blotted out, that God further declares,

Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more {Heb. 10:17}.

Blessed reality, and sure resting-place for sin-stricken souls! But whether every believer has the comfort of it or not, it is unquestionable that he has remission of sins; for God is faithful to His own word. He cannot deny Himself

2. In the next place, let us notice the remarkable words in this chapter,

No more conscience of sins {Heb. 10:2}.

By conscience we understand, God knows and I know. If you owed a man a thousand pounds, every time you met him you would be troubled, because you knew that you were in his debt, and that he knew it too. Suppose a friend went to him and paid him, and you did not know it, then, though your debt were paid, yet because you did not know it, you would still blush when you met your creditor. But if the creditor called upon you, told you he had been paid, and bade you read the receipt in full of all demands, then would you not be at once reconciled to him, and be in such perfect peace about your debt that, however frequently you met him, your conscience would no more be troubled? You would have a purged conscience, because you knew and he knew the debt had been justly discharged. So is it with regard to God and your sins. Though Jesus had borne your sins, suffered for your sins, died for your sins, shed His precious blood for the remission of your sins, and though God gave you remission, when first you drew nigh to Him, through Jesus and His blood, yet till you knew that God was satisfied, that He pronounced you cleansed, your conscience would not be purged, you would still feel burdened, and have dread of God. When you were quite sure from God's word that through the blood of Christ you were cleansed, that He justifies you, and will no more remember your transgressions and lawlessness, your conscience would be purged, you would have no more conscience of sins. Conscious of disobedience you may be after this, which will call forth the confession of your sins to the Father as His child, in order to your communion being restored; but there would be no more question of sin as to condemnation. You will then seek so to walk as to keep a conscience void of offence, both toward God and toward man. The Scripture which cannot be broken, setting before you as it does God's mind, and brought home to your heart by the Holy Spirit, you will be kept in perfect peace. Self-occupation, or brooding over circumstances, will disturb this; but looking off again to God and His word, you will realize that you are an object of divine favor and blessing.

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee {Isa. 26:3}.

3. The believer is also sanctified, and this through the one offering of Christ according to the will of God.

By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (Heb. 10:10).

This is another present blessing. We are not told here that we shall be sanctified, but that "we are sanctified." Many believers, because they have not searched the Scriptures on the subject, have very erroneous thoughts about sanctification. Not a few who would say they are justified, would greatly hesitate to say they are sanctified. Why is this? Because they hold the false notion that to be sanctified means to be holy in nature, and not finding this the case, they are always hoping to be, and never can say they are sanctified. But sanctification is not to be so understood. The vessels of the sanctuary were sanctified; but did the gold of those vessels differ from ordinary

corruptible gold? Certainly not. But they were set apart for God according to His will, by being sprinkled with blood and anointed with oil, and thus became vessels for His service, If sanctification is thus looked at, it becomes simple enough. It is most certainly God's truth that every believer is sanctified, or set apart for Him; but how could this be except through the atoning work of Christ? And if we are sprinkled with His blood, how could we but thus be set apart for God? The Jewish priests were sprinkled with blood in order to be set apart for their priestly functions; and we are also told

Wherefore Jesus, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate {Heb. 13:12}.

Nothing can be more conclusive than that every believer is sanctified, or set apart for God, by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

It may be well to remark here, that there are five aspects of sanctification in the New Testament.

(1) Sanctification of the Father, setting us apart according to His gracious will or purpose (Jude 1).

(2) Sanctification by the blood of Jesus (Heb. 13:12).

(3) Sanctification of the Spirit, one of the actions of the Spirit in our souls (1 Pet.1:2). Thus the Father's purpose, the Son's blood, and the Spirit's work, all combine to set us apart for God. We are sanctified by the will of God.

(4) But what, it may be asked, is the measure, or character of this sanctification? Where does it bring us in thus being set apart for God? The answer is, that Christ at God's right hand in heaven is the character of our sanctification; for we

are sanctified in Christ Jesus (1 Cor. 1:2).

And we are further told that God hath made Him to be unto us sanctification (1 Cor. 1:30). We are thus as near to God as Christ is; for we are set apart for God in Him. Blessed rest for our souls!

(5) We find also in Scripture practical sanctification, the effect of divine truth upon our souls. Jesus prayed,

Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth (John 17:17).

There is growth in this, no doubt, just as the word is received into our hearts as divine truth; but progressive sanctification, or persons getting more and more holy in their nature, is not true; for

that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit {John 3:6};

and we know that the flesh, though it may be kept under, cannot be made fit for God, or for His service.

The flesh profiteth nothing {John 6:63}.

How blessed, then, is this third result of the death of Christ, in thus setting us apart for God according to His will.

By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all {Heb. 10:10}.

And, as we have traced from Scripture, the Father's purpose, the Son's blood, and the Spirit's operation, have all acted in this, it is in Christ who is at God's right hand that we are sanctified, and by the power of divine truth in our hearts that we are practically led forth into His holy ways. Oh for the continual sense in our souls that we are thus divinely set apart for God!

4. But those who are thus sanctified are also
perfected for ever.

A wondrous fact indeed, but most surely true, and all through the sacrifice of Christ;
for by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified (Heb. 10:14).

It is into this permanent character of blessing we are now brought; Christ has sat down, and we are for ever perfected. Wondrous grace! The work is done. The effect is perpetual. God is glorified. It needs nothing to be added. The work is finished, so Christ has sat down. The perfect love of God provided the perfect and spotless victim for the sacrifice; the work has been effectually done, and eternal redemption accomplished, so that we are for ever blessed. What matchless grace! In virtue therefore of this infinitely efficacious offering, He will present us without spot and faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. When the soul receives this truth as from the mouth of God, he not only rejoices in the Lord, but, finding himself freed from all questions as to his own eternal blessing and security, he has leisure to serve the Lord in helping others.

Thus far in the portion we are considering have we seen, that by the one sacrifice which was once offered we have remission of sins, a purged conscience, and are also sanctified and perfected for ever. We do well to ponder these most blessed truths, and to charge our hearts not to lose the full blessing of joy and strength they are so calculated to impart.

5. To all this work of Christ the Holy Spirit bears witness. Until redemption had been accomplished, the Holy Ghost could not come down to indwell us. No doubt the Holy Ghost had acted on and wrought by holy men all through at various times; but before the vessel had been actually cleansed by the blood of Jesus, He could not take up His abode in us, But having been born of the Spirit, and cleansed from our sins, He is now given to us.

Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son in our hearts, crying, Abba, Father {Gal. 4:6}.

Now, what is so important to observe here is, that the Holy Spirit witnesses to us of the everlasting blessings we are brought into by the one offering of Christ. For immediately after being told that we are both sanctified and perfected for ever, we read,

Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us {Heb. 10:15}.

The witness of the Spirit, then, is that we are purged worshippers, sanctified and perfected for ever. He also writes God's laws in our hearts and understandings, so that we may know and enjoy these most precious truths; and comforts us with the assurance that our sins and iniquities God will remember no more (Heb. 10:15-17). In virtue, then, of the cleansing, sanctifying power of the

blood of Jesus, the Holy Ghost has come down to dwell in our hearts, so that we may be assured that we are perfected for ever by that one offering, enjoy the truth, understand the will of the Lord, and be kept in perfect peace.

6. The priesthood of Christ is also based on the perfection of the work of the cross. We are told that Christ has entered in once into the holy place by His own blood, having accomplished eternal redemption (Heb. 9:12); and in the Scripture before us we also find that

He sat down on the right hand of God . . . for by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified (Heb. 10:12-14).

Thus Jesus, the true Aaron, was able to go into God's most holy presence, not with the blood of bulls and of calves, but by His own blood, because of its all-cleansing and perfecting efficacy. Having thus made us nigh to God in perpetuity of blessing, so that no further offering is needed, He sat down. He is therefore a sitting priest. Aaron could never sit down, because of the many sacrifices he was called on to offer.

But this man (Jesus), after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God {Heb. 10:12}.

Thus the present priesthood of the Lord is established on that which has perfected us for ever. Jesus is therefore meeting our present need by sustaining, succoring, interceding for us, and ministering to us, because we are cleansed, sanctified, and perfected for ever by His one offering.

7. Thus have we boldness also to enter into the holiest of all. As before observed, we have not to do with a standing veil, but a rent veil. When Jesus died upon the cross, we are told that

the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom {Matt. 27:51, Mark 15:38}.

In this way God showed that He could now, because of the one sacrifice of Christ, openly pronounce that every barrier to our entrance into His presence was entirely removed. Thus

the new and living way was consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh {see Heb. 10:20}.

We therefore now by faith draw near. We enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, where the great High Priest is. The new and living way is always open. Our place is to be inside. There the believer is always welcome.

Come boldly {Heb. 4:16},

says God.

Let us draw near {Heb. 10:22},

says an inspired apostle. What grace! What a precious privilege to be able at all times to draw near! What love! What nearness, too, to be thus set before God on the true ground of worship as purged worshipers! The precious blood of Christ is surely our never-failing title to be there, and there He ever lives as our subsisting righteousness; for we are made the righteousness of God in Him. What peace and rest the accomplished work of Christ gives us, even in the holiest of all! And how we feel our souls drawn there by the perfection and activities of our great High Priest, by the

rent veil, and the sprinkled blood! This is surely something more than the modern evangelical doctrine, which insists on our being “always at the foot of the cross.” Blessed, most blessed, it surely is to look back and remember Jesus in all His love and sorrow there. But that soul whose thoughts rise no higher than Jesus on the cross, though safe for eternity, knows neither the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, nor, however retiring and secluded in his habits, what it is to be rescued from this present evil world, nor to be delivered from self! But when he believes that the precious Person who died for him on the cross is now in the glory, and that His blood now speaks for him in God’s most holy presence, he rejoices in the fact that the death and blood-shedding of the Son of God give him title to be in heaven itself — now by faith and in spirit, and bodily when Jesus comes. Talk to him about being “always at the foot of the cross,” and he will point to the rent veil, to the ever-living High Priest inside, to the blood which speaks there, and declare that his unspeakable privilege now is to be inside the veil. It is there we see the One who died for us now. He was on the cross; He was in the sepulcher; but it is there we contemplate Him now, and crowned with glory and honor. There we know His precious priestly functions are always active for us. There we learn the true value of His most precious blood, not only in giving remission of sins, but as our never-failing title to be in the presence of God in perfect peace for ever. Those who insist on being “always at the foot of the cross” may have peace; but how can they know communion and worship according to God’s mind?

Do our souls then, beloved fellow-Christians, truly rejoice in the Lord? Do we know what it is really to be inside the veil as purged worshipers? There is no effort in this. We shall not be trying to get there, because we know we are there, in Him who is true. Entering into this precious fact, and beholding the blessed One who is there, knowing also the welcome to come boldly and at all times, we take the place which wondrous grace has accorded to us, and bow our hearts in adoring gratitude and worship. Then we delight to sing,

“Thy precious name it is I bear,

In Thee I am to God brought near,

And all the Father’s love I share,

O Lamb of God, in Thee.

“And when I in Thy likeness shine,

The glory and the praise be Thine,

That everlasting joy is mine,

O Lamb of God, in Thee.”

(The four articles below on Priesthood were also printed as a separate pamphlet called *The Cross and the Throne*; or, *Sacrifice and Priesthood* (London: Broom, n.d.). The additional, prefatory article in that paper was called *Sacrifice* and is essentially the article just above and so is omitted here.

Priesthood No. 1

Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession (Heb. 4:14).

In a day like this, when the authority of Scripture is either questioned or not listened to, and error abounds on almost every hand, it is impossible that believers can overrate the value of acquaintance with the truth of God's present order of priesthood. Like many other parts of divine teaching, it has been greatly lost sight of, because a false order of things has usurped its place. But the knowledge and enjoyment of priesthood according to God greatly sustains our hearts, as well as draws us out into the most precious exercises of communion and worship; though, no doubt, Satan and men have sadly corrupted the truth in order to damage souls, and dishonor the Lord Jesus; and thus rapidly bring about that condition of things which we know will end in apostasy and judgment.

On turning to the eleventh verse of Jude's epistle, we perceive the three principal ways in which men and Satan are acting so as to bring about that character of false profession, which will end in judgment, and in being spued out of Christ's mouth. (See Jude 14, 15, and Rev. 3:16.) We read,

Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam, and perished in the gainsaying of Core {Jude 11}.

Thus we have Cain's way, Balaam's error, and Korah's gainsaying, characterizing people professing Christianity. "The way of Cain" was religiousness without the sacrifice of a life;

"the error of Balaam," ministering in divine things for reward; and "the gainsaying of Korah," the despising of God's order of priesthood, and setting up a false one. Now, if you look around, you can scarcely fail to see that the three characteristics of Christianity which have been, and still are being attacked by the enemy, are the infinite value of the one sacrifice of Christ, the divine order of ministry by gifts bestowed by Christ in heaven, and the present divine order of priesthood sought to be supplanted by another of human appointment. This warning voice of Scripture therefore as to "the gainsaying of Core" is most solemn, and shows that a true acquaintance with God's present order of priesthood is one of the ways of escaping Satan's wiles, and of living and acting more according to God's mind. On turning to the sixteenth chapter of Numbers, we find that "the gainsaying of Core" was not an effort to set aside priesthood altogether, but to supplant God's order by a false one; and we know how summary and severe the judgment of God was upon them for it. May we know God's mind about this!

It is quite true that God had an order of priesthood in the last dispensation; but it was earthly in its character, that is for service on earth, and successional; though it was divine in its appointment. It consisted of Aaron and his sons, which in some respects, as we shall see, remarkably shadowed forth God's present order of priesthood, which is divine in its appointment too, but heavenly, and not successional. It consists of Jesus the Son of God, gone into heaven itself — THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST, and those who believe in Him who are PRIESTS — an holy priesthood, and a royal

priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5). It is an enquiry into Scripture-teaching on the priesthood of Jesus the Son of God which we now propose to enter upon; and may God help us by His Spirit to approach this most glorious subject with that reverence and godly fear which it demands.

In the fourth chapter of Hebrews, the priesthood of Jesus the Son of God is presented to us in connection with the sharp and powerful searchings of the word of God, by which the thoughts and intents of the heart are discerned. The great High Priest is therefore introduced to us there to sustain and comfort us before God as His creatures, while conscious of infirmities under the scrutinizing power of His written word (Heb. 4:12-16).

In the eighth chapter of Hebrews, our High Priest is brought before us in relation to the throne of God —

set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens (Heb. 8:1).

Not only does He hold the highest place, but is seated there, because He had perfected us for ever by His one offering. Now, how could we think of approaching God's throne, unless we knew One was there who had glorified God in the accomplishment of our eternal redemption?

In the tenth chapter of the Hebrews, priesthood is again set forth concerning our being in the presence of God, our entering into the holiest. This is therefore specially connected with communion and worship. Thus

Jesus the Son of God, who is passed into the heavens {see Heb. 4:14},

is presented as a "High Priest," which "we have" when exposed to the searching qualities of "the word of God," when thinking of the infinitely holy claims of the throne of God, or entering into the holiest, the presence of God.

But observe the greatness of this Person. He is called a great High Priest, and He is declared to be Jesus the Son of God. The essential Son surely, and yet perfect man, and gone into the very glory of God —

passed through the heavens —

"Who knows what sore temptations are, For He has felt the same."

Perfect man, made of a woman, who completely did the will of Him that sent Him; yet no less God, the essential and eternal Son, who had glory with the Father before the world was; for

in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily {Col. 2:9}.

What infinite glory, perfection, almightiness, and everlastingness, therefore are in Him! What a Priest! How transcendently glorious is He! How the glory of an earthly, fallible, mortal priesthood, though in a former dispensation of divine institution, fades away before the eternal excellency of our great High Priest!

Before entering further on the contemplation of this blessed Person and His precious ministry, there are some erroneous thoughts current among Christians which call for a few remarks. The common idea that Christ is now interceding in heaven for everybody, is entirely without Scripture authority. No doubt He is the one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; but

mediation or standing between God and men for a time to avert the blow of divine vengeance, is very different from the activity of a heart going out in deepest interest toward God for blessing on the objects of His love, who have been reconciled to Him by the death of His Son. Was Aaron a high priest for any but those who were standing in relationship with God, a people who had been delivered from judgment by the blood of the lamb? Again, did not our Lord say,

I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine (John 17)?

On this point Heb. 7:25 is also very clear, for it plainly states for whom Jesus is now interceding. We are told it is

for them that come unto God by Him {see Heb. 7:25},

which certainly includes all believers on Him, and excludes all others. It is really unaccountable how Christian people have picked up the idea, that Christ is a High Priest and Intercessor for all men. But how precious is the fact that Christ sends the gospel to every creature, and that His heart in heaven is ever going forth in living ministry on the behalf of those who believe; and about this there can be no doubt, because such

come unto God by Him.

Oh the unutterable preciousness of this truth! An honored servant of the Lord once said, "If I heard Christ interceding for me in the next room, how happy it would make me! But distance makes no difference." Let us, then, dear Christian reader, lift up our hearts with joy and thanksgiving for the precious fact, that the heart of Christ on high, who ever liveth, is ever active in loving ministry on our behalf.

There are some who speak of the intercessory work of Christ in heaven as necessary to appease God's anger lest it should break loose upon us, and some who have received this error actually call on the Lord Jesus to pray for them. Such, however, have greatly mistaken God's mind on the matter. The truth is, that the same grace that moved the heart of God to give His only-begotten Son, and deliver Him up for our offences to the death of the cross, also appointed Him to the work of priesthood. We are told that

Christ glorified not Himself to be made an high priest {Heb. 5:5},

and also that

the Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec (Heb. 7:21).

Again, it is the thought of not a few that it is by Christ's sacrifice and priesthood put together that we are saved. If this were the case, then neither His work on the cross as sacrifice was perfect, nor His work on the throne as Priest; but the truth is that both are perfect, as His sitting there shows. It is because His work on the cross was finished according to the will of God that we are perfected for ever by that one offering {see Heb. 10:14}.

It therefore needs nothing to be added to it. And it is because of the everlasting efficacy of the work of the cross, never needing another offering to be added to it, that He sat down in perpetuity

on the right hand of God. This Aaron could not do. He could never sit down, because the same sacrifices needed constant repetition, and even then, however numerous, could not take away sins. The priesthood of Christ was not needed to add to the perfect efficacy of the sacrifice; for, as we have seen,

by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified (Heb. 10:14).

The fact is, that the priestly office of Christ is exercised on behalf of saved people, those who were far off, but now in Christ, and made nigh by His blood —

for them that come unto God by Him (Heb. 7:25).

Both in Aaron the typical priest, and in Christ the antitype, their functions were set in activity for the benefit of those who already stood in relationship with God.

Priesthood, too, is always

in things pertaining to God (Heb. 2:17),

not the Father, but God. He is called of God. He sat down on the right hand of God. He now appears in the presence of God, or before the face of God, for us. He intercedes for them that come unto God by Him. It is because of this that priesthood does not take up the believer's sins; for being brought to God, reconciled to God, born of God, and children of God, the question of our sins as God's children has to do with the Father. Hence the Father's injunction to His children is to

sin not;

but

if any man sin we have an Advocate with (it does not say God, but with) the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous {1 John 2:1}.

Our Advocate is the Righteous One. Priesthood then has to do with us in relation to God, and that not about sins, while advocacy has to do with us and the Father, and that too about our sins. It is very important to be clear about this; for having been cleansed from all sin by the blood of Jesus on believing, and made children of God, our path is to walk in the light, in love, in truth, in faith, and in the Spirit according to our Father's will; in fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. Any disobedience, or transgression, or failure is unsuitable to the Father, and consequently communion is broken, and we become accountable to Him, not as sinners, as we once were, but as children. Here self-judgment and confession on our part come in, and also the advocacy of the Lord Jesus, prior to restoration to the Father's fellowship. It is a question of communion, not of justification; for

by Christ all that believe are justified from all things {see Acts 13:39};

but the Father cannot give us to enjoy His fellowship while our sins and transgressions are unjudged. And, blessed be His name,

if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9),

There is also another ministry of Christ in heaven on our behalf which must not be confounded with priesthood. I refer to the Lord's washing of His disciples' feet. (See John 13.) This is not Christ as priest appearing before the face of God for us, neither is it the precious action of His advocacy with the Father about our sins; but it is a most gracious activity of our blessed Lord on our behalf to maintain us in communion with Himself; as He said to Peter,

If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me {John 13:8}.

It is the warm desire of our adorable Lord, that during His absence we may know what entering into His own love, and mind, and ways, and councils, and service are — having part with Himself. When Peter saw the blessed Lord gird Himself with a towel, take water, pour it into a basin, and begin to wash the disciples' feet, he cried out,

Thou shalt never wash my feet;

which brought from our Lord the gracious announcement already referred to, of the imperative necessity of this ministry in order to maintain us in communion with Himself.

If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me (John 13:8).

And when Peter, with equal rashness, replied,

Not my feet only, but also my hands, and my head {John 13:9},

it served to bring out from the Master's heart the true meaning of this most precious ministry.

Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit (John 13:10).

Clearly showing us that a believer in the Lord Jesus, having been completely cleansed from sin by the blood, never needs to have that process repeated; but he does need to have the defilement removed from him which he may contract in his daily walk. In other words, he that has been washed all over in a bath, needs only to have his feet washed from the defilement he may have contracted in his subsequent walk. And this charmingly illustrates one of the most blessed ministries of Christ on our behalf while He is seated on the right hand of God. It is the needed application of His word to our souls, to cleanse away from us the evil we pick up in our daily walk, so as to keep our hearts free and happy for communion with Himself. We read in Ephesians of

the washing of water by the word {Eph. 5:26}.

All this too was blessedly foreshadowed by the altar of burnt-offering and laver. After the priests had been washed all over, and sprinkled with blood, it needed never to be repeated; but after this, when they had been consecrated to the service of the sanctuary, though often handling the sacrifices, &c., they went to the laver, and washed their hands and feet, every time they went into the tabernacle of the congregation, to have to do with the things of God and the service of the sanctuary. It is a mistake therefore to suppose that when a believer is conscious of defilement, and of having failed and dishonored the Lord, that he needs, as some say, to take his place again as a sinner, and to be sprinkled again with the blood; that would be in type to go back to the altar of burnt-offering instead of the laver. But what we have here is the wondrous care of Christ Himself over us, so ministering His word as to wash our souls clean, and (as the wiping with the towel sets

forth) making us feel so comforted in His presence as to be able to go on in happy fellowship with Himself. While defilement is on our consciences, communion with our precious and infinitely holy Lord must be hindered; but He restoreth our souls, washes us with the word, and gives us again to enjoy the blessedness of His own presence with us.

But there is another character of ministry on our behalf most graciously carried on by our adorable Lord at this present time. I refer to His being the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. Not only overseeing everything concerning us, but also feeding, tending, leading us into varied pasture, guiding us in difficulties and dangers, bringing us out of mischief, and setting us right when wrong. Here also we see a difference as to the character of the ministry. The truth is that the same blessed Lord, who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, sustains various offices and exercises different ministries on our behalf. And all being conducted by the same loving heart, and the objects of all these ministries being the same persons, they must necessarily in some respects run one into another. Still their distinctness cannot be questioned, and the knowledge of all are needful in order to meet the varied need of our souls. We may say then, speaking in general terms, that the Priesthood of Christ has to do with us in things pertaining to God, and not about our sins. The advocacy of Christ has to do with the Father, and about the sins of His children. The action of washing the feet is to sustain our souls in conscious, happy communion with Christ Himself; while Christ as Shepherd cares for the state of our souls, so as to preserve us in health and strength, according to His own gracious will.

Having thus grouped together some of the precious offices of our adorable Lord, in order to show that, strictly speaking, His priesthood is not the same as His advocacy, His washing of our feet, and His shepherding of our souls, the way has been cleared to enable us to pursue our inquiry as to the priesthood of Christ in the next lecture. We can scarcely ascribe too much importance to the subject, because it has to do with the conscious sustainment of our souls day by day in the presence of God. This and every other present ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, and all our blessings, are no doubt based upon His atoning work; as we sometimes sing, and truly so —

“Our every joy on earth, in heaven,

We owe it to Thy blood.”

But while the death of Jesus is the foundation, the alone foundation, of all our confidence and hope, yet the precious lessons of divine grace do not end here; for Jesus is risen from among the dead; which shows that He has triumphed over death, and Satan, and the grave for us, as well as put away our sins; that we have been quickened together with Him, thus giving us new life, resurrection-life, life in One who is on the other side of death; a subject of the deepest comfort, and large in its wealth to our souls. But more than this, Jesus has ascended, gone into the presence of God; and there we are now, as to standing before God, complete in Him, who is our righteousness for evermore. And besides all this, as we have seen, He is our ever-living, ever-loving, ever-faithful High Priest, our Advocate, the Washer of our feet, the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. What an incalculable loss to those who are in ignorance of what the finished work of Jesus has accomplished for us, and what He is to us, and for us, now as risen and ascended! How terribly defective, not to say damaging to souls, to suppose that the proper place of a Christian is, as they say, “to be always at the foot of the cross!” It is impossible that Christians in such a state can be enjoying the peace, liberty, and triumph to which the grace of God so richly

entitles them. How can they be in the true place of separation from the world, delivered from self, and consciously true worshipers of the Father, enjoying communion with the Lord, or be free to live unto God, and have leisure to help the souls of others.

Happy indeed are those who can look back upon the cross, and adoringly praise Him for His finished work; who can look up to the throne and now

see Jesus

by faith

crowned with glory and honor {Heb. 2:9},

and delight in all He is to God there, and all He is to us and for us; happier still to be rejoicing in the glorious prospect of His soon coming to receive us unto Himself, that where He is, there we may be also.

“Oh, precious Savior! deep Thy pain

When forth the life-blood flowed,

That washed our souls from every stain,

That paid the debt we owed.

“Cleansed from our sins, renewed by grace,

Thy royal throne above,

Blest Savior, is our destined place,

Our portion there, Thy love.

“Thine eye, in that bright cloudless day,

Shall with supreme delight

Thy fair and glorious bride survey,

Unblemished in Thy sight.”

Priesthood No. 2

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16).

In considering the priesthood of the Lord Jesus, we should never forget that this most gracious office is not added as necessary to give effect to His atoning work. On the contrary, we are told that He for ever sat down on the right hand of God, because He had by His one offering (and by that alone) perfected for ever them that are sanctified. We are also told that we are sanctified by the will of God, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (Heb. 10:10, 12, 14). Therefore the believer is both sanctified and perfected for ever by the one offering of Jesus upon the tree; hence the people for whom He exercises the office of priesthood are both sanctified and perfected for ever, before His priestly functions in heaven are active on their behalf. The veil having been rent from the top to the bottom, and Jesus having gone into heaven by His own blood, He, the risen, glorified man, now appears before the face of God for us; and we, by the Spirit, in virtue of His blood, and because He is there, enter into the holiest of all, and realize what it is to be there. We are not trying to get near, for we are near. In Him most assuredly we are, as other Scriptures show; but because of the blood which speaks to us and for us, and because Jesus is there as priest, we simply and happily go into the presence of God. As we are told,

Having therefore, brethren, boldness or liberty to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus . . . and having a High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near.

And observe also it is added, that we thus draw near not to be washed and to have guilt removed, but, on the contrary, we

draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water {Heb. 10:19-22}.

In other words, it is now our unspeakable privilege to enter into the holiest of all, in conscious nearness to God, for communion and worship, because our sins are remitted, our consciences purged, the veil rent, and Jesus, in resurrection triumph and ascension glory, gone in there by His own blood, and there engaged as a merciful and faithful High Priest continually on our behalf.

In looking now at the teaching of Scripture on the functions of Jesus as our great High Priest, it is clear that His place for its exercise is the heavenlies; for us, no doubt, yea, for the very feeblest believer, for the weakest in the faith, as the precious words of the Holy Ghost plainly set forth —

for all that come unto God by Him {see Heb. 7:25}.

His priesthood was not formally exercised on earth, however sweetly the loving heart of Jesus flowed out toward His own; for if He were on earth, He should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law.

. . . But now hath He obtained a more excellent ministry (Heb. 8:4, 6).

Our High Priest then, blessed be His name, is in heaven; and among other perfections of the office, He is not a standing, but a sitting priest,

set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens (Heb. 8:1).

“In heaven itself He sits,

A heavenly priesthood His.”

He is also a High Priest

after the order of Melchisedec;

that is, not a changeable priesthood, like Aaron’s, which did not continue by reason of death, but made with an oath, and set up in perpetuity; as it is written,

The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec (Heb. 7:21).

He is thus engaged officially also, not as those of old, who were compassed with infirmity, but as one

who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens {Heb. 7:26},

and who did not need to offer sacrifice for Himself. Hence we read,

The law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore {Heb. 7:28}.

He is, moreover, like Melchisedec, a royal Priest, both King and Priest, which Aaron was not; for in millennial times

He shall sit as a Priest upon His throne (Zech. 6:13).

He is also, like Melchisedec, a blessing Priest, who brought forth bread and wine to Abraham after his battles were over, and blessed him; so will our precious Lord not only refresh and cheer our hearts by the ministry of His own grace, after all our conflicts here are ended, but will make us sweetly realize throughout all eternity that we are objects of His unchanging and everlasting blessing.

But while Jesus the Son of God will be for ever our blessing Priest, and in the day of Israel’s glory will be both their King and their Priest, He now exercises on our behalf the Aaronic functions. While the High Priest’s order is Melchisedec, being established by oath, perpetual and unchangeable, He is in some respects, as to His present activities, the antitype of Aaron, in appearing now in the presence of God for us. He is thus before the face of God for us, ever caring for and ministering to us.

If we turn to Ex. 28 we shall there see blessedly illustrated by the types drawn by the Holy Ghost, something of the meaning of Christ’s being in God’s presence for us. The whole chapter is full of the deepest possible interest, and profoundly charming and instructive; but at present we can only look at a few leading points. Let us not forget that all these things were made according to the

pattern which God showed to Moses in the mount, and that Bezaleel was energized by no less power than that of the Holy Ghost to fashion them. We can only take a brief glance at some of those glorious and beautiful shadows of our most blessed Lord.

And thou shalt take two onyx stones, and grave on them the names of the children of Israel: six of their names on one stone, and the other six names of the rest on the other stone, according to their birth. With the work of an engraver in stone, like the engravings of a signet, shalt thou engrave the two stones with the names of the children of Israel: thou shalt make them to be set in ouches of gold. And thou shalt put the two stones upon the shoulders of the ephod for stones of memorial unto the children of Israel: and Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord upon his two shoulders for a memorial. And thou shalt make ouches of gold; and two chains of pure gold at the ends; of wreathen work shalt thou make them, and fasten the wreathen chains to the ouches. And thou shalt make the breast-plate of judgment with cunning work; after the work of the ephod thou shalt make it; of gold, of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine-twined linen, shalt thou make it. Foursquare it shall be being doubled; a span shall be the length thereof, and a span shall be the breadth thereof. And thou shalt set in it settings of stones, even four rows of stones: the first row shall be a sardius, a topaz, and a carbuncle: this shall be the first row. And the second row shall be an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond. And the third row a ligure, an agate, and an amethyst. And the fourth row a beryl, and an onyx, and a jasper: they shall be set in gold in their inclosings. And the stones shall be with the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names, like the engravings of a signet; every one with his name shall they be according to the twelve tribes. And thou shalt make upon the breast-plate chains at the ends of wreathen work of pure gold. And thou shalt make upon the breast-plate two rings of gold, and shalt put the two rings on the two ends of the breast-plate. And thou shalt put the two wreathen chains of gold in the two rings which are on the ends of the breast-plate. And the other two ends of the two wreathen chains thou shalt fasten in the two ouches, and put them on the shoulder-pieces of the ephod before it. And thou shalt make two rings of gold, and thou shalt put them upon the two ends of the breast-plate in the border thereof, which is in the side of the ephod inward. And two other rings of gold thou shalt make, and shalt put them on the two sides of the ephod underneath, toward the forepart thereof, over against the other coupling thereof, above the curious girdle of the ephod. And they shall bind the breast-plate by the rings thereof unto the rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, that it may be above the curious girdle of the ephod, and that the breast-plate be not loosed from the ephod. And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breast-plate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually. And thou shalt put in the breast-plate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim: and they shall be upon Aaron's heart, when he goeth in before the Lord: and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the Lord continually. . . . And thou shalt take a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD. And thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre; upon the forefront of the mitre it shall be. And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord (Ex. 28:9-38).

Observe, in these types, that the names of the tribes of Israel were engraved both on the onyx stones and on the breast-plate. In the former, they are looked at collectively; in the latter,

individually. In one sense the Church, which is His body, or the saints, looked at in their unity, must always be presented in Him who is their Head before God; while, on the other hand, as the smallest tribe in Israel, as well as the greatest, was represented by a separate jewel and distinct engraving, so each believer is now always kept before the face of God — held up, as the shoulders show us (the place of strength), by His almighty power, as well as by His perfect love, as the breast-plate worn over the heart sets forth. Each precious stone being enclosed in gold, seems to imply that we are thus kept before our God in Christ, who is our subsisting righteousness —

Made the righteousness of God in Him {2 Cor. 5:21}.

But observe also that the shoulder-pieces are connected, divinely connected (gold being the emblem of divine righteousness) by two golden chains of wreathen work of pure gold, to assure us that the almightiness of Jesus the Son of God, and His perfect love, both combine to preserve us in righteousness and acceptance in Himself continually before the face of God. And concerning the breast-plate, we find that it was also tied underneath with a lace of blue to the rings of the ephod, that it might never slip away from the high priest's heart; so that the type of Him, the loving One, who is

the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever {Heb. 13:8},

might be most carefully preserved. Hence we read that

Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breast-plate of judgment UPON HIS HEART, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually. . . . Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel UPON HIS HEART before the Lord continually {Ex. 28:29, 30},

But there is another point to be noticed before passing from this chapter — the golden plate on which was engraved

Holiness to the Lord {Ex. 28:36},

which Aaron wore on a lace of blue on the forefront of the mitre

always {Ex. 28:38},

that he might bear the iniquity of their holy things. And surely it is the sense of our shortcomings, defects in our service, and in our most solemn acts of worship, that tend to cast us down, and would even perhaps sap our confidence, did we not see that we are always presented before God in and by Him who is holiness to the Lord, and that our service is alone acceptable to God through Him. As it was the priest's office to pluck away the crop and feathers of a sacrifice of burnt-offering of fowls, and burn the rest upon the altar, so our adorable Lord is able to take up our holy things, and present what is acceptable to God through Him.

With regard to the beautiful materials with which the breast-plate was made, we have, in the gold, blue, purple, scarlet, and fine-twined linen {see Ex. 28:15},

the personal glories of the great High Priest typically set forth. So immediately did failure and sin come in after the introduction of priesthood, that there is no reason to believe that these garments of glory and beauty were ever worn before the Lord. But we can, I trust, easily see how all will be made good, when the true Melchisedec sits as a Priest upon His throne, and all the twelve tribes of Israel are set in terrestrial glory in their proper lots in the land; and with what unspeakable glory all these typical blessednesses will shine forth in moral worth, and unfading excellence, in their true Messiah, when He reigns before His ancients gloriously. We can, also, happily enter into and enjoy the precious lessons these types and shadows read to us, as to the meaning of that blessed One having entered into heaven itself by His own blood, and now appearing before the face of God for us. And how touching to the feeblest believer to find that he is included among all those who are thus so wondrously blessed; for it is for

all who come unto God by Him {see Heb. 7:25}!

This surely every believer can say, even the weakest babe in the faith, that he comes unto God by Christ.

1. The first practical lesson for our hearts suggested by the contemplation of this glorious High Priest in heaven for us, is, that He both demands and warrants our unwavering confidence. Hence the apostle says,

Seeing then that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession {Heb. 4:14},

or let us hold fast the confession. This does not say, “Hold fast your faith,” or “Hold on in faithfulness,” blessed and important as it is to continue both in faith and faithfulness; but seeing that Christ has so taken hold of us, that, whether we are thinking of Him or not, He is faithful, He changes not — that His merciful and unwearying heart is continually taken up with us, in presenting us always before the face of God, — we cannot hesitate to confess Him as our life, righteousness, never-failing security and hope, spite of all the changes within and around in this checkered and sinful scene. Let us then “hold fast the confession.” It is His faithfulness, His grace, His abundant goodness, which is the ground of true confidence; and especially when we see that Jesus our great High Priest is presenting us, in divine righteousness, in His own acceptance before God continually. Dear Christian brethren, we do well thus to contemplate the moral perfections and excellences of our High Priest. When we grow cold and forgetful of Him, does He forget us? Never. Nothing can and nothing will ever cause Him for one moment to cease to bear us up before our God in the perfectness of His unchanging love, and in the almightiness of His everlasting strength. What an unspeakable basis of rest and confidence our God has given us in Christ Jesus!

“I change, He changes not,

My Christ can never die;

His love, not mine, the resting-place,

His truth, not mine, the tie.

I know He liveth now

At God's right hand above;

I know the throne on which He sits,

I know His truth and love."

2. The second point to notice in the functions of our precious priest in heaven is His sympathy. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities {Heb. 4:15}.

Observe, it is not sins, but infirmities; for surely that infinitely Holy One could have no sympathy with us in sin, nor could we wish Him; besides, we know that He suffered for sins. But "infirmities" are short of sins and transgressions. He knows that often our spirits are willing, but the flesh is weak; that again and again we break down through natural weakness in our efforts to serve and glorify Him. We would praise Him with untiring voice, but soon grow weary. We are sometimes sleeping when we ought to be praying; and are overcome with fatigue in His blessed service when our inner man would delight to go on much further. But Jesus knows all about us.

He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust {Psa. 103:14}.

He understands our frailty, feebleness, and shortcomings; and His heart is touched with deep consideration for us. He knows, too, what we are, not only as knowing all things, but as having lived here among men, and having had, as perfect man, thorough personal acquaintance with every element at work in man. And He is certainly not less mindful of His own dear ones now than He was then. If the sorrowing hearts of Mary and Martha drew forth tears of sympathy from their loving Savior, when He knew that in a little while Lazarus would again be by their side in all the vigor of health and brotherly affection, though He has changed His place from earth to heaven, His heart cannot love less on that account. How sweet then to be able to look up to Him, when conscious of our own infirmities, and fully to count upon Him as a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother —

"Whose heart is filled with tenderness,

Whose very name is love."

We have not then an High Priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but who is

"Touched with a sympathy within,

And knows our feeble frame";

Now in the presence of God for us,

"And, though ascended, feels afresh

What every member bears."

3. Our High Priest is also our Succourer in temptation.

In that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted (Heb. 2:18).

His watchful eye never taken off us, His heart ever caring for us, and thus being objects of His constant care and activity, there is not an advance of Satan towards us that escapes His vigilance, not a snare laid, not a fiery dart hurled, not a wile projected against the feeblest of His saints, but all is open and manifest to His all-seeing eye; and, blessed be His name, He is able to succor us. He has known terrible temptation Himself. The foul breath of the great adversary must have been exquisite suffering to His holy heart; and it is true that He did suffer thus; for

He was in all points tempted like as we are {Heb. 4:15},

sin excepted. He is then able to defeat Satan, to strengthen us to resist him, to keep us from being carried away by him, to preserve our feet from being entangled in the meshes of his net, to uphold us lest we fall, to deliver us from his wiles, to strengthen our faith to quench his fiery darts, and to enable us to stand fast in Christ, stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. How comforting then is the thought, that there is a perfect One in the glory who resisted Satan in temptation, and, through death rendered null him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, who triumphed over him in resurrection from among the dead, and who assures us that

He is able to succour them that are tempted {Heb. 2:18}.

4. Our Lord in the glory as our great High Priest is deeply concerned about our need. He is constantly saving us from the ten thousand difficulties and perplexities which cross our path. In this way He saves us to the uttermost, or right on to the end. Having saved our souls, saved us from the wrath to come, He saves us day by day from the things of men, and Satan, and the world, which sometimes threaten to swallow us up. For this, too, He is ever living to intercede for us. His intercession then as our High Priest is not about our sins, but about our need. We are therefore enjoined to

come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (Heb. 4:16).

Oh how precious is the fact that Jesus, having saved us from the wrath to come by the blood of the cross, is now pleading for us in heaven about our present need! As the Captain of our salvation, He is leading us on our way, and, unlike other captains, has actually gone before His soldiers to break down every impediment for them, and now as our great High Priest ever intercedes for us with God. He never forsakes, never forgets us, never slumbers nor sleeps, but is always active on our behalf, ever merciful and faithful, ever living to make intercession for them that come unto God by Him. He will thus carry us through every difficulty thrown in our way by men and Satan, and bring us off more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

Oh the blessedness of having such a great High Priest to sustain our hearts in happy, holy liberty in God's presence! One, too, who can sympathize with us as to our infirmities, succour us in temptation, and daily save us through His ever-living and all-prevalent intercession. How unspeakably precious to be able to look up, and see that no weakness nor failure on our part, no, not even eternity itself, can erase the graving of our names from His heart! And when we would be easily cast down with humbling views of our weakness, forgetfulness, and shortcomings, oh the unutterable blessedness of looking up and seeing that infinitely loving, faithful heart ever engaged about us, and ever presenting us before the face of God in all the virtue and fragrance of an

everlastingly anointed High Priest! And if the precious ointment, with its exquisite perfume, when poured upon the head of Aaron, ran down to the skirts of his garments, surely the precious savour of Christ must, by the Holy Ghost, rest upon every member of His body. It was the same precious anointing oil which was poured upon the sons of Aaron as upon Aaron himself; and so the same Holy Ghost that Jesus received of the Father has also been given to, and has anointed those, who are, through grace, brought into everlasting relationship with Him. But this leads us to the consideration of God's present priests on earth, which will occupy us on another occasion, if the Lord will. Meanwhile, let us not forget, that because the veil is rent, and Jesus is gone into heaven with His own blood, that there we now are, and there is our sanctuary. Because of the blood, and also because our High Priest is there, we have liberty to enter into the holiest at all times, and abide there and worship. As we sometimes sing —

“Tis finished — here our souls can rest,

His work can never fail;

By Him, our Sacrifice and Priest,

We pass within the veil.

“Within the holiest of all,

Cleansed by His precious blood,

Before the throne we prostrate fall,

And worship Thee, O God.”

Priesthood No. 3

Unto Him that loveth us, and has washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen (Rev. 1:5, 6).

Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe He is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed (1 Pet. 2:5-8).

The fact, is here plainly stated, that all those who are loved by Jesus, and washed from their sins in His own blood, are made priests unto God. They are also called

an holy priesthood {1 Pet. 2:5},

and

a royal priesthood {1 Pet. 2:9}

Their life is one of entire dependence and faith, as the apostle so forcibly expresses it —

The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me (Gal. 2:20).

But in the typical instruction of Old Testament Scriptures we have abundant details as to the characteristics, maintenance, and occupation of priests.

We know from the epistle to the Hebrews how remarkably the Aaronic high priest was a type of Jesus, our great High Priest; and we know also that Aaron's sons only were priests, and that they were chosen of God, washed, clothed, consecrated by blood, anointed with oil, and in relationship by birth with the high priest. All pretensions to priesthood apart from these realities were accounted false. When any did come forward professing to be priests, and could not trace their genealogy, they were put from the priesthood as polluted (Neh. 7:64). And when the sons of Korah sought to set aside God's order of priesthood by setting up another of their own, He caused the earth to cleave asunder and swallow them up, and all that appertained to them (Num. 16:20). The order of priests that God now has, is, as we have seen, composed of those who are washed from their sins in the blood of Jesus. Such are made priests unto God. They need no other qualification than God gives them. The order is divine. They are priests unto God. They are consecrated to the office, made priests — and in some striking particulars were remarkably set forth in type by the sons of Aaron. Let us consider a few of these similarities.

Firstly, Aaron's sons were priests by the election of God. God chose them, and no others. They were priests unto God by His gracious choice. Of all the tribes and families in Israel, no other people than the sons of Aaron could fulfil the office of priesthood. So now it has pleased God to choose those only who are washed from their sins in the blood of Jesus. Such only are made nigh to Him, and have liberty to come into His presence to minister in holy things; for

in Christ Jesus we who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:13).

Such too, according to the Father's eternal purpose and grace, were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. We are priests therefore by God's election.

Secondly, Aaron's sons were priests by birth — priests as sons of Aaron. When a son of Aaron was born, he was necessarily at a certain age a priest. No one else in Israel could be a priest. No interest, talents, wealth, or anything besides, could procure the office. These only were priests. Such only were recognized by God. They must be Aaron's sons. So now no one is a priest who is not born of God, and every one who is born of God is a priest, and every believer is this through grace; for He is born of the Spirit; he is a child of God; he is in everlasting relationship with Jesus the great High Priest. Scripture therefore speaks of us as

born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever (1 Pet. 1:23).

We are priests then by a new and spiritual birth.

Thirdly, Aaron's sons were priests by consecration — made priests unto God. They were washed.

Moses brought Aaron and His sons, and washed them with water {Lev. 8:6}.

So we are washed from our sins in the blood of Jesus — thoroughly cleansed by that blood which cleanseth us from all sin. They were clothed with garments provided by God. So we stand in Christ, who is our righteousness. Sins being thus remitted, and the conscience purged by the blood of Jesus, we can

draw near to God with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water {see Heb. 10:22}.

They were also consecrated, or set apart by God for Himself, by being sprinkled with the blood of the ram of consecration.

He brought Aaron's sons, and Moses put of the blood upon the tip of their right ear, and upon the thumbs of their right hands, and upon the great toes of their right feet: and Moses sprinkled the blood upon the altar round about. (See Lev. 8:6, 24.)

Thus they were sanctified by the blood, set apart for God and His blessed service. The right ear was marked with blood to teach us that we are to hearken to God's voice. Not to lend our ears to receive the evil and foolish communications which men would make, but amid the clatter of ten thousand conflicting voices to hearken to what God says.

A wise man will hear {Prov. 1:5}.

The blessed Lord said,

He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious (Isa. 1:4, 5).

There are two great avenues to the heart — the eye and the ear. By attracting the eye, Satan often succeeds in turning away the heart, by taking us off the true object of faith, and occupying us with something else to gratify the lust of the eye. Some of the most serious falls in Scripture have been through the lust of the eye. The other principal avenue to the heart is the ear. If Satan can get us to hearken to the voice of the flatterer or to the roar of the lion, he will often turn us away from the posture of listening to the voice of Him whose we are, and whom by grace we serve. It is then our true posture of soul to be consciously set apart for God, and for Him only, as sanctified by the blood of Jesus; and waiting upon and for Him, hearkening to His voice, we always find to be the true path of blessing.

Whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil {Prov. 1:33}.

But we should never forget that

a flattering mouth worketh ruin {Prov. 26:28},

and

a whisperer separateth chief friends {Prov. 16:28}.

The thumb of the right hand being sprinkled with blood, is no doubt to teach us that we are now to work for God, to minister according to His will; that we are set apart to be thus active in His blessed service; for we all have some service committed to us.

He gave to every man his work {see Mark 13:34};

Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ {Eph. 4:7}.

We each have ministry of some kind to carry out in faithfulness to God. We are all His children, and His servants. The hand is sprinkled with blood, sanctified, set apart for His service, and for none other. Whether therefore we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we should do all to God's glory. We are not to live unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us, and rose again. Our bodies are to be consecrated to His service. We are to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service; for we are not our own, but bought with a price; we are therefore to glorify God in our body. On these accounts also the great toe of the right foot was sprinkled with blood, to show that our walk should be in obedience to Him, every step ordered by the Lord. The ear was first sprinkled to show that we must receive all our commands and instructions from God, in order then to minister for Him, and walk with Him. We thus see that another characteristic of those priests, so typical of us, was that they were wholly set apart for God, by being sprinkled with the blood of the ram of consecration — a point of the utmost practical importance, and never to be lost sight of; and if there were no other reason, this is enough to show the utter folly and complete delusion of people being made priests by human appointment, not to refer to the exceeding sinfulness of despising God's present order of a heavenly, spiritual, holy, and royal priesthood.

But this was not all. The last point to notice in this solemn business of consecration of the priests, is, that they were anointed with oil, an unmistakable type of our being anointed with the Holy Ghost, as an inspired apostle writes:

Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath

anointed us, is God (2 Cor. 1:21);

while another apostle writes:

The anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you (1 John 2:27).

This is our power for service, and this makes the character of priesthood now to be spiritual and holy, not merely human or educational, not to say successional. The latter is but a poor caricature of the former, and not only lifeless and powerless, but, far worse than anything else, it sets aside the divine order by substituting another. Those who are God's priests now, then, are sanctified by the blood of Jesus, and anointed by the Holy Ghost.

Fourthly, Aaron's sons were in such relationship with Aaron the high priest as no others were, and were also associated with him in the service of the sanctuary. So now every believer, whether man, woman, or child, is by the new birth, and by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, brought into real relationship with Jesus our great High Priest. Being sanctified by God, and made children,

He is not ashamed to call us brethren {see Heb. 2:11}.

We are also united to Him by the Holy Ghost; so that

we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones {Eph. 5:30}.

Thus are we in spiritual and eternal relationship with Jesus now in the heavens, our life and righteousness. Moreover, having liberty to enter into the holiest of all, where Jesus acts as Minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man, we offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Him. As none but Aaron and his sons had access to the sanctuary for the service of priesthood (Moses being a type of Jesus, as mediator and king, being king in Jeshurun), so now all who are priests, and none else, have liberty to enter into the holiest where Jesus is.

Thus we see that, like Aaron's sons, believers now are priests unto God, by election, by birth, by consecration, by being in relationship with the High Priest, and associated with Him in the service of the sanctuary; the distinction between high priest and priest being always preserved. Jesus, though King of kings, as well as High Priest, has not yet come forth to reign; and we too, though both kings and priests, await His time of manifested glory ere we reign with Him. Now we exercise our priestly office, and ere long through matchless grace shall sit on thrones and wear crowns. Now we are both

an holy priesthood {1 Pet. 2:5},

and

a royal priesthood {1 Pet. 2:9};

absorbing, commanding, and satisfying object of our hearts. We thus obtain strength for service. It is communion, entering into the love and power of Christ, and finding satisfaction and delight in that same object which perfectly satisfies and now we suffer with Him, then we shall reign with Him.

Again, because they were God's priests, He provided everything for their sustenance. He prescribed what they were to eat, and what they were to abstain from, so as to be fitted for their office. To feed on what was forbidden, or to have abstained from what God ordered, would alike have rendered them incompetent for the true work of priesthood. Here also the typical instruction set forth touching the sons of Aaron is deeply instructive. The food prescribed, too, was for priests only —

a stranger shall not eat thereof {Ex. 29:33}.

The priests were to eat and be satisfied, and the remainder might not be eaten by a stranger, but it was for God; it was burnt, and offered up to God by fire.

If ought of the flesh of the consecrations, or of the bread, remain unto the morning, then thou shalt burn the remainder with fire; it shall not be eaten, because it is holy. (See Ex. 29:33, 34.)

The priests were to feed on the sacrifices, in order to be fitted for their service. Observe the divine directions:

They shall eat those things wherewith the atonement was made, to consecrate and to sanctify them {Ex. 29:33}.

This is both simple and positive. We know who has made atonement, and by what sacrifice alone it has been accomplished; and it is upon that blessed, spotless, perfect One, who loved us and gave Himself for us, that we have to feed for real strength and blessing. Remark here, that the priests were to eat; not merely to look upon and talk about, but to handle and receive, so as to derive nourishment and strength, refreshment and comfort, from the same sacrifice by which atonement had been made; thus teaching us that it is personal communion with the Lord which can alone qualify for the activities of priestly service. The believer, already washed from his sins, having a purged conscience, accepted in Christ, is therefore to find his daily strength for priestly service in drawing blessing from Him who was the one Sacrifice which was once offered. We are to feed upon Him — to taste, enjoy, and enter into the qualities, worth, perfections, and glory of Him who redeemed us by His death upon the cross, so as to be strengthened for the faithful discharge of our priestly office. "But how are we to feed upon Him?" some may ask. We reply, The written word reveals Him, and the Holy Ghost given unto us testifies of Him. Thus, pondering the Holy Scriptures in dependence on the Holy Ghost, and receiving God's thoughts in faith, we enter into the divine testimony of Jesus the Son of God — His personal glories, His finished work, what He was and is to God, what He is to us and for us; thus our hearts are gladdened, and our inner man strengthened. In this way we shall be so attracted to Him, so taken up with His perfections, that in our measure we shall be able to say,

We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth {John 1:14}.

And being occupied with Him, He will be to us the attractive, delights the heart of the Father.

Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ {1 John 1:3};

for, by the communion of the Holy Ghost, we have thoughts, feelings, joy, and rest produced in our souls in joint- participation (wondrous grace!) with those of the Father and His Son. Does the Father delight and rest in that beloved Son, who glorified Him on the earth, and finished the work which He gave Him to do? So do we. Is He an object capable of filling and satisfying the Father's heart? Assuredly He is. He is then much more than enough for our hearts. And does that beloved Son, now in the glory, delight in all the results of His accomplished work! And do not we? Does He not take deepest interest in His present work on earth, both in evangelizing and in care for His own flock? And do not we? Is He not looking forward with earnest expectation of having us with Him to behold His glory? And are not we looking and waiting for Him? And if we ponder it for a moment, we must see that the blessed Spirit, the other Comforter, who has been given by the Father to dwell in us, could not produce in us a lower order of thought, feeling, joy, and hope, than suit the Father and the Son, though our apprehensions may be small and poor. Oh the blessedness of this precious fellowship! How it kindles our hearts to go out in adoring worship and thanksgiving, attracts and sets our minds on things above where Christ sitteth, and draws us onward in testimony for Him who so richly loved us, and so willingly gave Himself for us! What a mine of wealth, what untold treasure, is wrapped up in those precious words,

They shall eat of those things wherewith the atonement was made, to consecrate and to sanctify them (Ex. 29:33)!

It has always been God's way to feed His people. In the sandy desert He rained down bread from heaven day by day, and they had only to gather up and eat of His gracious and abundant provision. When they arrived in the land flowing with milk and honey, and the manna ceased, they ate of

the old corn of the land {Josh. 5:11, 12}.

But when Jesus came and announced Himself to be

the bread of God {John 6:33}, the bread of life {John 6:35},

He said,

The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world {John 6:51}.

He is now, then, "the bread of God," and

the living bread {John 6:51};

concerning which He added,

Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth Me, shall live by Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever (John 6:56-58).

Enough has been quoted from Scripture to show the imperative importance of the believer being occupied with Christ as drawing his resources from Him, so as to be strengthened and fitted for

service; not only to do the will of God, but to do it in the spirit and mind of Christ. By feeding on the same sacrifice

wherewith the atonement was made {Ex. 29:33},

as we have seen, we are in communion with Him, we dwell in Him, and He dwells in us. His thoughts engage our minds, His grace pervades our souls, we enter into His unspeakable love, and He has a place in our hearts; thus His presence is enjoyed, and we find our place with Him in the true sanctuary inside the veil. Without this personal intercourse and communion with the Lord, we cannot possibly carry on the high and holy functions of priesthood; and though, through marvelous grace, we are objects of His untold love, washed from our sins in His blood, and have been made a royal and holy priesthood, we shall have little or no sense of it, and lose one of the highest occupations of soul, and one of the most exalted privileges that could possibly be known by us on the earth, during the absence of our precious Lord Jesus. Blessed be God, the Scriptures testify of Christ, and the Holy Ghost guides into all truth, and takes of the things of Christ and shows unto us, so that we are well furnished for the life and walk of faith through

a barren and thirsty land where no water is {see Psa. 63:1};

where, with all the bodily comforts and blessings we enjoy, there is nothing, absolutely nothing, for our souls; but in Christ we have enough to satisfy our every need, a sufficiency for every requirement. Oh the blessedness of thus finding more than we could possibly have desired or needed in Christ, instead of complaining of the dry and disappointing character of broken cisterns, and the barrenness of the desert path! Thus we can look above, and step out with quickened step and freshly-girt loins, singing —

“His word a light before us spreads,

By which our path we see;

His love, a banner o’er our heads,

From harm preserves us free.

“Jesus, the bread of life, is given

To be our daily food;

The Rock that gave the streams from heaven,

The Spirit of our God.

“Lord, ‘tis enough; we ask no more;

Thy grace around us pours

Its rich and unexhausted store,

And all its joy is ours.”

Priesthood No. 4

And the Lord spake unto Aaron, saying, Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations: and that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean; and that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses. And Moses spake unto Aaron, and unto Eleazar and unto Ithamar, his sons that were left, Take the meat-offering that remaineth of the offerings of the Lord made by fire, and eat it without leaven beside the altar: for it is most holy: and ye shall eat it in the holy place, because it is thy due, and thy sons' due, of the sacrifices of the Lord made by fire: for so I am commanded. And the wave breast and heave shoulder shall ye eat in a clean place; thou, and thy sons, and thy daughters with thee: for they be thy due, and thy sons' due, which are given out of the sacrifices of peace-offerings of the children of Israel. The heave shoulder and the wave breast shall they bring with the offerings made by fire of the fat, to wave it for a wave-offering before the Lord; and it shall be thine, and thy sons' with thee, by a statute for ever; as the Lord hath commanded (Lev. 10:8-15).

Besides abstaining from unclean things, which every Israelite was bound to do, the priests were on no account to drink wine or strong drink. This direction was simple enough, but doubtless reads to us very serious lessons. The effect of wine and strong drink is to inflame or stimulate the natural passions, which cannot be done without soul damage. Hence the Holy Ghost, by Peter, enjoins us to

abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul {1 Pet. 2:1}.

If we are doing anything for the strengthening of the passions of an evil nature, the result must be disastrous to our spiritual health, and therefore unfitting for the due exercise of our priestly office.

There are three reasons given why we should avoid thus gratifying the fleshly appetite. First, they were told not to drink wine nor strong drink, when they went into the tabernacle of the congregation,

lest ye die {Lev. 10:9}.

And what believer of any experience does not know the lethargy and dead state of soul which fleshly indulgence induces?

To be carnally minded is death {Rom. 8:6}

is surely a divine axiom, and ought to be well pondered by us. Were this principle more heeded by saints, it may be that many would be able to ascertain why they have so often to complain of indolence and deadness as regards the things of the Lord. If we would live godly, ungodliness and worldly lusts must be denied, We are quickly influenced either by good or evil, and the Spirit within us, the power of godliness, is easily grieved, and

he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption {Gal. 6:8}.

Secondly,

That ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean (Lev. 10:10).

From this we gather that another effect of fleshly ways, is to obscure spiritual vision and hinder spiritual discernment. One of the first symptoms of souls having departed from the Lord often is, that they justify what they have formerly condemned. After Samson's folly and trifling with Delilah, the first thing the Philistines did was to put his eyes out. Such blindness, too, the enemy will effect on souls who give way to fleshly indulgence; at least they will be unable to put difference between holy and unholy, between unclean and clean, qualities which are absolutely necessary for the priestly office. (See Lev. 13:2, &c.) If we would then have discernment according to God, we must abstain from fleshly lusts. Why have some dear saints such difficulty in perceiving what to others is clearly unholy and unclean in God's sight? And why is there sometimes such a difference of judgment about evil among many of the Lord's people? The answer is plain. There will be no ability to put difference between holy and unholy, when the walk is careless and fleshly habits or ways encouraged. We are told that the Hebrew Christians were unable to enter into a true discernment of the Lord's things; for they were dull of hearing. Not having been practically engaged in the due exercise of priestly functions, and turning back to legal and worldly religiousness, their discernment had been little cultivated, and the disastrous effect was most manifest to the apostle. He writes:

Of whom (speaking of the Lord Jesus) we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Heb. 5:11-14).

I have quoted the passage at length, because of its solemn importance, and also because it almost seems like a divine commentary on the subject now immediately before us. Thirdly,

That ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses (Lev. 10:11).

This point has been already anticipated by the quotation from Hebrews, where we are told that they ought to be able to teach others, instead of needing elementary teaching themselves. But this must be so, if souls are damaged by fleshly indulgence, instead of denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living a life of faith upon the Son of God, who loved us, and gave Himself for us. If we would then be lively, earnest Christians, and fit for our priestly functions, be able to discern between holy and unholy, and qualified to teach others, we must abstain from fleshly lusts, and feed upon those things wherewith the atonement was made to consecrate and to sanctify us.

Avoiding wine and strong drink for the reasons given, the priests were to eat the meat-offering in the holy place, and the peace-offering in a clean place. How significant all this is! The meat-offering shows the perfect humanity of Jesus in life, the spotless One, in whom was nothing

rough and inconsistent, but who was perfectly pure and even in all His ways, as the fine flour sets forth. That holy One was conceived by the Holy Ghost —

fine flour mingled with oil {see Lev. 2:1, 2}

— and He was anointed with the Holy Ghost, as the oil poured upon the fine flour would teach us. As, however, God only could enter into the fullness and perfections of this precious One, a

handful of the flour and of the oil {see Lev. 6:15}

was offered to God, burnt upon the altar by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Lord. The remainder was food for the priests. And here we are told they were to eat the meat-offering in a clean place. No leaven was to be with it. Nothing unclean was to be associated with it. Elsewhere we read that they were to eat it with unleavened bread, and in the holy place. As free from leaven or uncleanness, and occupied with what is unleavened and holy, in a clean place — that is, apart from every impure association, and in the holy place, or where God's presence is — the priests were to eat the meat-offering. How profoundly precious yet solemn this is! How searching too, inasmuch as it shows us that no careless walk, no unjudged evil, no association with uncleanness of any kind, can be allowed in those who are exercising the holy office of priests according to God! But if self-judged, separate from all iniquity, as purged worshipers, consecrated priests, consciously in God's presence, there occupied adoringly with the infinite perfections of Him who was represented by the fine flour anointed with oil, delighting our souls in Him, and gathering strength and grace from Him, what a deep reality and precious privilege we then know the priestly office to be! This, be it observed, is emphatically communion; for God had His part as well as the priests. So we feed on the same spotless One, in whom the Father was well pleased, and to whom we must be everlastingly thankful.

But more than this. They were not only to be occupied (typically) with the perfect man Christ Jesus in His life, but also as the One who had offered Himself without spot to God. This must also be eaten in the holy place, for the consciousness of being in God's presence, apart from every thing unsuited to Him, is necessary for true enjoyment and appreciation of the food which His abundant grace has provided for us. It is important, too, to notice the parts of the peace-offering which were set apart for their food. They were

the wave breast and the heave shoulder (Lev. 10:14).

Parts of the same victim which had been offered to God, and in which He had found a sweet savor. It is like the father who had provided the fatted calf, calling his returned prodigal to feast and rejoice with himself, saying,

Let us eat and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found: and they began to be merry {Luke 15:24}.

What a peace-offering! What holy joy! What matchless love! And, blessed be God, we may add too, what precious fellowship!

Now what are we to learn from this rich and abundant gift of “the wave breast and heave shoulder” for the priests' food, but that all the unsearchable, perfect love, as well as the almighty power of Christ, are laid open to us for our souls' everlasting consolation and strength? The breast the seat

of the affections, and the shoulder the source of power, are thus specially before us. And in feeding, the need of our souls is very precious met, by spreading out before us both the affections and strength of Him who made peace for us by the blood of His cross. And these parts too they could wave before the Lord as infinitely acceptable to Him, as well as most precious to us.

And what, beloved, I would ask, do we know of those exercises of soul in God's most holy presence? Do we enter into the unspeakable privilege of being in the holy place — inside the veil? And, when in the holiest of all, is it the ever-living Jesus there for us that attracts and delights our souls? Do we triumph in His exceeding preciousness, as well as His perfect love, and His almighty power to usward? And do we rejoice thus in Him? Can we say, In whom, though now we see Him not, yet, believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory? Oh to beware of all uncleanness! We are careful not to have a spot of defilement on our bodies, then why should we not be equally jealous as to a spot of unjudged and uncleansed evil on our souls? Without sustaining food, this blessed, happy fellowship, we must become weak and faint; but feeding on the finest of the wheat, on pure honey out of the rock, the life, and strength, and perfectness of Jesus the Lord, who has washed us from our sins in His own blood, we shall be qualified for our daily continual work of priest-hood. Thus by the word of God and Spirit we shall be tracing, entering into, and enjoying His unsearchable love, and infinite power — love that met us when dead in sins, and knows no change; power that has triumphed over all our enemies, even death itself, and taken the place of Headship over all principality and power. What joy, and peace, and vigor to our hearts the reception of these glorious realities impart! What encouragement, too, all this divine instruction gives, to keep close to the Lord Jesus! How all this grace attracts and binds our hearts to Him! How necessary, too, for how else could we be fitted for faithfully exercising our functions as priests unto God!

A few words on priestly service. Some may ask, What was their official occupation? No one could trace the inspired account of the service of the “sons of Aaron,” without being struck with how much they had to do with the sacrifices. They were constantly serving in the sanctuary —

the priests went always into the first tabernacle accomplishing the service of God (Heb. 9:6).

But they washed their hands and feet at the laver every time they went into the tabernacle, or drew near to the altar to minister (Ex. 30:19-21). They were also to order the lamps, and were in frequent association with the high priest. Moreover, as we have seen, they were sustained in their service there by feeding on the various parts of the offerings that were allotted to them. This is communion, and it forms no small part of priestly occupation.

But besides the work immediately connected with the sacrifices, and other service of the sanctuary, it was for them, on certain occasions, to sound the silver trumpets, so as to make known the will of God, as they had learned it in the place of His presence, whether for the calling of the assembly, or for the journeying of the camps. (See Num. 10:2-8.) Sure it is that only those who now know what it is to abide in the Lord Jesus — our sanctuary — living upon Him by faith, and thus by the Spirit entering into His counsels and truth, will know His mind, and be the fitting instruments of communicating it to their brethren. But observe it was not a terrifying, harsh sound that characterized this ministry, it was the sweet melody of the silver trumpet that enjoined them thus to be obedient to the divine will. We should never forget this; for it is one thing to inform our brethren of what the will of the Lord is, but it is quite another thing to do so in the way and spirit

which suits Him who is full of grace and truth.

The sons of Aaron, the priests, were to

blow an alarm {Num. 10:5, 6}

when the people were to go forward and take their journeys. And who now can enjoin their brethren to go onward and forward in their pilgrim course according to the will of God, but those who have tasted the blessing and enjoyed the privilege of being in His presence, as set apart for Him, both by the blood of Jesus, and the anointing of the Holy Ghost? How important, yea, indispensable, then, if we would really be a help and blessing to others, that we ourselves should have the comfort in our own souls of nearness to God, and happy relationship and intercourse with Him. Again,

When the congregation is to be gathered together, ye shall blow, but ye shall not sound an alarm (Num. 10:7).

And who, I would ask, are there in the present day to sound a note sufficiently clear, certain, and distinct for gathering together the members of the body of Christ, in His most precious name? Can they be any other than those who know personal communion with the Lord Himself, and the sweetness and joy of being in the sanctuary where Jesus our great High Priest is, and where His blood is ever speaking for us? Who can know, and long that others should taste, the reality and preciousness of being gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus who is in the midst, but those who realize personal intercourse with that blessed One, who is the central object of the Father's heart, the alone center of coming glories, whether celestial or terrestrial, and the only true center around which, according to the will of God, every member of the body should now by the Spirit be gathered?

Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them {Matt. 18:20},

is a cardinal truth, and as fresh and real as ever.

And further. In time of distress from the oppression of the enemy, the priests were also to blow the silver trumpet, "an alarm." And why? that they might be remembered before the Lord their God, and be saved from their enemies (Num. 10:9). How touching this is! for it shows the deep interest in the welfare of God's people, and the sympathy in time of affliction and distress those will manifest who are living in communion with the Lord Jesus, feeding in the holy place, and in a clean place, upon those things wherewith the atonement was made. Such go out in heart and soul to God on their behalf. Thus they blow the silver trumpet; for they only can intelligently discern and enter into the blessedness of going forward in His name, following Him, of being gathered together in His name, or in time of difficulty thinking of His name, and being saved from their enemies. In days of gladness, in solemn days, and in the beginning of months, the trumpets were also blown over the sacrifices of burnt-offerings and peace-offerings; for holy rejoicing cannot fail to be associated with those wondrous aspects of Jesus in His entire surrender to God, as well as for the ground that has been laid for our fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, and with one another (Num. 10:10). The priests then were the great movers in this time of rejoicing and solemn gladness.

But priestly work now is spiritual These shadows instruct us, but are not the very image. Jesus the Son of God has come, and is gone up into heaven, and has given us the Holy Ghost; and He teacheth and searcheth all things — yea, the deep things of God. We are therefore now no longer groping our way in uncertainty and obscurity; for

the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth {1 John 2:8}.

We are then

an holy priesthood {1 Pet. 2:5},

to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance {Gal. 5:22, 23};

and we are to offer up spiritual sacrifices; not carnal religiousness,

the desires of the flesh and of the mind {Eph. 2:3},

but that which is in the energy of the Holy Ghost, who glorifies Christ, in all the variety of His workings, in bringing forth fruit in its season.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise {Psa. 51:17}!

We read, too, of

sacrifices of joy {Psa. 27:6};

of

presenting our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God {see Rom. 12:1};

and we are also exhorted

by Him to offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually; that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name (Heb. 13:15).

Thus as

an holy priesthood

are we to

offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 2:5).

We are also “a royal priesthood,” to exemplify Christ in all our ways.

Ye are a royal priesthood, . . . that ye should shew forth the praises (virtues) of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9).

Thus in every relationship of life, at all times and under all circumstances, are we to walk as He walked. The office of priesthood, therefore, is not occasional, but continuous, whether looked at Godward or manward; whether in offering the sacrifice of praise to God continually, or in showing

forth the way of godliness in daily details. Like every other aspect of divine truth, the relationship is first set forth, and then the entire consecration suited to it. "The sons of Aaron," it is true, had a place of distinction before men, as well as the work of the sanctuary where God's presence was; but they were to be distinguished from others, not so much by their official trappings as by their practical nearness to the place of God's presence, and their life of consecration to Him as those who were marked with the blood and anointed with oil.

This double aspect of priesthood — "an holy priest-hood" and "a royal priesthood" — reads deeply serious and practical lessons to us. We are redeemed to God, children of God, and we are God's; not our own, but His. Hence we are to live, not unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us, and rose again. As another has said, we have a bright specimen of this double action of priesthood in Paul and Silas when at Philippi. With backs aching and bleeding with cruel scourging, and heartlessly thrust into the inner prison, with their feet made fast in the stocks, not all this suffering could check the outflow of praise from these holy priests. Even at midnight they sang praises, and not only God heard them, but the prisoners also. Thus we see the living activities of "an holy priesthood." And when in the darkness and stillness of the night God sent an earth-quake, so that the prison doors flew open, and every prisoner's bands were loosed, and the jailor himself was so terrified that he drew his sword in readiness to commit suicide, the loving voice of the "royal priest" was solemnly and quietly heard,

Do thyself no harm {Acts 16:28}!

How like the blessed Master, who loved His enemies, prayed for them, and instructed us to do the same! The Christ-like word of kindness, "Do thyself no harm," was used to bring the stout-hearted jailor down at the apostles' feet, crying out,

Sirs, what must I do to be saved? {Acts 16:30}.

The result we are familiar with. Enough has been said to illustrate the difference between "an holy priesthood" and "a royal priesthood." It is for us not only to enter into and enjoy the various relationships into which the grace of God has brought us, as in His most holy presence, but also to see how, when truly entered upon and enjoyed, they must give a complexion and a character to all our ways. If we really enjoy the blessedness of being inside the veil, where else can it put us here but

outside the camp {see Ex. 37:7, Heb. 13:13},

the religious camp? If we are conscious that we are consecrated or

made priests unto God {Rev. 1:6},

and feed upon that which He has provided for our sustenance in a clean place in His most holy presence, and offer up praise to God continually, what else could characterize us here but showing forth the virtues of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light?

Unto Him that loveth us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen {Rev. 1:5}.

The Reign of Christ

The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. The LORD at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of His wrath. He shall judge among the heathen, He shall fill the places with the dead bodies: He shall wound the heads over many countries. He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall He lift up the head (Psa. 110).

In the opening words of this psalm, the first "LORD" is in capital letters, and, when found so printed, generally indicates that it means Jehovah. The verse therefore might be read,

Jehovah said unto my Lord;

that is, Jehovah said unto Christ. This verse is frequently quoted in the New Testament. It was by it that Jesus so put the Pharisees to silence,

that no man was able to answer Him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions {Matt. 22:46}.

Our Lord searched their consciences about His own blessed person. He said,

What think ye of Christ? whose Son is He? They say unto Him, The Son of David {Matt. 22:42}.

This, so far as it went, was quite true. The blessed Lord therefore went on to say;

How then doth David in spirit call Him Lord, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call Him Lord, how is He his Son? {Matt. 22:43-45}.

This is and always has been the difficult problem for man to solve. How could Jesus be both David's Son, and David's Lord? The answer is simple enough. As David's Lord, He was the Creator of David, for God created all things by His Son; but as born of Mary, who was of the house and lineage of David, He was David's Son. This first verse, therefore, announces the coronation of Jesus, after He had accomplished redemption and rose from the dead. It is Jehovah, His God, who had forsaken Him on the cross in righteousness, because our sins were upon Him, righteously welcoming Him as the Conqueror of all our enemies, and the One who triumphed over death, Satan, and the grave, and installing Him in the highest place of honor, power, and glory.

Sit thou on My right hand {Matt. 22:44}.

As Jehovah's righteous servant, then, He is crowned with glory and honor, and there He waits till His enemies be made His footstool {Heb. 10:13}.

When the time comes for Jehovah to bid Him to arise and take to Himself His great power and reign, He will then

put all enemies under His feet {1 Cor. 15:25}.

It is important also to notice here that our Lord interprets the first verse of this beautiful little psalm as referring to Himself, and gives us David as the author. David is here speaking prophetically, and elsewhere he is called a prophet (Acts 2:29, 30); and this psalm gives us a fair specimen of the scope of Old Testament prophets. We are told that it was by the Spirit of Christ that they testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories which follow. They therefore passed from the sufferings to the glory or reign of Christ. This present interval of the church-time did not form a part of their prophetic ministry, for prophecy is connected with the earth; whereas the calling, standing, and relationships of the church are heavenly. We must not, then, expect to find any notice of the Church of God in the Old Testament prophets, except here and there typical representation, which they evidently did not and could not enter into. This psalm therefore, immediately after introducing us to the rejected Messiah, as now crowned with glory and honor, passes on to His reign over the living wicked, and the restoration of His ancient people to blessing in the earth. Let us never forget, then, that the scope of the Old Testament prophets was, as we are told, that of

the sufferings of Christ, and the glories which follow {see 1 Pet. 1:11};

but that glorious workmanship of the Holy Ghost which comes in between Christ's sufferings and reign, the Church of God — the body and bride of Christ — needed further revelation, and to be made known by different instruments, even the apostles and prophets of the New Testament (Eph. 3). To turn therefore the psalms, and the other prophesies before Christ and His apostles, into instruction concerning the church, as if it were their sphere, is to miss the mark entirely, to mistake the simple ministry of the Spirit, and to mystify some of the clearest statements of divine inspiration. Isaiah tells us that he wrote concerning Judah and Jerusalem, and David is called the sweet psalmist of Israel; and while the writings of both abound with most precious statements of the ways of faith, and pious sentences suited to God's people in every dispensation, yet there is the absence of those soul-elevating and essential doctrines of Christianity, of nearness to God, acceptance and completeness in Christ, union with Christ, and the present liberty of sonship with the veil rent, and present indwelling of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven to abide with us for ever, and such like teaching, with which the inspired epistles abound.

We find here, like in almost all the writings of the other prophets, that the Lord's judgment of His enemies — the living wicked — is connected with blessing to the Jews. While ruling in the midst of His enemies, Jehovah will send

the rod of thy strength out of Zion,

when, it is added,

thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power {Psa. 110:2, 3}.

It is impossible to apply this last sentence to the present time. By "thy people" in the prophets we are to understand God's earthly people, the Jews. Now we see they are not willing. Occasionally a solitary Jew may receive Jesus the Lord as his Savior; but as a people they still pride themselves

on the traditions of the elders, and reject the true Messiah. This is the day of divine grace. Now grace reigns through righteousness. Now enemies to God are saved, and publicans and harlots receive Christ, which self-righteous people do not. It is the glad tidings of divine grace, even to the chief of sinners, that God now preaches. But when Jesus the Lord takes unto Himself His great power and reigns, it will be emphatically the time of His power; for His enemies will be made His footstool. Then every knee will be made to bow to Him, and every tongue confess His name. Then, while treading down the wicked, reigning in righteousness, He will arise upon Israel as the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings. Then His people now not willing in this day of His grace, will be

willing in the day of His power,

and that too

in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning {Psa. 110:3}.

At the sunrise, the bringing of that day of Christ's reign into existence, the Jews will be thus blessed. Like Thomas, they will not believe till they see, though we know the sweetness of those precious words,

Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed {John 20:29}.

When the Messiah comes in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, and every eye sees Him — when those who pierced Him look up and behold Him, they will mourn, until, like Joseph in the day of his power comforted his brethren, and established them in confidence before him, by the revelation of himself, and his forgiving love, according to the will of God, so Jesus will manifest Himself to them in this the time of His power, and establish them in confidence and blessing according to the purpose and grace of God.

Observe here that the coming of the Lord for us is not named, not even alluded to, because it was not the province of Old Testament prophets to do so. The revelation of our special blessings, the calling and peculiar standing and hope of the church, were reserved for the apostles and prophets of the New Testament, those who were so gifted by the ascended Christ, the Head of the body, the church, from whom all the gifts for the edifying of the church flow down. From them we know that the revelation of the mystery, the church, was in other ages not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that is, since Jesus was glorified, and the Holy Ghost came down. It is from Paul's writings, then, we learn that Christ will descend from heaven; and we shall be changed and caught up to meet Him in the air, and so be for ever with the Lord. And this we know, from other Scriptures, must take place before the Lord is publicly manifested from heaven in flaming fire, with His mighty angels, to execute vengeance, and put all enemies under His feet. At that time we shall follow Him out of heaven (Rev. 19). I repeat, then, how closely the prophets confined their ministry to the sufferings of Christ and the glories which follow, and how silent they are about this present wonderful work of divine grace, not according to prophecy, but according to eternal purpose, in calling out the bride of Christ, and the formation of the church, which is His body. This point is not without its importance for our hearts, and helps to clear souls from much of the terrible confusion of thought and doctrine current at this time.

In turning again to the short psalm we are considering, the personal glory of the One who will thus reign is again referred to in the brief sentence,

Thou hast the dew of thy youth {Psa. 110:3}.

And surely this is none other than, though man, the unchangeable Jehovah. It is Jehovah-Jesus. Perfect as He is, and was, in every respect, neither time nor circumstances can alter Him; hence the Holy Ghost by an apostle styles Him,

Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever {Heb 13:8}.

Again, it is touched on in another psalm, and quoted in Heb. 1:

Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed. But Thou art the same, and Thy years shall have no end (Psa. 102:25-27).

His official glory as a Royal Priest is also mentioned in the

Spirit's contemplation of this scene of power and great glory:

Jehovah hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek (Psa. 110:4).

Observe here the immovable foundation of this official glory — Jehovah's oath; the perpetuity of it — “for ever”; also the royal majesty of it — “a priest . . . after the order of Melchizedek.” According to the testimony of an inspired prophet, Israel is to know Him, like Melchizedek, to be both a Priest and a King; that as Melchizedek was priest of the most high God, and king of Salem, and Scripture is silent both as to his beginning and end, he was thus a suited type of Him who is the Son of God, and abideth a Priest continually, and who, according to Zechariah,

shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne, and shall be a Priest upon His throne {Zech. 6:13}.

What glorious majesty is here! When we search the Scriptures, what reality and soundness appear! Surely He shall wear His many crowns then; for He is worthy, however much He is still despised by men. How brief the space of time may be ere all this will be realized! At the longest, it can be but a few more risings and settings of the sun before the Scripture must be verified:

Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him {Rev. 1:7}.

Not then to be mocked and wear a crown of thorns; but to wear His many crowns, be clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, and have a sharp two-edged sword proceeding out of His mouth, that with it He should smite the nations, &c.

“This earth, the scene of all His woe,

A homeless wild to thee,

Full soon upon His heavenly throne

Its rightful King shall see.

“Thou too shalt reign; He will not wear

His crown of joy alone:

And earth His royal bride shall see

Beside Him on the throne.

“Then weep no more; ‘tis all thine own,

His crown, His joy divine;

And sweeter far than all beside,

He, He Himself, is thine!”

And how solemn is the fact that

He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet {1 Cor. 15:25};

not some enemies, but all enemies; not subdue some things, but subdue all things unto Himself. Now we can sometimes scarcely distinguish between the “friends” of Jesus and His “enemies.” Now the proudest of His foes often lifts his head in defiant arrogance and effrontery. Now the boldest blasphemers of His holy name are among the prosperous of the world. Now the true friends of the Lord Jesus are often among the poor and afflicted of the land, little known and less considered; but then all will be changed. Now God is long-suffering, and preaching grace; then the Lord Jesus will reign in righteousness, and execute judgment. Now the sons of God are not manifested; but then shall they be seen reigning with Christ, and the world will know that the Father hath loved them as He loves Jesus, His beloved Son. Then how eternally wide the contrast — the friends of Jesus sharing His honor and glory for ever, while all His enemies are trodden down as ashes under the soles of His feet! How unspeakably important it is then now to be assured that we are reconciled to God, and friends of the Lord Jesus Christ!

The truth is that we were all enemies to God by wicked works — the natural heart at enmity against God and Christ: loving what Christ hates, and hating what He loves. So alienated from God were we, and such sinners by nature and practice, that we needed reconciliation to God. The ground of true peace and reconciliation was laid for us in the precious blood of Christ. He

made peace through the blood of His cross {Col. 1:20}.

Enemies therefore become true lovers of God, and friends of the Lord Jesus, by being

reconciled to God by the death of His Son {Rom. 5:10}.

Such only are Christ’s true friends. All else are His enemies, and must ere long be made His footstool. The question, then, for every one to enquire is, “Am I a friend or an enemy of the Lord Jesus?” The point is vital. Eternal consequences hang upon it. Everlasting glory or everlasting punishment depends on your being His friend or His enemy. The friends of Jesus love Him. They hearken to His sweet voice. They serve Him, and are not ashamed to confess His name before men. And He loves to hear us bear witness to Himself now during this time of His rejection. He

said,

Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God {Luke 12:8}.

We show our attachment, interest, and friendship by confessing Him. Mark, it does not say confessing religion, or confessing a creed, or confessing denominational distinction, but confessing Christ –

Whosoever shall confess Me.

And this is so precious to the Lord Himself, that He says He will confess such before the angelic hosts in heaven. Oh the blessedness of thus being reconciled to God! Every question of sin and guilt cleared, every fear removed, all the accusings of conscience having been met for us for ever on righteous, holy grounds, by the precious blood of Christ! And now, born again and indwelt by the Holy Ghost, in the hope of being caught up to meet the Lord in the air at His coming, what a real delight to our hearts it often is to take our place as His friends! May e help us in this yet more and more!

“Not half His love can I express;

Yet, Lord, with joy my lips confess,

This blessed portion I possess,

O Lamb of God, in Thee!

“Thy precious name it is I bear,

In Thee I am to God brought near,

And all the Father’s love I share,

O Lamb of God, in Thee!

“And when I in Thy likeness shine,

The glory and the praise be Thine,

That everlasting joy is mine,

O Lamb of God, in Thee!”

But how unutterably dark is the contrast of being an enemy to God and to Christ! What did Jesus say of such?

He that denieth Me before men shall be denied before the angels of God {Luke 12:9}.

Oh, how solemn for Jesus to disown any connection with that person! Not only to say to such,

I know you not {Matt. 25:12},

but to say of such before the myriads of holy angelic hosts in heaven, “I know him not.” Professor he might have been, a celebrated theologian, or an ecclesiastical dignitary of exalted position on

earth, but never reconciled to God by the death of His Son; still in his sins, with all his orthodoxy, theological acquirements, or ecclesiastical elevation, the solemn words must inevitably fall from the lips of Jesus, "I know you not"; and He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. Not all the luxury, safe custody, or power, of the most costly, most elaborate palace on earth, can keep the mightiest of royal personages from falling under the iron rod of the Son of God when He thus reigns; for we are told that

He shall strike through kings in the day of His wrath {see Psa. 110:5}.

No shams will avail then, no earth-born security can hide a soul from being detected and brought under the righteous sway of Jesus then; for He will be manifested as

the only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords {1 Tim. 6:15}.

Each person, high or low, bond or free, will then be judged according to the rule of righteousness.

He shall judge among the heathen, He shall fill the places with the dead bodies (Psa. 110:6).

And yet how few seem to believe such divine statements! It only shews how earnestly people may cling to a creed, because they have either inherited it, or adopted it as their own, without ever seriously considering its import. For instance, if you put before some people such Scriptures as those which unquestionably set forth the reign of the Lord Jesus executing His righteous vengeance upon living people, you will be often met by the reply, "I do not believe that Christ is coming again personally and visibly to act like this on the earth." And yet they often repeat as a part of their creed that "He will come to judge the quick and the dead." The word "quick," as many know, is an old English word which means "living." But when people read in Scripture that Jesus will judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom (2 Tim. 4:1), or repeat as part of their accustomed creed, "I believe that He will judge the quick and the dead," who really believes the words they read or utter? And yet nothing can be more clearly set forth in Scripture, and that over and over again, than that the Lord will sit on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens TILL His enemies be made His footstool, and that He will come forth in flaming fire, and every eye shall see Him; that He will

strike through kings in the day of His wrath, judge among the heathen, fill the places with the dead bodies {Psa. 110:5, 6}.

Moreover, at that time, according to Rev. 19 and other Scriptures, He will find the beast at the climax of his antichristian wickedness in league with the false prophet, whom the Lord will at once slay with the spirit of His mouth, and destroy with the brightness of His coming. This may be implied by the words,

He shall wound the heads over many countries (Psa. 110:6).

Sure it is that in those fearful judgments the blessed Son of man, unto whom all judgment is committed, will be executing the will of God, and in this scene of unparalleled desolation will find communion and refreshment:

He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall He lift up the head (Psa. 110:7).

How very solemn this is, and yet how clear and distinct is the warning note!

The wrath to come {Luke 3:7, 1 Thess. 1:10}

is fearful indeed; and, knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men. Happy are those who are now turned from enemies to friends, by being reconciled to God by the death of His Son; for be assured that God hath highly exalted that blessed One, who humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. And it is His determinate purpose and counsel, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, in heaven, in earth, and under the earth (the infernal regions), and that every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Remember, dear friends, that Jesus is now at God's right hand, crowned with glory and honor. There He will sit until His enemies be made His footstool. And never forget that in this awful scene He will shew no respect of persons; for He will reign in righteousness — not mercy, but righteousness; and that He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet.

Death, Life, and Glory

Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory (Col. 3:3, 4).

We can scarcely fail to be struck with the decided and unmistakable plainness of these brief but important sentences. There is no “if,” or “but,” or condition of any kind. The statements are clear and absolute; and the question which at once forces itself upon the mind is, To whom were those divinely-inspired words sent? The answer is supplied by the second verse of the first chapter:

To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse {Col. 1:2}.

We can easily see how impossible it would be to address such soul-comforting language to the inhabitants generally of an idolatrous city. We therefore find that the persons to whom this blessed epistle was written were those in that city who were “in Christ.” The first verse shows that

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God {Col. 1:1},

was the inspired writer; and the second verse, that

the saints and faithful brethren in Christ at Colosse

were the persons addressed.

It is remarkable too that Paul had not seen them. We can easily understand a spiritual servant of the Lord Jesus saying of persons with whom he was personally and intimately acquainted, “I fully expect that such and such persons will be in glory”; but to write in such a positive and decided style to persons he had never seen, needs some explanation. The reason of his thus writing was that he had heard, through a faithful servant of the Lord who had been laboring among them, that they not only professed to be Christians, but that they manifested the two cardinal points of Christianity,

faith in the Lord Jesus, and love to all the saints (see Col. 1:4).

He declared also to the apostle their

love in the Spirit (Col. 1:8).

It need scarcely be added that these activities of soul are never found in the natural man, and can be produced only by a divine work. There may be, on the one hand, much natural amiability and generous and self-denying ministry to others, without any knowledge of Christ; on the other hand, there may be a boastful faith which can remove mountains, without any sense of the love of God in Christ. But when the apostle heard of their faith in Christ Jesus, and of their love to the brethren, he was led, by the Spirit, unhesitatingly to assure them of their present standing and blessings, and of the certainty of their being with Christ in glory.

Moreover, we know that

faith worketh by love {see Gal. 5:6}.

They always go together; for they are both the fruit of the same Spirit. A man may say that he has faith; but if love to the Lord and His saints be wanting, he would only be a dead professor; for

he that loveth not knoweth not God {1 John 4:8},

and

he that loveth not his brother abideth in death {1 John 3:14}.

But it is impossible that Christ Himself should be the object of our trust, without the heart being attracted by His love; for it is His love to us which commands our confidence in Him:

We love Him, because He first loved us {1 John 4:19}.

And have not many of us in former years, when in soul- distress, had our hearts assured and comforted with those precious words:

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren {1 John 3:14}?

In John 5:24 we are taught that those who believe

have passed from death unto life;

and, as we have just seen from another Scripture, that those who love have passed from death unto life. Thus

faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints {see Col. 1:4},

are the two cardinal activities of vital Christianity; so that when the apostle had credible testimony that persons were at Colosse in whom this precious fruit of the Spirit was manifested, he recognized such a divine work in their souls, that he was able to write definitely to them,

Ye are dead (or have died), and your life is hid with Christ in God {Col. 3:3}.

Now what are we to understand by our being dead, or having died, and then as having life? for observe the order is not according to nature, that of life and death, but death first, then life. And this surely is very significant. In the previous chapter, they are spoken of as having been

dead in their sins, and in the uncircumcision of their flesh {see Col. 2:13},

which is no doubt the morally bad condition of every one naturally; afterwards the same people are said to be

dead with Christ {Col. 2:20},

which is certainly true of every believer. It is the latter point which is taken up in the text we are considering; for they had been "dead in sins," but now they are

dead to sin {Rom. 6:2},

or "dead with Christ." Thus were they all not only sinners, but such sinners by nature as to be entirely destitute of spiritual life; but now, having received Christ Jesus the Lord as their Savior, it

is their blessing to know that they have died with Christ, and are alive in Him who is the Head of all principality and power.

When the Holy Ghost works effectually in souls, He, being the Spirit of truth, must necessarily expose in us what is evil, as well as present to us the wondrous way in which the grace of God has met our need in Christ. It is the guilt of sins committed which almost always troubles souls at first: their consciences are burdened by being convicted as offenders against God. Their relief is immense when they know that all their sins were borne by Jesus, and that He suffered for them on the cross. But often, after this, their distress is deeper than ever, because they discover such evil thoughts, pride, and lust working within, as to force them eventually to conclude, that in them, that is in their flesh, dwells no good. When first they received the Lord Jesus as their Savior, and realized that God had given them remission of sins through faith in His name, they set out on an entirely new path of obedience to the word of God, and flattered themselves that they would never more be distressed about sin. But this is not the case. It is what they are, what they find within, rather than what they have done, which so troubles them now; finding in them what they hate, what they disallow, still active, which they resolve against and struggle against, but cannot obtain victory over. Spite of all their efforts and resolves, a trifle is often enough to stir up its loathsome activities. They fight against it, pray against it, redouble their efforts, make a thousand resolutions, and vainly try to overcome its manifold workings; but all their endeavors seem so powerless, that, almost in despair, they look for deliverance outside themselves, and cry out,

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? {Rom. 7:24}.

We find that it was early in man's history that the divine verdict came forth as to the springs of evil in his heart. God declared that

the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of man were only evil, and that continually {see Gen. 6:5}.

This is God's estimate of man's nature; showing the thorough depravity of every spring of thought in his heart. Consequently, the next words are,

I will destroy {Gen. 6:5};

for if man is only by nature a child of wrath, incurably bad, what else could be done with him, but to put him under the judgment of a holy God? and this judicial sentence was actually carried out by the flood. Years and even centuries passed over after this, man having been instructed and tested in various ways, when the prophet Jeremiah is heard to sound a somewhat similar note in saying,

The heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked {see Jer. 17:9}.

A long series of years, and wonderful interventions of God, again pass over, and we find the Son of God from heaven declaring to His hearers at Capernaum the humiliating truth that

the flesh profiteth nothing {John 6:63},

and that

out of the heart of man proceedeth all manner of evil {see Mark 7:21}.

But neither the Lord's own ministry, nor that of the apostles, improved man's nature; so that again an inspired apostle pronounces him as wilful and insubject as ever, saying,

The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God {1 Cor. 2:14}

and that

the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God (Rom. 8:7, 8).

All these Scriptures show that God's estimate of the natural man is that he is thoroughly undone and corrupt, yea, incurably bad; and this is no doubt why the gospel does not propose to help or improve man in the flesh, says nothing about mending an evil nature; but, on the contrary, sets forth in the most absolute way his need of redemption and life. Thus the blessed gospel declares what God is to man, and what He has done for man; it is therefore concerning His beloved Son; for He having been delivered up for our sin and guilt to the death of the cross, God has graciously provided for us, not only in the judgment of sins, but of the nature too from whence our evil thoughts and desires proceed.

We therefore read in Rom. 6 that

our old man (not our sins, but our old man) has been crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6).

This is clearly not our transgressions, but the nature that did the sins — our old man — thus substitutionally and judicially put to death —

crucified with Christ.

God has done this, in His rich sovereign grace, in giving His own Son to be made sin for us, as our substitute, to answer under divine judgment for the evil of our old Adam nature, on whom He

condemned sin in the flesh {Rom. 8:3}.

Thus when Christ was crucified we were crucified with Him; so that when Christ died, we died. We therefore read in Col. 2 of our being

dead with Christ {Col. 2:20}.

And it is when the soul receives in faith this testimony of God, he realizes at once that he is delivered from the guilt arising from the workings of this evil nature — the old man. Though the believer is still painfully sensible that the flesh is in him (and no one who is not born of God is), yet his comfort is, and victory also, that it has been judicially and righteously set aside by death, in the death of Christ his substitute. And though, when looking within, such painful discoveries are made as to compel him to cry out,

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? {Rom. 7:24}

yet, turning back to Calvary, he finds his question immediately answered in the death of Christ as his substitute; so that he praises God, and says,

I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord {Rom. 7:25}.

This is our power also over this evil nature; for as long as we are reckoning it living, and therefore resolving against it, we are ignoring what God has really done for us concerning it in the cross of Christ, and are not dealing with the old man as dead. A truth, the importance of which can scarcely be overrated, by which the believer is enjoined to have so completely done with self as to reckon himself to have died indeed unto sin, and to be alive unto God in our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:11). When this is really the case, we cannot be self-occupied, or self-confident; but having done with it, knowing it has been most righteously judged, and set aside by God in the cross of Christ, we are in perfect peace about it, find victory over it, and are free to look to the Lord for everything. The practical difficulty is to go on continually reckoning ourselves to have died unto sin, while at the same time we feel its terrible workings within. But this is our faith; for as it is not actually taken from us, but still in us, faith must reckon according to God's word and Christ's work, for it knows it has been really judged in our Substitute. While therefore we read in Rom. 8,

Ye are not in the flesh {Rom. 8:9},

but

in Christ Jesus {Rom. 8:1},

we are told in the previous chapter that the flesh is in us —

In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing {Rom. 7:18}.

Both are true. As to standing, we are not in the flesh, but in Christ Jesus; but as to fact, the flesh, in which is nothing good, is in us. Our old man is crucified with Christ, and we are dead; we are therefore not to recognize it, not to trust it, have no resources in it, but to treat it as dead — to know that we have died with Christ.

But we have LIFE; for we are in Christ, who is our life; we are alive unto God in our Lord Jesus Christ. A risen Christ, who is the other side of death, is our life; we have therefore resurrection-life, a life that lives beyond the region of death. It is not a prolonged natural life, but spiritual life; not life for a time, but for ever — eternal life; for, as we are told here, Christ is our life. It is a life therefore inseparable from a risen Christ, a glorified Savior, who has triumphed over the grave and Satan and death for us, after having answered in justice and righteousness for all our sin and guilt. This is life indeed, as imperishable as Christ Himself; for He is our life. This could not have been an actual fact till after the death of Jesus; for He tells us so. He said,

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).

Thus it is perfectly clear that the death of Christ was actually necessary to be accomplished before others could be associated with Him. Prior to His death He was solitary and alone, loving others intensely, ministering to them unceasingly; but until He died He was alone. Life in Him, union with Him, as precious realities, could not be, then, till after His death, and therefore in resurrection and ascension. Precious truth indeed for our hearts! for we are told now as a positive fact for present joy and strength, not only that we have died, but that we have life:

Your life is hid with Christ in God {Col. 3:3}.

If we remember the gracious words of our adorable Lord, we must be aware that His great object in coming was to give us this life. He said,

I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly (John 10:10).

Now what could this more abundant life mean but this spiritual life, risen life, we are now considering? It is life in the Spirit, life in Christ, eternal life, which God now gives to every one that believeth. We find, therefore, in John's first epistle, that one object which he had in writing it was, that they might know that they have eternal life.

These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life {1 John 5:13}.

It would seem that some believers in the apostle's day did not know that they had the present possession of eternal life: and how few appear to know it and enjoy it in our day! He therefore had it laid on his heart by God the Holy Ghost to write so plainly about it, that all believers might know as a present fact that they have eternal life. He tells them also that it is a free gift of God, and that it is in Christ. He says,

He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son {1 John 5:10}.

This shows the terrible profanity of the unbeliever; for God speaks, and he will not believe what God says. He then tells us what God publishes for men to believe. He says,

And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son (1 John 5:10-13).

Here two things are set before us; first, that eternal life is God's gift in rich and free mercy, as we elsewhere read,

The gift of God is eternal life through (or in) Jesus Christ our Lord {Rom. 6:23};

and secondly, that

this life is in His Son {1 John 5:11};

that is, in Him who is risen and ascended, as our text sets forth:

When Christ, who is our life, shall appear {Col. 3, 4}.

It is not merely that He has given us the present possession of eternal life — true, most blessedly true, as it is — but that this life is risen-life, and not separated from Christ Himself; for Christ is our life. Oh, how blessed this is! while he that believeth on Him hath everlasting life, yet that this life is in His Son; so while we look up into the face of the Lord Jesus in the glory, and know Him as our life, yet that same life being in us, we can assuredly say that Christ liveth in us. Our life is therefore so bound up with the Son of God, that it is further said:

He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life {1 John 5:12}.

No words can more plainly or positively express a truth so eternally solemn and vital.

We have thus seen, from the teaching of Scripture, that the believer has died with Christ, and is risen with Christ; that his present standing is not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, in Christ; that he has life, new life, risen-life, in Christ; that not in the flesh, and not of the world, all his springs and resources are in Him who is his life. Practical Christian life, therefore, consists in drawing all we need from Christ, living upon Him, and looking to Him for every thing; hence the apostle says,

The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me (Gal. 2:20).

The hope therefore of such, and we may add certainty too, is glory.

When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory {Col. 3:4}.

What assurance and confidence this inspired language imparts! Could a more decided mode of expression be used? It reminds us of our blessed Lord's saying, that

every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day {John 6:40};

for it connects the present possession of everlasting life with the certain enjoyment of future glory. And how could it possibly be otherwise? for if Christ, who is in the glory, be our life, how could He come forth in manifested glory without us? Nor is there such a thought in His loving heart; for we are sure from His own lips that He desires to have us with Him where He is. Oh the unspeakable blessedness of the hope of glory! To see His face, be with Him, and like Him, and then to come forth in manifested glory with Him, when the world will certainly know that the Father has loved us as He has loved Jesus, all to the praise of the glory of His grace, what more could we wish? That the world will see us in glory with the Lord Jesus there can be no doubt; for the sons of God will be manifested. That they will see the Lord Jesus is certain; for

behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him {Rev. 1:7}.

They will not glorify and admire us, but glorify and admire Him who has so loved us, and brought us to share His glory, They will not say then what a wonderful saint that was, but what a wonderful Christ! what amazing grace God has displayed! for

the Lord will be revealed from heaven, in flaming fire, to execute vengeance, . . . when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe {2 Thess. 1:7-10}.

Now He is glorified by His faithful ones; then He will be glorified in them. I need not say this appearing of the Lord, and our manifestation with Him, follows our having been caught up to meet Him in the air. It is public manifestation; and, blessed be God, it is a fact, whether we know its power and comfort or not, that when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory.

Abraham Offering up Isaac—Genesis 22

This was a remarkable trial of Abraham's faith. He had often been tested before, but not in this way. He had been tried by famine in the land, and failed by going down into Egypt. He had been sorely tried in family rule by being obliged to turn Ishmael out of the house. He had waited for many years in his old age for the fulfilment of the divine promise to give him a son, and, hoping against hope, accounted that God was able to perform what He had promised; so, after he had patiently endured, he received the child Isaac as God's precious and peculiar gift. But time passed on. Isaac grew up. For many years he had been the delight of fond and godly parents, and most unexpectedly the aged patriarch was called upon to give him back to God — to surrender this gift which His own sovereign mercy had bestowed. And, strange to say, in this severest trial his faith and obedience most blessedly shine forth. The reason of this, no doubt, was, that the trial met him when in communion with God. The emergency found him calling on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God, at Beer-sheba, as the concluding verses of the preceding chapter shew; so that when God called he had no question to settle, no errors to set right, no matters for self-judgment to delay him; but when God said,

Abraham,

his immediate reply was,

Here I am {Gen. 22:1}.

Let us not fail to gather from this that God may call upon us to give back to Him what we may least expect; for if He bestows gifts, is it not that we should hold them in entire subjection to His will? And happy indeed is it for those who day by day hold the blessings of God in His hands, so that when He calls for them we may be at once ready to yield them up. The moment we tenaciously grasp any of God's gifts as our own they become sources of care, and expose us to the governmental dealings of God. But to hold all God's gifts so entirely in the hands of the gracious Giver, as to leave them continually at His own disposal, is the surest way of enjoying and retaining the comfort of them,

On no account, let us forget the great importance of the state of soul in which the trial finds us. If it occur when we are occupied with self, or taken up with circumstances, or in a careless and unjudged walk, we shall be quite unprepared for the trial of our faith; so that instead of responding to the will of God, and quietly going through it with God, self-will, pride, fretfulness, and rebellion may be manifested. Even a small trial then seems too much for us, and may call for the settlement of questions of conscience by self-judgment and confession, before being able calmly to consider the matter in the presence of God. On the other hand, if the trial find us happy in God's presence, in the spirit of worship and thanksgiving, dwelling on the perfectness of divine love to us, enjoying His favor, then we unhesitatingly (however painful to nature) own the claims of God to be paramount and best, and peacefully bow to His will in child-like obedience and confidence. Let us not fail, then, to learn the lesson here set before us of the vast importance of our abiding in the

Lord Jesus, and of habitually enjoying the privileges and blessings God has graciously given to us in Him.

But it was with Abraham as it is sometimes with us, that God tried his faith in a way that he never could have expected. Isaac was a son specially given to Abraham by divine promise in his old age; could he then possibly have anticipated that he would one day be suddenly called upon to give him back to God, by offering him up as a burnt-offering? Again, all the promises of God, both as to his descendants and the nations, were given in Isaac:

In Isaac shall thy seed be called {Gen. 21:12, Heb. 11:18};

and

in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed {Gen. 22:18}.

Can it then be possible that God would have this one put to death? But the hoary-headed patriarch asks no questions. He knows that God's calls are imperative, and that His word must be implicitly obeyed; and when the man of faith was thus occupied with God, and accounting that He was able to raise him up again from the dead, he was strengthened at once to arise and obey every detail of direction for the accomplishment of His will. He knew that God is faithful, that He could not deny Himself, that the counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, and in some way or other all His own promises must be fulfilled. As on the occasion of Isaac's birth,

he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform {Rom. 4:20, 21};

so now He could go forth,

accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead {Heb. 11:19}.

It was reckoning then entirely upon the faithfulness and almighty power of God, that enabled the heavy-hearted patriarch to go forth, step by step, according to the divine command in this time of deep affliction. The trial finding him as it did occupied with God, calm and happy in His presence, he went forth looking to God, walking step by step, and day by day, according to His bidding, believing that if his beloved Isaac were bound to the altar and killed, and consumed to ashes as a burnt-offering, that He was able to raise him up from the dead, and establish all His promises in him. This was the way of faith; hence we are told,

By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac, &c. {Heb. 11:17}.

It was not reckoning upon any arm or stratagem of the flesh, not brooding over circumstances, painful, most painful to nature as they must have been, but having to do with God, the living and true God. No doubt he felt his own weakness, and his feelings must have been acutely sensitive, every emotion of affection too put to its utmost stretch; but all this only the more earnestly cast him unreservedly upon God, and, like another, he might say,

My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever {Psa. 73:26};

or again,

Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him {Job 13:15},

for faith knows no other resource or confidence.

Oh the blessedness of thus holding all our blessings in faith, at the sovereign disposal of the Giver of every good and perfect gift! Then we shall have to do with God, and take all from Him, and, confiding in His perfect and changeless love, our song will be —

“Take what Thou wilt,

we’ll ne’er repine;

E’en as the branches to the vine

Our souls will cling to Thee.”

Thus we confide in God in the time that seems to us most perilous; every murmur is hushed, and fretfulness dare not intrude upon the scene. We can

in every thing give thanks {1 Thess. 5:18};

we bless the Lord at all times, and have His praise continually on our lips —

“We praise Him for all that is past,

And trust Him for all that’s to come.”

But this cannot be the case if our hearts are not really stayed upon God, and our souls kept consciously and happily in His blessed presence. How often, alas! instead of this, when trials of faith come, they serve rather to waken us up to a sense of our own carnality, worldliness, and carelessness of walk, and drive us to self-judgment and humiliation before God, instead of manifesting the calm dignity of a faithful servant, and in quietness of soul saying,

Behold, here I am {Gen. 22:1}.

With Abraham, as we have noticed, there were no questions of walk and conduct to be settled when he was called by God. He was ready at once to hear and attend to the divine directions, which were:

Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of (Gen. 22:2).

How totally unexpected such a command must have been! How very solemn! With what point must these words have penetrated into the deepest recesses of the heart of this aged man of faith! A man of like passions with ourselves, whose very heart-strings were entwined around his precious Isaac, he stands before God, hearkens to these thrilling words, so calculated to make every fibre of his earthly tabernacle quiver, and unhesitatingly bows to Him; for he knows the Judge of all the earth must do right. Without a reply, a murmur, or uttering even a question, conscious that God’s word must be implicitly carried out at all costs, he obeys. We are told that

Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt-offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him (Gen. 22:3).

Thus we see the obedience of faith acting, as it always does, in strict subjection to the word of God. He travels along the road so plainly marked out for him day and night, with Isaac and his servants; and it was not until the third day that he first caught sight in the distance of the place where this most solemn and affecting scene was to be enacted. Then, as he had received no command from God to take any one with him to Moriah's mount but Isaac his son, he bade the servants to tarry there with the ass until they returned. He

said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you (Gen. 22:5).

Then Abraham, having laid the wood upon Isaac, took fire in his hand, and a knife, and they went both of them together. The father and his only son thus went on side by side together, until they reached

the place which God had told him of {Gen. 22:9}.

This must have been a terrible moment for the father of the faithful. But he had often proved the goodness and faithfulness of God; and distressing and unintelligible as all this at this moment may have been to him, yet he could trust God, and act according to His own word, assured that the path of obedience must be the path of blessing. Accordingly, Abraham first builds an altar; then he lays the wood in order, making it ready to consume the sacrifice; after this, he takes the darling of his heart, his precious Isaac, into his arms, and having bound him, laid him, as he would another sacrifice, on the altar upon the wood. And now the trying moment has fully come; neither parental feelings nor reasonings can rule now. The word of God was plain, and He claims obedience at all costs. The aged patriarch yields himself wholly unto God; he makes no reserve. He knew that God meant what He said; he is therefore in real earnest. The knife is at hand, and the fire ready to consume to ashes this only son whom he loved. We are told that

Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son {Gen. 22:10}.

But this is far enough for God. The patriarch's faith had been tested, and its reality proved. He had to do with God; a voice therefore calls out of heaven, to stop his uplifted arm from actually plunging the knife into the heart of his beloved son. He hears from heaven,

Abraham, Abraham;

and he said,

Here am I {Gen. 22:11};

and having thus turned to God, he hears the divine command:

Lay not thine hand upon the lad: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me (Gen. 22:12).

Thus Abraham proves again the goodness and faithfulness of God, and, like another could say,

he had seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy (see James 5:11).

It must indeed have been a joyous moment to the heart of Abraham as he loosed his son, and received him to his welcome bosom again as one raised from the dead. It was more than deliverance in respect of being saved from the unutterable pain of inflicting the fatal blow on his only and much-loved son; for he had also the consolation that God, who had tried him, had found him faithful; and he also had the testimony in his conscience that in obeying the truth at all costs he had pleased God. It was perhaps the happiest time he had ever known; for the angel called to Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said,

By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies (referring to Israel's future blessings); and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed (referring to Gentiles); because thou hast obeyed My voice (Gen. 22:15-18).

Thus the blessing of God, not only to himself, but to many, many others, is connected with his faithfulness to His own word. All, no doubt, will be established through the Seed, Christ; but we can surely gather for ourselves the profitable lesson, that if we are obedient to the word of the Lord at all costs, whatever trial it may entail, it will secure God's approval, and His blessing, both to ourselves and others.

Before looking at the typical instruction which this marvelous scene sets forth, the obedience of Isaac calls for a few remarks. Abraham is specially spoken of by the Holy Ghost as an example of family rule according to God:

I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him (Gen. 18:19).

Nor is Scripture wanting in charming examples of the family order and piety of the father of the faithful; enough surely is recorded to show that real godliness should be manifested in every department of our social as well as public life. Where family piety is wanting, we may be sure there is little if any piety elsewhere. It is easy for the natural man to be either religious or irreligious before men; but the life of faith always (not sometimes, but always) has to do with God. So it was with Abraham, and so it is with every true believer now. We cannot doubt the aged patriarch's loving attachment to Sarah. No one can survey the touching scene on the plains of Mamre, when heavenly visitors suddenly arrived at the tent door in the heat of the day, without seeing what true conjugal love and confidence subsisted between Sarah and her lord. After offering hospitality to these unknown but welcome visitors, Abraham ran at once to Sarah to bake cakes for them on the hearth, while, almost at the same moment, he commanded a servant to dress a calf which his master had selected for the entertainment of his guests. We are told that

the young man hastened to dress it {see Gen. 18:7}.

And we cannot doubt that Sarah, who is held up as an example to Christian wives, was delighted to help in thus carrying out her husband's desires to entertain their heavenly visitors. But as obedience and reverence are not the only qualities of a pious wife, so the Holy Ghost has carefully noted down for our admiration and profit that she was Abraham's helpmeet also. When Ishmael was mocking the child of promise, she evidently discerned the evil when Abraham did not, and knew better than he the will of God about it. And, though consciously in advance of her husband on this point, she did not move out of her own proper sphere to act upon it, but put it before him whom she reverently owned as lord, and waited for him to fulfil his own responsibility as ruler of the household. We are told that

Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking. Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac. And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son. And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed (Gen. 21:9-13).

The result, we know, was, that Abraham sent her and her child away. Thus we see Sarah, in her character of helpmeet, as knowing the Lord's mind concerning him who was heir according to the promise of God. About this she was exercised before God; and a wife, though a Christian, lamentably fails to fill the place allotted to her in the wisdom of God, if she lacks exercise of soul before Him as to carrying out His will in the family circle, even though there be a goodly measure of subjection and reverence manifested.

As we have noticed, Abraham is commended of God for ruling his own servants and children. We have seen in chapter 18 how readily the young man obeyed him; and, when approaching mount Moriah, the young men were commanded to tarry there with the ass until they came to them again, and verse 19 shows how obedient they were to their master's bidding. The filial subjection of Isaac, the much-loved and only son, is also remarkably set forth. Though burdened with the pile of wood necessary for consuming a burnt-offering, he freely converses with his father, saying,

Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering? {Gen. 22:7}

and seemed satisfied at being told,

My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt-offering {Gen. 22:8}.

All this shows filial confidence and love; so that when the moment arrived, he bows to his father's command to be laid on the wood, and bound to the altar as a burnt-offering. But all these points show the family piety which marked Abraham's household. The secret of power and blessing, no doubt, was his own personal walk before God, whom he knew to be his

shield and his exceeding great reward {Gen. 15:1}.

The typical instruction of this portion of divine truth has been frequently noticed. It is perhaps the only type we have in Scripture of God giving His only-begotten Son, delivering Him up for us all. And though He spared Abraham's parental feelings, He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him for our offences, and forsook Him in His deepest agony upon the cross, because our sins

were upon Him. No doubt there is significance in the expression,

They (the father and the son) went both of them together {Gen. 22:6},

while the servants were at the foot of the mountain; for in that unparalleled scene on Calvary, the transaction was between God and His only-begotten Son. They were together, and none else than those can ever fathom the mystery of God's just condemnation of sin as then and there took place. But though God spared the patriarch's feelings, the ram caught in the thicket was really offered upon that altar instead of Isaac; and when Abraham loosed his son from the altar, he received him as alive from the dead, and thus he became a type of Jesus risen. The typical instruction, moreover, is so accurately maintained that we do not see Isaac after he is loosed from the altar of burnt-offering till he comes forth again to meet his bride. And further, the record between these two events, which so strikingly portray Christ risen, ascended, and coming, remarkably sets forth almost all the leading elements at work in the world, both spiritually and temporally considered, from the resurrection of Christ to His coming to meet His bride in the air.

First of all, let us look at this marvelous scene dispensationally. After the offering up and resurrection of the only son, in a figure, Sarah dies; i.e. God's blessing to the Jews in the way of promise dies, the kingdom is tendered by Peter (Acts 3), and the death of Stephen (Acts 7) shuts the door to Israel's blessing in that way. We see also the Holy Ghost (typified by Eleazar, Abraham's servant) is sent forth to select a bride for the Heir of all things, the

only Son {Gen. 22:2, 12}

who had been on the altar of burnt-offering; and his mission is so successful in carrying out the father's will that he wins a bride for Isaac through his report of him, and leaves her not until he conducts her to the bridegroom's embrace, who during this time is occupied in intercession (Gen. 24:63-67). After this, the natural descendants of Abraham, the children of Israel, are again brought upon the scene; getting blessing through Abraham, it is true, but Isaac pre-eminent among them as the risen one and heir of all things (Gen. 25:1-15).

Then observe, during this period the world goes on its course (Gen. 23). There is death, burial, getting a grave to bury the dead out of their sight; there is also buying and selling, courtesy, kindness, and liberality too; but all is of the world, and not of the Father. Amidst it all we see the man of faith, the man that had not only been associated with the sacrifice, but with the risen one, who knew God as the Raiser of the dead, and thus disclosed to him a scene out of and beyond this region altogether. The man of faith, therefore, rises so superior to every thing here, that his bold confession before men is,

I am a stranger and a sojourner

and all I want here is a grave to

bury my dead out of my sight {Gen. 23:4};

and even that I cannot accept as a gift, but will pay the true price for. This is a noble confession.

I am a stranger;

I am not one of you; and do not desire, with all your possessions, rank, or courtesy, to be reckoned with you; for I do not belong to this scene. I am a sojourner — only here for a little while; how long or short I know not. It may be the next hour may bring commands from God to go elsewhere. This is his confession before men, and therefore he could afford to be kind and courteous, and weigh out to the sons of Heth four hundred shekels of silver, current money with the merchant, for the field in Machpelah for a possession of a burying-place.

Thus we find blessed lessons of instruction as to trial of faith, family piety, as well as typical instruction concerning the person of Christ, His accomplished work, the ways of God in different dispensations, and the true place here of those who are associated with Christ risen, and waiting for His return from heaven. The remarkable accuracy with which these typical lines have been drawn, seems enough to bow the stoutest infidel to the acknowledgment of their divine authorship; while the believer, who walks in the bright shining light of the New Testament Scriptures, cannot but be filled with joy and comfort, in tracing the unmistakable ministry of Him who knows the end from the beginning.

Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world {Acts 15:18}.

Grace, Government, and Glory

Grace and glory are God's gifts.

Jehovah,

said the psalmist,

will give grace and glory {Psa. 84:11}.

Being now saved by grace, through faith, we wait for glory; for Jesus said,

The glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given them {John 17:22}.

Now God is sending forth the gospel of His grace, by which He calls those who believe unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus; and when we are in the glory, we shall ever be to the praise of the glory of His grace.

It is because we are objects of His abundant grace, and soon to be partakers of the glory, that we are necessarily objects of His government and care. If an ancient prophet said,

The Lord will judge His people {Psa. 135:14},

an inspired apostle also enquires,

What son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? {Heb. 12:7}.

An earthly father does not discipline other people's children, but he does his own, and because they are his own. So, because we are now by grace children of God, and predestined to be thus before Him in love in eternal glory, He does of necessity exercise parental discipline and correction, and that because we are His. It is well, then, to be instructed in the Lord's mind about these things, otherwise we shall be ignorant of His ways, and have hard thoughts of God at the time we ought to be giving thanks, when, by some humbling process, He is either preparing us for the reception of further blessing, or delivering us from false refuges and carnal confidence. By such wrong thoughts the Lord is dishonored, His Spirit grieved, and our souls damaged, because we judge of the Lord's dealings with us according to sense, instead of by the light of His own revelation of Himself and His ways in the Scriptures. When rightly occupied with Him in time of trial, we may say with another —

“Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;

The clouds ye so much dread

Are big with mercy, and shall break

With blessings on your head.

“Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,

But trust Him for His grace:

Behind a frowning providence

He hides a smiling face.”

The history of Jacob furnishes us with remarkable illustrations of the three subjects we propose now to consider — Grace, Government, and Glory. The illustrations may be feeble, but they seem clear enough to set forth the importance of giving to each of them its distinctive place; for if this be not the case, we shall be mixing up in our minds present circumstances with our hope of glory, and allowing feelings and desires to decide for us, instead of God’s infallible word, whether we are objects of divine favor or not. Yet, all through Scripture, few subjects are more frequently or more distinctly brought out than Grace, Government, and Glory. May the Lord help us to consider, with reverence and godly fear, what His own word of eternal truth teaches about these things!

1. GRACE. — The apostle Paul informs us that he owed all his blessings to divine grace.

By the grace of God I am what I am {1 Cor. 15:10};

and he also says,

The grace of God bringeth salvation {Titus 2:11}.

It therefore seeks lost, helpless, and sinful ones to display itself upon; and it brings salvation, nothing less than present and eternal salvation — salvation from sins, death, judgment, Satan, and the world; and unto eternal glory, the redemption even of our bodies when Jesus comes. Such is grace. It makes no conditions, it brings everything, demands nothing, gives freely, suitably, everlastingly, thus securing endless praise and glory to God. We shall find this in its measure illustrated in Gen. 28. Jacob had proved himself to be a liar, deceiver, supplanter; and, as the fruit of his evil doings, he was now a fugitive, fleeing for his life from his brother Esau when God met with him. He was therefore justly exposed to severe punishment from the hand of God. Alone in his unhappy flight, stretched on the cold ground beneath the starry canopy of heaven, sleeping soundly on his stony pillows, with everything to condemn, and nothing to recommend him, God appeared to him in a dream. Without one upbraiding word, or asking a question of this sinful fugitive, He reveals Himself, in connection with the future glories of the kingdom, as the God of Abraham and of Isaac, and at once tells him how richly and abundantly He will bless him. He is assured not only that the vast blessings promised to Abraham and Isaac shall be continued to him, but it is added,

Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of (Gen. 28:15).

This is grace. It is God lovingly revealing Himself to one wholly undeserving of any good thing, and giving freely and abundantly according to the good pleasure of His will; and, not only pouring out blessings, but making Jacob, the utterly unworthy receiver, personally an object of divine love and constant care. The secret of this way of blessing is no doubt found in the thrice-repeated words connected with the announcement of this grace, “Thy seed”; for the way of divine grace must always be through the “seed” — Christ. Hence we read that

grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 5:21).

God is never gracious at the expense of truth or righteousness, therefore in the cross of Christ we see both the exceeding riches of His grace to us, and His unsparing righteous judgment of our sins. In this way, God was glorified in justly condemning our sin, and is also glorified in saving us; for in the cross He was both just and the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. Grace flows freely to us, therefore, through Him who thus suffered for sins to bring us to God. Every claim of divine righteousness and holiness having been thus answered for by Christ on the cross, God is now faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Let us on no account forget the thrice- repeated “thy seed” in connection with Jacob’s blessing.

Still the way of God with Jacob, blessed as it was, and serving to illustrate our subject, falls far short of the grace that has come to us. Not only were we practically wicked, opposed to God, and dead in trespasses and sins, when divine grace met us, but it brought us life, resurrection-life in Christ; so that we were quickened together, raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Besides this, we are united to Him by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, made sons of God, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, who is in us the hope of glory. This is grace indeed. It is not only that Christ has freed us from sin and guilt, but He has also brought us into partnership with Himself in all that He is and has. No marvel, then, it is said that the grace of God bringeth salvation; for it is indeed a great salvation, bringing us present remission of sins, justification from all things, sanctification, new and eternal relationships, all through that one offering by which we have been perfected for ever; so that with fullest confidence we may wait and look for the Savior. It is divine grace; all is of God; it is His grace to us, free, unconditional, and eternal.

The effects of grace may also be noticed here. We read:

Jacob awaked out of his sleep. He said, Surely the Lord is in this place. . . . This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. . . . Jacob rose up early, took his stony pillow, set it up for a pillar, poured oil upon it, called the name of that place Beth-el (house of God), and said, This stone which I have set up for a pillar shall be God’s house (see Gen. 28:16-22).

And so with us, divine grace brings such vast and eternal blessings, and so wholly undeserved, that it awakens hearts, makes us know that we are in the presence of God, exercises the conscience, and draws out our souls in worship. It brings us peace, comforts us with the sweet assurance that God is for us and not against us, and subdues and molds us to His own mind and will. It rouses our affections, quickens us into activity in His service, sets us in the posture of dependence, and bows us before God with adoring gratitude and praise. Oh, yes! —

“Grace taught our wandering feet

To tread the heavenly road;

And new supplies each hour we meet,

While traveling home to God.

“‘Twas Grace that wrote each name

In Life's eternal book;
'Twas Grace that gave us to the Lamb,
Who all our sorrows took.
"Grace all the work shall crown
Through everlasting days;
It lays in heaven the topmost stone,
And well deserves the praise."

The grace of God to us in Christ, when received into the heart, must produce mighty effects. It cannot but attract us to Him who has so loved us, while it constrains us to do those things which are pleasing in His sight. As the apostle, by the Holy Ghost, so forcibly puts it,

It teaches us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, etc. {Titus 2:12-14}.

If then there be a question in the soul as to the true ground of peace, eternal salvation, or present power for service and walk, the grace of God to us in Christ is the answer; and being now so fully blessed in Christ risen and ascended, what could such marvelous grace teach us to look for, and wait for, but God's Son from heaven? Well may we sing —

"Oh, to grace how great a debtor
Daily we're constrained to be;
Let that grace, Lord, like a fetter,
Bind our wandering hearts to Thee!"

Jacob then, as we have noticed, was blessed of God at Bethel through His abundant grace; and in after years the patriarch needed to be reminded of this, and made again and again to feel the reality of his having been so blessed of God. When Laban dealt hardly with him, the angel of God said to him in a dream,

I have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee. I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto Me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred (Gen. 31:12, 13).

On another occasion, when his heart had been well-nigh overwhelmed with family sorrow and humiliation,

God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee where thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother (Gen. 35:1).

Thus he was, directed to Bethel, and then, having erected an altar to God, to ponder His ways of grace toward Him. The children of Israel too were often reminded of how mercifully Jehovah had brought them out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. And so we are frequently instructed to

consider Him, and to remember Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood; and, like the patriarch, to consider that the God of Bethel is our God, and that Bethel is the place we should visit, and consider His marvelous grace, and how richly and fully we are blessed. It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, so that we may be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus; and no doubt one of the most blessed offices of the Holy Ghost is thus to minister Christ, and testify of Him to our hearts. How sweet then are those precious instructions of God to His servant Jacob —

and,

I am the God of Bethel; Arise, and go up to Bethel, and build there an altar, &c.

and commanded the foremost of his servants, when he met Esau, to say,

They be thy servant Jacob's; it is a present sent unto my

When we think of Jacob's course, and of the untiring mercy and goodness of God to him, is it any marvel that it is said,

Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help (Psa. 146:5)?

Jacob, however, left Bethel, and went on his journey to the people of the east. Yet, on starting on his pilgrimage, so confident was he in his own resources, that he voluntarily determined to give to God a tenth, if only God would be as good as His word. A poor beginning indeed; and, if such self-confidence be fostered, must sooner or later call for governmental interference. Still he manages for himself for many years; only it may be that he hindered his own blessing by his habit of bargaining and contriving, instead of simply trusting in his God. Yet amidst all, God, faithful to His own word, was remarkably with him in all the places he went.

After twenty years, however, tidings suddenly reached Jacob that Esau was coming to meet him, and four hundred men with him. All along this period we have no record that Jacob had judged himself, and humbled himself before God, on account of his sin in regard to Esau. The consequence was, that, being conscience-stricken with the report of Esau's approach, he was greatly afraid and distressed {Gen. 32:7}.

This was a searching moment. God knew how to reach the sore spot. It put Jacob fairly to the test, and was enough to make him manifest to himself and to others. Now let us look at this man of faith, so blessed of God, and yet so full of stratagem. What will he do? Observe his prayer. He cries to God about it, takes a low place before the God of Abraham and of Isaac, who had also spoken to and blessed him, and entreats Him to fulfil His own word in delivering him from Esau. Very good. What can be better? No doubt, if he had begun and ended here, his whole soul thus stayed upon God, all would have been well. But it was not so. He has such confidence in his own competency to manage the matter, that before he prayed unto God he resorted to a delivering contrivance of his own; and also, after his brief but orthodox prayer, he at once fled to his own inventions again. Before prayer, he divided the people with him, and the flocks, and herds, and camels, into two bands, and said,

If Esau come to the one company and smite it, then the other company shall escape {Gen. 32:8}.

This was his stratagem before prayer. It was the first thing he did. He tried to deliver himself without God; but thinking it might possibly fail, he made God his refuge too. Again, after his prayer, we are told that

he took of that which came to his hand a present for Esau his brother; two hundred she goats, and twenty he goats, two hundred ewes, and twenty rams, thirty milch camels with their colts, forty kine, and ten bulls, twenty she asses, and ten foals {Gen. 32:13-15}.

Then he arranged them to proceed in separate droves, with
a space betwixt drove and drove {Gen. 32:16},

lord Esau: and, behold, also he is behind us {Gen. 32:18}.

He commanded the second and third servant, and all that followed the droves, to speak to Esau in the same manner. Jacob also said,

I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me {Gen. 32:20}.

He appears greatly pleased with these carnal contrivances; and to complete the scheme, he sends his two wives, and two women servants, and eleven sons across the brook, and he himself tarries behind (Gen. 32:22, 23).

Thus the state of Jacob's heart is fully manifested. He is a double-minded man, trusting in God in some sense, and relying on his own plodding and contrivances as well; and this was a time when God's governmental dealing was called into action to deliver His servant from these pernicious ways, and to make him somewhat sensible of the dignity and blessing into which God in His grace had brought him.

And here let us, dear Christian brethren, solemnly and unsparingly deal with ourselves as regards our own actings; for the day of trial will make manifest the crooked workings of carnal confidence, and the infidelity of carnal stratagems, if we are bringing them into requisition, instead of simply and only relying on the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Be assured God loves us too well to encourage us in a course so destructive to our own real blessing, as alike dishonoring to Him. The bane of the present day is, that policy, even among Christians, is ranked side by side with faith. It was a saying of a godly young man, "Policy I hate; but faithfulness to God I love." Surely nothing is more clearly expressed in Scripture than that

without faith it is impossible to please God {Heb. 11:6}.

But this mixture of faith and contrivance is what is now before us, and which the truth so forcibly enjoins us to judge ourselves about. Being careful for nothing, and praying about everything, exercising faith in our gracious God who has raised up Christ from among the dead, is what He looks for, and that we should have no confidence in the flesh, its ability, resources, or righteousness. When this is the case we shall be single-eyed, and the language of our hearts will be,

My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him (Psa. 62:5).

2. GOVERNMENT. — Jacob had carried out all his contrivances, and was alone. We therefore read that

Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day (Gen. 32:24).

Here we see the governmental dealing of God with His double-minded servant. Observe, Jacob was left ALONE, and then the wrestling began. It was not, as many say, Jacob wrestling with God in order to obtain a blessing by his persevering efforts; but it is rather God wrestling with him, in order to teach Jacob that he is not so good and clever as he supposes himself to be. He was resisting God, and needed a mighty power to be put forth to subdue him. Therefore it was that Jacob's unyielding spirit needed that

the hollow of his thigh should be touched, and put out of joint, as he wrestled with him (see Gen. 32:25).

We often hear Christians say God is greatly trying them, whereas the truth is that they are trying to God, resisting His guidance, and insubject to His will; and, like Jacob, at length need to be overcome by divine power.

Jacob is now fairly broken down. He is made to feel his thorough helplessness and entire dependence. His weakness now compels him to cling to the strong for strength, and he cleaves to the Blessor for blessing; so that when the mighty Wrestler said,

Let me go, for the day breaketh; he said unto him, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me {Gen. 32:26}.

It is no longer his own competency that fills Jacob's mind, but the resources of God; and what a vast change is produced! He now takes the place of a receiver instead of a contriver, and of drawing his blessings from another in the consciousness that he had no resources in himself. With thigh out of joint, he is made to feel his own real weakness, and so entirely dependent, that he only looks for blessing from another on the ground of his own helplessness, and not by his own planning.

But further. He learns also in the school of God his own vileness. Job, when brought into the presence of God, had to learn to abhor himself, Isaiah that he was undone and unclean, and Daniel that all his comeliness had turned to corruption. And the moment this mighty Wrestler enquired of Jacob,

What is thy name?

it touched the deepest springs of his heart, reached the secret workings of conscience, so that he was obliged to reply,

My name is Jacob {Gen. 32:27},

or supplanter; as much as to say, "I am vile, for I am a supplanter." Thus he learns during one night another salutary lesson. And all now who are under divine teaching, also learn that in the flesh is nothing good, but all manner of evil, and that it cannot be trusted. These things Jacob learns, as I have said, in the presence of God; for though the Wrestler appeared to him in the similitude of "a man," he afterwards owns that he is God; for he says,

I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved (Gen. 32:30);

for surely none else could have so taught him that he was perfectly weak and thoroughly vile. In the sequel, he proved experimentally how entirely useless all his plans and stratagems were for appeasing Esau, and trying to escape his supposed anger, by taking up his own position in the rear of his long droves of cattle, his wives and children. The truth is that he had a bad conscience about Esau, and it happened to him according to the Scripture,

The wicked flee when no man pursueth {Prov. 28:1}.

But profit is always the end of God's discipline. He not only delivers from evil by exposing it to our view, and bowing our hearts before Him because of it, but He also in result gives positive blessing. It was so with Jacob. When he humbled himself as a supplanter, (owning, as we judge it did, his previous wrong toward Esau,) God exalted him. When he clung in perfect weakness to the Blessor, he obtained blessing.

Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed {Gen. 32:28}.

Thus, in helplessness and self-abasement, vile in his own eyes, a supplanter, he was a prince in God's account, and in the place of power and blessing; prevailing with God in obtaining from Him, and prevailing too in divine strength (not by human contrivances) over men, whether Esau or others.

All this time, let us remember, Jacob is alone, learning salutary and lasting, though costly, lessons. His fancied comeliness had turned to corruption, and his competency had been proved to be capable only of insubjection to God. Instead of bowing at once to Him who wrestled with him, his persevering willfulness during the night seemed to necessitate the painful process of having his thigh put out of joint, before he could take his true place of clinging to God for strength. But, when broken down and self-judged, it became at once the occasion for God to exalt His servant, and to encourage him in Himself. Blessed discipline! and somewhat illustrative of the apostle's words:

Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness (Heb. 12:6-10).

This is the activity of divine love in governmental care so as to make us partakers of further blessing. These ways of God often produce much exercise of soul; and though not pleasant at the time, nevertheless afterward, to such as are bowed before the Lord, it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

Jacob learned lessons that night at Peniel which he never forgot, and, we may add, never lost the profit of. When he actually met Esau, it was only to prove the faithfulness of God to His own gracious word of promise,

I am with thee, and will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of {see Gen. 28:15}.

Instead of Esau killing him, as he had feared, we are told that

Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept (Gen. 33:4).

After this they met at Isaac's funeral; for we read that

his sons Esau and Jacob buried him (Gen. 35:29).

Many a bitter trial Jacob had to pass through, and had need to think of Bethel, and the God of Bethel, and, halting on his thigh, he could never forget that night at Peniel. However, he was at length so conscious of his dignity and superiority, as being an object of God's gracious care and blessing, that he could courteously take the place of conferring blessing on the greatest potentate on earth, and of bowing himself out of his presence.

Jacob blessed Pharaoh {Gen. 47:10}.

Instead of courting this royal person, or coveting anything from him, he now rightly felt his real superiority over those who know not God. When the king said unto Jacob,

How old art thou?

Jacob said unto Pharaoh,

The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.

Again it is said,

And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh (Gen. 47:7-10).

Jacob's conduct was certainly very different toward Pharaoh to what it was when expecting to meet Esau; and if the latter serves to illustrate the proverb, that

the wicked flee when no man pursueth,

the former not less strikingly shows that

the righteous are bold as a lion {Prov. 28:1}.

3. A few words now on our third subject, GLORY. As we have seen, glory is a divine gift.

The glory which Thou gavest Me,

said Jesus,

I have given them {John 17:22}.

God's government of us, as we have noticed, is because of relationship, and is connected with our state and walk, the object being our profit. Rewards in the glory will, no doubt, be according to our

present faithfulness. But our being in the glory will be entirely because we have been objects of divine grace. Jesus said,

This is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise Him up at the last day (John 6:40).

Jacob sadly failed, as we know. By nature and by practice a sinner; and after God had revealed Himself to him, and blessed him, his self-confidence and habit of contriving for his own ends, instead of walking with God in all simplicity, were very manifest. But with all the needed governmental discipline by the way, he was in the end in that circle of glory of which the one who was type of the true Messiah was the center, into which he had been also most unexpectedly carried by the command and power of Him who had typically been dead and alive again, who came to meet him on the way.

Looking then at Joseph's exaltation and glory in Egypt as typical of the reign of Christ, we only now observe that the man of faith was there, and that it serves, though feebly, to illustrate the fact that those who are now the objects of God's gracious blessing, after all the vicissitudes of this present time, and all the changes of their earthly pilgrimage, are privileged to expect to be in glory with Christ,

caught up . . . to meet the Lord in the air {1 Thess. 4:17}.

Joseph had been hated and sold by his brethren, put into a pit and dungeon, and taken out again. After rejection, deep humiliation, and affliction, he was at length exalted to be set over all the land of Egypt. In all this we cannot fail to see the rejected, crucified, risen, and glorified Son of God. But more than this. When manifested in glory, his Gentile bride shares his honor, and reigns with him; his brethren, the sons of Israel, are given the fattest of the land in subjection to him; while he is governor over all the Gentiles (Egyptians). Joseph being arrayed in fine linen, with a gold chain about his neck, riding in his chariot, and ruler over all the land of Egypt, they cried before him,

Bow the knee {Gen. 41:43}.

Here again we see the various circles of glory, both terrestrial and celestial, drawn by a divine hand for our instruction. There Jacob saw Joseph's face; for

Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face {Gen. 48:11}.

And is not this our highest and sweetest hope? for what else could really satisfy our hearts? It is not only that our blessed Lord will wear His many crowns, be King of Israel, and Governor among the nations, every knee in heaven, in earth, and under the earth bowing to Him; but the precious expectation held forth by the Holy Ghost for our hearts' joy is, that we shall be with Him and like Him,

They shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads {Rev. 22:4}.

It is this surely that gives us to

rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory {1 Pet. 1:8}.

"The bride eyes not her garments,

But her dear Bridegroom's face;

I will not gaze on glory,

But on the King of Grace;

Not at the crown He giveth,

But on His pierced hand;

The Lamb is all the glory

Of Immanuel's land."

How sweet is the thought that in the ages to come, after all His governmental ways with us through the wilderness are over,

He will shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus {see Eph. 2:7}!

The End of the Lord

James 5:11

Job was an eminently pious man. God declares that there was none like him in the earth. But he needed trial. Though he feared God and eschewed evil, he really knew little of himself, or of God.

Before honour is humility {Prov. 15:33, 18:12}.

The pious patriarch needed to be brought low, in order to be lifted up; to learn the sentence of death on everything here, in order to fully trust in God who raiseth the dead.

He had sons and daughters, and his thought of them was in relation to God —

it may be,

said he, that

they have cursed God in their hearts {see Job 1:5}.

He therefore offered burnt-offerings to God according to their number. Thus did Job continually. And most blessed too is it to see that when by God's permission Job was deprived of his oxen, sheep, camels, servants, and sons, at a stroke as it were, he arose and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshiped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord (Job 1:20, 21).

This was most blessed. It showed thorough subjection to God under His bereaving hand. It manifested that this servant of the Lord was walking in the way of faith, tracing every sorrow, by whatever instrumentality it reached him, to God alone, and taking everything from His hand. And, when further affliction came, wave after wave, so that he had to relieve his bodily distress by scraping himself with a potsherd, and his wife a trouble rather than a comfort, breathing the suggestions of the great enemy of souls in advising him to

curse God and die {Job 2:9},

still his eye is so set upon God, that he turns sharply upon her, and says,

Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? (Job 2:10).

This lesson of submission was, if I may so say, in the ordinary course of a pious man. Blessed, most blessed as it is, it is not the only lesson that God has to teach. The human heart is deceitful above all things as well as desperately wicked. There are deep things of God too which the Spirit searcheth. To bow in submission to God in a great bereavement is to some not so difficult a lesson as to cease from our own wisdom, and to refuse every idea of creature righteousness, and self-sufficiency. To have a place of credit among men, among saints if you please, may lie underneath

many active energies which connect themselves with service to God, and acquiescence in heavy losses. God is the Searcher of the heart. He alone knows it thoroughly, for He alone has searched it. He teaches us that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and would have us cease from our own wisdom, and lean on Him as our only sufficiency and strength. He shows us that in the cross of Christ our old man was crucified. There He presents to us at a glance His estimate of man in the flesh. The flesh, morally, intellectually, religiously, is there seen under the judgment of God. Its fancied wisdom, righteousness, strength, desires, are there weighed in God's balance, and pronounced unfit for His presence — worthy only of death and burial. It is a deep lesson to learn, that

the flesh profiteth nothing {John 6:63};

but oh! how blessed is the fact that our sufficiency is of God, and that He hath made Christ unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, that no flesh should glory in His presence, but according as it is written,

He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord {2 Cor. 10:17}.

Job little thought when his friends came, or they either, that he was going to be submitted to a further trial. But so it was. Real sympathy doubtless prompted them; for how can we suppose that otherwise they could have sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights in silence? Besides, we are told that their object was

to mourn with him, and to comfort him {Job 2:11},

and that they lifted up their voices and wept before they came near him, and that they also rent every man his mantle, and sprinkled dust on their heads toward heaven. They saw that Job's grief was very great.

But with all this good intention, and uprightness of purpose on both sides, a serious and painful controversy ensued among these men of God. Little did either of them suspect that God was permitting them to scourge one another, in order to bring out what would otherwise have remained hidden, and to bring all in self-abasement before Him. Job thought himself aggrieved, and his friends assured themselves that they were in the right. But the Lord at the end taught every one of them most valuable lessons.

It seems as if God allowed the matter to work itself out so far, that there was manifestly no help in the creature. Then the Lord came in. Job saw faults in his friends, and they were not ignorant of failure in him. Painful sentences were uttered and retorted. It was man against man, but we read little of the Lord in all the controversy. Before the controversy, Job was habitually found at the altar of burnt offering, and so was he at the end of it; but during the painful season of intercourse of these men of God, we have no reference on either side to God's altar of burnt-offering. Surely this reads us a serious lesson; for I ask, Can there be a clearer proof of our not being in communion with the Lord, than forgetfulness of the Lamb as it had been slain? Could we be filling our mouths with carnal arguments, or be relying on the stratagems of fleshly wisdom, if we were adoringly contemplating Jesus who was crucified for sinners? Is the flesh in us laid low, while we are unmindful of its being judged and dead upon the cross? And have we power to maintain controversy or conflict, according to the mind of Christ, except we are living by the faith of the Son

of God, in communion with Him whom God hath raised from the dead, who now appears in the presence of God for us?

During the controversy, Job seems to be only before men; but when he is brought into the presence of God, instrumentally perhaps, by Elihu, then he learns profitable lessons. But, through all, God was working; He marked every word that came out, and made His own judgment most clear at the end, that none of them had spoken of Him so rightly as Job.

This pious man soon learned when in God's presence something of his own sinfulness. He said, Behold I am vile {Job 40:4}.

But this, though a good beginning, was not all that God wanted to do for him. Generalities are often easily grasped, and as easily uttered; but God must have details, if we confess our sins. The searching process therefore must go on, the hidden things of the heart must be brought so clearly to the conscience, that the soul finds relief only in confessing it all, and knows rest again at the burnt-offering.

In God's presence, as it were under God's eye, Job learned experimentally that He was Almighty, and the Searcher of every thought of the heart.

I know that thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from Thee (Job 42:2).

He seems to quote the first words the Lord uttered when He spoke to Job out of the whirlwind,

Who is he that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? {see Job 38:2}

and then makes the solemn confession of his own guiltiness,

Therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not {Job 42:3}.

This is indeed renouncing his own wisdom. But further, he goes on to say,

I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes {Job 42:5, 6}.

This is enough. The lessons, though so costly, have been learnt. He lays hands, as it were, on his own righteousness, and strength, and fancied goodness, and condemns all; yea, more than this, he sets self completely aside as vile and worthless,

I abhor myself;

and in this self-loathing frame he confesses a change of mind, "I repent." His sorrow has wrought in him a repentance not to be repented of. He lies down in self-abhorrence in dust, because he acknowledges self only fit to be laid low in the dust, and buried out of God's sight, a sinner by birth as one of Adam's fallen race, concerning whom it was said,

Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return (Gen. 3:19);

and he takes the place of ashes, as withered up under the trial of the searching fire of an infinitely holy God. Thus the patriarch comes to the end of self, when under divine teaching in God's holy

presence. It is enough; he judges himself, and needs no longer to be judged and chastened.

But more than this. He has to learn God, and the provision that He has made for such as he. While Job is thus in felt weakness and self-aborrence before the Lord, He now undertakes for His servant. Job having given everything up to God, God can now come in and plead His cause with his three friends. We are therefore told that the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite,

My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of Me the thing which is right, like my servant Job. So Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the Lord commanded them: the Lord also accepted Job {Job 42:7-9}.

How important is the last sentence,

The Lord also accepted Job {Job 42:9}.

How truly the divine statute is here fulfilled,

He that humbleth himself shall be exalted {Luke 14:11, 18:14}.

And what a profound, but simple lesson the Holy Ghost here sets before us. Observe that God still calls Eliphaz and his brethren Job's friends, and Job is seen no longer wrangling and contending with them, but crying unto God for them. This was the turning-point. Nor is this all. The time is now come that he who has been brought low shall be lifted up. Therefore it is added that

the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before {Job 42:7-10}.

Friends, substance, family, all more abundant, with the blessing of the Lord, than he knew before. Now I ask, beloved, what are we to learn from this divine narrative?

“Made Meet”

Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light (Col. 1:12).

One thing marks every variety of false religion; it is uncertainty as to salvation, which is exactly opposite to the teaching of Scripture. They all deny that the atoning work is done, that redemption has been accomplished, and the truth of new creation in Christ Jesus. It is particularly characteristic too of the present day; for even true Christians, when asked if they are children of God, or if their sins are forgiven, are very commonly satisfied to reply, “I hope so”; which really means they cannot speak with certainty about it. Those who have the most extensive opportunities of judging, know how rarely such pointed questions elicit the hearty response of simple confidence, which the unalterable word of the Lord warrants. Some think that to doubt and fear are marks of humility of mind, and judge it presumption to take the ground which the grace of God in Christ Jesus has given us. It becomes, therefore, a question of great importance as to what Scripture teaches on the subject.

We have looked in vain for a single instance in the New Testament of a child of God doubting his eternal salvation. On the contrary, it abounds with witnesses of present joy, because of the knowledge of present salvation. It is what the Holy Ghost teaches. Our blessed Lord told His disciples before He left them, that they would know their security and standing in Him. Referring to the time of the Comforter’s coming, He said to them,

In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in Me, and I in you (John 14:20).

When a poor sin-burdened woman came to our Lord and shed tears over His dear feet, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, the blessed Savior would not allow her to depart without the fullest rest of soul as to her sins and guilt. To those present He said,

Her sins, which are many, are forgiven;

and turning to her He added,

Woman, thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace (Luke 7:47-50).

Again, when a rich publican came down and received Him joyfully, the Lord also assured him that for a sin-convicted soul to receive Him whom God had sent was to have present salvation.

This day is salvation come to this house,

said He;

for the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:9, 10).

And so also taught the apostles. We find Paul, when addressing saints by the Holy Ghost on the gospel, saying,

Unto us which are saved, it is the power of God {1 Cor. 1:18};

and when writing to Timothy he exclaims,

Who hath saved us {2 Tim. 1:9}.

Again, in another epistle we find the same ground of faith maintained:

We know (not we hope, but we know) that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have (not we hope to have, but we have) a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens {2 Cor. 5:1}.

Peter, too, by the same Spirit, not only says that we rejoice in Him, whom having not seen we love, with joy unspeakable and full of glory, but, referring to present salvation, he adds,

receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls {1 Pet. 1:9}.

John also by the same Spirit says,

We know (not we hope, but we know) that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren {1 John 3:14}.

We know that we are of God {1 John 5:19}.

Quotations might be multiplied on this point, but enough has been adduced to show the unshaken confidence which formerly characterized Christians, who simply rested on the testimony of the Holy Ghost in the word of God, and the accomplished redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The same line of truth, only in more detail, is brought before us in the epistle to the Colossians. It appears that Epaphras had gone to that idolatrous city with the gospel. Some believed. This success he communicated to the apostle Paul. They had only just turned to God from idols through Christ. The two cardinal points of Christianity were very manifest in them; viz.,

faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and love unto all saints {see Col. 1:4}.

The apostle thanked God when he heard of these characteristics of true Christianity. It was not people merely saying that they believed, but as true faith in the Lord Jesus is always connected with life in the soul, being born of God, the consequence is that this life flows out in like-mindedness to Christ who is our life; they therefore love what He loves. He loves all saints; so do all that are born of God. But more than this. He learned from Epaphras that it was not merely affection which they manifested to certain persons, for after all this might be mere natural affection, but with these saints it was spiritual —

love in the Spirit {Col. 1:8}.

There could, therefore, be no mistake as to their reality; hence the apostle addresses them as “in Christ”; for all true believers not only have life, but Christ risen and ascended is their Life, they are therefore in Him. Thus Scripture now speaks only of two classes — those who are “in the flesh,” and those who are “in Christ.” Here the apostle looks at them in the new creation, where God sees them; hence in the second chapter he tells them,

Ye are complete in Him {Col. 2:10}.

In turning to the apostle's prayer, we find he asks first that they may have knowledge of God's will — have that spiritual intelligence and understanding as to God's mind, that they may be able to walk (Col. 1:9, 10). How can Christians do God's will if they do not know it? The great adversary, therefore, has gained a great step in souls when he has succeeded in hindering them from reading, and meditating on, the word of God; for God's word gives us His will. In the third chapter he exhorts them also that the word of Christ may dwell in them richly. It is impossible that the importance of habitually reading the Scriptures prayerfully, in dependence on the Holy Spirit, can be overrated; in fact, it is impossible that a believer can know how to act so as to please God without it.

Observe as to walk, it is to

walk worthy of the Lord {Col. 1:10}.

How seldom we find such a standard of walk contended for. We hear much as to "consistent walk," but such a loose, indefinite character of walk is not found in Scripture, it is "worthy of the Lord," who loved us, and gave Himself for us. This is a different thought, and silences a thousand questions as to going here or there, doing this or that. The whole point is, Is it "worthy of the Lord"?

But more than this; His heart's desire by the Holy Ghost is, that they may honor the Father as they ought for having made them fit for glory —

Giving thanks to the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light {Col. 1:12}.

The verses which follow declare that they have present redemption:

In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins {Eph. 1:7}.

Present deliverance —

who hath delivered us from the power of darkness {Col. 1:13};

— and present translation —

who hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love {see Col. 1:13}.

Here it is something more than the other blessings —

made meet {Col. 1:12}

for the inheritance. And how can it be otherwise if we are

in Christ {Col. 1:2},

yea,

complete in Him, who is the Head of all principality and power {see Col. 2:10}?

And yet how many Christians in the present day, while really in Christ, and having the atoning work of Christ as the foundation of all their hope of glory, are nevertheless looking for something yet to be done in their souls to make them meet for glory. Hence it is not uncommon to hear some speak of affliction and trial as squaring and fitting them as stones for the heavenly temple. Others

talk of the present sufferings purifying them for glory; or of ripening them, until they become like a shock of corn ready for the garner. Their souls have never entered into that precious declaration of the Holy Ghost, that the Father hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, and that our place now is thanking Him for it. That affliction doth afterward yield peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby, and that through the trials we get profit and are made partakers of His holiness, are most blessedly true; but being made meet for heaven is something not to be done, but has been done. The idea of saints getting by their trials, &c., more and more meet for glory, denies the truth of man's thorough ruin in the flesh, sets aside the workmanship of God in the new creation, and questions the full value of the redemption-work of Christ; for

by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified {Heb. 10:14}.

Scripture tells us that Christ is

made of God unto us righteousness {see 1 Cor. 1:30},

that

Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth {Rom. 10:4}.

He is also spoken of as our life —

Christ who is our life {Col. 3:4}.

If then, as we have before noticed, we are regarded by God now as not in the flesh, but in Christ, complete in Him who is our life and righteousness; and further, that God now speaks of us as accepted in Christ, and that

as Christ is, so are we in this world {see 1 John 4:17},

it becomes simple enough. All this too is traced to the Father. It was the Father who loved us and chose us in Christ, who gave us to Christ, and redeemed us by Christ; it is the Father now who welcomes us through Christ, accepts us in Christ, assures us that the cross of Christ has judicially rolled away all our sin and guilt, and evil nature too; so that now we are in the new creation, and brought into the new relationship of sons, and partakers of the divine nature.

That we wait for the redemption of the body, that change which will fashion this body of humiliation like unto His glorious body, is quite true; but as to life, forgiveness of sins, righteousness, standing, and completeness in Christ, union with Christ, the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, sonship, full title to glory, we do not wait for, because we have all this now. We are

made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light {see Col. 1:12}.

Hence we are told that

after ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory (Eph. 1:13, 14).

Beloved, have we so believed these precious truths of God as to know the joy and rest of soul, and thankfulness too, they produce? The heart then delights to sing —

“High in the Father’s house above

My mansion {abode} is prepared;

There is the home, the rest of love,

And there my bright reward.

“With Him I love, in spotless white,

In glory I shall shine;

His blissful presence my delight,

His love and glory mine.

“All taint of sin shall be removed,

All evil done away;

And I shall dwell with God’s Beloved,

Through God’s eternal day.”

The Lord's Table

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread. . . . Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils — (1 Cor. 10:16, 17, 21).

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread: and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another (1 Cor. 11:23-33).

The believer on the Lord Jesus Christ is an object of divine, unchanging love. Through an accomplished redemption, he is set in righteousness and peace before God; and new and everlasting relationships are formed, the highest and best that God could give. Because we are in Christ, who is in the very glory of God, no position could possibly be higher; and being now

children of God {Rom. 8:16, Gal. 3:26},

no relationship could be more elevated and endearing; so that, as to our position, relationships, and blessings in Christ in heavenly places, nothing could exceed what God has made us to be, and given us to enjoy. Moreover, while passing through this

barren and thirsty land, where no water is {see Psa. 63:1},

divine grace confers on us the distinguished privilege of welcoming us to

the Lord's table {1 Cor. 10:21}

to eat

the Lord's supper {1 Cor. 11:20}.

The Church of God, while on earth, could have nothing to exceed this collective character of enjoyment and blessing. As we have often said, "It is the best thing out of heaven to be together consciously and intelligently at the Lord's table, and entering into His mind about His supper." Is it

not important, then, to gather up from Scripture, as the Holy Spirit may guide, what the Lord's mind is as to this great privilege, which is so joyous and strengthening to the souls of those who can thus enter into it?

To every believer Christ is precious. Though now faith sees Him crowned with glory and honor, we remember that He was crowned with thorns; that He was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death; that He died for our sins upon the tree. The believer knows that the death of Christ is the sole basis of peace, the alone foundation of hope, the only way into the unclouded presence of God. He thankfully owns that he owes all his present and eternal blessings to the blood of the cross. He thinks of the mighty work of creation, and knows that all was brought into existence by the word of God; but, when he considers the stupendous and triumphant work of redemption, he is convinced that it could have been accomplished by nothing less than the death and blood-shedding of the Son of God. No marvel then that the death of Jesus should be of such unspeakable interest to every believer, and that it is so often brought before us in the volume of eternal truth.

In looking carefully over the Scriptures we have just read, we find

the Lord's table {1 Cor. 10:21}

spoken of in the tenth chapter (the only place in Scripture where it occurs), and the disorderly conduct of the Corinthians brought out the remarks of the apostle on the Lord's Supper in the eleventh chapter. The former gives us more the fellowship element, while the latter sets forth more of the individual exercise of soul, and condition suited to such an occasion. The reason, no doubt, why this portion of the eleventh chapter is more frequently read at such times than the verses of the tenth chapter, is because so few seem intelligently and heartily to enter into the fellowship character of it. But it is our superlative happiness, to be consciously enjoying the communion of saints at the Lord's table, while remembering Him, and showing His death till He come. Though both portions of Scripture refer to the same meeting of the saints, we cannot fail to observe some striking differences between them. The order of the chapters too must not be unnoticed, because the association or fellowship character of the Lord's table, in separation from the tables of demons, must be entered into before the soul can be rightly exercised according to the eleventh chapter. Then in the tenth chapter the cup is mentioned first. We have

the cup of blessing which we bless}

before

the bread which we break {1 Cor. 10:16}.

Now, whatever other reasons there may be for this change, it is clear, if Christian fellowship is here treated of, that its only basis can be found in that which brings us on a common level before God in peace and blessing. This has been accomplished by the blood of Christ. Here we all find a true ground of communion, both spiritual and eternal. We bless together as with one soul. We drink of the same cup.

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the
communion of the blood of Christ? {1 Cor. 10:16}

Apart from that precious blood there could be no communion; but by it a solid and everlasting basis has been laid, and we express the true ground of communion in blessing together and drinking together the same cup. Though when thus assembled we may all have had different histories and experiences, yet now, in virtue of the all-cleansing power of the blood shed for many, we are on one common ground of peace and thanksgiving. It is also emphatically a time of praise; for it is

the cup of blessing which we bless.

Again, in the tenth chapter, instead of

the body and blood of the Lord {1 Cor. 11:27},

as in the eleventh chapter, we have

the blood of (the) Christ,

and

the body of (the) Christ {1 Cor. 10:16}.

This change also has its significance. In the tenth chapter, the subjects being communion and thanksgiving at the Lord's table, the grace of God is very especially brought before us in the work of Christ, and membership of the body of Christ. Hence we read,

It is Christ that died, &c. (Rom. 8:34);

made nigh by the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:13).

It is also as the Christ that He is given to be Head over all to

the Church, which is His body (Eph. 1:20, 23).

The title of Lord brings in more the idea of dignity and authority; that of Christ the rich and abundant grace of God, in meeting us in our deepest need as sinners by His death, and giving acceptance and blessing in Him who is Head of the body, now in the heavenly places. What love!

And further, the communion of saints expressed at the Lord's table is also characterized as being in the membership of "one body," as formed and energized by "one Spirit." In breaking the same bread, and eating of the same loaf, we not only have communion together in feeding by faith upon His body given for us, but we also, in partaking of the same loaf, express our oneness in the (mystical) body. Hence we read, not only

the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

but it is added,

For we being many are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one (bread) loaf {1 Cor. 10:17}.

Breaking and eating of the same loaf is the expression of our oneness in the mystical body of Christ. And the membership of one body on earth in union with the Head in heaven, formed by the Holy Ghost come down, being an essential doctrine of Christianity, how could it have been

possible for the Lord's table to have been instituted on earth on any other ground? To the thoughtful believer it commends itself at once. It may, however, make manifest to some, how little the conscience has been up to the truth of the Lord's table, both as to its associations and what it expresses. Scripture does not speak of "members of a church," or of "the minister of a church," or of "administering the Lord's Supper"; nor could such expressions have been current among Christians, if the membership of Christ's body, the varied gifts of the Head, the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and the communion character of the Lord's table had been truly recognized.

Scripture then does teach us about the Lord's table; not the Lord's tables; for being instituted for the remembrance of Himself, on the ground of the blood once shed, for the communion of saints, and for the expression of the membership of one body, however many companies there may be, and however geographically separated, still, to faith, each and all thus gathered are consciously sitting at the Lord's table, owning too the same indwelling Spirit who has united all to Christ the Head, and to each other in Him. Saints cannot go far wrong collectively when really holding the Head.

It is the death of Christ which so especially engages us when gathered to the Lord at His table. We remember Him. We think of Him as He was. We heartily respond to His loving request,

This do in remembrance of ME {Luke 22:19, 1 Cor. 11:24, 25}.

It is the Lord Himself, who died for us, that now occupies our hearts. We shew or announce His death.

As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come {1 Cor. 11:26}.

What wonderful words — "THE LORD'S DEATH"! Let us ponder them well. The death of Him who is Lord of all, and in the highest place of authority and power! What a marvel of divine grace! What a privilege too, that now, while in our mortal bodies, we are to announce the Lord's death! Not that in so doing we are establishing anything on earth; on the contrary, we thus remember Him as those who are expecting to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. It is therefore said —

As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come.

In the Lord's Supper, then, we look back upon Jesus, the Son of man, lifted up, and are occupied with His death. It is clearly this for which the Holy Ghost gathers us together. While taken up with Himself — "ME" — it is doing that, in thus remembering Him, which especially announces His death. Our adorable Lord well knew the need of our souls in thus having Him, who poured out His soul unto death for us, in constant remembrance — in calling to mind this outflow of divine, perfect love, this basis of eternal peace, during the whole period of His absence. What praise becomes us!

It is, however, important to notice that, because of the peculiar calling, formation, and relationships of the body, the Church — which was not set up till Pentecost, nor known until revealed to Paul — it needed a special revelation from the Lord to fully declare to us His mind concerning His supper. For while all know it was instituted by the Lord Himself, as recorded in the gospels, yet there we observe that it came in after the Passover, and had a prospect kingdom-wise. The Jewish order of things not being at that time completely set aside, (for after Pentecost Peter preached that

Messiah would come, and set up the kingdom, if the nation repented, Acts 3:19,) our Lord at the supper referred to the kingdom in hope, the period of His setting up millennial blessing on the earth, saying,

I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom (Matt. 26:29).

But we are taught to shew the Lord's death till He come. Observe here, not only that the supper was instituted after the Passover, but that our Lord partook of the passover with them. He said,

With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer (Luke 22:15).

It was His service to fulfil all righteousness. Whereas at the supper, though profoundly and perfectly entering into its character in all its marvelous blessing to us, so that He gave thanks, yet instead of eating, He gave it to His disciples to eat. He said,

Take, eat {1 Cor. 11:24};

and so we eat, as knowing, He will come from heaven to take us to Himself. This needed a special revelation from the ascended Lord, to set us in the proper posture of expectancy at His table. We therefore read that the apostle Paul informed the assembly at Corinth that he had received the instruction then needed by the Church of God. He said,

I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread: and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, after He had supped

(or, In like manner also the cup, after having supped), saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me (1 Cor. 11:23-25).

Thus far the apostolic announcement is almost a narration of what took place when the Lord instituted His supper; only the supper is separated from the Passover, which preceded it, and brought out in its own proper distinctness. What follows, however, is entirely new, and remarkably suited to the special calling of the Church of God. For it is not the kingdom to be set up on earth which is given as the boundary for keeping the supper on earth; but it is the Lord's coming for us, when we shall be changed, and caught up to meet Him in the air. The inspired apostle therefore added,

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come (1 Cor. 11:26).

Living as we are between the cross and the glory — Christ crucified and Christ coming — we look back on Calvary, and remember Him; we look up by faith into heaven, and see Him, and know that we are in Him, and He in us; and we look forward to His coming, to take us to glory with Him. As therefore this hope is peculiar to the Church of God, as terminating her sojourn here, we can easily understand why we are instructed that we are to eat the Lord's Supper, and shew His death, not till the kingdom come, but till He come; for, from other Scriptures, we know that His coming for us will be before He comes out of heaven in power and great glory to establish His kingdom. It is our

happy privilege therefore, thus to remember the Lord till He come.

The vital point in the Lord's Supper is discerning the Lord's body, which we do by the exercise of faith. To eat the bread and drink of the cup as a mere formal routine is displeasing to the Lord. It is only a piece of lifeless ritualism, a kind of Christianity without Christ, alas! so fashionable and prevailing at the present time. It was this which brought such severe discipline from the Lord on so many in the Church at Corinth.

For this cause, many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

They were professing to eat the Lord's Supper, but were forgetful of the Lord —
not discerning the Lord's body (1 Cor. 11:29, 30).

A more solemn delinquency perhaps can scarcely be practiced, and could not fail to call for the Lord's discipline. It seemed common at Corinth, for the Lord's all-seeing eye detected it in many. Nor could it in any place be unnoticed by Him, with whatever outward propriety, and apparent sanctity, it might be covered. At Corinth some were sickly, others were weak, and others removed by death, for the Lord's governmental discipline was exercised on many.

For this cause, many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep (1 Cor. 11:30).

Professing then to take the Lord's Supper, and not when taking the bread and wine to discern the Lord's body, is to eat and drink the cup of the Lord unworthily, and to bring damnation (condemnation, or judgment), for such are guilty (not of, but) in respect of the body and blood of the Lord (1 Cor. 11:27, 29). They do not regard it as a sacrifice.

The Lord's Supper is also to be eaten with self-examination. Not self-examination to see whether we are good enough, prepared enough, and the like, for it is not a question as to fitness for eating or not; but having examined ourselves, we are to eat. That is, we are not to take the Lord's Supper in a careless state of mind, but to come to it in a condition of soul suited to the Lord's presence.

Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup (1 Cor. 11:28).

We are to approach the supper of the Lord with self-examination and self-judgment, that not a spot of unjudged evil may be allowed on us, the Holy Spirit be not grieved, and our Lord well pleased; for it is the Lord's presence, the Lord's table, the Lord's Supper, the body and blood of our Lord, in the perfectness of divine love, which engage us on this occasion.

But some may say, I dare not examine myself; if I did, I should make such appalling discoveries that I could not go to the Lord's table, because I should find myself so unfit. This, however, is not what we find here. It is a divine direction to

examine himself, and so let him eat;

that is, that true self-examination as to life and walk answers to that state of soul which suits the Lord on such an occasion. No doubt, when we are in the searching light of God's most holy presence in the exercise of self-examination, much will be detected which we deplore before the Lord; but are we to stay away from His supper on this account? Certainly not. But having judged ourselves, and condemned, as in His sight, every thing we have discovered contrary to His mind

we are to eat —

So let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

Therefore these precious words are added,

For if we judge ourselves, we should not be judged (1 Cor. 11:28, 31).

We should partake of the Lord's Supper then, not in a state of mere formality or carelessness, but with all solemnity, as having examined and judged ourselves, and therefore not conscious of associating any uncleanness with His presence; for how otherwise could we be enjoying the Lord and His work? If the head of a well-ordered household would have each member approach the family table with order and cleanliness, and would feel that disrespect was cast upon him by one taking his seat there bespattered with spots of defilement and carelessly attired, could our adorable Lord be less sensitive as to the state of soul with which we surround His table? Could it be a matter of indifference to Him whether or not we appeared there with unjudged evil? Most certainly not, as the Scripture before us clearly shows; yet how blessed is the divine assurance, that

if we judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

On the other hand, because the Lord loves us, and we are His own, He must govern and discipline.

As many as I love I rebuke and chasten {Rev. 3:19}.

The two lines of truth, that the Lord's people are objects of His love, and also of His government, run like parallel lines all through Scripture; nor can His ways with us be understood, unless these two lines are clearly seen. If then there be the absence of self-judgment, it will call for the Lord's governmental-judgment, or it may be the judgment of the assembly, for these three orders of judgment are found in this epistle. If the Lord's governmental interference be called for, He must judge according to His own perfect wisdom and faithfulness; but, as we have seen, this would not be needed if we judge ourselves;

but when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world (1 Cor. 11:32).

The present sphere of the Lord's judgment is the house of God, by-and-by it will be the world. Those who are not dealt with governmentally now, will be condemned with the world then. Let us never forget that our present blessing, as well as the Lord's glory, are connected with the state of soul in which we are found at the Lord's table. Our title to be there is, that we are redeemed by Christ; our blessing when there is, that our state is according to Christ, and that we are occupied with Him.

Let us then, dear fellow-Christians, have it warmly impressed upon our hearts, firstly, that there is such a precious reality as the Lord's table, which is essentially characterized by communion, and the expression of one body in the cup of blessing which we bless, and the bread which we break. Secondly, that in eating the Lord's Supper, we remember HIM, shew the Lord's death, which He would have continued "till He come." Thirdly, that the vital characteristic of being thus occupied is

discerning the Lord's body. Without this, it is

eating and drinking unworthily {1 Cor. 11:29}

— a dead observance — which may bring forth the Lord's solemn discipline. Fourthly, that the Lord looks for a condition of soul in us suited to such a happy and holy privilege, therefore should it be approached with self-examination, and, if needful, self-judgment. When this is absent, He must chasten because He loves, and because He finds associated with His name and table that which is dishonoring to Him, and unprofitable to us.

If in 1 Cor. 10 separation from the idol's temple, and from eating of the tables of demons, are pointed out as necessitated on account of the divine character of fellowship in the membership of the one body which the Lord's table sets forth, we have also in the eleventh chapter the individual exercises, condition of soul, and discipline which suit the partaking of the Lord's Supper. It is the former line of instruction that has been so lost sight of, though the latter is always of all-importance. Many pious souls no doubt know what it is as individuals to eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of the Lord, and to enjoy perhaps the supper of the Lord, who have little idea of the comprehensive import and fellowship character set forth by the cup and the loaf. In this they come short of the Lord's mind. Self likes individuality, even in a pious path, for it suits self-love and gratifies nature. But while the Lord holds each saint individually accountable, and has set each in personal dependence on, and responsibility to, Himself, yet He has established a fellowship of saints divine in its character, for which He has wrought in us by the Holy Ghost, and for which also we are accountable to Him. While individually the objects of His love and care, we are also

members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones {Eph. 5:30},

and

members one of another {Rom. 12:5}.

Our present profit and blessing are surely in carrying out the Lord's mind in all things. We must not close our eyes to the spurious imitations and corruptions of the truth which surround us. May the Lord keep us faithful to Himself!

The practical question for each of our souls is, Do I recognize, according to Scripture, the Lord's table? and am I, when there, entering into the Lord's mind about it? Characterized as His table is by the communion of the blood of Christ, and the communion of the body of Christ, how necessarily it excludes all who do not believe in Him to the saving of the soul! How distinctly also the divine character of fellowship in the membership of "one body," of which Christ is Head, separates us from every other fellowship, and leaves no room for any official administration of it! Failure there has been and may be; but when the soul has the sense of being at the Lord's table, how can anything dishonoring to Him be excused or tolerated? And when the divine membership of the body of Christ is realized, how could any other membership be allowed? Impossible. And this communion is holy and real.

The bread (not that is administered, but) which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? {1 Cor. 10:16}.

When we are intelligently sitting at the Lord's table, breaking and eating the same loaf, and drinking of the same cup, we enjoy communion of saints in no less a circle than the membership of one body of which Christ is Head, so that every saint in Christ Jesus is an object of our hearts affections, and interests. This is not sectarianism; it is exactly the reverse, because it embraces all saints. The ground is not narrower than the membership of the "one body," nor can it in faithfulness to Christ be wider. Oh for constant and unfeigned subjection to the Lord's will!

The Epistle to the Church at Philippi

In considering any book of Scripture, it is most helpful to have a knowledge of some particular line of truth of which it treats. For instance, Ephesians sets forth most blessedly the Church of God, the body of Christ; Colossians, the glories of the Head of the body, and the mischievous results of not holding the Head. In Galatians, the apostle contends most uncompromisingly for the finished work of Christ — glorying in the cross, as separating us from the world, putting an end to all fleshly pretensions, and refusing everything supplemental to the work of Christ as subversive of it, and damaging to souls. In Philippians, we have devotedness prominently set forth. There is much more, no doubt, in all these epistles; but in these remarks we refer to prominent points.

In turning to Philippians, some may be ready to ask, What are we to understand by devotedness? To which we reply, Did not our Lord refer to this subject when He said,

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me {Luke 9:23}?

Devotedness is heartily yielding ourselves to the claims of Christ, and therefore refusing the claims of self, and of the world. In a word, devotedness is following Christ, walking as He walked.

You will observe that this epistle is addressed to those who are in Christ —

To all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi {Phil. 1:1},

as we read in the first verse. This is surely where God began with us —

When we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, . . . and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus {Eph. 2:5, 6}.

This is the beginning of our history as saints, and is the starting- point of true devotedness. A person cannot be said to be intelligently on the ground of devotedness, till he enters, by faith, upon this new position, which God has given him as a new creation in Christ Jesus.

This is again alluded to in the third chapter, where four characteristics of true Christians are grouped together.

1. With such there is no question of mending, or improving man in the flesh. The death of Christ forbids the thought. On the contrary, we have judged

the flesh, with its affections and lusts {see Gal. 5:24},

to be so irremediably bad, that we have accepted its crucifixion under the judgment of God, with Christ, and set it aside as unfit for God or His service —

We are the circumcision {Phil. 3:3}.

2. We so know God in Christ as the Giver of His Son, and the source of all our blessings, that our hearts adoringly go out to Him in praise —

We worship God in the Spirit {Phil. 3:3}.

3. We so know Him who has loved us, and glorified God in our redemption, as to delight in the infinite glory of His person, and His highest exaltation —

We rejoice in Christ Jesus {Phil. 3:3}.

4. Seeing God's estimate of our old man in the cross, we refuse the claims of the flesh, its resources and pretensions, as unworthy of our trust; and that not only as regards flesh in ourselves, but as in any one else —

We have no confidence in the flesh {Phil. 3:3}.

It is plain, then, that the starting point of all true devotedness is the apprehension of our new standing, position, and relationships “as in Christ Jesus.”

The energy of devotedness is connected with rejoicing in the Lord. Apart from Him we are perfect weakness.

Without me,

said Jesus to His disciples,

ye can do nothing {John 15:5}.

Taken up with Him, we are attracted to Him, find Him to be our strength, and are drawn on in His ways. Again and again, in this brief epistle, is this rejoicing alluded to, like another witness, reminding us that

the joy of the Lord is our strength {see Neh. 8:10}.

The heart being set free from self and sin, finds in Him an unchanging source of joy and strength. In this epistle there is no question of guilt or sins taken up; but the soul is taken up with the Lord, and stayed upon Him. Peace, communion, and devotedness is the divine order. It is when the heart is enjoying the sweetness and perfectness of divine love, disentangled from self and circumstances, standing in liberty in Christ, that we are free to follow Him with girded loins, holding forth the word of life. And it is because He changeth not, is above all circumstances, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever, that it is our happy privilege to

rejoice in the Lord always {Phil. 4:4}.

The spring of true devotedness is the knowledge of the moral excellencies, perfections, and worth of Christ Himself. The apostle Paul could say,

What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, &c. (Phil. 3:7, 8).

Paul had seen the Man in the glory. The perfections of Him had disclosed to him the failure of all else. The brightness of that light had made manifest the imperfection of all that he had gloried in. His righteousnesses now looked like filthy rags. His comeliness was turned into corruption. He saw that His religiousness was totally unfit for God. The ineffable beauty and glory of that blessed Savior had shown him that what he had hitherto boasted of was altogether a corrupt and foul mass, which could now only be counted by him as dung. That which man most glories in looks poor indeed in the light of the glory of the risen and ascended Son of God. Weighed in the balance with Christ, all is lighter than vanity. Measured by the standard of His eternal excellencies, all comes far, far short, and is found only dung and dross — corrupt and unclean in God's most holy presence. No one could speak more truly of a blameless life in his dealings with his fellow-men than Paul. As to his pedigree, he was of pure Israelitish blood, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, of a favored tribe, zealous in the Jews' religion above many, an out and out Pharisee, strict adherent to Jewish ordinances and legal ways; but when he put all these things together in the light of the presence of the glorified Son of God, he found that self and pride, unbelief and vain-glory, abounded in them all; so that those things which had been gain to him he now felt to be positive loss, and not for the honor of God. Having had to do with that blessed Man in the glory, who is at God's right hand, Paul's heart was so captivated that he never could be satisfied till he was with Him. He could not bear to be outside the light and joy of His blessed presence, or fail to respond to the desires of His heart. Nothing can make up for a lack of personal acquaintance with Christ. Intimacy with Himself is certainly the secret of true devotedness. Occupied with Him, the heart readily detects, and refuses the voice of the stranger, and cannot but own the Lord's claims to be paramount. Nothing so thoroughly tests the state of our hearts, as whether or not we have intimacy with the Lord Himself.

"Far from Him, we faint and languish;

Oh, our Savior, keep us nigh!"

The characteristics of devotedness are largely set forth in this epistle. It is to have in us the mind which was in Christ Jesus {see Phil. 2:5};

like Him, to be

blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation . . . lights in the world, holding forth the word of life {Phil. 2:15, 16}.

As redeemed by Christ, standing in Christ, and aiming to walk as He walked, it is easy to understand that such would therefore see everything in relation to Christ, and value everything according to Him; and this is remarkably brought out in the first chapter of this short epistle. Thus, if, as in the sixth verse, he thinks of God's present work, or, as in the tenth verse, he is occupied with the walk of the saints, he looks at both as they will appear in the day of Christ — that day when everything will come out according to God, when all will be made manifest, and all His saints shall have reward from Him according to their works.

If his heart goes out after the saints, he thinks and feels for them, not as they are seen of men, but as they are precious to the deepest feelings of the heart of Him who loveth them, and washed them from their sins in His own blood. He could say,

God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:8).

If he looked at the galling chains which bound him, and so painfully pressed upon him, as a prisoner for the truth's sake, he could think of those heavy irons as associated with the Lord Jesus, whom he served, and for whom he suffered. Hence he called these fetters his

bonds in Christ.

He saw Christ, as it were, written on every link of his chain. By faith he so looked to Him, so dealt with Him, and so received everything out of His hand, that he knew himself to be the prisoner of Jesus Christ, and felt his chains to be as he said,

his bonds in Christ (Phil. 1:13).

Then as to preaching. Here too the person of his adorable Lord was everything. It was not merely the quantity, as people now call it, of evangelical machinery, but whether Christ — that blessed Man in the glory — was exalted in it. It was not enough for the apostle that persons preached about Christ, but whether the person — Christ Himself — was exalted; that was the point; and if so, no matter by whom this was, he could say,

I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice (Phil. 1:18).

If bodily health or bodily suffering were the subjects, he seemed to have had but one desire animating his soul; and what could that be in one who knew Christ in the glory to be the one absorbing object of his heart? Could he consider his own body apart from Him? Certainly not. It was therefore that

Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death (Phil. 1:20).

As to this present life, he could say,

For me to live is Christ.

Blessed testimony! True mark of the faithful! It is not merely holding doctrines about Christ, however orthodox they may be, but expressing Christ, showing forth His characteristics, exhibiting His ways, habits, and spirit continually — being really yoked with Him who was meek and lowly in heart. What is devotedness but this? Happy those who, rejoicing in Christ, are seeking in all points to be like Christ — obedient, faithful, meek and lowly, not seeking to do their own will, but subject in all things to His will. Wondrous expression,

For me to live is Christ (Phil. 1:21).

Then as to departing. It was not rest, or joy, or heaven, or happiness, that fired his soul with hope when he thought of putting off this tabernacle. No! As in other matters, so here, he looked at it in relation to the great object of attraction before his heart — Christ Himself. His joy in the prospect of departing was to be with Christ. Blessed prospect! It was not the crown, the deliverance from sorrow, or even the positive and eternal enjoyment of the place. No; it was to be with Him, as it must be with every truly devoted heart; Christ there as well as Christ here —

having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ (Phil. 1:23).

We find examples of devotedness in the second chapter. The Lord Himself of course stands first and foremost in all His infinite and glorious perfections; then Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus, each in his measure, are strikingly set before us. The dear apostle's sorrow at this time was, that all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's {Phil. 2:21};

that other interests came in to displace the paramount claims of Christ; so that self became an object, The apostle therefore pointed them to the lowly, obedient Son of God, as the true and perfect pattern of devotedness, marked as it was with humiliation and rejection here, though followed with the highest exaltation above. He desires, therefore, that this mind which was in Him may characterize them.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore also God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father {see Phil. 2:5-11}.

Thus this perfect One is traced in the path of unfailing obedience and self-abnegation, making Himself of no reputation, always delighting to do the will of Him that sent Him, and not stopping short of the entire surrender of Himself unto death, and that

even the death of the cross {Phil. 2:8}.

To Him their eyes are here directed as the One to be imitated and followed, who certainly looked not on His own things, but whose heart was set on glorifying the Father on the earth, and finishing the work which He gave Him to do.

And the apostle tells the Philippian saints of his readiness to be offered up, joyfully sacrificing his own life in the service of his blessed Master. His heart's desire so goes out after others, that he entreats them so to walk, that he may rejoice in the day of Christ that he has not run in vain, neither labored in vain.

Yea,

said he,

and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all (Phil. 2:17).

In all this he certainly has

the mind which was in Christ Jesus {see Phil. 2:5},

and is looking not on his own things, but on the things of others.

Then Timothy is brought before us, as another whose heart was unselfishly set upon the welfare of others, at a time too when

all seek their own, and not the things which are Jesus Christ's {see Phil. 2:21},

The apostle on this account speaks of sending him to Philippi, if the Lord so ordered. He says,

I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state; for I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state (Phil. 2:19, 20).

Epaphroditus is also introduced into this blessed group of devoted servants, in company with our adorable Master. Instead of seeking his own things, we are told that for the work of Christ he was sick nigh unto death; and so completely did he set aside selfish considerations, that he did not regard his own life, so that he might accomplish his service to the beloved apostle of our Lord. The chief sorrow too of dear Epaphroditus was, not that he himself was sick, but that the saints at Philippi had heard of his sickness, for he knew this would distress their hearts. We are told

he was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick {Phil. 2:26}.

His journey to Rome, to take the ministration of love to the apostle in prison, is spoken of as the work of Christ, and the saints are enjoined to receive him in the Lord with all gladness, and to hold such in reputation, (Phil. 2:26-30). Thus in the second chapter the perfect One is first set before us as the great exemplar of devotedness, and then men of like passions with ourselves, who, through grace, had, in their measure, the mind in them which was also in Christ Jesus.

The path of devotedness is blessedly and plainly marked out in the third chapter. It begins with the excellent knowledge of Christ (Phil. 3:7), and terminates with His coming again (Phil. 3:20). The one who pursues this path resembles a runner at the games, pressing on most perseveringly toward the mark for the prize. His heart is so single that "one thing" absorbs his energies. He has but one object — that he may win Christ — be actually where He is, in the soul-satisfying enjoyment of his precious Master face to face. Nothing less can meet the fervent desires of his longing soul; for he has already had to do with Him, and a glimpse of the glorified One had convinced him that there was no beauty elsewhere, nothing comparable to Him. He counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of his blessed Lord, so that he could run the race, looking away unto Him, and sing —

"Compared with Christ, in all beside

No comeliness I see."

In pursuing the path of devotedness, pressing toward the mark for the prize, there were three things which the apostle diligently sought — knowledge, power, and position, while looking for the coming of the Savior at the end, as the bright and blessed hope which lighted up every step of the path.

To sight and sense the way is fraught with difficulties, while faith knows no halting-place, counts nothing worthy of a moment's delay, and looks for no rest till with the Lord. The soul that ardently pursues this path longs above every thing to win Christ, and be found in Him, not having a righteousness which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith.

Let us now look at these four marks of the path of true devotedness — knowledge, power, position, and hope. And it should not be unnoticed that the path of worldliness and unbelief proposes the same four objects, yet, alas! how wide the contrast as to their real worth.

1. As to knowledge, the press in this day can scarcely print copies fast enough, even with the facilities of steam power, to supply the increasing craving for knowledge of the teeming millions. It is found too among all classes. The cheapest and lowest forms of periodical literature abound to meet the growing thirst for knowledge among the poorest of our neighbours; while scientific and refined volumes of learning and intelligence for the more advanced and polite are equally numerous. But what is the object and end of all such knowledge? Does it really climb a step beyond the range under the sun of vanity and vexation of spirit? It boasts of “looking from nature up to nature’s God”; but does it ever know God in this way? Are we not told that

the world by wisdom knows not God {see 1 Cor. 1:21}?

How different was the heart-longing of the devoted apostle! He desired knowledge, it is true; but it was

that I may know Him {Phil. 3:10},

and this was his constant, most fervent desire. What he had already known of Christ had so captivated his heart (and who on earth ever knew Him so well as Paul?), that his whole soul went out after further knowledge of Him. To know more of the infinite worth, unsearchable perfections, and moral excellencies of the Lord Himself, was the knowledge that he so craved.

Dear fellow-Christians, are we growing in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? Are we desiring it? Are we searching the Scriptures for it? Are we having such personal intercourse with Christ, as to ensure better acquaintance with Him, His fullness, offices, grace, faithfulness, unchanging, perfect love?

2. With regard to power, what is there that men will not give for a little increase of power over their fellow-men? What sacrifices they often make to obtain it? And, after all, it is only a power that exercises its jurisdiction in a world that is under judgment, lying in the wicked one, and limited by the chilly hand of death. But the power which the Lord’s devoted servants desire is not that, but far greater and higher, it is

the power of His resurrection {Phil. 3:10}.

God has given to us risen life in Christ, who is the other side of death, and it is the power of that in a world like this — a power that knows its origin to be beyond this present scene altogether — a life in Him who is the Head of all principality and power. It is a fact that Christ died, and that we died with Him; it is a fact also that Christ rose from the dead, and that we have life in Him who is risen. It is this risen life in the soul that the apostle so craved the power of, that he might walk here as a risen man, not after the flesh, not like the world, but manifest the walk and conduct of a man on earth who is one with Christ in heaven. Beloved, are we ardently desiring this power?

3. The third point is position. Men will work night and day, and persevere year after year, to raise themselves to a position above others; but the position that Paul so earnestly desired was to be cast out with Christ; to be despised, hated, and to suffer for being like Christ; to suffer for

righteousness' sake, and for well- doing; to have

the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death {Phil. 3:10}.

Is this, dear Christian brethren, the position in this world that we are honestly seeking? Is it "the fellowship of His sufferings"? If so, we shall, like the apostles, rejoice at being counted

worthy to suffer shame for the name of the Lord Jesus {see Acts 5:41}.

4. As to hope, the world says it is hoping for better days; but, alas, how delusive! How it flatters itself in its own eyes! What boastings are heard of "peace and safety!" How largely too it talks of "progress" and "advancement," thus refusing to accept the divine verdict,

Now is the judgment of this world {John 12:31}.

But the Christian's hope is eternally bright and glorious, shedding its gladdening rays over every step of the path of devotedness; for it is the coming of the Lord Himself. As already risen with Christ, seated in Him in heavenly places, one with Him by the baptism of the Holy Ghost, we look for the Savior. As in Christ, according to God's eternal purpose and grace, and by the precious blood of His own Son, having a place in heaven, citizenship in heaven, "we look" not for

earthly things {Phil. 3:19},

but

we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ {Phil. 3:20},

when redemption-power will be applied to our bodies, and we shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Then this body of humiliation shall be changed and fashioned like unto His glorious body, and we shall be like Him, and with Him for ever. Then our bodies, as well as our souls, will have capacities for entering into, and enjoying our eternal inheritance, as joint-heirs with Christ.

Such is the climax of the Christian's pilgrimage, the terminus of the path of devotedness now laid open to us, and how glorious it is! Then we shall

win Christ {Phil. 3:8}.

The race will have been run. Days for faith, and times of failure, will have passed for ever. The wilderness journey will be an event of the past. Hope will be realized. The prize possessed. The glory of God and of the Lamb actually enjoyed. The path began with our being

in Christ {1 Cor. 1:30, Eph. 2:10, Phil. 1:1},

and it ends with our being with Christ, and like Christ for ever. As to the end, there is no doubt for those who are Christ's. Jesus said,

I will raise him up at the last day {John 6:40, 44, 54};

and He is faithful that promised. He cannot deny Himself. Hence we can truly sing —

"We nightly pitch our moving tent

A day's march nearer home."

Some of the hindrances to devotedness are touched on in the fourth chapter. We may briefly refer, first, to a want of yieldingness —

Let your moderation (yieldingness) be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand (Phil. 4:5);

and secondly, the heart burdened with cares —

Be careful for nothing (Phil. 4:6).

If we trace the ways of Jesus, we never find Him contending for His rights, though He was the only one here who had a right to every thing. But His mind was always to do the will of Him that sent Him. He yielded Himself wholly and unreservedly to the Father's will. A Christian leaves the path of devotedness, the moment he contends for his own rights. He can afford to yield, for

the Lord is at hand {Phil. 4:5};

and men should know us as such:

Let your yieldingness be known unto all men {see Phil. 4:5}.

We are to contend for one thing, and that earnestly; it is

for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints {Jude 1:3}.

We are enjoined also to be

careful for nothing {Phil. 4:6},

for when cares are pressing on the mind, our communion with Him, who enjoins us to cast all our care upon Him, for He careth for us, becomes interrupted, and we are weakened and checked in the path of devotedness. It is when our yieldingness is known to men, we are careful for nothing, and all our requests made known unto God, that the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. And it is when our hearts and minds are occupied with the truth and ways of God, doing His will, that the

God of peace {Phil. 4:9}

will be with us.

Double-Mindedness; or, Lamenting After the Lord

1 Samuel 7

It is one thing to be a Christian, it is another thing to be a happy Christian. To know the Scripture doctrine of the believer's position and privileges is very different from having the possession and enjoyment of them. The fact is, that we are slow to enter upon, and make our own, the blessings God has graciously given us in Christ.

In Samuel's day, the people were characterized for a long time by lamenting after the Lord; and this, we fear, describes the state of heart of thousands of Christians now. They are desiring rather than possessing — longing for instead of enjoying fellowship with the Lord Himself; hoping to have, instead of entering into God's thoughts and purposes, and tasting His joys. Why is this? In Israel's day there was unjudged evil among them, and the eye and heart were not single. Hence they were told to

put away the strange gods, and Ashtaroth,

and also to

serve the Lord only {see 1 Sam. 7:3}.

So now there are

strange gods {1 Sam. 7:3},

some things occupying the heart contrary to the truth, something between the soul and the Lord; it may be the world, its pride, wealth, honor, pleasure, in some shape or other; or it may be darling lusts, self-love, self-exaltation, or something else cherished or allowed, which the word of God positively condemns. The eye, therefore, cannot be single, nor the heart only desiring the glory of God — serving Him only. The affections are not set on heavenly things; the eye and heart are not exercised in the life and walk of faith; and things of time and sense so occupy the soul, that there is desire to have rather than present possession and enjoyment, so that, like Israel of old, they go on year after year lamenting after the Lord (1 Sam. 7:2, 3).

The people, however, hearkened to the prophet's counsel.

They were willing to think badly of their ways. They took the place of self-judgment. Their errors were made manifest. They determined at all costs to separate from evil. They were conscious of having sinned. They saw that their strange gods and Ashtaroth had displaced and dishonored Jehovah. They resolved therefore to

cease to do evil {Isa. 1:16},

by putting them away from among them. So far this was good, but the next step would be

learning to do well {see Isa. 1:17}.

Separation from known evil was not enough — they were to pursue positive godliness and devotedness. We, therefore, read of their humiliation before God for such deep dishonor to Him, fasting before the Lord, confession, saying,

We have sinned {1 Sam. 7:6};

and of taking the place of conscious weakness, and of relying only upon the strength of the living God, as their desire for the prophet's prayer plainly intimated. This was learning to do well. The result was that they were soon delivered from the power of the enemy that had so long oppressed them, and their joy in the true God was manifest by their setting up a stone, and calling it

Ebenezer; saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us (1 Sam. 7:4-12).

How simple is all this, and yet how full of instruction and admonition to us! What searching of heart and ways should this inspired account produce in us! If our walk be so careless that unjudged sin is covered up, no marvel that the Holy Spirit is so grieved that we are not possessing and enjoying the Lord's presence and truth. And if the eye be not single, and the heart really set upon serving Him, and Him only, it is not surprising that weakness and lamentation characterize us both individually and collectively.

How different is the condition of saints as contemplated in the epistles. There we read

we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ {Rom. 5:11}.

Being

in Christ, complete in Him, who is the Head of all principality and power {see Col. 2:10},

our state is supposed to be rejoicing in the Lord always, rejoicing evermore, rejoicing in Christ Jesus — happy, and making others happy. It is a mark of our being really happy in the Lord when we are making others happy. As love provokes love, so there is something infectious in real spiritual joy. Who visits saints much, and does not often prove this? If we cannot make others happy in the Lord, the inference is strong that our own souls are at a low ebb. The apostle said, We

comfort others with the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God {see 2 Cor. 1:4}.

Is it not possible that the standard of practical godliness is too low among us? To have as much of the world as possible, and to satiate the desires of the flesh as far as can be, and still to maintain credit among the saints of being "consistent Christians," as the term is, may be the conventional thought of this day; but it will not do, for such a standard opens wide the door to many a "strange god," and gives a lodging-place to many an "Ashtaroth." Whether we think of ourselves as individuals, or of the church of God collectively, there can be but one question as to the standard of practical conduct, and it is this, Does it suit Christ? When you hear a person say, "What harm is there in this or that?" you may be sure that he has not the sense of the holiness due to the place and relationships the grace of God has brought him into, nor of the claims of Christ; for we are not our own, but are bought with a price. Does this suit Christ? should be the question, and it carries with it an answer for all the difficulties of the most active imagination of the fleshly mind. To

walk worthy of the Lord {Col. 1:10}.

is how Scripture puts it.

The truth is that we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. We have been made alive, raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ. Observe this word “made.” It is done. We are already associated with Him who is exalted at God’s right hand. We have the present possession of life eternal in Christ, we are in Christ in heavenly places, we are fully blessed in Him, we are sons of God. Marvelous blessings! Should we then be lamenting after the Lord? Certainly not, but rejoicing in the Lord; seeking the things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God — our minds set and fixed on things above, and not on things on the earth. In a word, possessing and enjoying all that God has made us and given us in Christ; yea more, joying in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received these amazing blessings. If you say, How can I possess and enjoy all this? we reply, not by efforts and resolutions, but by simply believing God’s own statements as to His rich mercy in thus blessing us in Christ.

Beloved fellow-Christians, let us beware of the snares of unbelief, by whomsoever presented, or in whatever shape. Let the Scriptures be the sole and exclusive authority to our hearts and consciences. What can be worse than not to receive implicitly what God has written? Let us watch against the Christ- dishonoring, soul-damaging ways of false humility and doubt. When Scripture gives us the plainest possible statement, what but unbelief could suggest the question, What does it mean? In these days of growing rationalism, we need to guard against every insinuation which refuses the direct and absolute authority of the written Word of God. Let us not take lower ground than it gives us, notwithstanding the scorn of unbelief, and charge of presumption that skeptical minds may intimate.

Let God be true, and every man a liar {see Rom. 3:4},

was, and still is, the motto of believing souls. To have “strange gods” among us — the heart set on things of earth — and to be faithfully serving the Lord too, is simply impossible. To be consciously and happily one with Christ, and to be practically taking a place of one with men in the flesh, cannot be. No man can serve two masters. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. If the world, and men in the flesh are worthy, or if the interests of self in your esteem have the first place, let it be so, and honestly abandon Christian ground, and say, “Baa1 is my god.” But if Christ be worthy, if He who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, has in our esteem most justly the first and only claim, then let us serve Him only, follow Him closely, and walk worthy of the Lord who hath called us unto His kingdom and glory.

“My Savior, keep my spirit stayed

Hard following after Thee,

Till I in robes of white arrayed

Thy face in glory see.”

On Prayer

The relationship with God, which by grace the believer is brought into, is necessarily connected both with child-like confidence and dependence. The knowledge of the Father, the liberty we have to enter into the holiest of all, by the blood of Jesus, at all times, the operations of the Holy Ghost dwelling in us, and the all-prevailing plea given to us in the name of Jesus, lead us to expect that the Christian while here would be peculiarly given to the exercise of prayer.

The cry which the Spirit produces, the Spirit of adoption, when sent forth into our hearts, being
Abba, Father {Rom. 8:15},

opens up to us at once His tender love, as well as His fatherly care and resources. It is this knowledge of the Father that gives such confidence and perseverance in prayer, as well as comfort in thanksgiving, and worship.

The Father Himself loveth you,
said Jesus,

because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God {John 16:27}.

The Spirit thus reveals the Father, and makes us know that He delights to give His children good things.

If ye, being evil, know how to give good things unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him {see Matt. 7:11}.

The sense on our hearts of the reality of this relationship, which, according to the Father's eternal purpose and grace in Christ Jesus, we are now brought into, makes it natural, if I may so speak, for Christians to be emphatically men of prayer, both for themselves and others; and especially when challenged with such a gracious declaration as

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? {Rom. 8:32}.

Nor can there be a doubt that it is the will of God that our souls should be going out to Him in much prayer for others. The apostle Paul, in writing to Timothy, makes this perfectly clear. He says,

I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; . . . for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour (1 Tim. 2:1-3).

Elsewhere we are enjoined to pray for

all saints {Eph. 6:18};

but this circle includes the widest possible range — “all men.” Nor is it well to overlook the quality of prayer here contemplated. It is not cold, dry formality, but as earnest and pointed as such a

chain of words could well convey —

supplications, prayers, and intercessions.

We have in Scripture private prayer spoken of, and also united, and it is well to consider both. The habit of private prayer, or such a state of constantly felt dependence on God as shall lift the heart to Him on all occasions, is set before us in such words as

Pray without ceasing {1 Thess. 5:17};

that is, wherever we are, whether in the house, or place of business, or walking the streets, to have the heart habitually going out to God about all our need. But there is another thing which nothing else will supply; it is going into a secret place to pray — to be alone with God, to pour out the heart to Him, and wait upon Him. We find the Lord going out into

a solitary place {Mark 1:35}

to pray, going up

into a mountain {Matt. 14:23, Mark 6:46, Luke 6:12},

and

into the wilderness {Luke 5:16},

to pray. Our Lord expressed His mind for us on this point most touchingly when He said,

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly (Matt. 6:6).

Here we have, first, the believer going into a secret place, away from every human eye and ear, for the express purpose of praying to his Father. 2nd. The fact announced that our Father is in that secret place — “Thy Father which is in secret.” 3rd. The encouragement that those who do thus seek the Father shall not fail to be “openly rewarded”. How blessed this is!

As to united prayer, we have precious examples in Scripture of the marvelous way in which God has honored this. Our Lord too blessedly encourages our hearts on this point; and where are the Christians who cannot praise God for His mercy and faithfulness, in again and again giving most precious answers to their united supplications? Jesus said,

If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them (Matt. 18:19, 20).

But observe, there must be agreement. This is of the greatest importance. It is not one praying, and the others merely listening; but hearts united before God in presenting certain requests to Him. All going together into “the holiest of all” to present common supplication. At Pentecost, the disciples were not only

in one place,

but

of one accord {Acts 2:1},

before the mighty blessing came. Oh, if God's dear children would only take God at His word in this particular, and seek Him earnestly and together in supplications, prayers, and intercessions, what blessed results there would be! This would soon put to flight the deadness and formality which so largely prevail in prayer-meetings at the present time. Thus crying to God, reckoning upon Him, and expecting only from Him, what rich and abundant blessing would follow!

In prayer, however, we must remember that God expects us to come before Him in uprightness.

If I regard iniquity in my heart,

says the psalmist,

the Lord will not hear my prayer {Psa. 66:18}.

He must have integrity. Evil must not be cloaked. Sin must be judged, and honestly dealt with before Him. The upright soul abhors that which is evil, and cleaves to that which is good, and from such God will keep back nothing good.

No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly {Psa. 84:11}.

This is most encouraging. David had lamentably failed, and circumstances, because of his failure, seemed all against him, but he hoped in God.

David encouraged himself in the Lord his God {1 Sam. 30:6},

and we know the blessed deliverance that followed. The upright soul can turn to God with confidence, and find encouragement in Him, when there is none elsewhere.

We find also in Scripture that success in prayer is connected with obedience, and especially love to the brethren. Our Lord connected the act of praying with forgiving,

if we have ought against any {see Mark 11:25};

and so with fruit-bearing and obedience to the word of God:

I have ordained you,

said Jesus,

that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you (John 15:16).

And so the apostle John, after presenting to us God in His nature as Light and Love, the relationship we are called into by the Father, and the conduct suited to such relationship, exhorts that brotherly love may be real, that is,

not in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth {see 1 John 3:18};

for in this way we shall assure our hearts before Him. If, however, this brotherly kindness be wanting, our hearts will condemn us, and this God knows. But if we are walking in true brotherly love, then have we confidence toward God, and obtain answers to prayer.

And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment (1 John 3:19-23).

Nothing, then, can be clearer, that if we would be successful in prayer we must be obedient children, and walk in true practical love with our brethren in the Lord. Perhaps the importance of this is too much overlooked in the present day. We must never forget that in prayer we are acting in the relationship of a child to a father; and we know that when we are truly loving our children, how hindered we feel in granting them their requests if they are acting disobediently, and not walking lovingly toward their brothers and sisters. Oh to be constantly, in felt helplessness, abiding in the Lord Jesus, finding all our resources in Him, drawing all we want by faith from Him; for He said,

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).

The confidence we should have as children of God is that our Father knows infinitely better than we do, and that He seeks our profit. To ask, therefore,

according to His will {1 John 5:14},

and not according to our will, is the unselfish path in which the Spirit leads. We sometimes ask amiss, because self, in some shape or other, is our object, and not the Lord's glory; and no marvel if such prayers are not answered.

Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts (James 4:3).

Who would wish such prayers to be answered? and yet it is well to watch our hearts as to this. On the other hand, our relationship with God our Father forbids that anything should interfere with the freest actings of filial love. The Spirit, therefore, enjoins us to

be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving to make our requests known unto God (Phil. 4:6).

He does not here promise that all our requests shall be answered, but this Scripture does enjoin that outpouring of heart becoming a child to his Father.

After all, perhaps nothing so hinders answers to prayer as the condition of soul we may be in. Felt nearness to God must be connected with self-abasement. No flesh can glory in His presence. When Job was so unusually near to God that he said,

I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee,

how did he feel? He added,

Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes {Job 42:5, 6}.

When Isaiah was consciously in the presence of the glory of the Lord, we find him saying,

Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts {Isa. 6:5}.

Again, when the prophet Habakkuk, under divine teaching, contemplated more thoroughly the ways of God, he says,

When I heard, my belly trembled, my lips quivered at the voice, rottenness entered into my bones, &c. {Hab. 3:16}.

And so Daniel, the man greatly beloved, when he had a vision of the glory of the Lord, and heard His words, what was the effect? He says,

There remained no strength in me; for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. Yet heard I the voice of His words; and when I heard the voice of His words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground {Dan. 10:8, 9}.

But some of my Christian readers will say, "These were Old Testament saints who had not learned God, as we have, in the death and resurrection of His beloved Son, and had not the Spirit of adoption, and conscious knowledge of God as their Father." I know it. But I refer to these Scriptures to shew what man, while in the body, is, when brought into felt nearness to the infinitely holy God. Surely, He is not less holy now than He ever was, though, in the brightness of that perfect holiness we know, for our joy and confidence, that Jesus has entered with His own blood; and that He is our life, righteousness, peace, and acceptance. We find the aged apostle John, when his eye for one moment rested upon the glorified Son of man in the midst of the seven candlesticks, saying,

When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead {Rev. 1:17}.

We know that the Lord soon lifted him up and comforted him; but I refer to it to shew that in the presence of divine glory flesh must be abased, and God alone exalted.

To pursue a little further this part of the subject we are considering, let us look at Jacob. He was greatly troubled, full of fear, and rightly enough made the God of Abraham and of Isaac his refuge. His prayer, as recorded in Gen. 32, was humble, earnest, and supplicatory. But with this there was some reckoning upon his own policy. Faith in God he doubtless had, but he had confidence also that a present would appease Esau's wrath, and thus help to deliver him. It was therefore necessary that God should sharply exercise His servant before answering his prayer, so that he might give the glory to Him to whom alone it was due. Hence we read at the end of the chapter, that

Jacob was left alone, and there wrestled with him a man till the breaking of the day {Gen. 32:24}.

Jacob needed his fancied strength and self-confidence to be broken down, so that he might feel his own weakness. Hence we see his thigh was put out of joint, and in this perfect helplessness he clung to the one who wrestled with him for blessing. He said,

I will not let thee go, except thou bless me {Gen. 32:26}.

Thus he was consciously helpless, and clinging to another for blessing. He was then asked his name, for God wanted him to feel his vileness as well as weakness. He therefore confesses that

his name is Jacob — supplanter. Thus he is vile in his own eyes as well as weak. He confesses that he is a supplanter, as well as helpless. And now God can abundantly honor him.

Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed {Gen. 32:28}.

Now, what do we learn from all these instances, but that God's people, when in felt nearness to Him, will be consciously weak and unworthy, and that a sense of our helplessness and vileness — real self-abasement before God — become us, in order that He should bless and honor us in answering our prayers.

He that humbleth himself shall be exalted {Luke 14:11, 18:14}.

How pride must hinder answers to prayer!

There is another reason why prayer is not more frequently answered. God has marked out the ground of approach worthy of Himself, and of the relationship His grace has formed; viz., the name of His beloved Son. Several times in our Lord's last address to His disciples, He especially taught them to ask the Father in His name. There is no limit to blessing to those who come in His name.

If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it (John 14:14).

The fact is that Jesus has so infinitely glorified God in His work on the cross, that He is righteously worthy of all blessing. There is nothing too much for God to do, or to give, because of the infinite worthiness of His beloved Son. How simple this is, and how encouraging! Vile and helpless in self, yet so pleading the all-worthy name of Jesus, as to have joyful answers to prayer. He said to His disciples,

Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full (John 16:24).

Saints of old were wont to approach God by a sacrifice; we bring the name of Him who offered Himself without spot to God — a sacrifice and an offering of such infinite and eternal efficacy, that it never needed to be repeated.

When Samuel prayed for God's people Israel, we are told that he took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt-offering; and no sooner had the savour of the offering gone up, than God thundered upon their enemies and delivered His people. Daniel was successful in prayer at the time of the evening oblation. Zechariah prayed to God, and was heard, while incense was being offered up. Elijah offered a bullock on the altar, when he presented prayer to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, which God immediately answered by fire from heaven, We cannot be too simple and earnest in pleading the name of the Lord Jesus in prayer.

“O plead His name, His precious name,

With boldness at the throne;

For all He is, and all He has,

Will surely be our own.”

Not that the Father does not love us. Far from that. The Lord does not intercede to cause the Father to love us. Hence Jesus said,

I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you; for the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God (John 16:26, 27).

It is very interesting to notice the prominence given to prayer by the Holy Ghost in the epistles. The immense importance of prayer, its simple, definite, and direct character, and the blessed results to be expected, are alike strikingly set forth.

In the first chapter of Romans, Paul not only speaks of mentioning them always in his prayers, but that he definitely made this request, that he might by the will of God be made a blessing and a comfort to them, and be comforted also by their faith (Rom. 1:10-12). In the fifteenth chapter he beseeches them, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, to pray also that he might come unto them by the will of God, and may with them be refreshed; and he also desires that they may be so earnest, as to strive together with him in prayer for two other things, which are most distinctly and definitely named; viz., that he might be delivered from the unbelievers in Judæa, and that his service which he had for Jerusalem might be accepted by the saints (Rom. 15:30-32).

In the first epistle to the Corinthians, we have little said as to prayer, further than it should be in the Spirit and intelligent

—

I will pray with the spirit, and with the understanding also {see 1 Cor. 14:15};

the main object of the epistle being to correct the disorders of the assembly, and to give fresh instructions on the subject. It is true that saints giving themselves to prayer and fasting is enjoined to guard from the temptation of Satan — a most important principle.

In the second epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle again shows how much he valued the help of saints in prayer:

Ye also helping together by prayer for us (2 Cor. 1:11).

He prayed for them,

that they might do no evil (2 Cor. 13:7).

In Galatians we have nothing about prayer, the object of the Holy Ghost being to rebuke in the sternest way the attempts to undermine the gospel of the grace of God by adding something to it, thus giving the flesh importance, instead of holding to its entire judgment unto death in the cross of Christ — the crucifixion of the old man. It was not the place, therefore, to expect the subject of prayer to be introduced.

Very different indeed is the epistle to the Ephesians, for the apostle is there contemplating God in His grace, eternal counsels, and ways towards us, when dead in sins, in and through Christ Jesus. The sense of this upon his heart necessarily bowed him before the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in prayer and thanksgiving for them. His prayer in the first chapter is that they might have the knowledge of God's grace and power toward them, in Christ risen and ascended, as well

as the hope of His calling.

In the third chapter, the contemplation of the unsearchable riches of Christ brought out in the mystery now made known, of the body the Church, so bowed him again before the Father, that he prays that, not according to His rich mercy, but according to the riches of His glory, they may be strengthened by the Spirit so as to enjoy Christ, that He may dwell in their hearts by faith, &c. At the close of the epistle, when he thinks how Satan opposes the saints, and tries to hinder their standing in the new place God has brought them into in heavenly places in Christ, the apostle most earnestly urges the saints to habitual and continual dealing with God in prayer, and that not for themselves only, but for every member of the body, and for the gospel too. Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make

known the mystery of the gospel, &c. (Eph. 6:18, 19).

In Philipians, where the prominent subject is devotedness, we might expect something about prayer, and so there is. In Phil. 1:4, Paul assures their hearts that he makes request for them with joy always, and in every prayer; and in Phil. 1:19 he counts also upon their prayers. He told them that he prayed definitely for two things; 1st, That their love may abound more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; 2nd,

That they may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God (Phil. 1:9-11).

In the fourth chapter, the saints are enjoined to pray about everything, as one of the necessary ways of enjoying the peace of God. So free is the child of God to feel, that he is to keep back nothing, but make known his requests to God. God does not say He will answer every request, but it is clearly His will that we should tell them out before God.

In everything (great matters, or very small, as we call them) by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God (Phil. 4:6, 7).

In the epistle to the Colossian saints, the apostle assures them that he was praying always for them (Col. 1:3), and details some of the points he brought before God on their behalf. As usual, they are most definite, pointed, and brief.

(1) For knowledge of God's will being wisely and spiritually entered into, in order

(2) to walk worthy of the Lord;

(3) to be strengthened with all might according to the power of the glory;

(4) that they might be giving thanks to the Father for having made them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. (Col. 1:9-12).

He exhorts them also to continue in prayer, to watch in the same with thanksgiving, and to pray also for him and others, particularly as regards the ministry of the word. Moreover, before concluding this short epistle, he refers to one who labored fervently in prayer for them.

Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God (Col. 4:12).

In the Thessalonian epistles, the apostle says that he made mention of them in his prayers, and that he continually and definitely asked, first, that God would count them worthy of this calling, and secondly, that He would fulfil all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ might be glorified, &c. (1 Thess. 1:2, and 2 Thess. 1:11, 12). He enjoins them also so to cultivate the habit of prayer, as to

pray without ceasing {1 Thess. 5:17},

and in both epistles asks their prayers for himself and fellow- servants, especially that

the word of the Lord might have free course, and be glorified {see 2 Thess. 3:1}.

In Paul's first epistle to Timothy, so important is the subject of prayer to his own soul, that he exhorts, first of all, that prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all in authority, &c., because it is good and acceptable in the sight of God and our Savior. He adds,

I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting (1 Tim. 2:1-8).

He mentions also as one mark of a widow indeed, that she

continueth in supplications and prayers night and day {1 Tim. 5:5}.

He declares that food is

sanctified by the word of God and prayer {1 Tim. 4:5}.

In the second epistle to Timothy, we find Paul assuring him that he remembered him in his prayers without ceasing night and day. Let us think of this — continually mentioning in prayer by name persons night and day. He prays also most definitely for the house of Onesiphorus, and that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day.

In Titus there is no direct reference to prayer, though it is a most practical epistle; not only does it correct various disorders then manifest, but most urgently enjoins godliness.

In the brief letter to Philemon, prayer is twice brought before us — first, in the apostle's assurance to Philemon that he always made mention of him in prayer; and secondly, that he counted that through his {Philemon's} prayers he would be sent to tarry with him (Philemon 4, 22).

In Hebrews, we have the strong crying, supplications, and tears of our Lord, referred to in the fifth chapter; and in the last chapter the apostle so values prayer, that he hopes he may, through their prayers, be restored the sooner (Heb. 13:18, 19). This Scripture shows how graciously God owns the prayers of those whom He has put into the place of intercession for others, both by relationship and the gift of the Holy Ghost.

James, in his last chapter, gives us quite a treatise on prayer. He insists on the prevalent power of the prayer of one fervent soul, and names Elijah as an example, who was a man of like passions

with ourselves. He enjoins us to pray for one another touching our faults; that the afflicted should give themselves to prayer; that in bodily sickness the elders should be sent for to pray over such, because the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and even if he have committed sins they shall be forgiven him. The statements in the fourth chapter,

Ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts {James 4:2, 3},

are very striking and solemn.

In Peter's first epistle, saints are enjoined to

watch unto prayer {1 Pet. 4:7}.

They are reminded that God's

ears are open unto their prayers {1 Pet. 3:12},

and husbands and wives are exhorted to so dwell together

as heirs together of the grace of life, that their prayers be not hindered {see 1 Pet. 3:7}.

In the second epistle, the exhortations are more to pursue practical godliness in general with

all diligence {2 Pet. 1:5-8}.

John's epistles rather suppose those he addresses to be praying people than give much instruction on the subject. In chap. 5 of first epistle, speaking of

a sin unto death

(as for instance in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, when discipline unto death should take its course), he says,

There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it {1 John 5:16}.

In the third epistle he says,

I will (or I pray) that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth {see 3 John 1:2}.

Jude introduces the subject of prayer most pointedly. Looking as he does at the failure and ruin of the church, and its going on to apostasy and judgment, he contemplates some faithful ones standing outside, and characterized not only as being praying people, but as

praying in the Holy Ghost {Jude 20}.

In the Revelation, we read of the prayers of saints in the fifth chapter, and of incense offered with the prayers of saints in the eighth chapter. The book concludes with the Spirit and the bride crying, Come, Lord Jesus.

This brief glance at the apostolic writings furnishes us with abundant evidence of the high and important place that prayer and supplication held in former times. No doubt that intellectualism prefers theological research; but a heart taught of God not only feels its own need and poverty, but

instinctively cries to God for itself, as well as cheerfully makes intercession for others. When this is lacking there must be serious soul-defect. We are all, no doubt, too much in the company of others, and too little alone with God. It is easy for most Christians to talk in the social circle; but often with what result? When we are really enjoying the Lord's presence, loving His truth, taken up therefore with His counsels, joys, and interests, we are not only drawn out in worship, but have a full tide of prayer for others; for the same blessed Spirit, who takes of the things of Christ and shows unto us, also gives us access, by Christ, unto the Father, and teaches us how to pray and what to pray for. Let the Christian reader ponder these things, and be assured that if secret prayer for himself and others be not the daily habit of his life, it is time to search and consider before the Lord why it is not.

"There is an eye that never sleeps

Beneath the wing of night;

There is an ear that never shuts,

When sink the beams of light.

"There is an arm that never tires,

When human strength gives way;

There is a love that never fails,

When earthly loves decay.

"That eye is fixed on seraph throngs,

That arm upholds the sky;

That ear is filled with heavenly songs,

That love is throned on high.

"But there's a POWER which faith can wield,

When mortal aid is vain;

That eye, that arm, that love to reach,

That listening ear to gain.

"That power is prayer, which soars on high,

Through Jesus, to the throne,

And moves the hand, which moves the world,

To bring deliverance down."

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