

# PEACE AND COMMUNION

by H.H. Snell

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*A collection of articles and writings by H.H. Snell from Peace and Communion, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.*

22 Chapters

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## Peace and Communion

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## Prefatory Remarks

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It is not with the thought of publishing anything unknown before that this little volume is sent forth, but with the hope of bringing before the Christian reader what was well known in the beginning of Christianity, though now, perhaps, receiving less attention than the truth demands.

It is confessedly a time when every good thing is being diluted or adulterated; nor has the truth of God escaped the corrupting influences, so that many of the Lord's people are sad and drooping instead of giving thanks and rejoicing; and collective ruin and disorder instead of worship, and united testimony to the truth, are to be seen on every hand. It must therefore be important to inquire where the defect lies in those who are truly born of God. We believe much of it arises from a low state of soul, a superficial acquaintance with divine truth, and an erroneous idea that God's word is given only to teach sinners the way of salvation, and that there is little to be known here besides the forgiveness of sins. But as to souls who are better instructed, and where doctrine is guarded, and orthodoxy contended for, the question may be asked, Why is it there is so little liberty, joy, and devotedness? We believe the answer is found in a lack of peace and communion.

Where there is not peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ {Rom. 5:1},

there cannot be communion and true worship. If "care" and "fear" distress the soul, there will not be the comfort of the peace of God {Phil. 4:7}, which surpasseth all understanding, keeping the heart and mind. If we walk in His ways, the God of peace {Rom. 15:33} will be with us.

Joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ {Rom. 5:11}

is also the happy privilege of every child of God; but how few speak of these things as their own happy experience. It is not merely, then, the present certainty of forgiveness of sins (blessed as it is) which the believer is entitled to know, but peace with God {Rom. 5:1}, the peace of God {Phil. 4:7}, the presence of the God of peace {Phil. 4:9} with us, and even joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ {Rom. 5:11}, by whom we have received the reconciliation, and much more.

While many a true-hearted Christian is suffering greatly in soul from lack of knowledge, others, perhaps, are too much taken up with doctrines; content, it may be, with critical accuracy and orthodoxy, rather than the power of the truth in the love of it. The consequence is that some have unconsciously become more like theological students and scholars of divinity, than devoted followers of Christ in the path of obedience and suffering for His sake. It is clear that it is not merely the knowledge of doctrines that the child of God should desire, important as it is, but he should be occupied with the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom all doctrine points, and in relation to whom we now stand as members of His body {Eph. 5:30}, dependent on the Head {see Eph. 4:15; Col. 2:19}, and called to show forth His characteristics, and to bear much fruit. We may be sure that when the word of Christ dwells in us richly, there will be faith and love in activity, as well as knowledge; there will be communion as well as peace. We can understand a person being taken up with certain "views," as they are called, and holding what is true, perhaps, according to the letter of Scripture, and yet being as unspiritual and lifeless as he can well be; but we cannot

understand a soul really receiving God's testimony concerning the personal glory, the finished work, and the coming again of His own Son, without being attracted to Him. Neither can we understand a person having the present possession of eternal life without its producing results, both in experience and walk. Scripture is most decisive about this; for not only does John write his first epistle in order that those who believe on the name of the Son of God may know that they have eternal life, but he further declares that

we know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren (1 John 3:14);

and when this love to God's children is wanting, the person is pronounced to be destitute of vital Christianity, however loud his profession may be, and however extensive his Bible knowledge; for it is added.

He that loveth not his brother abideth in death (1 John 5:13).

This point was also of such great moment with the apostle Paul, that we find the principle on which he accredited persons as being "in Christ" was not because they professedly believed in Christ, but because he also heard of their love . . . to all the saints {Col. 1:4}; their love in the Spirit {Col. 1:8}.

He knew how easy it was to say "I believe in Jesus," as many do now; but until he heard of love flowing out to all saints, how could he recognize them as having eternal life? We, therefore, on one occasion find him teaching that whatever a man did, or whatever he said, if love were wanting, he was only

as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal {1 Cor. 13:1}.

Take another point. Scripture teaches that those who have remission of sins have the Holy Ghost given unto them; being children of God by faith in Christ Jesus,

God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father (Gal. 3:26; 4:6).

Now, we ask, is it possible that God the Holy Ghost should take up His abode in us for ever, without producing results both in experience and walk? Without this, could there be a consciousness of the love of God shed abroad in our hearts? (See Rom. 5:5.) Have we no comfort from a power within us beyond what is natural in His leading, guiding, teaching, and taking of the things of Christ, and showing them unto us? Do we know what it is to have One directing our hearts to Him who is glorified, and in whom we possess all things, whilst we are increasingly conscious of having nothing in ourselves? Can we ascribe our joy in the Lord, our hope of His coming, or even the grief, and reproof when walking contrary to the truth of God, to any power short of the Holy Ghost dwelling in us? And how could our thoughts and affections flow in the current of the thoughts and affections of the Father and His Son, but for

the communion of the Holy Ghost {2 Cor. 13:14}?

May, then, both reader and writer be filled with all joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost!

## The Son of God

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God . . . hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son (Hebrews 1:2).

The question by which our Lord put the Pharisees to silence, so 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},

was concerning the mystery of His person. Though they knew that Messiah would be the Son of David, they were completely confounded when asked how the Christ could be both David's Lord and David's son (Matt. 22:41-46).

And still,

What think ye of Christ? Whose son is He? {Matt. 22:44}.

are the vital questions on which hangs the eternal destiny of man. It must therefore be of all importance to learn from Scripture what is revealed concerning Him; for types have prefigured Him, prophets have heralded Him, one more than a prophet was His forerunner, a multitude of the heavenly host hailed His entrance into this world, and apostles have most blessedly dwelt on the glory of His person, the everlasting efficacy of His atoning work, the offices He now so perfectly sustains, and on His coming again. May we then ponder the inspired writings which testify of THE SON with that reverence and subjection, which become those who delight to hearken to God's testimony of Him!

We know that the Son of God is come {1 John 5:20}.

The Word which was with God, and was God, became flesh, and dwelt among us: and God, whom no man has seen, has been declared by the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father. The divine moral glory so shone in Him, that Spirit- taught witnesses tell us,

We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth {John 1:14}.

In olden times, the thorough sinlessness of this peerless One was continually set forth, by the imperative requirement, that each victim sacrificed should be

without blemish and without spot {1 Pet. 1:19},

and His inimitable moral excellencies were borne witness to in the sweet perfume of the burning incense; while various offerings typically expressed His perfect surrender, and devotedness, as well as the savour of rest God always found in Him, both in life and in death. The laying down of the victim's life, the shedding and sprinkling of the blood, the entrance of the high priest inside the veil once every year, not without blood and incense, all pointed to Him, whose blood was shed for many for the remission of sins, and in virtue of whose one offering the veil was rent in twain from

the top to the bottom, thus removing every hindrance to the believer's going at once into the presence of God.

Of the person of the Son of God, as also of His sufferings, and the glories which follow, ancient prophets have sweetly spoken by the Holy Ghost. The promised Seed — the Son of David, the Son of Abraham, the virgin's Child — has been manifested according to their word, in the mysterious person of Emmanuel. The babe of Judah's prophet has been born, and the Son given, whose name is

The mighty God,

The Prince of Peace {Isa. 9:6};

who will ere long establish His kingdom with judgment and justice

upon the throne of David {Isa. 9:7}.

According to others, Israel's Ruler has come out of Bethlehem,

whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting (Micah 5:2).

The true Shepherd, the Fellow of the Lord of hosts, has been smitten, and the sheep have been scattered (Zech. 13:7). The Antitype of Isaac has been offered up, and raised again. The blood of the true paschal Lamb has been shed, and a way made for us through death and judgment into the very presence of God. It is no marvel then, that His forerunner should have been divinely taught that He was

the Son of God {John 1:32-34},

should have announced Him to be

the Lamb of God {John 1:36},

and have declared that He who came after him into the world was really before Him — for THE SON was before all things — and that His shoes' latchet he was unworthy to unloose.

Prophets also foretold that He — the Son, Messiah — would be despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, sold for thirty pieces of silver, and His hands and feet pierced; that His garments would be parted by the soldiers among them, and lots cast upon His vesture. They also declared that He would be numbered with the transgressors, and bear the sins of many; that it would please Jehovah to bruise Him, and to put Him to grief; that the cry of His distress would be,

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? {Psa. 22:1}.

That though He would be made an offering for sin, and pour out His soul unto death, making His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death; yet it was clearly announced that His soul would not be left in hell [hades], neither His flesh see corruption, but that, having been shown the path of life, He would go back to Him

in whose presence there is fullness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore {see Psa. 16:11}.

Jehovah therefore said to the mighty Conqueror over death, Satan, and the grave,

Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool {Psa. 110:1}.

For this we know He waits, and of Him it has been said,

The Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment {Jude verse 14},

and that He will sit

upon David's throne {see Isa. 9:7},

and

reign before His ancients gloriously {see Isa. 24:23}.

From this brief glance at the Old Testament prophets, we see that they spake of Him

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 God also 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 (Phil. 2:6-11).

When the prophet Isaiah refers to this period, he says,

I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by Myself, the word is gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear (Isa. 45:22, 23).

But when an apostle brings it before us, he applies it to Christ, thus giving another example of Scripture-teaching on the deity of the Son. He says,

We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ (Rom. 14:10),

and in proof of it quotes this passage from Isaiah:

For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God (Rom. 14:11).

We see the same interpretation of the prophets elsewhere; we might turn for example to Isa. 6:1-8, compared with John 12:41 and Acts 28:23-28, which also give the clearest testimony to the Godhead of Christ.

It is no wonder, then, that a multitude of the heavenly host should introduce THE SON into this world with,

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men (Luke 2:14),

or that the apostles should so dwell on the glory and perfections of His person, and be inspired to make Him known to others as the Object for our unchanging delight. One of these divinely- taught

writers says,

We have seen with our eyes, we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life; for the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us (1 John 1:1, 2).

Another sets forth the divine glory of the Son to the Colossians, as creature: for by Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created by Him, and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. And He is the Head of the body, the Church: who is the beginning, the Firstborn from [among] the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence. For in Him all the fullness was pleased to dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of His cross, &c. (Col. 1:15-20).

What a precious cluster of glories is here presented for our contemplation! How clearly they speak to us of the deity of the Son!

Again, in the Hebrews we are told that

God, . . . hath in these last days

— after all the varied testimony of prophets —

spoken unto us in [the person of the] Son (see Heb. 1:1, 2);

and we propose now to look a little, with the Lord's help, at what is recorded for our blessing concerning Him in the earlier chapters of this epistle. Before, however, proceeding farther, it may be well to press upon the reader the importance of making the word of God as much as possible our vocabulary when speaking of the unfathomable mystery of THE SON; and, in all simplicity of faith, receiving what God has declared of Him for our intelligence and blessing, instead of drawing deductions, reasoning out conclusions, or allowing ourselves to think or speak of Him according to human phraseology, and thus unconsciously gliding into serious error. We may be certain that

no man knoweth THE SON but the Father {Matt. 11:27},

and that enough has been revealed of Him in Scripture for our instruction and comfort.

In Heb. 1 and 2 THE SON is remarkably brought before us; in chapter 1 as to His eternal Godhead, and in chapter 2 as to His manhood. Yet not exclusively so in either chapter; for how could this blessed One, who is both God and man in one Person, be divided? Perhaps there has not been a more fruitful source of error than the attempt to do this. In both these chapters however, Scriptures are quoted which specially refer to Him as Messiah.

In the first, He is also presented as the Purger of sins, and then as sitting down on the right hand of God; both which wonderful acts He did being man, yet as no one less than God could do. In the second we see that He took part in the children's flesh and blood; He takes not hold of angels but of Abraham's seed; that He is the Sanctifier, and the One who, under the title of Son of Man, will put all things under His feet. Thus we find that when the Holy Ghost brings before us the eternal Godhead of THE SON, He also reminds us that He is man; and when He specially presents Him to us as man, He shows us that the Child born — the Messiah — is the mighty God. How could He

be Maker of all things, Heir of all things, Upholder of all things, and how could He put all things under His feet, except He were verily and truly God? And how could He take part in flesh and blood, be the Purger of sins, taste death for everyone, and sit upon the throne of David, without being verily and truly man — the woman's Seed, Son of Abraham, and Son of David, according to the flesh? Hence Scripture says,

It is Christ that died {Rom. 8:34},

the image of the invisible God, the First-born of every that the Son of man {see John 3:14, 8:28, 12:34}

in this first aspect of THE SON, the clearest possible proof of His being was lifted up, and that God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all {Rom. 8:32}.

It was the glory of His person which gave such eternal value to His work; whereas, among men, it is the dignity of the work which gives honor to the person.

In Heb. 1 THE SON is looked at as

from everlasting to everlasting (Psa. 90:2).

He is therefore infinitely above angels — the highest class of created intelligences that man knows; for He had a more excellent name, was emphatically called by Jehovah, "My Son," and He called God, "Father." The Son, as man, is now exalted to the Father's throne, the One to whom angels, and principalities, and powers are made subject; and the world to come will not be put under angels, but under Him, to whom it was said,

Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool {Psa. 110:1}.

THE SON, then, is infinitely above angels, who are ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall inherit salvation. That Holy Thing which was born of Mary is called the Son of God, but being also eternally divine in His own person, He is no less than the effulgence of God's glory, and the exact expression of His substance. He is therefore before all things, and greater than all things; for all things were created by Him, and by Him all things subsist.

In the first twelve verses of this chapter, THE SON is, as we have said, particularly looked at in His Godhead character. He is truly

the First and the Last {Rev. 22:13}.

Not only did He most truthfully say,

Before Abraham was I am {John 8:58},

but He was before anything was which is made, for it is said of

Him,

By whom also He made the worlds (Heb. 1:2).

We read elsewhere also that He had glory with the Father before the world was, and, Father and Son being relative terms, we find here His eternal Sonship most plainly revealed. (Heb. 1:2; John

17:5). Moreover, we are taught that the Father's counsel and purpose, and love to us; were in the Son before creation —

According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love (Eph. 1:4).

THE SON, then, is eternally divine. We are instructed by an inspired prophet that one attribute of Godhead is Creator.

To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number. . . . Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, Jehovah, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of His understanding (Isa. 40:25-28).

He, then, who created all things is Jehovah. We have, therefore, from everlasting {Psa. 90:2; Micah 5:2; Hab. 1:12}.

Secondly, He is brought before us as the One who did by Himself make purification of sins, and set Himself down on the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. 1:3). As man had sinned, man must bear the penalty of divine justice for sin; and since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead; but who could satisfy the infinite claims of God's justice? or drink up the cup of His eternal condemnation of sin, but one who was divine Himself? Who else could glorify God about our sins, could put them away for ever, and cleanse us by His own blood, but He who had eternal attributes — the Son sent by the Father to be the Savior of the world? Again, who but He could step from the sepulcher to the throne of God, and take His rightful place there? It is not here the aspect of His resurrection as being raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, most precious as that view is; but it is THE SON, who descended first into the lower parts of the earth, lay in the grave till the third day (thus giving the most decided proof of His actual death), rose again from among the dead in the glory of His own eternal excellency, and took His place on heaven's throne, to which He was righteously entitled —

who . . . when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. 1:3).

Blessed be God, there He is, the ascended, glorified Man, and made both Lord and Christ {Acts 2:36}.

Thus, in the second and third verses of this chapter, we find THE SON is looked at before time, or from everlasting, as the One by whom everything was made; and in time purging sins by Himself, and then sitting down in the highest place of power and glory at God's right hand.

Thirdly, there THE SON still sits; but He is coming again, and then He will be the Object of the worship of angels, even as now in heaven angels, and authorities, and powers are made subject to Him. Hence we read:

And again, when He bringeth in the First-begotten into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him (Heb. 1:6).

It need scarcely be said that worship could not be rendered by all the angelic beings which surround the throne of God to any one who was less than God. To no creature, however blessed by God, or endued with divine power, could such honor be rightly accorded; the idea would be sinful in the extreme. Angels know who the Son is, and that He died for man on the cross; they announced His entrance into the world when born in Bethlehem, they afterward tracked His solitary and perfect path, and ministered unto Him; and when He comes to the world in power and glory, they will accompany Him. Whatever may be the measure of the intelligence of angels, it is quite clear that they know to whom worship rightly belongs; for when John was once and again so overcome with the bright shining of an angel, and the wonderful things made known to him, that he fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed him these things, it was at once refused. Instead of the angel accepting the homage, he rebuked the erring apostle, saying,

See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant, and [the fellow-servant] of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this Book: worship God (Rev. 19:10, 22:9, 10).

Angels, then, who clearly know that God is the true object of worship, will take their happy place of rendering worship to THE SON when He comes as the First-born into the world, and in this they will be of one accord, for it is said,

Let all the angels of God worship Him {Heb. 1:6}.

Fourthly, then His rightful place on earth will be the throne; for He comes not to suffer, but to reign. As the true David, He will occupy His own throne; for all things are to be subdued by Him unto Himself, before He delivers up the kingdom to God even the Father,

when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet (1 Cor. 15:24, 25).

He will establish, too, His ancient people in their hoped-for earthly glory, when all the promises shall be made good to them. And who but One, who is God, could take possession of all things, and subdue all things to Himself? We read, therefore,

But unto THE SON he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows (Heb. 1:8, 9).

Thus, in millennial glory, when THE SON — the Messiah — takes His kingly place of power, and reigns before His ancients gloriously, our attention is again called to contemplate Him in His eternal Godhead. Fellows, or companions, He will doubtless have; but here, as in all things, He must have the pre-eminence. It is unquestionably the millennial time in which we here behold THE SON; for it is characterized by righteousness, according to the Scripture,

A king shall reign in righteousness {Isa. 32:1}.

Now God is preaching forgiveness of sins, and bearing with this evil world in marvelous patience and long-suffering; but when THE SON sits on His own throne, He will wield the scepter of righteousness; for, as we observed, righteousness will characterize His kingdom, not grace. It will be manifest that He loves righteousness, and hates iniquity; and because He is eternally divine, will be able to subdue all things unto Himself. Then He will show who is the blessed and only

Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen (1 Tim. 6:15, 16).

Fifthly, as the eternal Godhead of THE SON has been looked at

from everlasting {Psa. 90:2},

before the worlds were made, He is also brought before us as

to everlasting {Psa. 41:13, Psa. 90:2},

when heaven and earth shall have passed away. Now He is upholding all things, and by Him all things consist; but when, according to the divine counsels, this old creation shall have fulfilled its course, and have for ever passed away, THE SON will still be known in all His unchanging freshness and glory. He by whom all things were made will lay aside, as a garment, what is perishable and has waxen old. We read:

Thou, LORD, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: they shall perish, but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail (Heb. 1:10-12).

Can there be a clearer testimony to the eternal Godhead of the Son? Who else could have brought everything that is made into existence? or who but He who is Almighty could fold up and lay aside this vast universe, and yet Himself remain in all His infinite and unchanging attributes? Most truly did He say in the days of His flesh,

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

What man, what angel; what creature, could truthfully utter such an authoritative sentence? Well might His hearers have been sometimes astonished, and exclaim that

He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes {Matt. 7:29}.

Thus has it been our happy privilege to trace in this inspired word THE SON eternally divine before all worlds; then as the Maker of all things; then as purging sins, rising victoriously over death, and taking His rightful place on the Father's throne. We have also been contemplating Him as the One whom angels universally will worship, when He comes into the world in power and glory, to reign as King of kings, sitting on His own throne; and, lastly, when time shall cease, and this old creation pass away, we have been instructed, that His eternal attributes will shine out in all their divine and unchanging glory and freshness. Well, indeed, has it been added,

Jesus Christ [is] the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever {Heb. 13:8}.

"Thou art the everlasting Word, The Father's only Son;

God manifest, God seen and heard,

The Heaven's beloved One:

In Thee, most perfectly expressed,  
The Father's self doth shine;  
Fullness of Godhead, too: the Blest —  
Eternally Divine.  
Worthy, O Lamb of God, art Thou  
That every knee to Thee should bow."

## The Son of Man

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But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor: that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man (Heb. 2:9).

The Word, by whom all things were made, became flesh and dwelt among us. But He who is divine is also Son of man — God was manifested in the flesh. God sent forth His Son made of a woman. Jesus Christ has come in flesh. He, who being in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, was found here in fashion as a man, and took a servant's form. He ate and drank, suffered hunger, thirst, and weariness. He slept, He walked, He prayed, He preached and taught. He resisted and overcame Satan in temptation. He groaned and was troubled, He wept, He was grieved for the hardness of men's hearts, and looked round about on them with anger. He so lovingly entered into the sufferings of those around, cast out devils, and healed all manner of sickness with His word, that it was said by the prophet,

Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses {Matt. 8:17; see Isa. 53:4}.

He was then verily man, born of a woman, though without sin, and in every respect perfect, spotless, holy, harmless, and undefiled.

THE SON, however, did not become incarnate in order to make Himself one with sinners, but that He might die for our sins, and, rising again, make us one with Himself. It is of all importance to see this clearly; for how could the Holy One unite Himself with fallen and sinful men, who justly merited the wrath of God? THE SON, therefore, had a solitary path through this world. By reason of His essential holiness and perfect purity, He could not be otherwise than separate from sinners {Heb. 7:26},

however much He went about doing good. There could not possibly, therefore, be union between us and Himself, until sin had been judged, and we were cleansed. This the Lord most clearly taught. Referring to Himself, 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).

For this we know the Father sent the Son. He came to die, for He came to save. In no other way could the righteous demands of God, or the necessities of our case, be met; for man had sinned, and the penalty of death had come in by sin. He, therefore, took part in the children's flesh and blood,

that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage {Heb. 2:14, 15}.

He took not hold of angels, but He took hold of the seed of Abraham, for Messiah was the promised seed of Abraham, and also of David,

of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God, blessed for ever (Rom. 9:5).

Thus Christ is both God and Man.

His life, here, however, was one of suffering. He was truly a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief {Isa. 53:3}.

He came for the suffering of death. He suffered having been tempted, which must have been deep distress to His infinitely holy soul. He suffered that, as the Captain or Leader of our salvation, He might be made perfect through sufferings. He not only knew every step of the way and every circumstance connected with us, as Omniscient, but He passed through everything that was needed to perfect Him for the office of Leader of our salvation. Though He were a Son, and thus could command all to obey Him, yet He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. His perfectness was in obeying in every respect in circumstances most adverse and painful. His love, subjection, obedience, and faith — all were perfect. And having been perfected, and glorified as man at God's right hand, He is the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him (Heb. 5:8, 9). Ah! who can tell the variety and depth of the sufferings of our precious Lord!

He suffered from man for righteousness' sake — was hated without a cause, despised, and rejected. He suffered from Satan in temptation and bruising —

Thou shalt bruise His heel {Gen. 3:15}.

He suffered (alas, how deeply!) by reason of His wondrous love for His own nation, from God's governmental dealings with them because of their sin, for

in all their affliction He was afflicted {Isa. 63:9};

and He suffered from God atoningly for sins, the just for the unjust (how unfathomable to us!), when He cried out,

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

God only knows the love and sorrow that met there. What a death was the death of the cross {Phil 2:8}!

But His was a victorious death; and, as it has been said, "He death by dying slew." He saw no corruption. His soul was not left in hades. He rose from the dead, for it was not possible that He should be holden of death. He went through death, and annulled death, and

him that had the power of death — that is, the devil {see Heb. 2:14}.

Thus He triumphed over death, and Satan, and the grave. The Son of man is therefore a risen, victorious Savior.

When John was so overcome by a sight of the glorified Son of man that he fell at His feet as dead, the Lord graciously comforted His servant by assuring him that, though He was dead, He is now for evermore a living Person, and holding in triumph the keys of death and hades.

He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell [hades] and of death (Rev. 1:17, 18).

Thus the Son of man has triumphed. Death could not detain Him. He rose from among the dead. His was certainly a victorious death.

By man came death {1 Cor. 15:21},

we know, and here we see,

by man came also the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor. 15:21).

Hence we find that after Jesus rose from the dead, He showed Himself alive again by many infallible proofs, being seen of His disciples, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. He appeared in their midst, showed them His hands and His side, gave commandments, breathed on them, and said,

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

and expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. When some who saw Him were terrified and affrighted, and supposed they had seen a spirit, He fully demonstrated to them the reality of His own actual and bodily resurrection from among the dead. He said unto them,

Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and any feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet (Luke 24:37-40).

Moreover, He led them out as far as to Bethany, and while He blessed them, was parted from them, and carried up into heaven; and they watched Him ascending higher and higher, until a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they steadfastly looked toward heaven, hoping to catch another glimpse of their precious Savior, heavenly messengers stood by them, and said,

Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven (Acts 1:9-11).

Nothing can more fully prove the reality of the resurrection of the man Christ Jesus from among the dead. This was victory indeed.

And, as we have just seen, He has ascended. We now see Jesus . . . crowned with glory and honor (Heb. 2:9).

We remember that He was in death, but we see Him glorified at the right hand of God. A man in glory: what a precious Object for our hearts! He that descended first into the lower parts of the earth is ascended above all heavens; far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come (Eph. 4:2, 10; and 1:21).

There He is highly exalted — a glorified Man. There Stephen, when he looked up steadfastly into heaven, saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God (Acts 7:55, 56).

There we now have to do with Him. There, too, we know Him in new relationships.

He is not ashamed to call them brethren; saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee (Heb. 2:11, 12).

And again, Behold, I and the children which God hath given me (Heb. 2:13).

We know, too, that it was after His triumphant resurrection, He said to Mary, Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God {John 20:17}.

The One, therefore, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, is crowned with glory and honor.

Now He is before the face of God as our High Priest.

Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto [His] brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God (Heb. 2:17).

After having made atonement for the sins of the people by the sacrifice of Himself, He sat down on the right hand of God. There the glorified Son of man in heaven carries on His never-failing office of High Priest for us, after the Aaronic functions, but according to the Melchisedec order. He is not one that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but is merciful and faithful, able to succor us in temptation, to help in every time of need, and to bring us right through our pilgrimage to the end, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for us. He, who is of the seed of David according to the flesh, and Son of God, has passed through the heavens, and is our faithful, unchanging, and sympathizing High Priest; and when He comes the second time, and takes His Messiah throne, He will be, according to the prophetic word,

a priest upon His throne (Zech. 6:13).

— both king and priest on earth.

He is, however, soon coming to reign,

for the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto THE SON; that all should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him. . . . He hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man (John 5:22-27).

Again, we read that God

will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all, in that He hath raised Him from [among] the dead (Acts 17:31).

The Son being now at the right hand of God, is expecting till His enemies be made His footstool {Heb. 10:13}.

Man is yet to be set over the works of God's hands. Man (not angels) is yet to subdue all things unto Himself.

For unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the (habitable) world to come (Heb. 2:5); but quoting from Psa. 8, and applying it to Jesus, the Son of man, he says,

But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the Son of man, that thou visitest Him? Thou madest Him a little lower than the angels [applied to Jesus in Heb. 2:9]; thou crownedst Him with glory and honour, and didst set Him over the works of thy hands. Thou hast put all things in subjection under His feet (Heb. 2:6-8).

Thus we see that the Son, who made the worlds, who became incarnate, who was tempted, who suffered and died, was victorious over death and Satan; that He ascended into the heavens, sat down on the right hand of God, entered upon His priestly functions, and is yet to come forth and take His rightful place over all things, execute all judgment, and subdue all things unto Himself.

And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all {1 Cor. 15:28}.

No doubt one chief reason why the glory and perfections of the person of THE SON are thus so fully brought out in the first and second chapters of the Hebrews is to set forth the infinite value of the one sacrifice, and the perfectness of His priestly office; for there must necessarily be an everlasting efficacy connected with all that He did. Hence, as to the offering, we read,

By one offering He hath perfected for ever [or in perpetuity] them that are sanctified {Heb. 10:14};

and, as concerning priesthood, we are told, there were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death, 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 [or in perpetuity] sat down on the right hand of God (Heb. 7:23; 10:11, 12).

Thus, through the infinite efficacy of the one offering, the worshipers, instead of having to do with many sacrifices which could not take away sins, are once purged, and have no more conscience of sins, so that the Holy Ghost can indwell them, and unite them to Christ in the heavens; such have also liberty to draw near to God — to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, where our High Priest is, and where His blood ever speaks. Instead, therefore, of there being now a remembrance of sins {see Heb. 10:3}, we remember Him, who has by His one offering for ever put away sin. Hence, though sin is in us, we have no sin on us; for we are cleansed, sanctified, and perfected for ever by the will of God, through one offering; and God has said,

Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more {Heb. 10:17}.

Christ being now in heaven is the clearest proof that our sins have been borne, suffered for, and are gone for ever. We have, therefore,

no more conscience of sins {Heb. 10:2}.

How rich and abundant is the grace of God to us in Christ!

If, then, in virtue of the accomplished work of THE SON, the conscience is purged, the veil is rent, and He is gone into heaven itself by His own blood, we, as purged worshipers, have therefore access to God with confidence; our hearts are attracted to where He now is, so that we run the race set before us according to His word; and we also take that position here which is suited to His mind. Hence the believer is looked at in the closing chapters of this epistle as a happy worshiper,

an earnest runner, and a faithful bearer of the reproach of Christ. He is a worshiper inside the veil, where Jesus is, a runner of a race looking steadfastly unto Jesus, and outside the camp with a rejected Jesus bearing His reproach.

The liberty of access for the worshiper is here contrasted with the way of approach, while the first tabernacle was standing, according to the only ritual divinely instituted, but now done away in Christ. It was characterized by distance from God, for the veil excluded them. It was not rent — the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest; so that they never knew what it was to be in the presence of God, as purged worshipers. The priesthood, too, was of an earthly and successional order, confined to an earthly line of things (not heavenly) as between the people and God. It was a changeable priesthood, and often interrupted by death. There was also

a worldly sanctuary {Heb. 9:1}

— a place of worship on earth, a material building, which was the only one ever recognized as the house of God. Such was the Jewish order of things. Whereas Christianity tells us of distance having been removed by the veil being rent from the top to the bottom, when Jesus died upon the cross, so that the worshiper comes now with boldness into the holiest of all. The order of priesthood is heavenly and eternal, all believers being made priests, and Jesus the Son of God being the unchangeable High Priest. Worship, therefore, is not now connected with any particular building on earth, but with the holiest of all above,

the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man {Heb. 8:2}.

Because the Lord's people are His house, there is now no building on earth, which can be truthfully designated a house of God. (See Heb. 3:6.) It was, therefore, said by our adorable Lord,

Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them (Matt. 18:20).

To attach the idea of a sanctuary now to any building on earth is then so far to abandon Christian ground, and to go back to the Jews' religion; which is not only dishonoring to the Lord, but far more damaging to souls than many imagine; because it throws them at a distance from God, and necessitates their requiring a humanly-ordered priesthood to come between themselves and God. This the natural man likes, because it gives importance to men; while he rebels at the thoughts of divine grace, and refuses the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. But, blessed be God, we have remission of sins, and we have boldness to enter where He is. Hence we are welcomed with

Come boldly unto the throne of grace {Heb. 4:16}.

Do we know what it is to be inside the veil, in the sweet consciousness of God's perfect love {1 John 4:18}, and in the enjoyment of perfect peace {Isa. 26:3},

while our hearts at the same time are going out to the Father in worship and thanksgiving? It need scarcely be said that this is not the sinner drawing near in order to be cleansed, but the worshiper entering in with boldness, because he is cleansed, and has

no more conscience of sins {Heb. 10:2}.

Hence it is written,

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. 10:22).

Our Lord referred to this remarkable change in the character of worship. He said to the woman of Samaria,

Believe Me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. . . . But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:21-24).

Worship, then, must be “in spirit” — suited to the nature of God — and “in truth,” or according to God’s own revelation of His mind. Happy indeed are those who thus worship the Father!

At the same time the believer is deeply conscious he is in a world where Jesus was, but is not, and is running on to where He is. The spiritual worshiper is also then a devoted runner; and in so doing, he is exhorted to drop every weight which impedes his course, to lay aside unbelief in all its delusive forms — that easily besetting sin — and to run the race set before him (Heb. 12:1-3). He is encouraged to run, not to loiter, nor to seek a resting-place, where the faithful Forerunner had none; but to follow on in the race with patient, persevering faith. Not with spasmodic or desultory efforts, but with patience; not looking to men, however well they may have been reported for their faith; but to keep the eye steadily on Him, who has run the race perfectly, who knows every step of the way, every impediment and temptation, and is now sitting on the throne of God. We are, then, to run the race set before us, looking unto Jesus (or looking steadfastly on Jesus) where He now is. Thus, turning from every other object, and fixing the eye of our heart on Him, the Leader and Completer (not of our faith, but) of faith, we must look steadfastly and dependently on Him, who has trodden the path of faith perfectly from the beginning to the end; for all our resources are in Him. We are enjoined also to consider him {Heb. 12:3}, whose path was beset so painfully with opposition and trial; for when we well consider Him, who endured so great contradiction from sinners against Himself, we become cheered and strengthened, so that we do not grow weary and faint in our minds. The blessed Lord had joy in prospect, and so we have the bright hope of being with Him, and like Him for ever. We are told that He

for the joy which was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God {Heb. 12:2}.

The Forerunner is for us entered within the veil, and we are to run the race with patience, looking unto Him. We are also to bear the reproach of Christ. We cannot now be associated with a worldly system of religion on earth, for the veil is rent. He suffered without the gate, and we are exhorted to go forth unto Him without the camp. Our place then here is to suffer with Christ in His rejection. God hath highly exalted Him, and has made Him the central object of His counsels; Christ must therefore be the true and only center for the faithful here. False religiousness is as displeasing to the Lord as irreligiousness itself. Yet there is a way for faith in the darkest times. The Lord has interests still on earth of deepest moment to Him. He cannot bear what is evil. It is only the more hateful to Him, when His holy name is used to accredit it; though ecclesiastical evil is often the last thing which arouses the conscience. Still the word to the faithful is,

Let every one who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity {see 2 Tim. 2:19}, and go forth . . . unto Him without the camp {Heb. 13:13}.

This brings its “reproach,” but it is the path of blessing. To turn away from what is not according to His truth, and, to go forth . . . unto Him without the camp, is clearly His will concerning its, It may entail painful severances; but to be out to the Lord, and

with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart {2 Tim. 2:22},

is the divinely ordered path; and that is enough for a true heart.

Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach (Heb. 13:11-13).

It has been rightly said that a worldly religion, which forms a system in which the world can walk, and in which the religious element is adapted to man on earth, is the denial of Christianity.

May we know increasingly the blessedness of being inside the veil as purged worshipers, outside the camp with Christ in faithfulness to His name, and patient runners of the race which ere long will bring us into His presence for ever:

for yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry (Heb. 10:37).

When the Lord presents Himself as the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning Star {Rev. 22:16}, it is immediately said, And the Spirit and the bride say, Come {Rev. 22:17}!

so we may be assured it is the apprehension of His blessed person that will keep fresh in our souls the hope of His coming — the earnest desire of seeing His face.

Thy love we own, Lord Jesus;

Thy way is traced before Thee;

Thou wilt descend and we ascend,

To meet in heavenly glory.

Soon shall the blissful morning

Call forth Thy saints to meet Thee;

Our only Lord, alone adored,

With gladness then we'll greet Thee.

## The Gospel of God

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For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith (Rom. 1:16, 17).

In the opening verses of the epistle to the saints at Rome, the gospel is spoken of as God's gospel — God's power unto salvation. It is that in which the righteousness of God is revealed. All is of God; and we are told what the gospel is about, what it reveals, what its power, and on whom its marvelous blessings are conferred. God is the source of all our blessings, and all is made ours on the principle of faith. We observe that Paul was an apostle by calling, and separated unto the work of the gospel by the sovereign acting of the Holy Ghost. He tells us he had received grace. Those, too, in Rome, to whom he wrote, were saints by calling, beloved of God, called of Jesus Christ. All these ways were entirely of grace, and completely opposed to the principle of law.

The real value and point of the glad tidings of God, however, can only be rightly estimated by the consideration of the alarming fact, stated in connection with these verses, that

the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness (Rom. 1:18),

which shows that God's terrible judgment against all that is contrary to Himself is coming upon men from heaven. It is not a local or partial intervention of God's anger, but

against all ungodliness.

Divine wrath then is coming, and happy are those who, like the Thessalonians, can say they are delivered from the wrath to come. But let us not fail to notice, that wrath is revealed from heaven, not only against all that is hostile to God, but against all those, who, while holding the letter of the truth, are practicing unrighteous ways. In the days of our Lord, the Jews were the holders of the truth. All the truth of God known in the world was with them. The oracles of God had been committed unto them; but, alas! what grievous unrighteousness was among them, culminating in preferring a robber to Christ, and spitting upon and crucifying the Savior whom God had sent. In our day Christendom holds the truth — professes to be for Christ in contradistinction to Mahometanism {Islam}, Judaism, and idolatry; but the prophetic delineation of the last days is being rapidly fulfilled, that men would be

covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof (2 Tim. 3:1-5).

What is this but holding the truth in unrighteousness? And on such may we not expect that the heaviest blow of the wrath of God will speedily fall? Are we not told concerning those who received not the love of the truth, that God will judicially send men strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness (see 2 Thess. 2:11, 12)?

However, the solemn and arousing fact remains unmistakably clear, that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness.

It is in connection with this alarming warning that the glad tidings of God are sent forth.

First, it is well to observe that the gospel is the gospel of God {Rom. 1:1}

— God's message to man. It declares there is goodness in God's heart toward man. It is a ministry that makes no demands on man, but communicates glad tidings, which can make him happy (sinner though he be), and at rest in God's infinitely holy presence. In the gospel God speaks, and it becomes man to hearken. If a prophet in olden times said,

Hear and your soul shall live {Isa. 55:3}, the blessed Master was wont to say, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life {John 5:24}; and an apostle could write, that faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God {Rom. 10:17}.

It is the goodness of God which leadeth to repentance (Rom. 2:4).

It was, then, the gospel of God that Paul preached; and these glad tidings he was ready to minister in Rome by the will of God. It appears that up to that time no apostle had visited Rome. The gospel had effectually reached souls in that city by other instrumentality. Many there had evidently received it as the word of God, inasmuch as their faith was spoken of throughout the whole world. But there seems to have been something wanting in them, as to their grounding in

the righteousness of God {Rom. 3:22}

— the prominent subject of the epistle; so that Paul expressed himself as ready to preach to them at Rome as well as to others. He opens the epistle, therefore, with the foundation principles of the gospel; first of all asserting that it is

the gospel of God;

not like the law, which demanded righteousness and love from the creature, but God manifesting Himself in the activity of His own grace for man's eternal salvation and blessing.

Secondly, let us not fail to notice what the glad tidings of God are about. We are told they are concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord {Rom. 1:3}.

Whatever may be its effects, its source is from God, and the subject of it the Son of God — David's Son and David's Lord — who was raised from the dead. The gospel of God then sets before us the person and work of His Son, who was essentially and eternally Divine, and yet perfect Man; for only such a Savior could meet our need, or answer the just claims of the Majesty on high.

To redeem us He must be a sinless, spotless, perfect Man; for, had there been the least flaw attachable to Him, He would have had to be judged for it, and therefore unfit to be a substitute for us. But, blessed be God, He was the holy thing {Luke 1:35} as born of Mary; and after thirty years of trial and temptation in a path of sorrow and grief, the heavens opened over Him, and a voice from the excellent glory declared,

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

Beside this, because of His perfect spotlessness, the Holy Ghost came down and abode upon Him. This could not have been, had there been in Him the least taint of imperfection. When the Holy Ghost indwells a believer now, it is in virtue of his having received remission of sins through faith in the Lord Jesus; for the Holy Ghost could not take up His abode in anyone not cleansed from sin. The Holy Ghost then coming down and abiding on the Son of God, was another infallible proof of the perfect spotlessness of His person.

But while we needed a Savior who was perfect Man, that He might, as our Substitute, bear our sins in His own body on the tree, and be made sin for us, it was also necessary that He should be a Person having such capacities and attributes, that He could bear God's eternal judgment of sin, and be able to satisfy all the demands of infinite holiness and righteousness. All this He could do because He was Son of God, and also Son of David — God and man — in His own spotless person. By His one offering on the cross then He discharged all the claims of divine righteousness as to our sin and guilt, and in it glorified God. The gospel of God, therefore, must be concerning His Son our Lord Jesus Christ, who was of the seed of David, according to the flesh, and raised up from among the dead.

Thirdly, in the gospel is revealed the righteousness of God on the principle of faith. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith (or on the principle of faith unto faith); as it is written,

The just shall live by faith (Rom. 1:17).

No doubt it was the gospel of the grace of God, of which Paul testified; but we are told that in it the righteousness of God is revealed. It is God's righteousness. We know that God, in His acting, cannot sacrifice righteousness to love, nor love to righteousness, but works all His counsels according to the unchanging character of His own nature. God must judge sin. He cannot do otherwise, for He

is righteous in all His ways {Psa. 145:17}.

Jesus then magnified the law, and vindicated all the claims of justice. God condemned sin, and therefore He now justifies the ungodly who believe. Hence we read that even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 5:21).

In the gospel, then, it is not righteousness demanded from man, nor legal righteousness enforced, but God's righteousness revealed; not God requiring righteousness from man in the way of works for justification, but God bringing righteousness to man, suited to Himself, on the principle of faith. It is, then, not human righteousness, not the righteousness of the law, but

the righteousness of God (Rom. 3:21)

which the gospel reveals. It is righteousness wholly apart from law. It is a righteousness suited to God, and our faith is counted as righteousness.

But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe (Rom. 3:21, 22).

Scripture then speaks clearly of another righteousness than the one connected with law, and also that the law and the prophets gave testimony to it. Hence we find in the ceremonial law, as it is called, the burnt-offering showed that the worshiper was accepted in its sweet savor —

It shall be accepted for him {Lev. 1:4};

and the prophet Habakkuk, as we have quoted, declared that

the just shall live by his faith {Rom. 1:17; see Hab. 2:4},

showing that life and acceptance in another were contemplated by the law and the prophets, not on the principle of law-keeping, but on the principle of faith. David also, who lived under the law, wrote of the blessedness of the man unto whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works, saying,

Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered: blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin (Rom. 4:6-8).

Again we find, some hundreds of years before the law was given, that Abram was accounted righteous on the principle of faith. We read that

he believed in Jehovah; and he counted it to him for righteousness (Gen. 15:6).

Abel also, by his more excellent sacrifice obtained witness that he was righteous; and we find, that Noah became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. It is unquestionable then that a righteousness which was of God, and wholly apart from law, was reckoned to believers long before the law was given; that it was gloried in by the faithful who lived under the law; and that it is now revealed in the gospel, and is toward all and upon all them that

believe on Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from [among] the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification (Rom. 4:23-25).

Another point which Scripture brings before us, is God's righteousness in forgiving the sins of those who believed before the sacrifice of Christ. God, having now set forth Christ as a propitiation (mercy-seat) through faith in His blood, declares His righteousness in passing by the sins of Old Testament saints. His forbearance had been shown at the time, but now His righteousness in having done so is declared; for the atoning work of Christ, though then not accomplished, must have been always present to the eye of God.

Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus (Rom. 3:25, 26).

And further, when Jesus was bearing our sins on the tree, we know that there was unsparingly poured out upon Him all that justice could inflict in the condemnation of sin; as He said, The Son of man must be lifted up. Yes, it must be, because the righteous claims of God demanded just punishment for our sins. On this account, He was numbered with the transgressors, and bare our sins in His own body on the tree. Hence He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities. He was oppressed, afflicted, stricken; above all, it pleased Jehovah to bruise Him, to put

Him to grief, to forsake Him; so that He cried out,

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? {Psa. 22:1}

What all these atoning sufferings were, and the travail of soul that He passed through, no creature can comprehend, no tongue can tell. We know that His soul was made an offering for sin, and that He hath poured out His soul unto death {Isa. 53:12}.

Oh, the untold depths of agony and suffering which that blessed One so lovingly and willingly endured for us! Let us ponder what God has revealed of

the death of the cross {Phil. 2:8}

till our souls are melted, and peace fills every corner of our hearts! How loudly the atoning death of Jesus speaks to us of the righteousness of God (Rom. 3:21, 22)! Though He was the righteous One, yet He endured all the righteous vengeance due to sin in His own self on the cross, and completely drained the cup of wrath, so that He could say,

It is finished {John 19:30}.

Thus in His death the wages of sin were fully dealt out, for He died for our sins according to the Scriptures {1 Cor. 15:3}.

He died unto sin once. All the demands of righteousness were fully met, and peace was made. There righteousness and peace kissed each other. How then was it possible that He should be holden of death? The debt having been justly cancelled, how could the prisoner be longer detained?

Again we see the righteousness of God in raising Him from among the dead. The Savior having made a just atonement for our sins, having satisfied divine justice and glorified God, was it not a righteous thing that He should be raised from among the dead? Having brought eternal glory to God in the stupendous work of the cross, was it not a righteous thing that He should be exalted and glorified? Hence we hear Him saying,

Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him (John 13:31, 32).

And again,

I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was (John 17:4, 5).

This demand we know was granted, and we are sure that He was righteously entitled to be glorified as man. Hence we read elsewhere: He was

obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore, [that is, on account of His so glorifying God in His death on the cross,] God also 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 (Phil. 2:8-11).

Thus not only is the man Christ Jesus righteously raised from the dead, and exalted to the right hand of God, having received a name that is above every name, (there being made Lord and Christ,) but He is righteously entitled to Lordship over heavenly, earthly, and infernal beings — universal dominion, not only by reason of His personal glory as the Son, but because of the infinite worth of the work of the cross. Hence, when He takes unto Himself His great power and reigns, He will do so as righteously entitled to it in virtue of His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. He will then judge both the living and the dead, and put all enemies under His feet; for to this end Christ hath died and risen again, that He might rule over both dead and living.

But more than this. It is because, in marvelous grace, Christ died for our sins under the righteous judgment of God that we have remission — that God can and does in righteousness forgive us.

He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins {1 John 1:9};

for we have forgiveness through the blood. How could God in righteousness condemn our sins in the person of His own Son, and afterwards condemn them on us? Impossible; the idea would accuse God of injustice. But, blessed be His name, in virtue of the atoning work He justifies us —

Being now justified by His blood {Rom. 5:9}.

Is it not due to Christ, just to Him, whose blood was shed for many for the remission of sins, that God should forgive us, and manifest the full outflow of His love in justifying the believer from all things? This, we know, He does. Oh, how forcible and assuring are the words,

It is God that justifieth {Rom. 8:33}!

Instead of God condemning us, He now justifies us, and declares that He is

just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus {Rom. 3:26}.

Precious words of comfort! Thus we see that the gospel reveals the righteousness of God (Rom. 31:21, 22) in justifying us, who believe in Him, as due to Christ,

who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification {Rom. 4:25}.

And yet further, He, who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him — Christ Himself our righteousness. When the father fell upon the neck of the repentant prodigal, and imprinted on his cheek the kiss of love, he said to his servants,

Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him {Luke 15:22}.

It was the best robe. There could be nothing superior to it. It was the highest possible character of fitness for the father's presence. But the illustration fails to convey the full blessedness of the righteousness, which every believer now is in Christ, for He is not only graced for the Father's presence, but has acceptance in another — the Beloved — so that we are become

the righteousness of God in Him {2 Cor. 5:21}.

It is due to Christ, in virtue of His God-glorifying work of obedience, that those for whom He suffered should be accounted righteous in Him —

the Lord our righteousness {Jer. 23:6}

— according to the eternal purpose. God in His grace has therefore made Him to be unto us “righteousness,” and this on the principle of faith. How could Christ see

of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied {Isa. 53:11},

if this were not so, if we were not with Him in glory? Besides, His work was not only for the glory of God, but for us. He

once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God {1 Pet. 3:18}.

We are not then ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish our own righteousness, but have gladly submitted ourselves unto the righteousness of God. Having found all our righteousnesses as filthy rags, and all hope of righteousness by law-keeping having come to an end, we are rejoiced to find that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth (Rom. 10:4). There is no solid peace in souls until they see the justice or righteousness of God in giving remission of sins through His blood, and counting them righteous in Christ. How blessedly the gospel reveals the righteousness of God!

The righteousness of God {Rom. 3:21, 22}

thus revealed in the gospel is presented in contrast with

the righteousness of the law {Rom. 8:4},

and, as we have said, is entirely apart from it. It flows to us from the sovereign grace of God through the accomplished work of His Son, and is upon all them that believe. How sweet it is to know that Christ glorified is our righteousness, that through matchless grace we are become the righteousness of God in Him. Christ then is our subsisting righteousness in God’s presence. The ever-present witness there, not only that all our sins have been righteously atoned for, but that He is of God made unto us righteousness. What rest of heart this gives! What boldness too in the day of judgment, because as He is, so are we in this world! Who can condemn whom God justifies? How these truths melt our hearts, and draw us out in worship and thanksgiving! What comfort too they give in darkest circumstances! It is no marvel that so many have found the true expression of their souls in such lines as these —

“Without one thought that’s good to plead,

Oh, what could shield me from despair

But this: ‘Though I am vile indeed,

The Lord my righteousness is there’?”

Fourthly, the gospel is God’s power unto salvation. (Rom. 1:16). We say, with reverence, that in no other way could God’s power be put forth to save sinners; for apart from the accomplished work of the person of the Son, He can only judge sinners, and must be against sinners; but in the death and blood-shedding of Jesus, God shows that He hates sin, but loves sinners, and is able to save the worst of sinners. The apostle Paul therefore gloried in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and was not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes.

It brings salvation to Jew and Gentile on the principle of faith, though in point of order it was preached to the Jew first.

Observe then that the gospel is preached for salvation, not to improve man in the flesh, but to save him; not to help the efforts of nature religiously, but to bring him to God; for the obedience of faith, not of all nations, but among all nations. It is not therefore preached to better the world, nor to convert the world, but it is the power of God unto salvation to individuals,

to every one that believeth {Rom. 1:16}.

Now the power of God unto salvation is very specific in its meaning — a large expression; for while the freeness of the grace of God is shown in its blessing to every one that believes, fullness is set forth in not stopping short, in its blessing, of planting the saved one bodily in the presence of God in heavenly glory. We know that we are

called unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus (1 Pet. 5:10),

and that He

suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God (1 Pet. 3:18).

Not but that it is quite correct now to speak of believers as “saved,” for we have the salvation of our souls now by faith, as Scripture says,

Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls {1 Pet. 1:9}.

But we wait for salvation in its full sense,

The redemption of our body {Rom. 8:23},

the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time {1 Pet. 1:5},

when, in spiritual bodies, suited to heavenly and eternal glory, and conformed to the image of the Son, we shall be in full possession and enjoyment of this great salvation.

The gospel then is the power of God unto salvation, because in the cross of Christ the foundation was laid in righteousness for its accomplishment, according to the eternal purpose and grace of God, to give life and righteousness in Christ Jesus to every one that believeth. We have, therefore, by the power of God in the gospel, deliverance from the wrath to come, remission of sins, present possession of eternal life, justification by the blood of Christ, peace with God, sonship, the gift of the Holy Ghost, hope of glory, and much more. As the Father has made us fit for sharing the portion of the saints in light, we wait for God's Son from heaven; for then we shall know the full power of God to us in this great salvation. Our hope then is glory. We do not hope for righteousness, for, as we have seen, the gospel reveals that Christ is our righteousness; but we hope for that, to which righteousness established in the accomplished work of Jesus entitles us, even glory.

We through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith (Gal. 5:5).

We look for the Savior who shall change this body of humiliation, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working, whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto

Himself (Phil. 3:20, 21). Then “salvation” will be fully consummated; and in this sense we can say, Now is our salvation nearer [not surer] than when we believed {Rom. 13:11};

because, as time rolls on, it hastens the blissful period of our Lord’s return. It will not then be only salvation from the guilt and dominion of sin, the salvation of the soul, and deliverance from the wrath to come; but salvation from this old creation and its belongings, from a body of frailty and infirmity, for we shall be changed in a moment, and bodily translated into the presence of God and the Lamb for ever. Then, in uncreated light, we shall see His face; then we shall realize fully what we now apprehend so feebly, and sound forth so faintly, that the gospel

is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth {Rom. 1:16}.

“My hope is built on nothing less

Than Christ the Lord my righteousness;

I dare not trust the sweetest frame;

But wholly lean on Jesus’ name;

On Christ the solid Rock I stand,

All other ground is sinking sand.”

## The Resurrection of Christ

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Who . . . was raised again for our justification (Rom. 4:25).

All Christians are agreed that the death of Christ is the basis of all our blessings. Of this there can be no doubt, for

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

Without the death of Christ we could never be with Him:

Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone {John 12:24}.

He could not then, but in virtue of the death of the cross, have us in glory with Him: But, while all our present and eternal blessings are founded on the death and blood-shedding of Jesus the Son of God, Scripture points us again and again to Christ risen and ascended, as the One in whom we stand, and are fully blessed and accepted.

The use so often made of the apostle's resolve

not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified {1 Cor. 2:2},

as if he meant that he confined his preaching to the fact that Christ died for sinners, is very far wide of the truth. As a matter of certainty we know that he preached much more than this. The truth is that in Corinth, where human wisdom was so much extolled, and human righteousness so ardently contended for by the Jews, the apostle determined, that instead of regarding either, he would continually have a crucified Savior before him and minister Him. For he saw in the rejected and crucified Son of God the worthlessness both of human wisdom and human righteousness. He beheld in the cross the divine estimate of man in the flesh. Whether it be a question of man's righteousness or wisdom, he saw both alike laid low there by the righteous judgment of God. In the crucified Savior he knew that God had entirely and judicially set aside man in the flesh;

as Scripture says,

Our old man is crucified with Him {Rom. 6:6}.

The crucified Son of God must therefore be the abiding witness that the "wisdom" of the one, and the "righteousness" of the other, had equally rejected Him, who is

the wisdom of God and the power of God {see 1 Cor. 1:24};

and must also constantly set forth that man had there been judged by God, as utterly unfit for Him, so that no flesh should glory in His presence {1 Cor. 1:29}.

The apostle then was taught by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ to have no confidence in the pretended good qualities of the natural man. So that when he entered Corinth he determined neither to recognize the boasted wisdom of the Gentile, nor the pretended righteousness of the

Jew; for he had a crucified Savior before him, the Holy One of God, hated and rejected by both. He would be occupied with the cross, not only as manifesting God's love to man, but as setting forth God's verdict on the thorough depravity and incurableness of man in the flesh. To imagine that the apostle only preached the death of Christ, foundation as it is of all our blessings, would be contrary to the fact; for we know how largely his ministry entered into the resurrection, ascension, glorification, and coming of Christ, and many details also concerning each of these glorious truths.

It is a brief consideration of what Scripture teaches about the resurrection of our Lord Jesus, which, as the Lord may help, is now to engage our attention. It is the all-important truth of the gospel. We read of the disciples being enveloped in mist and perplexity, because

as yet they knew not the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead (John 20:9).

Notwithstanding the present extensive amount of Bible knowledge, and acquaintance with the facts and literal details of Scripture, it may, however, be truly said that the children of God are suffering much through lack of knowledge.

As in the last days of Israel's history the prophet had dolefully to exclaim,

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hos. 4:6),

it may now be truly said that God's people are immense losers through lack of knowledge of Christ. For who now delights to tell of the comfort, victory, and blessings they enjoy, from having to do with Christ risen, ascended, and coming? The highest blessing many appear to think that they can know here is present forgiveness of sins, and the consequence is, they become associated and entangled with much that is contrary to the Lord's mind, and injurious to their own souls; which those who have a better acquaintance with Christ avoid, because they perceive another path laid open by the Scriptures to the true followers of the Lord Jesus.

As we have seen, the error of the disciples was from ignorance of the Scriptures, as to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Their hearts were true and fervent, but they were sad, and looking in the wrong direction for comfort, because they knew not the Scripture

that He must, rise again from the dead {John 20:9}.

They knew not that

it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from [among] the dead, the third day {Luke 24:46}.

The consequence was that they were looking into the sepulcher, and were sadly disappointed because they found not the body of the Lord Jesus, instead of rejoicing in the reality of His mighty victory. They knew not that it was absolutely necessary that He must rise again from the dead. Had His body remained in the sepulcher, what assurance could we have had of His having redeemed us? Nay, more, had He been holden of death, we should have had no Savior, and no salvation. The resurrection of Christ is, therefore, the fundamental truth of the gospel. To take away the truth of the Lord's resurrection is to remove all hope — to leave the soul without hope. Hence we find Peter, after his disappointment at the sepulcher, blessing God for having

begotten us again unto a lively [or living] hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from [among] the dead (1 Pet. 1:3).

When some sought to persuade the saints of Corinth that there was no resurrection of the dead, the apostle at once refers to the resurrection of Christ, and asserts that, if He be not raised from the dead, then we have no gospel, no comfort, no salvation. He says, if Christ be not risen, our preaching is vain, your faith is vain, we are false witnesses, ye are yet in your sins, all who have believed are perished, and we are of all men most miserable. Thus the fundamental truth of the gospel is asserted in connection with the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and our resurrection, too, is affirmed, because there is one Man who has passed through death, and become the First-fruits of them that slept.

In looking through the Acts, when the Lord's servants were so much under the guidance and power of the Holy Ghost, we cannot fail to be struck with the prominence the apostles gave to the truth of the Lord's resurrection. In the first chapter of that book, before the Holy Ghost came, when they were exercised about the choice of an apostle, Peter insists that one must be a witness with us of His resurrection. And the sermon on the day of Pentecost not only exposes the guilt of the Jews in slaying Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God, but it also sets forth His resurrection from the dead, and declares that He is now in glory made Lord and Christ, the true object of faith, and the Giver of the Holy Ghost. In Acts 3, Peter again addressing the guilty Jews, says, Ye

denied the holy One and the Just . . . and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from [among] the dead; whereof we are witnesses {Acts 3:14, 15}.

In Acts 4, we find that the people were grieved, and persecuted the apostles, because they preached through Jesus the resurrection from [among] the dead {Acts 4:2};

and when Peter addressed them about the miracle he had wrought on the lame man, he said,

By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from [among] the dead, even by Him doth this man stand before you whole {Acts 4:10}.

In the same chapter, after waiting upon God in united prayer, we are told, among other manifestations of divine mercy,

With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus {Acts 4:33}.

In Acts 5, Peter witnesses again to the people that

the God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour {Acts 5:30, 31}.

In Acts 7, Stephen says,

I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God {Acts 7:56}.

In Acts 10, when Peter preaches to the household of Cornelius, speaking of the Jews, he says,

Whom they slew and hanged on a tree; Him God raised up the third day, and shewed Him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from [among] the dead {Acts 10:39-41}.

In the account of Paul's famous sermon at Antioch, he again and again insists upon the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. After alluding to the rulers of Jerusalem, who desired Pilate that He should be slain, he said,

They took Him down from the tree, and laid Him in a sepulchre. But God raised Him from [among] the dead, and He was seen many days {Acts 13:29, 31}.

Again, he tells his hearers that

He raised Him up from [among] the dead, no more to return to corruption {see Acts 13:34}.

He further adds, that

He, whom God raised again, saw no corruption {Acts 13:37}.

After this, when preaching at Thessalonica (Acts 17) Paul

reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from [among] the dead {Acts 17:2, 3};

and his great offence to the Thessalonians seems to have been in saying "that there is another king, one Jesus." At Athens, also, we are told that some thought Paul was a setter forth of strange gods, because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection, and others mocked when they heard of the resurrection of the dead. In Paul's speech of defense at Jerusalem, he says,

Of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question (Acts 23:6);

and before Felix, he not only asserts that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust, but repeats what he had said on a former occasion,

Touching the resurrection of the dead, I am called in question by you this day {Acts 24:21}.

So prominently was the doctrine of the resurrection set forth by Paul, that when Festus takes upon himself to explain Paul's case, he says, his accusers

had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive (Acts 25:19).

Before King Agrippa also he says that he witnessed

none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, &c. (Acts 26:23).

All these quotations plainly show, that, when the Holy Ghost was acting in mighty power with the apostles, they not only preached the death of Christ, but that the precious truth of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus was largely set forth in their ministry; and the more we consider the subject by the testimony of Scripture, the more convinced we shall be, not only that the resurrection is the fundamental truth of the gospel, but that those souls must be in a defective state who are always, as they say, at the foot of the cross. That ministry too of the word falls far short of the Lord's mind, which does not enter upon the resurrection of Christ, and the glorious doctrines of divine teaching associated with it, such as the gift of the Holy Ghost, and hope of our Lord's coming.

The truth is that, if Christ be not raised from the dead, then death has gained the victory over Him, the grave has closed upon Him, Satan has triumphed, and we have no living Savior, and no salvation. The subject therefore is of vital importance. But, blessed be God, Christ is risen from among the dead! He is alive again, and that for evermore, and has the keys of hell [hades] and of death; He has obtained the victory for us, and is become the First-fruits of them that slept.

The apostle Paul tells us that the gospel which he preached

was that which he also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:3, 4).

Every sacrifice which was offered set forth figuratively the death of Jesus. From Abel's offering downward, the Lamb of God was typically portrayed. In those types and shadows, God declared what He would do, when the time fully came for it, in the death and blood-shedding of His beloved Son. The very kind of death He would undergo in being hanged on a tree was also pointed out in Scripture. In the twenty-second Psalm we hear Him saying,

They pierced my hands and my feet {Psa. 22:16};

and the prophet Zechariah declares that the Jews will yet look on Him whom they pierced, and shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for his only son, &c. Moses also refers to it, by informing us that being hanged on a tree was connected with being made a curse,

for he that is hanged is accursed of God {Deut. 21:23}.

When an inspired apostle comments on this he tells us, first, that

as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them {Gal. 3:10}.

Thus he proves all under the law to be justly exposed to the curse of God. Then he insists on the precious truth that Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law. How? By being made a curse for us; and refers to Scripture for authority, saying,

For it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree {Gal. 3:13}.

And more; for those who thus came under the curse were to be buried. It was ordered that the body was to be taken down and buried that day.

His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou, shalt in any wise bury him that day (for he that is hanged is accursed of God) (Deut. 21:23).

Thus we see that

Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried {1 Cor. 15:3}

But it may be inquired, Where, in the Old Testament Scriptures, to which we presume the apostle here referred, are we taught that Christ would rise again from the dead on the third day?

The resurrection of Christ was plainly foretold by David in Psa. 16, which was quoted both by Peter on the day of Pentecost, and by Paul at Antioch, to prove the fulfilment of Scripture in His

rising again from the dead. They argued that David did not then speak of himself; for, though a prophet, he was buried and saw corruption; but that He, whom God raised again, saw no corruption. In death His soul was not left in hades, the place of departed spirits, neither did His body see corruption; but He entered upon resurrection, the path of life, and ascended to the right hand of God. The words are,

Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life; in thy presence is fullness of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore (Psa. 16:10, 11).

Thus the resurrection of the Lord Jesus was plainly foretold, and the instruction is clear that Messiah would not only rise again from among the dead, but be exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high {Heb. 1:3}.

But with regard to the third day in Scripture, which would seem often significant of resurrection, we are not so plainly instructed; and yet, to the spiritual mind, little doubt can remain that the third day would be the day of Christ's rising from the dead. Abraham seeing the place afar off for the sacrifice of Isaac on the third day (Gen. 22:4), makes it more than probable that Isaac was loosed from the altar on the third day. But this is not clear enough to be relied on as positive evidence on the point. Our Lord Himself referred to Jonah as a type, when He said,

As Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (Matt. 12:40).

Here we have the clearest instruction that the Old Testament record of Jonah did typically set forth the resurrection of Christ, forasmuch as Jonah, after this, was vomited out by the fish on dry land. The third day is also stamped with the divine mark of resurrection by the prophet Hosea —

After two days He will revive us; in the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight (Hos. 6:2).

Again, we find in reference to the peace-offering, that

the remainder of the flesh of the sacrifice on the third day shall be burnt with fire (Lev. 7:17),

that is, that it shall be entirely for God on the third day.

But the third day was also most remarkably and divinely stamped at creation. Before that day the waters of death covered everything; but on that day the waters receded, and out of the dry land sprang forth living, fruitful things.

The earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind {Gen. 1:12}.

And we are twice told on this day, and on this day only, that

God saw that it was good {Gen. 1:12}.

And what could this be for, but to teach us that the third day, the day of life springing out of death, was good not only as to creation, but also as to resurrection? Thus, without question, the Old

Testament Scriptures did mark the third day as specially connected with resurrection.

We refer only to another ancient type, to show that the resurrection of our blessed Lord, the First-fruits of them that slept {1 Cor. 15:20},

would be on the first day of the week; for the sheaf of first- fruits to be accepted for the people was to be waved before Jehovah on the morrow after the Sabbath.

Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the

first-fruits of your harvest unto the priest; and he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord to be accepted for you, on the morrow after the Sabbath [the day after the seventh day] the priest shall wave it (Lev. 23:10, 11).

From all these Scriptures, we cannot fail to enter somewhat into the apostle's meaning, when he said that

Christ rose again the third day according to the Scriptures {1 Cor. 15:4};

and we can also perceive the serious mistake, and consequent perturbation of the minds of the disciples, because

as yet they knew not the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead {John 20:9}.

But how great their joy was when they saw their risen Lord, and could understand something of the mighty victory which He had accomplished for them!

The apostle, however, asserts the fact, that

now is Christ risen from [among] the dead, and become the First-fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order; Christ the first- fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming. Then the end (1 Cor. 15:20-24).

And here we do well to notice,

1st. That the resurrection of Christ is the divine demonstration of the person of the Son of God, the foundation truth of Christianity; for He was

declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by resurrection from the dead (Rom. 1:4).

It also confirmed the truth of His own testimony to His personal glory, when He said,

Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. But He spake of the temple of His body. When therefore He was risen from [among] the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this unto them (John 2:19-22).

2nd. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus overcame death, and showed that though He died for the ungodly as an offering for sin, yet having laid down His life and lain in the sepulcher till the third day, (thus showing the reality of His death), it could detain Him no longer. It was not possible that

He should be holden of death, for He was  
the life {John 11:25, 14:6}, the Prince of life {Acts 3:15},  
and  
He . . . saw no corruption {Acts 13:37}.

That great and terrible foe, which we have because we are sinners, Christ triumphed over in His resurrection from the dead. It is because of this that it is not now absolutely necessary that we should die. Instead of this, we are told that

we shall not all sleep {1 Cor. 15:51},

but some of us will be

alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord {1 Thess. 4:15},

and then, instead of dying, we shall be changed in a moment, our mortal bodies will put on immortality, and we shall be for ever like the Lord, and with the Lord. Thus the Lord vanquished death in His resurrection from among the dead.

3rd. He triumphed over the grave. Covered as the mouth of the sepulcher was with a great stone, and a seal set upon it, guarded too with soldiers, all could not prevent the Son of God rising out of it. And be it observed that this, the greatest victory ever obtained, was wrought noiselessly. No flourish of trumpets announced this wondrous triumph. The sepulcher was left in perfect order, the linen clothes carefully put by, and the napkin that was about His head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. The whole scene tells us of the most perfect order and quiet. Had He still been in the sepulcher, the grave would have obtained a victory over Him. But, blessed be God, it was not so; and now looking at the triumphant risen One, we can truthfully say,

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory {1 Cor. 15:55}?

and know that all His victory is ours, by God's free gift in the depth of His abounding mercy; so that we can also say,

But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ {1 Cor. 15:57}.

4th. Satan no doubt thought, when Christ was nailed to the cross, and the power of death let loose upon Him, so that He bowed His sacred head in death, and gave up the ghost, that the Lord was then made an end of, and got rid of. And to the eyes of those who had said,

Not this man, but Barabbas {John 18:40},

it so appeared. Such, however, was not the fact. Instead of Satan, who had the power of death, triumphing over Jesus, Jesus triumphed over him. He rose victoriously out of death, and not only destroyed death, but

him that had the power of death, that is, the devil {Heb. 2:14}.

The blessed Son of God thus raised from the dead spoiled principalities and authorities, made a show of them publicly, leading them in triumph by it; He led captivity captive, ascended into glory, received gifts for men, and is henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool.

5th. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus is also God's public attestation to His finished work upon the tree. If in the cry,

It is finished {John 19:30},

it is implied that every thing had been then accomplished according to the purpose and grace of God, every type fulfilled, every Scripture obeyed, all the stern demands of justice satisfied, righteousness established, and all the claims of holiness met, so that nothing more remained to be done, all was fully responded to, by God, in raising Him from among the dead. If it had been possible that one sin which He bore had been unjudged, He could not have been raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. But now we do see Him crowned with glory and honor, who had been numbered with the transgressors and forsaken by God. We now behold Him righteously welcomed to the place of highest exaltation, instead of being abandoned in unsparing wrath because our sins were upon Him. Thus His being raised from the dead by the glory of the Father is the best possible proof, that, in bearing our sins, He had perfectly satisfied God. He was

obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him {Phil. 2:8, 9}.

The resurrection of Christ, therefore, is the undeniable proof of His finished work, that sin has been fully judged, and God glorified; for He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. How clear and decided is the testimony of the Holy Ghost on this point. Oh the marvelous blessedness of God being now the Justifier, and the Assurer to us that we

are justified from all things {Acts 13:39}!

6th. Christ having triumphed over death, and gone up the path of life, He has made a new and living way for us. When He poured out His soul unto death 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}.

Thus a new and living way was consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh. But after this He rose from the dead and entered into heaven itself by His own blood. He rose from the dead as the

First-fruits {1 Cor. 15:20-23}

because others are to rise from among the dead; and He went into heaven as the Forerunner, because other runners are to follow. What never-ending blessedness God has given us in a risen, victorious Savior! Well may we sing —

"His be the Victor's name,

Who fought the fight alone;

Triumphant saints no honour claim:

His conquest was their own.

“Bless, bless the Conqueror slain!

Slain in His victory;

Who lived, who died, who lives again,

For thee, His church, for thee!”

7th. In Christ risen we see Him, who was dead, alive again, and that for evermore, and know that God has, in the riches of His grace, given us life in Him.

God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son {1 John 5:11}

— a new life surely, risen life, the Spirit of life in Christ, life in One who is beyond death, the mighty Conqueror of Satan, death, and the grave. He, who is now in the very glory of God, is then our life. Hence we are spoken of as

risen with Christ {Col. 3:1},

having been quickened together, raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. What a marvelous blessing to be quickened and indwelt by the Holy Ghost, and to be thus associated in life with One who has risen triumphantly out of death, and sat down on the right hand of God! What liberty as well as gladness it gives us! How natural therefore it is because of this, that we should be enjoined to seek the things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, to set our mind on things above, and not on things on the earth. And these surely must be the exercises of risen-life in us, for its associations are above, its proper element is where Christ sitteth. Were this more practically the case with us, how familiar should we be with the things which are above; and how careful we should be not to be occupied with earthly things beyond our necessary duties! We should enjoy

the holiest of all {see Heb. 10:19, read Heb. 9:6 – 10:22}

as our proper dwelling place.

The throne of grace {Heb. 4:16}

would assure us of continual access with confidence; while we read our unchanging title to glory in the blood of sprinkling {Heb. 9:11-15, 12:24}.

The risen and ascended Man in the glory would be the constant object that attracts, commands, and satisfies our hearts. We should be joyfully contemplating Him as our life, righteousness, peace, and hope. His various offices too on our behalf in the glory, as our

High Priest {Heb. 4:14}, Advocate {1 John 2:1},

Washer of our feet,

Shepherd and Bishop of our souls {see 1 Pet. 2:25},

are enough to fill us with overflowing consolation and refreshment. While holding the Head, from whom all blessings flow to every member of the body, we should be in communion with Him in His

present work on earth. Contemplating Him also as

Head of all principality and power {Col. 2:10},

we are reminded by the Spirit that, if He is above every name that is named not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, we are complete in Him. These and many more lines of precious instruction must occupy our souls, if we are seeking the things which are above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Many saints are already with Him there —

absent from the body, and present with the Lord {see 2 Cor. 5:8}.

Like us, they are looking forward to His coming, when He, who rose so victoriously over death, will apply His resurrection power to our bodies, and then all who are in Christ, whether dead in Christ or alive on the earth, will be brought together in resurrection-life and glory to be

for ever with the Lord {see 1 Thess. 4:17}.

If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from [among] the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from [among] the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you (Rom. 8:11).

“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!”

## In Christ, and the Flesh in Us

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I knew a man in Christ (2 Cor. 12:2).

Such is the Christian. Through infinite grace he is no longer before God in his sins and in the flesh, but in Christ Jesus. He was

without Christ {Eph. 2:12},

he is

in Christ (2 Cor. 12:2),

he will be

like Christ {see Phil. 3:21}.

A Christian, then, is not one who hopes to be, but one who is in Christ. A man may be much reformed, and not in Christ. He may be earnestly taken up with religiousness, yet not in Christ. He may even be convicted, yet not converted. Those who stop short of Christ are still in their sins. To be in Christ is to be the workmanship of God — a new creation. Such have died with Christ, and are alive to God in Christ. It is an entirely new condition and standing. All is of God. The old things have passed away; all things have become new. Whatever, therefore, a man may think of himself, whatever changes may have been wrought in his outward deportment, or however esteemed he may be by others, he has no authority for calling himself a Christian, if he is not in Christ.

Nor is it correct to say that those who are in Christ were always in Christ, as some have asserted, because they confound purpose and redemption. We are told that we were all

by nature the children of wrath, even as others {Eph. 2:3}.

The apostle seems gladly to acknowledge that he knew some who had been brought into this marvelous character of blessing prior to himself. He says,

Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen . . . who also were in Christ before me (Rom. 16:7).

As to the purpose of God, we know that all those who compose the church of God were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. It is also clear that redemption, though accomplished more than eighteen hundred years ago, is only the present blessing of those who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of their salvation, and believed in the Son of God. Before that we were afar off;

but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:13).

Of such, too, it is truly written,

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

No one, then, can be spoken of in a Scriptural sense as in Christ Jesus, before he has received Him, as his Savior, who

was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification {Rom. 4:25}.

Before he was made alive (quicken) he was dead in trespasses and in sins — in the flesh; but, through a, divinely- wrought faith in the Son of God, he has received eternal life, the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. He is associated with Christ in life, and by the Holy Ghost he is one with Him. This, too, he is entitled to know and to rejoice in, as Jesus said,

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

In the apostles' days, persons were accredited as being in Christ, and they were spoken of, and written to, as such. For instance, Paul's first letter to the Corinthians is addressed

to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus {1 Cor. 1:2};

and the letter to the Philippians,

to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi {Phil. 1:1},

thus showing that saints in those days were ordinarily recognized as in Christ Jesus. The truth is that the epistles describe men as either

in the flesh {Rom. 7:5, 8:8},

or as in Christ Jesus.

The natural man, however cultivated or refined, however outwardly religious and benevolent, is nevertheless "in the flesh," as to his state before God. He is in the first Adam, and dead in sins. He needs spiritual life. This is why the gospel presents no thought as to mending or improving men in the flesh; on the contrary, it speaks of redemption, that is, taking out of a state of guilt and condemnation, and bringing into a position of blessing and nearness to God. For, however polished and amiable people appear, we are assured that

the carnal mind is enmity against God {Rom. 8:7}

— the will is in opposition to God. Thus man naturally, however intellectual and generous, is only a corrupt tree, which cannot bring forth good fruit {see Matt. 7:18}.

Neither law nor terrors, commandments nor judgments, make him fit for God. His whole history shows the opposition of his will to God's will, and exhibits the truth of the divine sentence,

They that are in the flesh cannot please God (Rom. 8:8).

A verdict sweeping indeed, but most just, and unmistakably plain and conclusive. Such is man! He receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because

they are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:14).

Under these circumstances, as before observed, God has not proposed to mend the corrupt nature; but, in His infinite grace, has brought in redemption in Christ, and through His blood. In this way we have deliverance from guilt, condemnation, and the dominion of sin, and are before God on an entirely new standing in life and righteousness.

The sense of guilt has been cleared in divine grace, by the blood of Jesus the Son of God; who bore our sins in His own body on the tree, suffered for our sins, and died for our sins under the judgment of God. Thus all our need, as to sins and guilt, has been fully met in righteousness, and all who believe are justified by His blood, justified from all things. Instead, then, of guilt we have a purged conscience; for we know that all is now clear between us and God. Our sins and iniquities He will remember no more. Instead of imputing sins, He accounts us righteous, so that we have no more conscience of sins {Heb. 10:2},

are no longer guilty, but justified freely by His grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. It is God who justifies. We are also delivered from condemnation, because, when law was unable to produce good in us, on account of the unclean and corrupt qualities of our nature, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as a sacrifice for sin, condemned our old evil nature —

sin in the flesh {Rom. 8:3}.

Thus our old man, with its sinful passions and lusts, has been crucified with Christ; we have died with Him, who, in such wondrous grace, was made sin for us; who became our Substitute, and bore that condemnation which was due to us. The whole condemning power of God due to us on account of sin having been poured upon Jesus, there is no condemnation left for us. Hence we are assured,

There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1. See also Rom. 4:22-25; Rom. 6:6-11).

But sin is the master of man naturally — it has dominion over him. Sin reigns unto death. He is the slave of sin, and cannot free himself. But God in His grace has set the believer free. He has died with Christ, his Substitute. Neither sin nor law can have anything to say to a dead man. He that is dead is set free, or justified from sin.

You cannot charge a dead man with lust. Being their set free from sin, and become an object of divine favor, it is said of such,

Sin shall not have dominion over you for ye are not under the law, but under grace {Rom. 6:14}.

We are delivered, and brought to God. We are become servants to God. What an unutterable difference between being a slave of sin and a servant to God! We are alive to God in Christ, that henceforth we should live, not to ourselves, but to Him who died for us, and rose again. His death has brought us deliverance as well as peace. By it we have been for ever freed from guilt, condemnation, and the dominion of sin. Blessed indeed it is to grasp these precious realities (Rom. 6:22)!

We must not, however, forget that God has not only wrought in His exceeding grace to save us from wrath, but has blessed us agreeably to His own goodness and nature. Nothing less could suit Him than that we should be before Him in love, in conscious nearness and relationship, in eternal glory. He is therefore bringing many sons to glory. Jesus once suffered for sins that He might bring us to God. Redemption is God's way of bringing us to Himself; the wisdom, work, and results are all for His glory, as well as for our eternal blessing. It was necessary, therefore, that the whole question of sin should be settled in righteousness for the glory of God, as well as to meet our need. Atonement was for God; it fully answered the just demands of His throne. In this way God has been glorified, and we have been cleansed, delivered, and brought to God as purged worshipers.

God has also given us life — a risen and eternal life. It is His own gracious gift. Blessed be God! We read,

God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son (1 John 5:11).

It is life in Him who is risen from among the dead, and given to us as a present possession, to be known in activity and power in our souls. God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.

He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life (1 John 5:12).

Christ, then, is our life, and

the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made us free from the law of sin and death {see Rom. 8:2}.

Christ lives in us, and we are in Him. We are then associated with Christ in life — a risen and eternal life. Hence we are addressed as

risen with Christ {Col. 3:1},

and consequently exhorted to

seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. For 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. 3:1, 4}.

The believer has passed out of death and into life. This transition, Scripture fully recognizes —

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

We have also received the gift of the Holy Ghost.

God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father {Gal. 4:6}.

The believer, therefore, is not in the flesh, but in the Spirit — he is in Christ; he has died out of his old Adam standing, in the death of Jesus, and has been quickened, raised up, and seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. He has been born of the Spirit, and is indwelt by the Spirit. He has been brought out and brought in. Hence Scripture speaks of us as

accepted in the Beloved {Eph. 1:6}, complete in Him {Col. 2:10}, preserved in Jesus Christ {Jude, verse 1},

and

sanctified in Christ Jesus {1 Cor. 1:2}.

We are a new creation in Him who is Head of all principality and power, are always before God in Christ, in all His acceptability and nearness, and loved by the Father as He loved the Son. This is where redemption has brought us, where divine, perfect love has set us; so that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as He is, so are we in this world. We have died unto sin, died with Christ, and are alive unto God in Him. Having received remission of sins, we are united to Christ by the Holy Ghost, joined to the Lord — one spirit. This is a man in Christ.

We were in the flesh {Rom. 7:5},

but having died with Christ, and risen with Him, we have eternal life in Him, and are united to Him by the Spirit.

“One spirit with the Lord;’

Oh blessed, wondrous word!

What heavenly light, what power divine,

Doth that sweet word afford.

“One spirit with the Lord;’

The Father’s smile of love

Rests ever on the members here

As on the Head above.”

Oh the marvelous depths and heights of divine grace! Its depths, in embracing us when in our sins and guilt, exposed to the wrath of God; and its heights, in bringing us to God in Christ for everlasting blessing. And so truly does Scripture teach the reality of this translation from being in Adam to our present standing in Christ, that we are now spoken of as

not in the flesh {Rom. 8:9}, not of the world {John 15:19, 17:14, 16}, not under law {Rom. 6:14, 15},

but

in the Spirit {Rom. 8:9},

and

blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ {see Eph. 1:3}.

The important question for us is, How far have we received these truths into our hearts? How far have we mixed faith with the truth of God concerning what He has wrought in Christ? The practical point is, Do we habitually take our place as in Christ when consciously dealing with God? Those who have not received this truth may be trying to work themselves into nearness to God, and be

always disappointed, instead of taking, in simple faith, the nearness and acceptance in Christ which His own grace has given us. Those who are working and redoubling their efforts to get near, only prove that they have not yet entered upon the place in Christ in which divine grace has set them. Those who by faith take possession of it rejoice therein, and rest in God's presence. Such are never so happy as when inside the veil, where the Lord Jesus is. They worship God in the Spirit, and have

fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ {see 1 John 1:3}.

But though the believer is not in the flesh, he sorrowfully finds that the flesh is in him. He learns through humbling experiences to say,

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

He does not say, "In me dwells no good," because he has a new life, and the Holy Ghost in him; but he says,

In me, (that is in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing;

for, though delivered from the Adam standing, he still has the Adam nature — the flesh, with its passions and lusts — that evil principle which is ready to serve the law of sin. He has, in fact, two natures: the old nature,

that which is born of the flesh, which is flesh; and the new life, or new nature, that which is born of the Spirit, which is spirit {John 3:6}.

The new nature which is born of the Spirit is strengthened by the Holy Ghost which indwells us; so that, while the flesh lusts against the Spirit, the Spirit is against the flesh in such antagonistic power, that we cannot do the things which we otherwise would. The delivered soul knows that he is the subject of the actings of these two opposing natures; and his conclusion is,

So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin {Rom. 7:25}.

The great trouble of every believer is not so much what he has done as what he is. It is the painful consciousness of having this evil nature — pride, self-will, and lust cropping up within, even if they do not come out. And the more his desire to live for the glory of God, the greater his sorrow at the garment being spotted by the flesh. This evil nature is his greatest enemy, his constant opponent, that upon which Satan and the world can act, and which neither time nor circumstances can improve, so desperately wicked is it, and deceitful above all things. The more we are occupied with it, the weaker we are toward it, because it becomes an object in the place of Christ. The secret of power over it is to know that it has been crucified with Christ because of its incurable badness — to reckon it dead — to disallow its cravings, and to find all our springs of comfort and strength in Christ glorified — to reckon ourselves to have died indeed unto sin, and alive unto God in Christ Jesus our Lord {Rom. 6:6-11}. In eternal glory we shall not need so to

reckon {Rom. 6:11},

for we shall be completely and for ever delivered from it; but we are to so reckon now, because the flesh is still in us. Yet it is equally our privilege to say with the apostle,

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I [that is, not the old nature], but Christ [my new life] liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh [that is, in this mortal body], I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me (Gal. 2:20).

This is Christian life.

To be occupied with what the flesh is in its various activities and deceitful workings, is not to be reckoning it dead; to be regarding it as an antagonistic force to be overcome, is to reckon it living; but to be holding it dead in the death of Christ, as judicially put to death in Christ our Substitute, and to find all our resources in Christ risen and glorified, is to reckon ourselves to have died indeed unto sin, and to be alive unto God in our Lord Jesus Christ. In this way we have power over ourselves, and can daily bring forth fruit unto God. The way of faith is always to look at things from God's stand-point, to take sides with Him who regards our old man as having been judicially set aside for ever in the death of Christ, and who always sees us

complete in Him {Col. 2:10},

in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

It is quite true that we are the objects of the continual care and discipline of the Father of spirits. If we walk after the flesh, instead of after the Spirit, this may call for His loving rebuke and chastening; but that in no way interferes with the precious truth of our continual acceptance and standing in Christ, by whose one offering we have been perfected for ever. The fact is that, through grace, we

are not in the flesh, but in Christ {see both Rom. 8:9 and 1 Cor. 1:30},

yet the flesh is in us; but our part is to reckon our old man as having been, before God and to faith, judicially put to death in Christ crucified, and thus to be so constantly occupied with the triumphant Son of God, as to find all our resources, all our strength, all our springs, in Him.

Nor does age, experience, or change of circumstances improve the flesh. It has been truly remarked, that the flesh without law is lawless; put it under law, it breaks law; put it in connection with Christ, and it crucifies Him; let the Holy Ghost be given to man, and the flesh lusts against Him; take a man up into the third heaven, and he is puffed up. It is wholly unimprovable, though its desires and habits, in youth and old age, in affluence or poverty, may show themselves differently. Its principles of lust and wilfulness remain the same. Paul had been in the third heaven, and heard unutterable things, which it is not possible for mortal man to speak. Was the flesh improved in him by such a wondrous change and experience? We are told that he needed

a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him {see 2 Cor. 12:7},

lest he should be exalted because of the exceeding greatness of the revelations. Now surely, when in the glory, we shall not need such a thorn, neither did he when in the third heaven; but afterwards, when among men, there was such tendency to the pride and lust of the flesh being stirred up, that a messenger of Satan was needed to act upon him, as a preventive of fleshly conduct. So deeply distressing and humiliating was this "thorn," that he three times besought the Lord to take it away; but this could not be done, that the servant might not be exalted above measure. Instead of removing it, the Lord said unto him,

My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness {2 Cor. 12:9}.

His path, therefore, for the remainder of his earthly pilgrimage, was to go forward, having no confidence in the flesh, but boasting in his weakness, that the power of Christ might rest upon him; for, said he, when I am weak, then am I strong (2 Cor. 12:10).

How vastly different was the experience of this honored servant of the Lord when in the third heaven, and when buffeted by Satan on earth! But was he not equally secure in Christ, when filled with anguish, or irritation, or other effects of the

thorn in the flesh,

as when hearing the unutterable communications of Paradise? Surely his standing before God in Christ was in no way altered by this remarkable change of circumstances and experience. And it is very important to observe this. For have not most believers their bright times and their dark times? Did not Israel taste the bitterness of Marah, and then realize the delightful change of Elim's palm-trees and wells of water? And do not most of God's children know what it is, on some occasions, to be filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory, and at other times to be in heaviness and distress, having the heart lacerated with the sorrows of the way? But are we not as secure and blessed in Christ, when in the trying path of humiliation and anguish, as when we are happy in the Lord, so near, that it is only the thinnest film which appears to intercept our vision of Himself, and His own glory seems to shine down upon us? Surely it is always true that

ye are complete in Him, which is the Head of all principality and power {Col. 2:10},

and that no change of circumstances or experience, whether dark or bright, can in any degree shake our security and standing "in Him"; though it is quite true we may lose the enjoyment of it, if we are taken up with experience, or anything else, in the place of Christ. How wise, then, it is for the believer to abide in the Lord Jesus, to be occupied with Him, for then we have always blessing.

We all, with open face beholding . . . the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Cor. 3:18).

So clearly does Scripture recognize "the flesh," with all its evil capabilities, even in those who are born of God, that they are enjoined to lay aside

all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as new-born babes, to desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby (1 Pet. 1:23; 2:1, 2).

Here we find persons who are born again instructed how they can grow in grace, &c., and charged not to let these dreadful workings of the old man come out. Again, because we are

risen with Christ (Col. 3:1),

and hope to reign

with Him in glory (Col. 3:4),

we are exhorted thus:

Mortify (or put to death) therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry (Col. 3:5)

— the vile workings of the flesh, the things which the ungodly practice, and which bring down the judgment of God upon them —

For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience (Col. 3:6).

Observe, Scripture nowhere says that we are to crucify the flesh, because our old man has been crucified with Christ, and thus we are said to

have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts {Gal. 5:24};

but, as risen with Christ, and having a new life in Him (though still having the flesh in us), we are so to reckon ourselves dead as not to suffer these things to live in us, because we have died with Christ. Again, therefore, we are enjoined to put off

anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new (Col. 3:1-12).

Now it is clearly impossible that such injunctions should have been given to those who are born of God and risen with Christ, unless they still have “the flesh” in them, in which is nothing good. Let us turn to another Scripture on this point.

If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live (Rom. 8:13).

This is addressed to those who are said to be “in Christ.” Observe, it is not the body which is to be flagellated, or put to death, but the deeds of the body — those things which the body is capable of doing, which are in opposition to God’s mind. Again, notice that the power for this is the Spirit of God; not flesh against flesh, but a new and almighty power given to us, by which we may practically keep in the place of death the workings of “the flesh.” Nothing can be found more clearly taught in Scripture than that the believer is “in Christ,” who is his life, and one with Christ by the Holy Ghost; and, at the same time, that “the flesh” is in every believer. He is, therefore, a compound of two natures; with one,

the mind, he serves God’s law; and with the other, the flesh {Rom. 7:25},

sin’s law. The indwelling Spirit strengthens the new nature, and keeps us occupied with Christ, our righteousness and strength, so that we may reckon ourselves to have died unto sin, and thus practically hold as dead the buddings forth of “the flesh.” May the Lord graciously help us more and more in this! It is important, however, to remember that the knowledge of having “the flesh” in us is of itself no hindrance to

our fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ {see 1 John 1:3};

but allowing it to come out practically does hinder it. We have not a bad conscience from its existence in us, because we know that the flesh, or the old man, has been judicially dealt with in the death of Christ. Neither need the believer sin. He is enjoined to sin not, and he has no excuse for sinning,

These things write I unto you that ye sin not {1 John 2:1}.

It is, moreover, not correct for a believer to say sin is not in him, for

if we say that we have no sin

— not sins, but sin, the corrupt nature, or old man —

we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us {1 John 1:8}.

If, however, the believer does sin, does commit sins, the fruit of the Adam nature, his conscience should be troubled, and his communion with the Father and the Son will be interrupted. It is a question of communion, not of salvation. Provision has graciously been made for it. Christ is our Advocate with the Father concerning it. Self-examination, self-judgment, repentance, and confession are wrought in our souls by the Spirit, and by the application of the word —

the washing of water by the word {Eph. 5:26}

— we become restored. The advocacy of Christ is based upon propitiation for our sins having been made, and He who takes up our cause is the perfectly righteous One. Hence it is written,

If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only: but also for the whole world (1 John 2:1, 2).

On confessing, we are cleansed perfectly, forgiven in righteousness, on the ground of the sacrifice once offered; so that we are told,

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:8-10).

It is not the believer taking the place of a miserable sinner; but a believer taking the place before God of an offending, naughty child, counting on divine faithfulness and justice to forgive his sins because of the sacrifice of Christ, and to cleanse him, and thus to restore him to happy communion. This is the true way of restoring an erring child of God. He may be the weakest and most faulty of God's children; still he is a child, to whom the Lord does not impute sin, and he never can be again, strictly speaking, a miserable sinner, even when feeling the dreadful character of his sin, before God in confession.

Happy indeed are those who are occupied with the personal glory and excellencies, finished work, and offices of our Lord Jesus Christ, so as to have always, by the Spirit, the comfort of the Father's love, and the joy of security and completeness in Christ while waiting for His coming! Such can truly say,

Our fellowship (or communion) is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ {1 John 1:3}.

## Communion

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There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee (Ex. 25:22).

The point specially to be noticed here is communion. Enoch had walked with God, and others had believed God; but here God is showing how He can meet man, and have to do with him, in a way suitable to His own infinitely holy nature. He had talked to Adam in the garden. He had made Himself known to Abram as the Almighty, and had come so near to him as not to hide from him the things that He would do. But when He called Israel out of Egypt, He revealed Himself to them as Jehovah. He sheltered them from destruction by the blood of the Lamb, brought them through the Red Sea of death and judgment, and thus perfectly delivered them from their enemies, whom they saw dead upon the sea-shore. In this way, God had a people (though in the flesh) separated unto Himself by election, and by blood, and redeemed by power, so that He could now dwell among them. We read, therefore, in this chapter,

Let them make ME a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them (Ex. 25:8).

And again, when the priests were consecrated, Jehovah said,

This shall be a continual burnt-offering throughout your generations, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, before Jehovah; where I will meet you, to speak there unto thee. And there I will meet with the children of Israel. . . . And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God (Ex. 29:42-45).

And again,

I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people (Lev. 26:12).

Thus Israel is chosen, separated from every other people, redeemed, and blest with Jehovah in their midst; and now we read of His meeting with Moses, and with them. Communion then flows out of established relationships founded on redemption accomplished, and through God's dwelling with His people by His Spirit. All this is clearly set forth in this typical people which God brought out of Egypt, most of whom fell in the wilderness because of their unbelief. With us, all these blessings are of eternal value. By One offering we are

perfected for ever {Heb. 10:14}.

The redemption obtained for us is "eternal." We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. We are children of God, and have received the Holy Ghost to abide with us, and in us, "for ever." We are therefore

called unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus {see 1 Pet. 5:10}.

In the verses we have referred to, we find Jehovah teaching what His mind is as to communion. He desired communion with His people –

There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee {Ex. 25:22}.

He also teaches on what ground He can meet them. It was not long before these precious words were communicated to Moses, that mount Sinai had been altogether in a smoke, because Jehovah descended upon it in fire. Then the people were commanded to keep off, and not to come near. There were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; and so terrible was the sight that Moses said,

I exceedingly fear and quake {Heb. 12:21}.

Bounds were set about the mount, so that the people might not breakthrough. It was said,

Whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death: there shall not a hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man it shall not live (Ex. 19:10-21).

But why all this? Because Jehovah came down upon mount Sinai, and demanded righteousness from man in the way of works. He gave a law proper to man as a child of Adam on earth. Holy, just, and good as it was, it was the ministration of death, because it was the ministration of righteousness. It demanded righteousness from man to God on the principle of works. Such was law.

But how different are the words written soon after —

There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee.

It is because God, knowing what was in man, that he would be insubject and a law-breaker, was here setting forth what was in His heart toward him; for, though on the principle of law or works, man must always be at a distance from God, yet His own wise and gracious heart could devise the way whereby men on earth and Himself could not only meet together, but have communion. An altar of burnt-offering was at the door of the tabernacle. All our blessings are founded on the sacrifice of Christ. These are some of the beginnings of the unfoldings of Scripture as to the way of grace.

Law then is not grace. They stand in widest contrast with each other. The principles of grace and works are never commingled in Scripture for justification in the sight of God. Hence we read:

If by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work (Rom. 11:6).

The symbol of the mercy-seat was the intimation that God would come out in grace, and that even to lawbreakers. This we know has since been freely done; for God has made the way of approach to Himself in the person and work of His own Son, both according to His own holiness and the need of the sinner. The Son of God has come; He has declared the Father. It is well to observe that the Ark was the first vessel of the tabernacle which God commanded to be made, and that the place assigned to it was inside the veil. It therefore sets forth Christ in heaven.

The two qualities of material of which the Ark was composed — “shittim-wood,” and “gold” — set forth Christ as perfect man, and also truly God. Made flesh and dwelling among us, He nevertheless was the eternal Son — God and Man in one Person. In this Ark, or chest, the tables of testimony, on which the Ten Commandments were written, were put. The whole was covered by

a lid of pure gold (pure gold meaning divine righteousness), out of the ends of which lid, or mercy-seat, were beaten cherubim made to overshadow the mercy-seat, and to look toward each other, and to the mercy-seat. All this clearly sets forth that

grace reigns through righteousness {see Rom. 5:21}.

It foreshadows the precious fact, that, though man was a sinner, and thus justly exposed to the wrath of God, yet that Jesus had glorified God concerning the law. He was the law-

The blood gives us title to be there, and we have no other.

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

We are redeemed not with corruptible things, as silver and gold,

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

After this ordinance on the great day of atonement, God was still further pleased to show us His mind as to the ground of intercourse and communion with Himself. When the Son of God hung, as the spotless sacrifice for sin, upon the tree, and cried out,

It is finished,

And fulfiller, as well as the bearer of its curse in the death of the cross, to redeem those who had broken it. Moreover, He magnified the law and made it honorable, and could truly say,

Thy law is within my heart {Psa. 40:8}.

With Him, not one jot or tittle of the law failed. He was obedient in all things. His meat and drink were to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work. This He did perfectly. He could therefore say at the close,

I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do (John 17:4).

The believer, who has been under the law, is thus redeemed from the curse of the law, and, having died to it in Jesus his Substitute, is brought to know God in Christ as the Giver of both grace and glory. Like the apostle, he can now say,

I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God {Gal. 2:19}.

It is precious to know that Jesus the Son of God, now in the heavens, is the One who has glorified God as to the law of Moses, and is the true mercy-seat. Thus we see Jesus.

In the directions about the construction of the mercy-seat, the way of our intercourse and communion with God begins to be shadowed forth. But about this, further revelations of God's mind are afterwards given. In this place it is especially seen how law-breakers can be brought to God in peace and blessing, and how God can then have intercourse and communion with them. Afterward, in the sixteenth chapter of Leviticus, God further reveals that those who come into His presence can only be there in safety by virtue of the cloud of sweet incense covering the mercy-seat, and the blood of the sacrifice sprinkled upon and before the mercy-seat. The incense, no doubt, blessedly set forth the moral excellencies and perfections of the Lord Jesus, who entered into heaven itself by His own blood. The blood upon the mercy-seat was never wiped off; it

was the ever-present witness to sins having been judged in the sacrifice, and to the ways of God having been fully vindicated. The blood was only sprinkled once upon the mercy-seat, for God knew perfectly the infinite value of the blood of Jesus Christ His Son; but it was sprinkled seven times before the mercy-seat, to assure the worshiper of its perfect efficacy for him when thus approaching God. We have now, then, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

gave up the ghost {John 19:30},

we are told that

the veil of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom (Matt. 27:51).

The veil, we are taught, symbolized the flesh of Jesus; hence we read,

The veil, that is to say, His flesh {Heb. 10:20}.

As long as the veil was unrent it was a bar of access from man to God; it showed that the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest. But when the mercy-seat was accessible to all through the rent veil, the way to God was made plain. It is now a fact that an incarnate Savior, Law-fulfiller and Curse-bearer, crucified, risen, ascended and glorified, is known in the presence of God. Man raised from among the dead, and gone into heaven itself by His own blood, is now seen there.

We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour (Heb. 2:9).

What a wonder of divine grace, that God should thus devise a way whereby His banished ones might return, in perfect consistency too with His own holy and righteous demands. It was Jehovah who said,

There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel (Ex. 25:22);

but we can say that we are now

justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth a propitiation (or mercy-seat) through faith in His blood (Rom. 2:24, 25).

What a holy and righteous ground has divine grace thus laid for the Father's intercourse with us, and our intercourse with Him. We see sins judged, law fulfilled, its curse borne, God's righteousness fully met, so that He is just both to Christ and to us, in forgiving our sins and giving us access with confidence into His own presence now by faith, with title to be there for ever. Let us not fail to observe that it is not said, There you shall meet with me, but,

There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee {Ex. 25:22};

for God's righteous estimate of the work of Jesus is such, that, consistently with every attribute of Himself, He can meet with us and commune with us. What peace and rest this gives to our souls! How similar is the Lord's, last address to the Church on earth, when in its worst phase of profession and indifferentism to His claims:

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me {Rev. 3:20}.

It is the Lord who Himself here proposes communion, and expresses Himself as desiring it. He wants to sup with us. Precious grace!

By communion we understand fellowship, or joint participation. Communion and fellowship are generally the same word in the original. Communion, as we have said, must flow out of established peace and relationship; and its measure must be according to the character in which God is known. We do not read of communion with God in the epistles, because God is now revealed as Father;

the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him {John 1:18}.

Every believer now is born of God, and knows the Father. The Holy Ghost has come down, and has been given as the Spirit of adoption.

Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father (Gal. 4:6).

Thus it is that

our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:3).

The Holy Ghost is the power of this fellowship, hence we read of the communion of the Holy Ghost {2 Cor. 13:14}.

Thus now, in our measure, we can enter into the Father's love, counsels, delight and rest, in regard to the Son, and to all His children; and can also enter into the Son's love, delight and rest concerning the Father, and concerning every member of His body. It is into this new order of things that we have been introduced through grace, and by

the fellowship of the Spirit {see Phil. 2:1}.

It is most wonderful to contemplate, and yet we can easily see that nothing less could suit the Father, nothing less be suited to the infinite worth of the

eternal redemption {Heb. 9:12}

accomplished by the Son, and nothing less could be wrought in us as children of God by the indwelling Spirit. It is no wonder that the apostle should have added,

And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full {1 John 1:4}.

As we have before observed, it is the peace made, the relationships established, and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, which give character to the communion from which true service flows. Peace, communion, and service are therefore the divine order. What rest, and joy, and power, too, for service and testimony, are connected with the realization of this present order of fellowship! It is of all importance that our souls really enter into it; so that we may be consciously before God our Father inside the rent veil, where Jesus is, our life and righteousness, where perfect peace and perfect love are unchangeably known, and the blood ever speaks of our title to

be there. There worshipping the Father, rejoicing in Christ Jesus, without a cloud, without a fear, having no confidence in the flesh; there ever learning divine goodness, and increasingly delighting in the Father, who loves us as He loved His Son; and delighting in the Son of God, who loves us, and gave Himself for us. Such are some of the blessednesses of present fellowship with the Father and with the Son.

What saith the reader to these things? Do you enter into and enjoy this present character of communion? Are you at home inside the veil? Is it the happiest place your soul knows? and do you regard it as the suited place for a child of God, now brought into this wondrous fellowship? Liberty of access there we have with confidence, and to come boldly to the throne of grace; but the important question is, What do our souls know of it practically?

The Christian's power for service, and all fruit-bearing, is communion. Jesus said,

Abide in Me {John 15:4};

and again,

Without Me ye can do nothing {John 15:5}:

The moment communion is broken we cease to live as Christians should, and cannot be in a good state till our souls are restored. Hence we find in Scripture that God's people were happy and blest in having to do with the ark or mercy-seat, and quite the reverse when not being near it. As an example of the latter, we have only to turn to 1 Sam. 7:2, where we read,

It came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjathjearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord.

The expression of their unhappy state is most telling, They

lamented after the Lord;

they had not the sense of His presence. And more than this; for we may be quite sure, if God our Father has not His right place in our hearts; something else will occupy them; perhaps the surrounding religiousness. It was so in this case; having lost the sense of the presence and blessing of the true God, they were taken up with the strange gods of the nations and Ashtaroth. A sad but true picture of the state of many now, who have no enjoyment of the communion at the mercy-seat we have been considering. Oh the marvel of divine grace!

There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony {Ex. 25:22}.

Surely we can look up and say

"Far from Thee we faint and languish;

Oh, our Savior, keep us nigh!"

If personal intercourse and communion with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Ghost, be not known by our souls, then other objects will easily engage our hearts, and we shall be unhappy; not surely giving up the Lord, but, instead of enjoyment,

lamenting after the Lord. May He graciously keep us abiding in our Lord Jesus inside the veil!

Let us turn to another example. In 2 Sam. 6:11, 12, we find one greatly blessed by the Lord. The ark, or mercy-seat, was in

the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months: and the Lord blessed Obed-edom, and all his household.

Nor could the blessing be unnoticed, or untalked of, it was so remarkable. We read,

And it was told king David, saying, The Lord hath blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that pertaineth unto him because of the ark of God.

Ah, let no Christian expect the blessing of the Lord in his household, unless the mercy-seat be consciously known and honored there! God's word is,

Them that honor me, I will honor {1 Sam. 2:30}.

If, therefore, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ be called on, honored, and served in our homes, we may surely count not only on our own blessing, but on blessing to all the household. We may rest assured that neither individual nor family blessings will be wanting, if Christ in heaven, the true mercy-seat, be the daily object of our souls, and honored by us.

the words (John 17:8).

— the divine communications — which the Father gave Him. He gives us too His own peace; that calm, unperturbed state, which ever flowed from confidence in the Father's love, so that He would have us be without heart-trouble, or fear, during the whole time of His absence. He said,

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. . . . Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid (John 14:27).

He would have us also share His joy. He said,

These things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves (John 17:13).

As to love, His desire is that we should know that the Father loves us as He has loved Him (John 17:23, 26). And, to crown the whole, He will share with us His glory.

The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them (John 17:22).

Oh to be kept in the constant enjoyment of this sweet communion!

Toward the end of this same chapter, we find also an encouraging example of collective joy and blessing, among those who knew the ark or mercy-seat to be the great center of attraction. The ark of the Lord, or mercy-seat, was brought up with shouting, the sound of the trumpet, and with gladness. Burnt-offerings and peace-offerings were offered before the Lord; the people were blessed in the name of the Lord of hosts; and bread and wine were distributed to the whole multitude of Israel. And so now, when the Lord's people are really gathered unto the name of the Lord Jesus, and He, the Head of the body, is truly known in the midst, who is also the mercy-seat above, then, doubtless, there will be blessing and gladness. The sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving will ascend from worshiping hearts to the Father of mercies and the God of all

comfort, and the affections will go out after every member of the body of Christ. If the presence of the ever- living and ever-loving Savior be not thus known and enjoyed, let it not be surprising if deadness and carnality in some shape or other be painfully manifested. Individual occupation with our glorified Lord Jesus is the secret of collective gladness and comfort. When each heart is rejoicing in the Lord, we can then have fellowship one with another, worship the Father in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and delight in the thought that

yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry {Heb. 10:37}.

Thanks be unto God, who hath called us

unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord (1 Cor. 1:9).

Communion then is the Christian's watchword. Our blessed Lord would have us share with Himself

## Manna and the Old Corn

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This is that 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 6:58).

And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes and parched corn in the selfsame day. And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year (Josh. 5:11, 12).

We are in a world that yields nothing for our souls, absolutely nothing; and all, who are taught of God, prove this. Surrounded as we are surely with abundant providential blessings, and many social and national mercies, yet as to our souls it is

a dry and thirsty land, where no water is {Psa. 63:1}.

Such it was to our Lord, and such it is to us. We have, however, resources in God. He is to us the Fountain of living waters in and through Christ, in whom we have redemption through His blood, and in whom we are blessed in the heavenlies with all spiritual blessings. Our never-failing springs then are in Christ, who is our wine to cheer, our bread to stay, our living water to refresh, our sufficiency and strength; a free and exhaustless supply to faith, as He said,

If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink {John 7:37}.

Thus we walk by faith, not by sight; for though by grace we are brought into such nearness and acceptance in Christ, we are, however, set in constant and entire dependence on Him, whom having not seen we love. It is the sense of this that enables us to glory in the Lord. It has always been the lesson God would have His people learn; hence, if the psalmist exclaim,

All my springs are in thee (Psa. 87:7),

we find one apostle writing,

Our sufficiency is of God (2 Cor. 3:5),

while another says,

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning (James 1:17).

Again, if we take our place in company with Jesus, we hear Him instructing His cleansed ones to cling to Him in order to bear fruit;

for without Me,

said He,

ye can do nothing (John 15:3-5).

In this way, we can easily understand why the apostle characterized the servants of Christ as having nothing, and yet possessing all things (2 Cor. 6:10).

In looking over the history of the children of Israel, we notice, not only that they were a redeemed people, and frequently reminded by the prophets that Jehovah had brought them out of Egypt with a high hand, but that they were constantly to have the sense of it kept up by observing the passover. They kept the passover in Egypt, in the wilderness, and in the land of Canaan. Again, it is plainly set forth, that wherever they might be, or in whatever circumstances, God made Himself known to them as taking the care of their sustenance, because He had redeemed them. He was their Sustainer as well as their Redeemer.

If they were under the safety of the sprinkled blood, He gave them to eat the flesh of the lamb roast with fire, especially the head, the legs, and purtenance. Not only does this read to us typically the comforting lesson, that we are safe for eternity in virtue of the precious blood of the Lamb of God, but also that during this night of watching, and time of need, He who died for us is our strength, and that we should have communion with Him as to His mind, His walk, and affections. Again, when redeemed out of Egypt, and brought through the Red Sea — place of death and judgment — on new ground, they soon found themselves in a barren wilderness, removed from all visible means of subsistence, and therefore entirely dependent upon God. But this gave occasion for Him who chose them, and redeemed them, to prove His power and goodness in caring for them. Day by day, according to His word, He sent manna down from heaven for their support. We read that

the children of Israel did eat manna forty years, until they came to a land inhabited: they did eat manna, until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan (Ex. 16:35).

When, however, they set foot on the promised land flowing with milk and honey, (which sets forth our present position in Christ in heavenly places), they were still dependent on God, though, instead of manna, their food was

the old corn of the land.

We are told that

the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year (Josh. 5:11, 12).

While we may gather from these facts in their typical import, that every believer is set in the position of dependence on God, and that He is the Sustainer of our souls, yet it makes a vast difference, to our state of heart whether our habit is to think only of Christ as the Lamb who shed His blood for many, or as the manna — the One who came down from heaven, or as the old corn of the land — the One who ascended up to where He was before.

Those who are thinking only of Jesus as crucified, limiting their thoughts mostly to what He did upon the tree — blessed and most precious as it is thus to remember Him — may be often reminded of the manifestation of divine love, sins borne and suffered for, and peace made, thus assuring them of safety, and of being objects of divine grace; but such do not know deliverance

from the world or from themselves, nor what it is to stand in liberty and joy in the presence of God. No doubt all our blessings are founded on the work of the cross, but Jesus is not there now. There was no singing in Egypt.

There are some, however, whose apprehensions of divine grace, and of the work of Christ, are beyond this. They know that Jesus who was crucified is risen, and that they are associated with Him whom the world rejected, and whom God raised from among the dead; they know too that they have life in Him who is out of death, and has triumphed over death and Satan. Such souls apprehend that they are rescued from this present evil world, and not of it, though they find themselves in a wilderness of need and dissatisfaction, and that they are going on to their inheritance. But such mostly think of God's blessings coming down upon them in the wilderness, and, it may be, regard earthly prosperity as a mark of divine favor. They are dependent, like the Israelites, on periodical ministrations from heaven, and are satisfied to gather up now and then a little food. The one thought of a soul not delivered from the world — still in Egypt — is his safety from coming wrath. The one thought of a wilderness Christian is having God's blessing poured down upon him day by day; he looks for the manna. Both thoughts very important in their place; but in neither of these states of soul is the conscience at liberty, or the heart at rest. Sometimes singing, and at other times repining, wilderness Christians know that they have been sheltered by the blood of the Lamb, and brought out of Egypt with a high hand, through the sea of death and judgment, and they have seen all their fleshly enemies dead upon the seashore; but, with all, their thoughts are limited to God's blessing poured out upon them down here. Very blessed surely it is to realize God's delight in blessing us here; but to know what it is to have to do with the ever-living, ever-loving Son of God Himself, as in Him who is in the glory, is another thing.

Blessed as it is to contemplate the faithful care of God day by day in providing for His people in a barren desert, it is sweeter still to know that "the manna" set forth Jesus; for He said,

I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever. . . . This is that 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 6:51-58).

Blessed as it is to think of Jesus as the One who came down, and gave His flesh for the life of the world in such matchless grace, yet the difference is most striking, as to our apprehension and enjoyment, whether we only think of Him as He was down here, or as He is up there. What the believer wants now day by day is the sustaining power and blessing of having to do with a living Person up there — the Man in the glory. And no doubt the great cause of weakness and failure in believers is not that they do not sometimes remember the work of the cross, or that they forget that Jesus came down from heaven; but because they do not draw from, lean on, and abide in a living, faithful Christ in the glory, in constant dependence, obedience, and confidence. We need His continual upholding care and blessing. Apart from Him, we are helpless. We can most truly say —

"As weaker than a bruised reed,

I cannot do without Thee;

I want Thee here each hour of need,

Shall want Thee, too, in glory."

It is when the believer enters by faith upon the new-creation blessings God has given us in Christ in heavenly places — the true Canaan — that he knows Christ Himself there as his Soul-sustainer —

the old corn of the land {Josh. 5:11}.

The

Corn of wheat {John 12:24},

which fell into the ground and died, is alive again, and in the glory. He then finds that it is not merely the work of Christ on the cross for us, nor the blessing poured out upon us on our pilgrimage which should occupy us, important as they are, but a full Christ up there, a living Person in the glory, even Christ Himself, who finished the work, and through whom all our blessings have come. It is Jesus glorified who is

the old corn of the land,

to whom we are now to look as the commanding and absorbing Object of our hearts. It is not merely promises, nor even privileges, but liberty to approach God with boldness, because He is there in whom we are for ever blessed, whose blood ever speaks there for us. Oh the unspeakable blessedness of feeding on Christ as

the old corn of the land

— on Him, who is our life, righteousness, peace, and hope, and yet the One in whom are all our present and eternal springs and resources. And surely He is enough to fill and satisfy our minds and hearts. Known thus as an Object, He eclipses every other. Beauty then is seen nowhere else. All here is death and corruption apart from that living, incorruptible One. By the word and Spirit, which testify of Him, exercising our souls, we grow in acquaintance with Him, rise superior to old associations, and find ourselves in the circle of such love and dignity, as makes everything here seem poor and dissatisfying. The heart thus taken up with Him loses its relish for passing and fading things, and finds Him a satisfying Object, as He said,

He that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst {John 6:35}.

He is enough for us; for not only is He almighty, but His love is perfect, and He is

the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever {Heb. 13:8}.

He is able to sympathize with us; for He can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and His compassions fail not. He ever lives to intercede for us, and always appears for us before the face of God. He is ever active and faithful in managing all our affairs for us up there, as the other Comforter does everything for us, and in us, down here. Well then might an inspired apostle enjoin us to set our minds on things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, and remind us at the same time that we

are dead,

or, have died with Christ, and that

our life is hid with Christ in God {see Col. 3:3}.

We find that “the lamb” was eaten, the “manna” was eaten, the “old corn of the land” was eaten. What is the instruction to us in this? Is it not that as those were all types of Christ, that we should feed by faith upon Him? Not merely think of Him, read about Him, hear about Him, or speak of Him, but receive God’s revelation of Him into our hearts, for our sustainment and joy. They did not merely think of the flesh of the lamb, or look at it, or the manna, and the old corn, but they ate it — they felt they needed it, they partook of it, and thus received strength for walk and service. And so now. We may read a chapter in the Bible, or hear an orthodox discourse, and yet it may be sadly true of us, as it has been said of others,

The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard {Heb. 4:2}.

No doubt it is by the written word of God that we have any knowledge of Christ; and the Holy Ghost, the Glorifier and Testifier of Christ, is Here to guide us into all truth, and to take of the things of Christ and shew unto us. So that, by the Spirit, through the Scriptures, the deep and wondrous glories of the Person, work, relationships, offices, moral excellences, and fullness of Christ are brought to us, and our souls are strengthened by feeding on Him. It is the needful daily employ for every child of God. When Jesus said to Mary {rather, Martha},

One thing is needful {Luke 10:42},

it was the habit of sitting at His feet, and hearkening to His word to which He alluded. This was Mary’s source of spiritual power. It was the good part which she chose. She was enabled to go forth from such a place of blessing, and let love have its own ready outflow, in breaking the costly alabaster box of very precious ointment, and pouring it upon Him, who was the conscious spring of all her blessing. Had Martha learned the same lesson, what failure and distress she would have been spared!

Feeding on Christ then is communion. It is an unfeignedly dependent one having to do with Him, leaning upon Him, drawing from Him, as He is set forth in the Scriptures, and revealed to us by the Holy Spirit. When God’s own testimony of Him is thus received into our hearts by faith, He is the food and strength of our souls. The more we feed on Him, the more we desire Him. If we are going out after the gratification of fleshly desires, we shall lose our relish for the sincere milk of the word. Fleshly lusts war against the soul. Where personal intercourse and communion with Christ are not practiced, there must be weakness and failure, even in those who have spiritual life. It is, therefore, of all importance for us, who have no visible sustaining power; such as “the lamb,” “the manna,” or “the old corn,” that we hold tenaciously, that for spiritual health and activity our joy and strength are found wholly in personal occupation with Christ Himself. Dead, cold, formal exercises are short of this, and to be dreaded. Sitting at the feet of Jesus, and hearkening to His word, are as “needful” as ever; and this the most spiritual and advanced Christians know best, and practice most. May we be kept abiding in Him.

The children of Israel fed on “the lamb” during the night, on “the manna” in the wilderness early in the morning, but on “the old corn” of the land at every time of need; and these points read instructive lessons to us. The passover feast was the remembrance of the lamb slain, by whose blood they had obtained safety. It was eaten

roast with fire {Ex. 12:8, 9},

which typically sets forth the suffering of death, which the Lamb of God endured for us. In “the manna,” we have the One who came down from heaven

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).

The manna was a small thing to man’s eye, like hoar frost, and was to be gathered {Ex. 16:14, 17}

before the sun rose, which would melt it; forcibly reminding us that the time for feeding on Christ is before the things of this old creation, however pure and necessary, have their effect upon us. The things of God should have their first claim on us. When Christ has the first place in our hearts, He will have every place. To begin the day in His strength is the secret of going through it well.

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

It is a good thing to see the face of the Lord Jesus by faith before we see another face; we thus have power, from intercourse with Him, before we practically enter upon the day’s duties. What a precious secret of blessing this is! How different when we make the things of this life, however important, the first concern of the day, instead of Him, who said,

Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you (Matt. 6:33).

The way the first part of the morning engages us, often tells the real state of our souls. If we are minding earthly things, they will assume increasing importance and gravity with us; but, if our minds are set on things above, the things of Christ, and His claims, will be the unerring standard of the value of everything. Feeding on Christ is a daily business, for

the inward man is renewed day by day {2 Cor. 4:16}.

The manna, too, was to be gathered fresh every morning; if it were kept, it would breed worms and stink. It is the habit of dependence and communion with the Lord, daily drawing directly from Himself, and not trying to live upon past experiences and gifts, however rich and abundant. Oh, the unspeakable blessedness of personally feeding on Him!

As we have noticed,

the old corn of the land

might be eaten at any time. It was unknown till they possessed the land. It was unlimited as to supply. It sets forth to us a full Christ, risen and ascended. We see Him in heavenly places—the land. We enter the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus, and know Him there, as

Head of the body, the church {Col. 1:18},

Head of all principality and power {Col. 2:10},

the glorified Man, in whom

dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily {Col. 2:9}.

Thus knowing this blessed One in the glory, we have a full and never-failing supply of strength and blessing in Him, who is our righteousness and strength. We are accepted, blessed, complete, and seated in Him in heavenly places. We are therefore enjoined to abide in Him, to walk in Him, to be rooted and built up in Him. Wondrous place of blessing! Unspeakable privilege! Perfect acceptance, and nearness to God, in whom we have all spiritual blessings in heavenly places! May we go forward in the walk of faith as those who know that without Him we can do nothing, but as knowing also that we have strength for all things in Him that gives us power. (Phil. 4:13).

Another point to notice is, that if Christ risen and glorified be looked to as the source of all sustainment, we cannot forget He was the One who came down from heaven, and died for us on the cross. We shall know Him in the glory as the Lamb as it had been slain. Hence we find that they not only ate of the

old corn

when in the land the day after keeping

the passover (Josh. 5:11),

but that

the manna (Josh. 5:12)

ceased the day after they had eaten of the old corn. Here we see “the passover,” “the manna,” and “old corn” clustered together. We are told also that they did eat of

the old corn . . . unleavened cakes, and parched corn (Josh. 5:11);

the cakes and parched corn forcibly setting forth the sufferings of Him who has been bruised for our blessing, and has been cut off under the fire of divine judgment for us. (Josh. 5:10-12) Thus let it be carefully noted that if we are really occupied with Christ ascended into heaven, we shall never forget how He came there, and what He did for us upon the tree. The reverse, however, does not hold good; that is, souls may dwell frequently upon His sufferings and death upon the cross, and have little sense of personal intercourse with Him, and what He is for us and to us now on the throne. In fact some would teach us that the true place of a Christian is to be “always at the foot of the cross.” Such know Christ as a Redeemer, but not as their ever living Sustainer; and this may account for much of the weakness among so many of God’s children. Now while the death of Christ can never be forgotten, for it is the great manifestation of divine love, and all our present and eternal blessings are founded on it, still we know that He is not now on the cross, nor in the sepulcher, but at the right hand of the Majesty on high. We delight to remember Him. The passover was celebrated in Egypt, in the wilderness, and in the land, and we are to shew, or announce, His death till He come; and always bear about in our body the dying of Jesus. But, while we thus remember Him where He was, we now see Him by faith where He is. Christ glorified is the Object of faith —

We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour (Heb. 2:9).

Having to do with Him there, we have power to walk as He also walked here.

We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Cor. 3:18).

May we know day by day the precious reality of present sustainment and blessing, by feeding on Him who is now seated on the right hand of God, and who is soon coming to take us unto Himself!

## Clean and Unclean

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Ye shall be holy; for I am holy (Lev. 11:44).

I am holy is God's own declaration of Himself. When therefore He is pleased in addressing His people to connect with it,

Ye shall be holy,

it is clear that communion can only be maintained between the Father and His children on principles which are in accordance with His own mind. While communion therefore is the highest privilege that can be known on earth, yet it must be according to the holiness of Him who says,

Be ye holy; for I am holy {1 Pet. 1:16}.

May our souls be more sensible of the holiness of the fellowship which is of the Spirit!

In order to progress in the things of God, even when under the influence of divine truth, two things seem necessary; first, a moral condition of soul to be capable of reception; and secondly, an exercised state of mind. With the Corinthian believers, the former was so much wanting, that the apostle was unable to set before them the deep things of God. They were "carnal," and "babes," so that he could only feed them with milk, and not with meat. The Ephesian saints, however, were in a very different state, so that the apostle could happily set before them the eternal counsels, ways, and mysteries of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he was obliged to withhold from the Corinthians.

The epistle to the Hebrews furnishes us with an instance of the latter requirement. The apostle evidently desired to teach them many precious things about the Melchisedec priesthood of Christ, but they had been so unexercised by divine truth that they were dull of hearing. He said,

Of whom 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 unskilful 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).

It is clear therefore that exercise of mind by the truth of God is indispensable to our making spiritual progress, or to giving us competency to distinguish between good and evil. It can easily be seen how both these points bear on the line of truth now before us.

In pondering the solemn and yet precious subject of communion as set forth in Holy Scripture, we shall find that there are two branches which arrest us on the very threshold; first, the ways and walk which suit our Father in this holy occupation; and secondly, the way of restoration when communion has been broken. Scripture abounds with instruction on both these topics. As an example of the first we may direct attention to the eleventh chapter of Leviticus.

It need scarcely be said that the various details of this chapter literally applied to the children of Israel. God having separated them as a people in the flesh unto Himself, them and their offspring, from every other nation on earth, redeemed them out of Egypt, and dwelt among them; He, with other manifestations of His care, prescribed what they should eat, and commanded that certain things should not be eaten, nor even touched, but had in abomination. No doubt as articles of food God selected the best for them. But the conclusion of the chapter points to deeper lines of instruction than are apparent in the beginning.

We do well to remember the teaching of the epistle to the Hebrews, that these ceremonials were of a carnal order, and only for the time, during the standing of the unrent veil. By the tabernacle service we are told that the Holy Ghost was thus signifying that the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest. We therefore read of both gifts and sacrifices, which could not make the worshiper perfect as pertaining to the conscience; also of meats and drinks, and divers washings and fleshly ordinances imposed on them until the time of reformation, or of setting things right. With landmarks so clearly laid down, we can profitably ponder this and similar chapters, as the Holy Ghost may graciously guide and teach.

In these days, when men's minds are so active in raising questions about almost everything, not a few have said a great deal about what should be eaten, and what should not be eaten. But concerning this we have the clearest instruction in the New Testament. The Christian, on the one hand, is told that

every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer (1 Tim. 4:4, 5).

On the other hand,

things strangled

and

blood {Acts 15:20}

are as much prohibited now as ever. Before the deluge God gave men

the herb of the field (Gen. 3:18)

for food; but after the deluge, and when the Lord smelled a sweet savor, or a savor of rest, in the clean beasts that had been sacrificed, and blessed Noah and his sons, He said,

Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat (Gen. 8:20 to 9:4).

Thus blood was prohibited by God in the days of Noah; and man, whether Jew or Gentile, infidel or Christian, has never from that time had liberty from God to eat blood. To believers in Christ who are brought into the liberty of children of God, it has been written by the apostles:

It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well

(Acts 15:28, 29).

From this Scripture it is clear, that, however literally this chapter in Leviticus called for an observance on the part of the children of Israel in daily food, to us it can have no such meaning; for the only prohibitions we have are “from things strangled,” and “from blood.”

That there are, however, deeply precious lessons now to be gathered by the spiritual from this chapter in Leviticus, and similar portions of the word, is obvious enough;

for whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope (Rom. 15:4).

And again,

All these things happened unto them for ensamples [types]: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come (1 Cor. 10:11).

Moreover, inasmuch as Moses wrote of Christ, who is the great object of testimony in the ancient Scriptures, there must be found therein much instruction for us on the subject of communion; for in what could the Father have communion with us, unless it were concerning His beloved Son?

And do we not find precious traces of Jesus in this chapter in Leviticus? It surely is a divine treatise on “clean” as opposed to “unclean,” and is intended to teach God’s redeemed people lessons on holiness, and

to make a difference between the unclean and the clean, and between the beast that may be eaten, and the beast that may not be eaten (Lev. 11:47).

Can we ever think of clean as contrasted with unclean without being reminded of Him who was the holy, spotless Lamb of God?

We eat naturally to satisfy the cravings of appetite. By receiving and digesting food it becomes incorporated with our bodies, and forms a part of ourselves. We refuse certain things because of their uncleanness and unsuitability, and eat what we relish, and what we judge good for ourselves. Others do the same. When we eat of the same food with others, we have communion; we partake together of the same meat.

By eating then in a spiritual sense we understand communion. Our fellowship being with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, we are occupied with such things as suit this fellowship. The Father loveth the Son, and we love the Son. In Him the Father’s joy and rest unceasingly abide; in Him also we, in our measure, have joy and rest. What is “clean” therefore in Scripture, looking at it spiritually, must set forth Christ; and what is “unclean” must be unlike this perfect model, who knew no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth.

In this chapter we are led by the Spirit of God to learn lessons from the animal creation. We are first instructed by what we find in beasts, then in fishes, then in birds, and, lastly, in creeping things. We know that when Jesus takes His rightful place as Son of man, and when creation, now groaning, is delivered from the bondage of corruption, things will be in a very different state from what they are now. Then it will be said of Him,

Thou madest Him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under His feet: all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea (Psa. 8:6-8).

Then, too, the vision of the writer of the Revelation will be realized, concerning which he said:

And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever (Rev. 5:13).

Blessed, however, as it is thus to contemplate the future deliverance of these creatures, it is good to be led by the Spirit of God to look at them now in their present groaning state, while Satan is the prince of this world, and to learn practical lessons of holiness as we become acquainted with God's mind, and mark the difference between clean and unclean.

With regard to "beasts," Moses is thus instructed to speak to the redeemed people among whom Jehovah dwelt:

Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, These are the beasts which ye shall eat among all the beasts that are on the earth. Whatsoever parteth the hoof, and is clovenfooted, and cheweth the cud among the beasts, that shall ye eat. Nevertheless these shall ye not eat of them that chew the cud, or of them that divide the hoof: as the camel, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you. And the coney, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you. And the hare, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you. And the swine, though he divide the hoof, and be cloven-footed, yet he cheweth not the cud; he is unclean unto you. Of their flesh shall ye not eat, and their carcass shall ye not touch: they are unclean to you (Lev. 11:2-8).

They were thus directed to distinguish between clean and unclean, so as to feed on some and to refuse others, not even to touch them, but in the most decided way to hold that

they are unclean.

The clean, as we have observed, shadow forth Christ. They were marked by two distinguishing features — parting the hoof and chewing the cud. When an animal was found bearing both these characteristics it was clean, and might be eaten; but if only one of these qualities existed in the beast, no matter however prepossessing it might otherwise seem, it must be entirely rejected.

Of their flesh shall ye not eat, and their carcass shall ye not touch; they are unclean to you (Lev. 11:8).

The "divided hoof" is clearly suggestive of walk, and "chewing the cud" of meditation on the word of God. Both these were strikingly and perfectly set forth in Jesus the Son of God, whose fellowship with God knew not a moment's interruption until He was made sin and a sacrifice for us on the cross. We know that He walked not after the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seat of the scornful. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. His delight was in the law of Jehovah, and in His law did He meditate day and night (Psa. 1:1, 2; Heb. 7:28). From these clean beasts then we are instructed not only to gather up spiritual food, but to go over it, portion by portion, in meditation, that it may be effectual for present comfort

and strength in the walk. The importance of meditation on the Word can scarcely be over-estimated. It is more than reading, and one of the essentials of communion. By thus being occupied with the Scriptures, in dependence on the Holy Ghost and in faith, we receive God's thoughts into the mind and heart, and are thus guided and strengthened to walk for His glory. In all this Jesus was our perfect model. Meditating in the law of Jehovah day and night, He did always those things which pleased Him. Obedience was His constant employ. He said,

My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work {John 4:34}.

He was

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

These ways are clean and pure. Those who are born of God easily understand them. But there are unclean things to be rejected. There are spurious imitations of Christianity which the faithful are not to touch, not to be mixed up with the uncleanness of what is false, though it may to an unexercised soul seem to be genuine. The counterfeit in both the examples before us consists in separating what God has joined together — receiving His word, and walking like Christ.

There are some who loudly cry up works. They contend for a righteous, conscientious walk. Their constant cry is, "Give and do." Practicing self-denial, and showing benevolence to our fellow-creatures, benefitting society, and improving the world, are the chief points they enforce. Philanthropy is their watchword. These are the Pharisees of modern times, and, like them, are hoping to have forgiveness of sins, if they need it, when they come to die. Though something like the clean animal in the one point of having a divided hoof, and leaving a certain track in the walk, yet they are as unclean as the swine, because they chew not the cud. The testimony of God as to man's utter ruin as a sinner, and of eternal redemption accomplished by Christ Jesus for all who believe in His name, as the foundation of all true Christianity, is ignored by them. Their principles are unclean, and those who are under their influence, whatever their apparent usefulness, are swine and not sheep:

The swine, though he divide the hoof, and be cloven-footed, yet he cheweth not the cud; he is unclean to you (Lev. 11:7).

There is another form of spurious Christianity equally unclean which also has many admirers. It cries up loudly the value of the Scriptures. Bible knowledge is inculcated. The precious volume is largely distributed. Christianity, as a system which is opposed to Judaism, Mohammedanism, and idolatry, is openly contended for. Bible-classes are formed; Biblical literature is upheld as a necessary branch of education; but there is nothing vital for souls. The Word is not delighted in and received into the heart as giving eternal life now; and the certain knowledge of forgiveness of sins through faith in the Son of God is unknown. The consequence is, that with all this standing up for the Bible there is not the walk of faith, because there is not the life of faith upon the Son of God; though chewing the cud, there is not the divided hoof. Doctrines are merely held in the head without power on the heart and walk. This brings reproach on the truth, because it practically declares that a man can be a Christian and yet follow the pleasures of sin, as their attendance at theaters, concerts, the race-course, the hunting-field, the ball-room show, as well as the habit of spending their strength and time in the frivolous pastimes and idle amusements of modern society. Like

the camel, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you (Lev. 11:4).

When the word of God in the love of it is received into the heart, the blood of Christ known as having purged the conscience, and the soul brought thus into the holy presence of God in perfect peace, we surely have no difficulty in concluding that henceforth we should live not to ourselves; but unto Him who died for us, and rose again (2 Cor. 5:15). May we love the word of God, esteem it better than thousands of gold and silver, and more than our necessary meat. May we so receive the Word from the mouth of God, that, like one of old, we may be able to say,

Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart (Jer. 15:16).

Then it will search us; for it divides between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart; then, in the sweet consciousness that we are children of God, we shall be constrained to receive the apostle Peter's injunction to walk

as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy (1 Pet. 1:14-16).

As to fishes, there were two things which, when found together, marked that which was "clean" — having fins, and also scales; all others were unclean.

These shall ye eat of all that are in the waters: whatsoever hath fins and scales in the waters, in the seas, and in the rivers, them shall ye eat. And all that have not fins and scales in the seas, and in the rivers, of all that move in the waters, and of any living thing which is in the waters, they shall be an abomination unto you: they shall be even an abomination unto you; ye shall not eat of their flesh, but ye shall have their carcasses in abomination. Whatsoever hath no fins nor scales in the waters, that shall be an abomination unto you (Lev. 11:9-12).

"Fins" show that the creature has power to go down, or rise high, or to swim against the stream; and the scales so completely enveloping them illustrate the covering or armor which the true servants of God have. We know how invulnerable Jesus was to every fiery dart of Satan. He could truly say,

The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me {John 14:30}.

In the perfectness of faith, He who took upon Him the form of a servant, effectually resisted every temptation with,

It is written {Matt. 4:4, 7-10; Luke 4:4-8};

and every child of God, through grace, in Christ his righteousness has strength to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one, and to escape his wiles. Our strength being in Another, and not in ourselves, we are enjoined to

be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might,

and thus to

put on the whole armor of God {Eph. 6:10, 11}.

Being born of God, and also having the Holy Ghost dwelling in us, we are able to go against the tide of circumstances; to refuse the world's patronage and honors; to go down, if need be, to the place of self-abasement, or to rise higher and higher in the power of faith.

Nothing is commoner in Christendom than to find persons pleading circumstances, and other influences, in excuse for disobedience to the word of the Lord. What many really mean by the guidance of providence is often only the opening up of circumstances, irrespective of the mind of God. But the principle is "unclean." A dead fish is carried down the stream, and only turns according to the windings of the river. Not so the way of faith. It looks only to the Lord. It finds direction in His word. And though it be against the influence of dearest friends, and calls for the cutting off of a right hand, or the plucking out of a right eye, faith still goes forward; and though experiencing loss, and opposition of various kinds, follows the instructions of the word of God. Faith echoes the precious words of the Master, when in His unutterable agony,

Not as I will, but as Thou wilt {Matt. 26:39}.

A fish that has "no fins" finds its pleasure in burrowing in the mud, and its element in that which is unclean, being directed only by the current of circumstances; and a fish having "no scales," is, from its nakedness, exposed to every surrounding influence. Like many professors of Christianity, who not only find themselves at home in the world, its commerce, politics, pleasures, or religiousness, and make no stand for Christ's name and honor, nor rise up against the stream of skepticism, and infidelity, which threaten to carry everything before them. Alas! what must be the eternal doom of such professors, who, like one of old, betrayed the Lord with a kiss for a few pieces of silver! God be praised for opening our eyes to distinguish between clean and unclean; between what suits the holiness of God our Father, and what only accords with the unholy tastes of the fleshly mind!

There is a busy and persevering attempt in Christendom to hold the most profound truths of Scripture with a worldly walk and conversation. Such opposite elements, however, never can be reconciled. The Holy Spirit which indwells the child of God never can be otherwise than grieved at that which is contrary to divine truth; He cannot, therefore, comfort such, or give them the happiness of soul as if nothing were amiss, for He is holy. He gives us power by strengthening us with might in the inner man to deny self, to resist the devil, and to refuse the fellowship of unbelievers; so that, like fish with "fins," if need be, we can go against the current of circumstances. He also takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us, and so enables us to enter into the Father's love, and the present place and relationship He has given us in Christ, that, like fish with "scales," influences around produce little effect. Is it any wonder, then, that the testimony of the Scripture concerning fish which have

no fins nor scales {Lev. 11:12}

should be,

They shall be an abomination unto you; ye shall have their carcasses in abomination. Whatsoever hath no fins nor scales in the waters, that shall be an abomination unto you (Lev. 11:11, 12)?

How plain and yet decided is the truth! How clear the instruction appears when we see its spiritual signification! What can be more opposed to God than the outward profession of the name of Christ, with the heart insubject to His will, and unattracted to Himself. In these lines of typical import, what a place the word of God has. It enjoins us to be taken up with Him who has left us an example that we should follow His steps; and to own the operations and teaching of the Holy Ghost, as the power of fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. How these views we have had of clean and unclean beasts and fish seem to ask us, Does the word of Christ dwell in you richly? Do you meditate on it day and night? Are you, therefore, aiming to walk as He walked? Are you apprehending and enjoying your new creation in Christ? And are you conscious of a power (not your own) which enables you to go forward in obedience to the will of God, spite of all opposing circumstances? May we lay these things to heart, and hearken to what the Spirit saith!

## Defilement From Contact

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To make a difference between the unclean and the clean (Lev. 11:47).

It may be often observed in Scripture, that God directs us to the study of living creatures, in order that we may learn lessons suited to us as His children while on earth. In the chapter before us, the subject is the difference between clean and unclean, so that we may be instructed about the ways of faith and fellowship, to which, through grace; we have been called. In other parts of Scripture, the strength, the sagacity, or the forethought of several creatures, without reference to their being clean or unclean, are found also to minister instruction to us under the guidance of the Holy Ghost. The Lord Himself is spoken of as a Lion —

the Lion of the tribe of Juda {Rev. 5:5}

— because of His almighty power; for the

lion which is strongest among beasts, and turneth not away from any (Prov. 30:30).

He is also spoken of as a Lamb —

the Lamb of God {John 1:29, 36}

— because of His gentleness, meekness, spotlessness, and fitness for sacrifice.

He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter (Isa. 53:7).

We are directed to the serpent as an example of wisdom, though in itself unclean and cursed above all cattle — Be

wise as serpents (Matt. 10:16);

and to the dove for harmlessness — be

harmless as doves (Matt. 10:16)

The conies are brought before us, to admonish us, when most conscious of our own feebleness, to place all our confidence, and find all our strength, in the Rock — Christ Jesus.

The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks (Prov. 30:26).

From insignificant creatures like “the ants,” we may learn to avail ourselves of opportunities for gathering means of blessing, notwithstanding our many infirmities —

The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer (Prov. 30:25).

To encourage us in the importance of Christian fellowship, and during the time too of our Lord's absence, when we have no visible head, we are enjoined to consider the locusts; for though they are individually small, yet, by combining their united energies, they accomplish wonderful and extensive results.

The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands (Prov. 30:27).

From the unclean spider we may also gather instruction. We are told,

The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in king's palaces (Prov. 30:28).

Unclean as we were as sinners of the Gentiles, yet having laid hold of eternal life in Christ, we shall be in the Father's house. Poor and insignificant as we are, yet a persevering diligence in God's ways, according to His truth and Spirit, will certainly lead to the honor that cometh from God only —

Them that honour Me, I will honour {1 Sam. 2:30};

and,

The soul of the diligent shall be made fat {Prov. 13:4}.

And further. In the wonderful work committed to the apostle Peter, of opening the door of faith to the Gentiles, we are told that he was divinely qualified for it by a vision of wild beasts, creeping things, and fowls of the air. Up to that time he seems to have attached merely a literal interpretation to this eleventh chapter of Leviticus, and such like Scriptures; for when he saw the vision, and heard the voice,

Rise, Peter; kill and eat,

he replied,

Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean {Acts 10:13, 14}.

But now, under the direct teaching of God, he finds these beasts, and birds, and creeping things to be representative of men utterly unclean in themselves, but, through divine grace, capable of being cleansed by the precious blood of Jesus. So this great apostle, who had the keys (not of the Church, for it has no keys, but) of the kingdom, evidently understood the vision. Peter's own account is,

I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me: upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat. But I said, Not so, Lord for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth. But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven (Acts 11:5-10).

We are further told, that

While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them (Acts 10:19, 20).

Nothing can be clearer than the spiritual instruction which God would have us gather from this deeply interesting chapter in Leviticus, and that these animals set forth the unclean workings of men in the flesh. But how blessed to know that though their uncleanness is unsuited to the presence of God, or the company of His people, yet that sinners of the Gentiles are not too unclean for the blood of Christ to cleanse and make fit for God's most holy presence.

In our meditations on the former part of this chapter, we have been seeking to derive profit from considering clean and unclean beasts, as well as from clean and unclean fishes. Fowls are next brought before us. Here, too, we have clean and unclean (cp. Deut. 14:11, 20, "Of all clean fowls ye may eat.") Again,

These may ye eat of every flying creeping thing that goeth upon all four, which have legs above their feet, to leap withal upon the earth (Lev. 11:21).

The first point to notice in clean fowls is their power of rising above the earth. We know of our Lord, at a time when everything seemed to be against Him, that He rose above all earthly circumstances;

At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight (Matt. 11:25, 26).

A clean fowl then leaps above the earth, is more or less heavenly in its flight. Secondly, clean fowls are harmless, and separate from that which is unclean; reminding us of Him who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners {see Heb. 7:26}.

Thirdly, What can be more dependent on God? for they have neither storehouse nor barn. The unclean birds may turn again and again to the carcass as their store of food, not so the fowls that are clean. Fourthly, Many clean birds are joyful — they sing and make melody; and so those who are born of God are enjoined to

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

and some know what it is even in circumstances of outward suffering, to

rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory {1 Pet. 1:8}.

Fifthly, They are exposed to many snares. With clean fowls, then, we are at home in gathering up precious lessons in the life and walk of fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. Especially we learn that believers are not of the world, for that which is of the world is not of the Father. If they have no power to leap upon the earth they are not clean. The apostle John says,

They are of the world (their resources, their enjoyments, and their home): therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us, Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error (1 John 4:5, 6).

There must be then in those who are born of God something distinct from worldliness and earthly-mindedness, though it may be in some instances very limited in degree.

Yet these may ye eat of every flying creeping thing that goeth upon all four, which have legs above their feet, to leap withal upon the earth; even these of them ye may eat; the locust after his kind, and the bald locust after his kind, and the beetle after his kind, and the grasshopper after his kind. But all other flying creeping things, which have four feet, shall be an abomination unto you (Lev. 11:21-23).

Thus we see, speaking generally, that clean fowls are marked by being not of the world, but heavenly in their ways, and harmless; they may be surrounded by snares, yet are they dependent on God, and joyful creatures. Clean fowls then shadow forth the perfect One, who has left us an example that we should follow His steps, and who said of us,

They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world (John 17:16)

But unclean fowls are very unlike Christ. They remarkably set forth the ways of the natural man. As the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, he must have something else on which to gratify his desires. They may be quiet occupations or noisy, moral or profane, nevertheless the quality is unclean, and is not of God; it is in some shape or other — of the world, or of the flesh, or of Satan. The most refined natural man is

without God {Eph. 2:12},

and derives his pleasure from that which is unclean in His sight, however religious it may appear to men. The man who is not born anew can never rise above self. Philanthropy is self-gratification, and man is the object; Christianity is self-abnegation, and the glory of God is its object.

Unclean fowls were not to be eaten, not to be touched; even their carcasses could not be borne without uncleanness being contracted. We may, for the sake of brevity, group them into classes, though each creature has doubtless a separate line of instruction to us.

1. Some of these fowls feed upon carrion and other unclean things, and strikingly exemplify the filthiness of the flesh — that which finds its pleasure in what is vile and corrupt. Hence, as Christians, we are enjoined to

cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God {2 Cor. 7:1}.

There are things not even to be once named among us,

as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks (Eph. 5:3, 4).

And again,

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers (Eph. 4:29).

The eagle, the vulture, and such like, belong to this class. Our Lord said,

Wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together {Matt. 24:28}.

It is a well-known fact that when an animal dies in the desert, the flight of these unclean birds towards the dead body for food takes place with incredible rapidity. They maintain themselves, and find their pleasure in feeding on that which is filthy and corrupt.

2. We are reminded of the selfishness of man in the flesh by many of those fowls, which are birds of prey. Their own existence is kept up through others being victimized. Man's motto is, "Mind yourself." His selfishness is the manifestation of the uncleanness of his nature. Jesus was not like this; for

He pleased not Himself {see Rom. 15:3}.

He went about doing good. His heart was set on blessing others. The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost. Practical Christianity is holiness; it is walking as He walked. Hence the teaching of the Holy Ghost is,

Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus (Phil. 2:4, 5).

These birds of prey are selfish indeed. The hawk and such-like fowls pounce on small and defenseless creatures only to benefit themselves. The cuckoo drives another from the comfortable nest it has constructed, and appropriates it for its own use. Such creatures subsist on the helplessness and downfall of the weak. And how many a man makes a pedestal for himself by the ruin of others! How many fatherless and widows have been oppressed to enrich the coffers of the covetous! How few people now seem to rank covetousness with the grossest sins of immorality as Scripture does! May Jesus be our model, that blessed One who left us an example that we should follow His steps.

3. The ungodliness and deceitfulness of the flesh are specially brought out in the night birds. Eager to devour others, they quietly obtain the objects of their voracious appetite in the stillness of the night, when least suspected. The owls and other birds secrete themselves mostly during the day, and with singular powers of nocturnal vision, when their victims are unconscious of their danger, suddenly and almost noiselessly take them in their fatal gasp. What a striking illustration of practical ungodliness and deceit! Look also at the bat. It dreads the light. Large numbers of them are found in caverns and dark recesses in Palestine. It hides itself by day in filthy and desolate places, and in the twilight of morning and evening, with soft wings enabling it to fly without noise, swiftly and rapidly devours with its sharp teeth the many insects in its way. How unlike is all this to Jesus. How unsuited it is to His followers need not be detailed. Suffice it to say that our path is to be

followers [imitators] of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also has loved us, and given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour (Eph. 5:1, 2).

And the grace of God teaches us thus to act;

for the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men; teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works (Titus 2:11-14).

Such is practical Christianity — the path divinely marked out for us. The unclean principles therefore which we have been contemplating are to be wholly shunned by God's dear children. Not only are we not to eat, but not even to touch their carcasses. Their carcass is to be loathsome to us; for we are to

have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret (Eph. 5:11, 12).

The unobserved and noiseless activities of the flesh are to be abhorred as much as those which are avowedly filthy and corrupt; the secret and refined ways of selfishness are to be held in abomination as much as those which are open and profane. To the Christian, Christ is the perfect model; and walking according to His mind we shall be

blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life (Phil. 2:15, 16).

This necessarily entails a separate path; for we are the Lord's, and the unclean are not to be touched. In this way we shall find special blessing:

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

Creeping things were also to be had in abomination.

Every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth shall be an abomination; it shall not be eaten. Whatsoever goeth upon the belly, and whatsoever goeth upon all four, or whatsoever hath more feet among all creeping things that creep upon the earth, them ye shall not eat; for they are an abomination. Ye shall not make yourselves abominable with any creeping thing that creepeth, neither shall ye make yourselves unclean with them, that ye should be defiled thereby (Lev. 11:41-43).

Creeping things move quietly, steadily, and with apparent humility; but they for the most part burrow in the earth, and know nothing higher. Jude traces the origin of the apostasy to certain men having crept in unawares. Through the unwatchfulness of the saints they quietly and steadily pursued their purpose, and found an entrance into the assembly of God's people. Jude says,

There are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ (Jude 4).

The apostle Paul also speaks of others who creep into houses and attract to themselves weak and silly women. He describes them as men who

resist the truth: men of corrupt minds.

After enlarging on the ecclesiastical evil of the last days, and giving this solemn sentence,

Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof,

he adds,

For of this sort are they which creep into houses

(noiselessly and yet perseveringly),

and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth (2 Tim. 3:5-8).

What a solemn but striking picture is this of what is actually going on in Christendom at this moment! How truly the spiritual import of

creeping things

was held in abomination by the apostles! Nothing can more clearly convey to us the need of entire separation from all such things, and not looking favorably upon them under any circumstances. If any plead that there is no harm in touching a creeping thing when dead, or if any solicit us to touch it because it has no power, we are told that it is still defiling.

Whosoever doth touch them, when they be dead, shall be unclean until the even. And upon whatsoever any of them, when they are dead, doth fall, it shall be unclean (Lev. 11:31, 32).

An earthen vessel so touched must be broken, and whatsoever it contained be unclean. A fountain or pit with plenty of water, however, is clean. If the water here typify the Holy Ghost, it cannot be defiled. These, and other points of difference between clean and unclean, shew how exercised we should be before the Lord as to the things with which we are having fellowship. There are many who would refuse to eat, but do not hesitate to touch; many who reject certain doctrines and principles for themselves, yet associate harmoniously with those who hold them. Again, there are some who declare of certain principles and doctrines that they are unclean in themselves, but that they have become obsolete, and have practically died out; so that you need not hesitate now to touch the carcass of them. We need to be watchful, and continually before the Lord, lest we touch that which is unclean, and defile ourselves with any manner of creeping thing which creepeth upon the earth. We are told also, both as regards unsound doctrine and evil practice, that it spreads, and that a little is enough to set evil going. As a redeemed people, the habitation of God, and dear children of God, He says to us,

Be ye holy; for I am holy {1 Pet. 1:16}.

It is well to observe, before leaving this chapter, the remedy God graciously provided for such as made themselves unclean by touching the carcasses of unclean things. On several occasions we are told he

shall wash his clothes, and shall be unclean until the even {Lev. 11:25, 28}.

In every instance the instruction is to

wash his clothes.

This to us is figurative of bringing our near surroundings under the cleansing action of the word of God. In it there is both the acknowledgment of defilement, and the removal of it according to God's mind. Even if a clean beast, which they might eat, died, the person who touched its carcass would be unclean till even; and he that

eateth of the carcass {Lev. 11:40},

Every soul which eateth that which dieth of itself, or that which was torn with beasts, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger, he shall both wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even; then shall he be clean. But if he wash them not, nor bathe his flesh; then he shall bear his iniquity (Lev. 17:15, 16).

Here the defilement is of a more serious character, so that the person needs to be washed with water as well as his clothes, in order to be clean: if he neglected these requirements, he would come under judgment. All these instances shew the need of our having much to do with the word of God, not only to give us intelligence as to His mind, but to exercise our consciences as to our own state and surroundings, as well as to help us in self-judgment, remove defilement, restore our souls, and to enlarge our fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. When the question is proposed in Scripture,

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?

The answer is,

By taking heed thereto according to thy word (Psa. 119:9).

How helpless and dependent the child of God is while passing through this evil world; yet, through abundant mercy, he can still say —

“When I am weak, then am I strong,

Grace is my shield, and Christ my song.”

or

beareth the carcass {Lev. 11:28}

of it, shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even. So we see that that which at one time was clean to us, and with which the Spirit of God would lead us into happy fellowship, might afterward become so manifestly corrupt and unclean as to call for our withdrawal, and forbid us even to touch. There is another case in the seventeenth chapter of a somewhat different character, which may well be alluded to here:

## Security, Communion, and Confidence

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If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me (John 13:8).

It is a fact with which many are familiar, that the account of our Lord's washing His disciples' feet, and the four following chapters, are found in the gospel by John, and in no other portion of the Holy Scriptures. The time was exceedingly and peculiarly solemn. The blessed Lord had ere this openly taken His farewell of Jewish things. The beautiful temple was soon to be a heap of ruins — not one stone left upon another; and a new order of things of a spiritual and heavenly character was to be brought in. Hence the washing of the disciples' feet, the disclosure to His own of the Father's house, the promise of the descent and abiding of the Holy Ghost, the other Comforter, and His marvelous operations, as also the blessed hope of our Lord's coming to receive us unto Himself, now have their place. It can easily be perceived how fundamentally important such instruction is to us, and how entirely foreign to Jewish ideas. We do not find here the declaration of the mystery of the Church, the body of Christ, because, according to the counsels of God, it was reserved for a subsequent revelation; yet these chapters clearly announce lines of deeply precious instruction suitable to us during the whole period of our Lord's rejection, until He come again.

These chapters, therefore, contain lessons of richest worth, which could not have been brought out while the Lord was presenting Himself as the Messiah to the nation of Israel; but, having been rejected, He could only leave them in desolation, darkness, and unbelief, until they shall say,

Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord (Matt. 23:38, 39).

The time, therefore, was now come for setting forth great and precious doctrines for us.

In the first twenty-five verses of this chapter, there are three points of instruction to which we would direct attention — the believer's security, communion with the Lord, and confidence of faith. This is the order in which these subjects are here presented, and assuredly it is divine. For until the believer is established as to his everlasting security in Christ, how can he enjoy communion with the Lord? And if not walking with the Lord, can he expect to have confidence in the Lord when adversity comes?

I. As to the question of THE BELIEVER'S SECURITY, several remarkable points are clustered together in the beginning of the chapter. In the first verse we read,

Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end {John 13:1}.

Love, divine love, is certainly the source of all our blessings. Our everlasting security, therefore, flows from divine love. It is His love to us which is first; for

we love Him, because He first loved us (1 John 4:19).

It is His love, not ours, which is the spring —

Not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His

Son to be the propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:10).

This love then has been manifested in all its fullness, perfectness, and suitability —

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 (1 John 4:9).

Most souls when anxious and awakened to a sense of their obligations to God as His creatures, think that all their blessings are based on their love to God. They therefore try, and try again, most sincerely, to love God; when, after a constant sense of failure and sin, they learn the precious truth that God's love in the gift of His Son is the source of peace and salvation, and not their love to God. They say, "I am trying to love God," but until they know how marvelously God's love has come out to us, while we were yet sinners, they never get peace. All believers in the Lord Jesus, therefore, can say,

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

This love, too, is unchanging, for

whom He loved when He was in the world He loved them unto the end {see John 13:1};

that is, He loved them through all their failings, mistakes, and ignorance.

"His love's unchangeably the same,

And as enduring as His name."

It is divine love, the love of God to us in Christ in all its fullness, perfectness, and unchangeableness, which is then the spring of our eternal salvation, and therefore imparts to us the first sense of our everlasting security. And let us ever remember that it is not God's providential kindness to us in our circumstances, gracious as He may be in these things; but it is His love to us in the gift of His only-begotten Son, that tells us of His infinite grace.

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

There can, therefore, be no peace, no sense of security, where the spring of our eternal blessings is not known as flowing to us in the gift of Christ; and until that is the case, souls, if truly awakened and earnest, will be looking to their own love to God, their feelings, their doings, the performance, of their promised resolutions, and the like, which Only increase their misery, and can never impart rest and peace. Happy those who so perceive the love of God in the Person and work of Christ, and its suitability to us, as to enable them to realize in their own souls the preciousness of the truth,

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

Then we have brought before us that which sets forth the death of Christ — the supper (John 13:2); for nothing less than the death and blood-shedding of the Son of God could meet our need, or satisfy the claims of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. Nothing less than the unsparing condemnation of our sins could satisfy divine justice, and nothing less than our having everlasting life and salvation could satisfy divine love. The death of Christ, then, was absolutely necessary,

and is the alone ground of peace and everlasting security.

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).

Precious love, that could thus manifest itself in cleansing and saving us, and bringing eternal glory to God! By the death of Christ, the question of our sins is for ever settled, according to the strictest claims of justice and truth, as well as love. We are told that He

bare our sins in His own body on the tree {1 Pet. 2:24},

that He

suffered for sins {1 Pet. 3:18}, died for our sins {1 Cor. 15:3},

shed His blood

for many for the remission of sins {Matt. 26:28};

that

He was wounded for our transgressions, . . . bruised for our iniquities, . . . and with His stripes we are healed {Isa. 53:5}.

We have thus in the death of Christ an immoveable ground of peace, and that which purges the conscience, because of remission of sins, on the ground of sins having been judged by God unsparingly in the Person of His beloved Son, who was

made sin {2 Cor. 5:21, see New Trans., JND}

and

made a curse {Gal. 3:13}

for us on the tree. If the love of God is the source of all our blessings, the death of Christ is the foundation of our everlasting peace and security; for

other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ {1 Cor. 3:11}.

Here we see the demands of holiness vindicated, the claims of righteousness met, justice satisfied, love manifested, sins judged, the sinner that believes saved, and God glorified. God, who condemned sin, now justifies the sinner on the principle of faith.

Jesus knowing that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father {see John 13:1},

and the Supper, tell us of His death. It is the death of Christ, then, that has justly answered for us every charge of sin, and which sets our conscience at rest before God; for if the question be asked, Who is he that condemneth? The answer is, It is Christ that died, and it is God which justifieth. Thus we sing —

“The Lord 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.”

But more than this. The Lord was in spirit at this moment on the other side of death. The language is very remarkable —

Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God {John 13:3}.

Here we have the Lord presented to us in spirit on resurrection and ascension ground,  
knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands.

We needed a Savior who could bring us to God — bring many sons to glory; a Savior, therefore, who should not only save us from our sins, but be the Conqueror of Satan, and rise victoriously over death and the grave. This Christ did when He rose from among the dead; for, through death, He annulled him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and thus set free those who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage. In the resurrection of Christ, we see not only God’s testimony to the finished work of Jesus on the cross, but we also see Satan, who had the power of death, completely triumphed over, and a new and living way made for us into the presence of God. And further, He being now in the place of power at the right hand of God, we have life, righteousness, and acceptance in Him. Thus, if a doubt arises as to our having eternal life, it is met by the Scripture that

God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son {1 John 5:11}.

If it be a question of righteousness, we are told, God hath made  
Christ to be unto us righteousness {1 Cor. 1:30}.

If an enquiry is raised as to our acceptance, we are told that we are  
accepted in the Beloved {Eph. 1:6};

that is, before God in all the acceptability of Christ Himself. If nearness to God be considered, we are thus as near to God as Christ is; and this always, for

in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ {Eph. 2:13}.

Thus believers, who were dead in sins, have been made alive, raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ, in whom the Father hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings. So that not a question remains unanswered as to our everlasting security and blessing.

In the death of the Lord Jesus, our sins have been judged, and thus purged; by the resurrection of Christ, Satan, death, and the grave have been triumphed over; and in Christ ascended we have eternal life, righteousness, acceptance, nearness to God, and all spiritual blessings; and His almighty power and perfect changeless love being to usward, we are kept for the inheritance in glory, and the inheritance is reserved for us. It need scarcely be added that the Holy Ghost is given to make all this known unto us, and to unite us to Christ. Thus, not a fear nor a doubt can possess a soul that is

stayed on the accomplished work of Christ, and God's testimony concerning it; and in this way we realize the truth of that Scripture,

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

How wondrous are the depths and heights of divine grace! Well might the apostle call it a great salvation {Heb. 2:3}.

are those, who so grasp God's own declaration as to what has been accomplished for us by the death, and in the resurrection and ascension of Christ, as to

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

Do we know, beloved fellow-believers, what it is thus to rest and triumph, as accepted and blessed in Christ Jesus in heavenly places?

2. The precious instruction of communion with the Lord comes out immediately after the remarkable words already quoted —

Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God (John 13:3);

which shew that He was in spirit on the other side of death when He addressed Himself to the mystic service of washing His disciples' feet. We expect therefore to gather instruction from it, as setting forth one of the glorious offices in which He is now actively engaged on our behalf while in the glory. That there is more in this gracious ministry than the mere act of lowliness — marvelous as it was in this respect — is perfectly clear; for Jesus said to Peter,

What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter {John 13:7}:

which remark would have been unnecessary if the act was only intended to set forth the Lord's deep humility. But the Holy Ghost having come down, since this scene was enacted, to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us, this and many other of His gracious words and ways are now made known to us.

It is well to notice that the Lord is alone engaged in this service. No one is allowed to help in it, as on some other occasions; nor was it needed.

He took a towel, and girded Himself. After that He poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded {John 13:4, 5}.

Now, What does this mean? Peter's ignorance and rash expressions are overruled to bring to us the Lord's own thoughts of this service. When Peter hastily exclaimed,

Thou shalt never wash my feet,

it elicited from the Lord how indispensable this service was for communion, or having part with Him.

If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me (John 13:8).

And when Peter again, with equal rashness and ignorance, said,

Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head (John 13:9),

it became the occasion for the blessed Lord to give a fuller elucidation of this service by saying,

He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit (John 13:10);

by which we understand that he who has been in a bath, washed all over, only needs afterward to have his feet washed, so as to cleanse away the defilement his feet had gathered up in walking in a defiled and defiling place. He had been washed once, and was thus

clean every whit;

but now it is a question of removing the uncleanness which the feet had since contracted.

Peter's thoughts exactly meet many dear souls in the present day. They think, when conscious of having sinned since they believed in Christ and had peace with God, that they must come to the Savior as sinners, as they did at first, and be again washed in His blood. But when a believer sins, it becomes a question between him and the Lord not of salvation, but of communion. Saved people, servants having part with their Master, is what we have here. Let us not fail to notice that the necessity for this service is that we, who are servants of the Lord, may have communion with our loving Master — have part with Him.

If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet {John 13:14}.

Having part with Him is surely not salvation, but communion.

A child of God hates sin, and desires, in obedience to the Lord's word, not to sin; yet through failure he does sin. This not only makes him sad, but communion with the Lord is interrupted. Of this he is sorrowfully conscious, and longs to have part again with his blessed Master. This bows him in self-judgment and confession, and earnest desire for restoration to happy communion. The question is, Does he want to be washed again in the blood? or, as some put it, Does he need a fresh application of the blood? We reply, Certainly not. Where does Scripture speak of a fresh application of the blood? It is not washing with blood here, but with water. The truth is, that every believer is by the one offering of Christ perfected for ever; he is a child of God, and is always before God, as we have seen, in all the nearness and acceptance of Christ Himself. But by the cleansing with water we understand the application of the word, as Scripture says,

The washing of water by the word (Eph. 5:26).

The priests of the nation of Israel, after having been at the altar of burnt-offering, had to wash their hands and feet with water at the laver when they went into the tabernacle of the congregation. So we, having been once washed from our sins in the blood, need afterward that the defilement contracted in our walk should be cleansed, and the heart comforted, as this blessed service of the washing of the feet with water and wiping them with the towel seems to imply. This ministry of our Lord to us now by His Spirit, may be either directly from Himself, or through instrumentality; but in either case the word is so brought to bear upon our troubled souls as to restore us to communion with Himself. For our blessing we are assured that,

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}.

How comforting, too, is that word,

If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged (1 Cor. 11:31).

To walk with the Lord, to have part with Him in His thoughts, affections, ways, and service, is surely a wondrous favour; and our carrying about with us an evil nature, which has been judged on the cross, need not hinder this. But if we give way to fleshly lusts, they war against the soul, grieve the Spirit, and we cannot enjoy part with Christ till we are restored. The priests of old had to wash both their hands and feet. We have not to handle sacrifices, &c., like Aaron and his sons, but have to walk for the glory of God. Hence we need only to have our feet washed. This feet-washing is surely a most gracious provision for us during this present time; and does it not sweetly assure us of our Lord's warm desire that we should be keeping company with Him? And is not this desire of the Lord further brought out by the expression that we should carry out this same restoring ministry to others?

If I then, your Lord and Master have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them (John 13:14-17).

So that as He by the action of the word seeks to relieve and restore His failing and distressed servants, so should we in meekness seek to minister to our fellow-servants the word of God, with the hope of thus restoring and comforting them. Happy indeed are those who thus walk in the Master's steps!

3. CONFIDENCE IN THE LORD flows out of communion. Those who have trusted Him most, and walked with Him most, know Him best; and those who are so practically near Him, and taken up with His word, as to drink in His thoughts, observe His ways, and enter into the secrets of His heart, are able to confide in Him in the time of adversity. Blessed are those who "hearken" to Him; for such shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.

The sudden and unexpected announcement of the Lord,

Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me (John 13:21),

must have filled them with surprise and distress. It was a most solemn moment. With indescribable sadness the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom He spake (John 13:22).

They seemed thunderstruck, and knew not what to do. Why did they not cry out to the Lord about it at once? There was one only who appeared to be up to the emergency. None but he could confide in the Lord about it, and at last Peter made a sign that he should ask who it should be of whom He spake; and the disciple who had been leaning on Jesus' breast unhesitatingly, in all the confidence of love,

saith unto Him, Lord, who is it? {John 13:25}.

Here we close these remarks, only suggesting whether we are not sweetly taught by this brief narrative that if we would be ready for an emergency, and have confidence in the Lord in times of adversity, we must be dwelling in the Lord's love, and walking and serving according to His own mind, having part with Him. We know who said,

Abide in me {John 15:4}, Learn of me {Matt. 11:29}, Follow me {John 12:26},

and

If any man serve me, him will my Father honour {John 12:26}.

May the Lord Himself so truly engage our hearts that —

“With His beauty occupied,

We elsewhere none may see.”

## The Father's Love

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For the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God (John 16:27).

Our Lord Jesus Christ received these precious words from the Father, who commanded Him to speak them for our comfort (John 12:49). They sweetly assure us of the Father's love. We read of God's love —

God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

We read also of Christ's love —

Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it (Eph. 5:25);

and of the Father's love, which is exercised toward those who, through grace, have been brought into relationship with Himself —

the Father Himself loveth you {John 16:27}.

The Father's love has wrought for us in accomplishing redemption through the death of His Son, and in Him risen and ascended, according to His eternal purpose; thus giving us life in Christ, and bringing us into the relationship of children, as well as uniting us to Christ by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

The Father's love has wrought in us in revealing His Son unto us. When our Lord said to Peter,

Whom say ye that I am?

and he replied,

Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,

Jesus immediately said,

Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven (Matt. 16:15-17).

Thus we see that every one who has apprehended the person of

the Christ, the Son of the living God {Matt. 16:16},

has only done so because of a distinct revelation of the Father to him. Without this, whatever else we may have known, we should have been in darkness as to the person of the Son; concerning whom it is said,

He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life (1 John 5:12).

To apprehend the person of the Son of God is entirely beyond the scope of the natural man. He may have heard of His name and of His works, he may be acquainted with the external circumstances of His death on Calvary, and of the fact of His resurrection, and yet not know Him. Though to the natural eye Jesus was like another man,

in the likeness of sinful flesh {Rom. 8:3},

yet Peter saw, by the revelation of the Father, that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God.

The Father has also wrought in us in having drawn us to Christ as sinners to a Savior. It is only by the working of the Father's grace in our hearts that we have thus had to do with Him whom the Father sent. Unless the Father had specially wrought in us in this way, it is certain we should never have found our true place, as hell-deserving ones, at the feet of a gracious Savior. It is well to have the sense of this fact constantly fresh in our souls; for Jesus said,

No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw Him (John 6:44);

and again,

No man can come unto Me, except it were given unto him of My Father (John 6:65).

Thus we see that the Father's love has accomplished redemption for us, brought us into nearness to Himself, called us into the relationship of children, given us the Spirit, revealed His Son to us, and drawn us to Him as our Savior. How sweet to think of the various yet distinct actions of the Father's love! Well might an inspired servant cry out,

Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us {1 John 3:1}!

How astonishing then is the fact that there are those on the earth who, though poor and feeble in their own eyes, sensible too of much failure, coldness, and forgetfulness of Him, are the constant objects of the Father's love; those on whom He ever looks with a Father's watchful eye, and ministers unto with Fatherly care. He is the perfect Father. He knows the state of heart, as well as the need, peculiarities, and circumstances of each child; and withholds or gives, sends adversity or prosperity, as is most for our real good. He disciplines and chastens for our profit, that we may be in subjection to Him, and be partakers of His holiness. It is well that we should receive all from Him, for all is dealt out in infinite wisdom by the hand of perfect love; for

"A father's heart can never cause

His child a needless tear."

He desires us to cast all our care upon Him, for He careth for us, to make all our requests known unto Him by prayer and supplication; and in this our Lord encouraged us by saying,

If ye then, 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).

But one of the children of God may inquire, "How much does the Father love me?" We are told that the Father loves us as He has loved Jesus (John 17:23). Our blessed Lord said to His disciples,

As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you {John 15:9}.

His love to us then is the same as the Father's love to Him; and elsewhere we find He prayed that by-and-by the world may know that the Father loves us as He has loved Him. Thus we find that the infinite, eternal, unchanging love of the Father to the Son is the measure of His love to us His children. This, too, will be manifested ere long in answer to His prayer,

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word . . . and the glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me (John 17:20-23).

In perfect keeping with the activity of this infinite, eternal, unchanging love, the Father hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3). Thus we are always before His eye in all the nearness, acceptance, righteousness, and life of Christ, and blessed in Him with all spiritual blessings; and all this, and more, to be known now for our present enjoyment, and power for service and conflict. What a precious assurance for our poor hearts are these few words of our adorable Lord,

The Father Himself loveth you {John 16:27}.

It is, indeed, a great secret for our souls when such words are received in faith, and we grasp them as infallible and settled for ever. We shall then be able to say in the hour of deepest sorrow and affliction —

“Although my cup seems filled with gall,

There's something secret sweetens all.”

But why do we not enjoy the Father's love more than we do? Because the Holy Spirit, which is given unto us, by whom the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, is grieved. When we walk obediently we abide in His love, and enjoy the presence of the Father and the Son. To be loved by the Father is a precious fact for every child of God; but to enjoy the Father's love and presence is the privilege of those only who are walking obediently to His will. Jesus said,

If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him (John 14:23).

Let no believer imagine then that he will have the comfort of the Father's love, if he is not walking in the truth according to the Father's will. In the path of disobedience the Holy Spirit dwelling in us is grieved, and we are not in the place where the Father's presence can be known. Our blessed Lord said to His own loved ones for their encouragement,

I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love (John 15:10).

We are told here who are the objects of the Father's love. They are those who have loved Jesus, and have believed that He came out from God. Not those who say this and that, but those who have the two grand cardinal points of vital Christianity — faith and love. They always go together when there is a divinely-wrought work in the soul, for faith worketh by love. Every true believer loves. He loves the Lord Jesus, and all that are His. He loves the brethren, the truth, the service of

the Lord, and all that is in association with Him. The believer loves, and he who loves, believes. Without this love, whatever else he may boast of, he is

as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal {1 Cor. 13:1}.

Love is a vitally important point; for

if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha (1 Cor. 16:22).

We love, because we believe the love of God to us.

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

We most certainly believe that Jesus came out from God; we have no doubt of it. We grasp the divine love that gave Him, and we cannot but love Jesus. We believe and love. Oh, the preciousness of the Savior's words,

The Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God {John 16:27}.

The more we ponder this precious subject, the more our hearts become melted, and our ways molded, according to this elevated and eternal relationship. To be

children of God {Gal. 3:26}

now, while in mortal bodies, and in a world where sin reigns unto death, is indeed a glorious fact; and, because we are sons, to have the Holy Spirit sent into our hearts, crying, Abba Father, is love so rich, so free, and so abundant, as never could have entered into the heart of man to conceive. And yet, how true it is. Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost. Wondrous grace! All

to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved {Eph. 1:6}.

While looking then to our glorified Lord, we can say —

“Yea, in the fullness of His grace,

God put me in the children's place,

Where I may gaze upon His face,

O Lamb of God, in Thee!

“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!

“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 Ashes of the Red Heifer

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It is a purification for sin (Num. 19:9).

In our previous meditations, we have been endeavoring to learn from Scripture the ground on which our fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, has been established; we have also looked at Lev. 11 as a sample of what Scripture types teach, as to what must be chosen and loved, and what must be refused and abhorred, in order to maintain the life and walk which

the communion of the Holy Ghost {2 Cor. 13:14}

enjoins.

As a matter of fact, however, the child of God has often painfully to acknowledge, that he does not practically maintain this communion. He has to deplore contracting defilement, if not to judge himself every now and then for positive disobedience. Thus communion is interrupted; for, though the Father loves us, He cannot walk with His children on any principle of uncleanness. Nor does the child of God desire it, for he hates sin wherever he finds it. It is then good to know that for defilement, however contracted, God has graciously made provision. In the New Testament we are told that,

If any man

(i.e. any child of God)

sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous {1 John 2:1};

and the Lord Jesus is also blessedly set before us as the Washer of His servants' feet, to cleanse away the defilement they may have contracted. In the Old Testament great principles of truth of a similar character are brought out; not only in the discipline of Jehovah's servants on account of failure, and for their restoration, but also details are given of the deep and varied exercises of soul, which the elect remnant of Jews will pass through, before they are turned away from their transgressions, thoroughly restored, and brought by divine grace into their promised liberty and blessing. Moreover, in early days, directions were largely given for detecting and removing uncleanness and defilement, whether it be through touching a dead bone, or by a man dying in a tent; or even if it be leprosy itself, either in the individual, his garment, or the house of any of those who belonged to the camp of Israel, where Jehovah was dwelling.

We now turn to Num. 19, because the ordinance of the red heifer shows not only that the allowance of defilement was strictly forbidden, but also that the gracious way of restoration, when defilement had been contracted, was according to the holiness of God. The subject is of all-importance; not that it treats of restoration from flagrant transgressions, for it does not; but because it shows how small a matter is enough to check and hinder communion, and this sometimes from circumstances over which we have had no control, as a man dying in a tent defiling all that were in it; and yet we find, in every instance, the exact way of restoration graciously

provided. It reads lessons specially to us, who are travelling on to our rest through a region of sin and death; for it treats of uncleanness, and the purification of those, who, belonging to God, were in their wilderness journey. This is why, perhaps, we have the ordinance of the red heifer in Numbers, which records Israel's way through the wilderness, and not in the book of Leviticus, which treats of grace and holiness, specially in regard to approaching God.

The ordinance of the red heifer stands alone. While other sacrifices are often brought before us, this is recorded in no other part of Israel's history; nor is there any account of its being repeated. The ashes of the burnt heifer were, or should have been, preserved all along the journey; because all was intended to prefigure the sacrifice of Christ once offered, and never to be repeated. The efficacy of His sacrifice being everlasting, there was no need of repetition. It perfected for ever. Hence we read,

There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins {Heb. 10:26}.

The red heifer has the character of a sin-offering. The "ashes" stand prominently in the chapter. They were laid up without the camp in a clean place, and

kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin (Num. 19:9).

This was the purifying power God provided. There was no other way of being freed from such defilement, and restored to the camp, than by being sprinkled with the ashes of the heifer. Even then it was only a ceremonial cleansing, called in Scripture that which

sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh {Heb. 9:13};

but we have deeply solemn lessons to learn from its typical import. May we hearken to the voice of God with attentive and anointed ears!

The heifer provided for this sacrifice must be red — a most rare and difficult thing to find in the world, among the thousands of cattle on its hills, one heifer answering completely to this description. It must also be without spot; neither should it be one with the least blemish, nor ever have been yoked with others as thus under the rule of man. All this was needful in order to be a fit type of Jesus the Son of God, who was emphatically

a Lamb without blemish and without spot {1 Pet. 1:19},

and always set apart for God. He was holy, harmless, undefiled {see Heb. 7:26};

and, instead of being yoked for men's purposes, He was separate from sinners {Heb. 7:26}.

The heifer having been found in all respects fit for the sacrifice, it was then slain; thus shadowing forth Him who not only

offered Himself without spot to God {Heb. 9:14},

but who

died for our sins {1 Cor. 15:3},

suffered for sins the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God {1 Pet. 3:18}.

The precious death of Jesus the Son of God was thus solemnly set forth, who was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities {see Isa. 53:5}.

May we always think of it with adoring and worshiping hearts!

The sacrifice having been killed, one of the priests (not Aaron, the high priest, but Eleazer, his son) took the blood, and sprinkled it

before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times {Num. 19:4},

which is the place of communion; for the subject here is not justification, but communion. It was sprinkled seven times, not round about the altar, but before the tabernacle, to represent where we meet God, and to show the ground of communion perfectly established. The rest of the blood, and every part of the heifer, including her skin and her dung — the whole sacrifice — was burnt. In the midst of the burning of the heifer, the priest cast in scarlet, cedar wood, and hyssop, because they set forth the royalty, incorruptibility, and lowliness of Jesus, and the whole was consumed under the fire, which represented divine judgment. The burning continued till all was reduced to ashes.

The ashes were gathered up by a clean man, and laid up without the camp in a clean place, to be kept for a purification for sin; for the ashes were mixed with running water (Num. 19:9).

They shall take of the ashes of the burnt heifer of purification for sin, and running water shall be put thereto in a vessel: and a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it, &c. (Num. 19:17, 18).

Observe, all was done without the camp, the killing of the heifer, the burning of the heifer, the laying-up of the ashes, and the sprinkling of the unclean; for here it was that the defiled were: they were apart from the sanctuary of God; they were outside the camp, because of their uncleanness.

The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Command the children of Israel, that they put out of the camp every leper, and every one that hath an issue, and whosoever is defiled by the dead: both male and female shall ye put out, without the camp shall ye put them; that they defile not their camps, IN THE MIDST WHEREOF I DWELL (Num. 5:1-3).

It is important also to notice that all who were employed in the work of removing the defilement from others contracted uncleanness themselves. And do we ever deal with evil, or seek to set others right who have gone wrong, without ourselves contracting defilement? It is very serious, and yet most instructive.

As to this, we learn in this chapter:

1. That the priest who sprinkled the blood, and cast the things into the burning of the heifer, was unclean until the even, and had to wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water before he could come into the camp (Num. 19:7).
2. The man who had burnt the heifer had to wash his clothes in water, and bathe his flesh in water, and was unclean until the even (Num. 19:8).
3. The clean man who gathered up the ashes had also to wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even (Num. 19:10).

4. The clean person who sprinkled the water of separation upon the unclean had also to wash his clothes; and he that touched the water of separation was unclean until even (Num. 19:21).

Surely nothing could more strikingly bring before us the solemnity of having to do with evil in others, and the need of those who are occupied in setting others right being themselves spiritual, and given to watchfulness and self-judgment; and being also in the spirit of meekness and fear, lest they themselves become defiled. Seeing, then, how difficult it is to have to do with uncleanness in anyone without becoming defiled ourselves, we do well to take heed to the apostolic injunction on this subject:

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness: considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted (Gal. 6:1).

How forcibly this ordinance of the red heifer reminds us that God would have the people, among whom He was dwelling, to be in that state, and to manifest that conduct, which were suited to His own holy presence!

Nothing of death, no, not even the touch of a

dead body {Num. 19:11},

or of

a bone of a man {Num. 19:16},

could suit

the sanctuary of Jehovah {see Num. 19:11};

for death in man witnessed of sin being connected with it —

By man came death {1 Cor. 15:21},

as well as sin, for death is the wages of sin. It could not possibly therefore be a light thing for any of those among whom Jehovah was dwelling to touch a dead body. We therefore read:

He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days (Num. 19:11).

We saw in Lev. 11, that for touching the carcass of an unclean beast the man was only unclean till even, but here for touching the dead body of a man he was unclean seven days. The reason of the difference is obvious; for man is connected with sin as well as death. For his purification God graciously provided the water of separation, of which the defiled man should avail himself; and that not only because of his personal uncleanness excluding him from the camp, but because, by his having thus contracted uncleanness, he

defileth the tabernacle of the Lord {Num. 19:13}.

Refusing to purify himself was a most serious delinquency.

Whosoever toucheth the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of Jehovah; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel: because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is yet upon him (Num. 19:13).

Again it is said,

The man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation, because he hath defiled the sanctuary of Jehovah: the water of separation hath not been sprinkled upon him; he is unclean (Num. 19:20).

What a serious thing to be “cut off” by God!

Nothing can exceed the clear and decisive instruction of these verses; and nothing could more forcibly convey to us the need of practical holiness in order to walk with God, or show the impossibility of our continuing in the enjoyment of fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, while careless and not self-judged. We are not our own. We are the children of God, and He is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works. Sin is no trifle. Not only would He require us to

have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness {Eph. 5:11},

but not even to touch the unclean thing; so that while we

cleave to that which is good,

it equally becomes us to

abhor that which is evil {Rom. 12:9}.

And when sensible of interrupted communion, we should at once give ourselves to self-examination, self-judgment, and the confession of our sins, in order not only to have the assurance from His own word of forgiveness, but the consciousness of being thoroughly cleansed. To us, we know, all comes through the advocacy of Jesus Christ the righteous, and upon propitiation made, and is brought home to us by the action of the Holy Ghost applying the word to wash away the defilement.

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).

Thus we are clean, and restored to this wondrous privilege of fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

But this action of restoration does not give us the idea of either a slight or a rapid process. We know that sometimes a considerable period of time is involved, before those who have been conscious of uncleanness are fully restored. It is a point in this ordinance not to be overlooked. As we have seen, the man was unclean “seven days,” during which the process of restoration was to be going on. Seven, in typical language, means that which is complete; from which we learn that a period, perfectly adequate, must pass, for certain experiences to be known, before he could be fully restored. This, in our case, as to time, may be short or long. But the Israelite who had been defiled must realize as facts:

1. That he is unclean, and therefore outside the camp.
2. That by his uncleanness he has defiled the sanctuary of the Lord.

3. That his heart bows under the sense of it, as one among whom God dwells.

4. That he has availed himself of the water of separation, and is cleansed. But more. We are told, He shall purify himself with it on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean: but if he purify not himself the third day, then the seventh day he shall not be clean (Num. 19:12).

Thus in the man's restoration there are two stages:

1. Up to the third day he is conscious day and night of what it is to be defiled, to teach us that God would have us to be clearly and thoroughly conscious of the gravity of it; then on the third day he is sprinkled with the water of purification for sin.

2. From the third to the seventh day he is conscious of having been sprinkled, but not able to come into the camp in the full sense of cleansing. Then he is sprinkled again, washes his clothes, and himself, and after that at even he is clean.

And the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day, and on the seventh day: and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, and wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at even (Num. 19:19).

The ashes having had running or living, (not stagnant or impure,) water, put thereto in a vessel, shows us that the word testifying of Jesus who once suffered for our sins, and was made sin for us, when brought home to our souls by the power of the Holy Ghost, is the cleansing remedy for restoring us from defilement to communion with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. It is not, as many have wrongly supposed, a fresh application of the blood of Christ, because by that one offering we have been perfected for ever; but it is the word, which testifies of Jesus in His finished work of redemption, applied with cleansing power to our consciences by the Holy Ghost. How often have we found that, after confession of our sins, and the belief, too, that He has been faithful and just to forgive, our souls have not been consciously and happily restored to communion; but when the word is brought to bear on our hearts and consciences by the Holy Ghost, giving us the sense of being really

cleansed from all unrighteousness {see 1 John 1:9},

then we realize that our communion is not only restored, but is often deeper and happier than before. We are restored, then, by the washing of water by the word.

The same principles apply as to other forms of defilement, whether of a personal or of a congregational character. Personally we may be defiled by contact with the smallest amount of uncleanness —

a bone of a man

as much as

a dead body {Num. 19:16},

because with God it is not merely a question of the amount of evil, but of any evil; and the path of the faithful is to depart from iniquity.

A grave is also defiling, because it is connected with sin and death. A man slain with a sword in the open fields {Num. 19:16},

being touched, also defiled. It may refer to our again turning to that which has been already judged and separated from. Observe, it is "one slain," reminding us of sin by man, and death by sin. But a man dying in a tent, and defiling all in the tent, and all that came into it, shows how congregationally a little leaven leavens the whole lump; and how God will have us, as His assembly, exercised about being clean congregationally as well as individually. All who were in the tent were then to take the place of humiliation, confession, and to be cleansed by the water of purification, before they could resume their place as connected with the sanctuary of the Lord. Things exposed, which ought to be covered, are also unclean, as an

open vessel, which hath no covering bound upon it (Num. 19:15).

This mode of defiling must not be overlooked.

How important then it is to see that sin is a most serious matter, and that communion can only be maintained on principles that are suitable to the Father and the Son; nor is it possible that the Holy Ghost could lead us to walk in any other path. No doubt it entails such watchfulness and constant dependence, that walking carelessly, not to say with levity, is altogether out of the question. The smallest contact with uncleanness is defiling, and walking for a moment after the flesh is damaging. An impure thought may interrupt communion; hence we are admonished to abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul; and to cast down imaginations [reasonings], and bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. But how wonderfully has divine grace provided for us, in the advocacy of the Lord Jesus, the ministry of the indwelling Spirit, and the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever! What lessons of holiness and grace all have to learn in the school of God! Our souls are astonished at the infinite wisdom of God to us-ward, as well as His power and grace, as we grow in the knowledge of His truth! Dreadful as it is, and so wholly unbecoming those who are born of God to sin, that he says,

My children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not {see 1 John 2:1};

yet, if we should sin, His gracious provision forbids our desponding, but encourages us to pour out our troubled hearts to Him in confession. Thus the Holy Ghost directs us to Him in the glory, the Washer of our feet; and while making us sensible of our uncleanness having interrupted communion, brings home with power the infinite virtue of what was done for us on Calvary, as revealed in holy Scripture. Thus, as the defiled Israelites were sprinkled with

the ashes of an heifer {Heb. 9:13},

so the Holy Ghost brings to our hearts and consciences the eternal efficacy of the one offering of Christ; and as the one outside the camp defiled by the dead had also to bathe his flesh and wash his clothes, so we prove, to our soul's comfort, what it is to have ourselves, and our near surroundings, brought under the cleansing action of the word, and thus again to have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having

spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:25-27).

## Leprosy: Outbreak of Sin

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He is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be (Lev. 13:46).

The hindrances to communion which we have been gathering from Scripture thus far, have been defilements contracted from without, by the influence of unclean things, or dead things. We have gone over several varieties, but they have all been from what is outside us; for the cleansing of which, God graciously made provision according to the nature of the cases, and suited to His presence who was dwelling among them. Thus a man who touched a dead dog, or even the carcass of a clean animal, or creeping thing, was unclean only till even, and needed only to wash his clothes; whereas, the man who touched

a bone of a man (Num. 19:16)

was unclean for no less than seven days, and it necessitated his having the water of purification sprinkled upon him, both on the third day and on the seventh day. Moreover, on the seventh day it is said he shall

wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at even (Lev. 11:28; Num. 19:19).

Now why this difference? Because by man came sin, and death by sin. To touch a dead body, or a bone of a man, therefore, is being brought into contact with death, which came by man's sin. It consequently needed that

the ashes of an heifer {Heb. 9:13},

typical of Christ's sacrifice, should be applied by

the water of separation {Num. 19:13, 20, 21}

to the man, before he could possibly be clean. And this is why it is also said, if he does not purify himself, he would be

cut off {Num. 19:13, 20}.

How terrible to be "cut off" by God. How impossible it is for Spirit-taught souls not to see the divine stamp on these wondrous Scriptures!

Besides our getting defiled by the influence of things without, there is the uncleanness which arises from within, and is of a far more serious character. Leprosy sets this forth. Two long chapters are devoted to it. It is looked at most gravely from different points of view; but wherever it was found, it imperatively called for immediate excision, as wholly insufferable in the place where God was dwelling. Ah, could we, as God's children, but have the abiding consciousness of his dwelling in us, and that the church is His habitation, with what holy fear and trembling should we speak and act! In all of these instances of uncleanness washing was indispensable for cleansing; washing thus typifying the washing of water by the Word. In some cases, particularly those

connected with man in death, if only a touch of a bone of a man, it required the sprinkling of the ashes of the slain heifer to purify them, so as to restore such to God's presence. In cases of leprosy, however, whether in a man or in a house, it needed that the full typical value of the death and blood-shedding of the sacrifice, and that which set forth the resurrection of the Lord, as well as a personal sense of the value of the blood, and the anointing oil, should be known, and the whole case judged and dealt with in the presence of the Lord, before the one who had been defiled with leprosy could be fully restored. How blessed to trace these wondrous ways of God in restoring such as have become unclean! and how the instances we have considered admonish us to be watchful, not only as to what we have communion with, but even what we "touch!"

Leprosy is a loathsome disease. It is set before us in Scripture as an illustration of the workings of fleshly lusts; for it is

deeper than the skin {Lev. 13:3}.

Like sin, its ravages are frightful; and it shows how unfit for communion, or the place of God's presence, those are in such uncleanness. In this way the instructions concerning leprosy become illustrative of that which affects "fellowship." Leprosy has been described by a popular writer as "a loathsome and infectious disease, still prevalent throughout all Syria, and corresponding in its general characteristics with that of former ages. It is called distinctively by some people, "The stroke or wound of the Lord." It commences internally, and often lies concealed for years, or is secretly spreading, before there is any outward indication of it; and after it breaks out, the sufferer often lingers for years before it reaches a crisis, and then years sometimes elapse before the leper is released by death. The bones and the marrow are pervaded with the disease, so that the joints of the hands and feet lose their power, the limbs of the body fall together, and the whole system assumes a most deformed and loathsome appearance." (Pop. Cyclop.) Mungo Park says: "It appears at the beginning in scurfy spots . . . at length, the ends of the fingers swell and ulcerate . . . the nails drop off, and the bones of the fingers become carious, and separate at the joints. In this manner the disease continues to spread, frequently until the patient loses all his fingers and toes. Even the hands and feet are sometimes destroyed by this inveterate malady."

It was because God was dwelling among a people on earth, whom He had chosen, and redeemed out of Egypt to Himself, that He would have them discern, and put a difference between clean and unclean, and be practically suited to His own presence. Leprosy was the most serious state in which an Israelite could be found; for until he was pronounced clean, and had cleansed himself, and offered certain offerings, he could never be fully restored. According to the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of Leviticus, leprosy might be personal, affecting only an individual; or it might be

in a garment {Lev. 13:59},

affecting his personal surroundings and associations; or it might be

in a house {Lev. 14:34},

the place where several are located, which might possibly necessitate its being pulled down, and carried out of the city into an unclean place.

Leprosy serves to illustrate either bad doctrine, concerning which it is said,

A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump (Gal. 5:9);

or immoral practice, about which it is said,

A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump (1 Cor. 5:6).

Scripture is most decided in dealing with evil doctrine. Of those who were undermining the truth of justification by faith, the apostle says,

I would they were even cut off which trouble you (Gal. 5:12).

Another apostle charges an

elect lady and her children (2 John 1),

not to receive into her house, or even to salute, one who did not bring

the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9, 10).

## Personal Leprosy

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As to personal leprosy, a spot or swelling of some kind appears on the surface of the body. The question is, What is it? The God-fearing in Israel would be under considerable exercise of mind as to the real nature of the unpleasantness, because God in His word had given most solemn and decided instructions about such things. So now, looking at its spiritual significance, an unusual spot appears in a person's walk, or testimony. It is not surmise, not thinking or imagining evil against a brother, for that would be evil in God's sight; but it is a fact, that the spot has appeared. It is so manifest that the only question is, What is it? The spot or swelling having appeared, is it a temporary swelling, or red spot, like the case of one overtaken in a fault? or is there such active working of fleshly evil, so dishonoring to God, that the person must be pronounced unclean, and put away? The whole question in Israel was, Is it leprosy? not how much, or how little; for if only a spot of leprosy, he is unclean. The command of God was, if a man be a leper, he must go outside the camp, for he is unclean. He must put a covering upon his upper lip, and with his clothes rent, and his head bare, cry,

Unclean, unclean. All the days wherein the plague shall be in him, he shall he defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be (Lev. 13:45, 46).

Then it is important to observe that a priest, either Aaron or one of his sons, was the only person in Israel competent to discern and pronounce a true judgment of clean or unclean in such cases. When there was any appearance of leprosy, the man was brought to the priest. This shows us that Christ should at once be our refuge until the case is clearly made manifest; and it also teaches us, as we have said before, that one who is a priest is alone able to discern the real character of such matters. The case must be unmistakably proved to be leprosy before discipline could take place. When this was made sure, then the children of Israel were to put out of the camp every leper (Num. 5:2, 3). This was absolute and compulsory. No favor or affection was to be showed to anyone. The dearest friend or relative must be put out, if he is affected. But this solemn acting was not to be from suspicion, however strong the grounds for it might be. The case must first be clearly manifested. If there were the least question about it, the priest was to shut the man up for seven days, and then look at him again the seventh day; if he is not then satisfied, he might shut him up for

seven days more {Lev. 13:5},

and the priest shall look on him again the seventh day, when he might expect the case to be made so clear as to be able to pronounce him clean or unclean. We find this principle of declining to act before sufficient and unquestionable evidence has been forthcoming, running through Scripture. On another matter we read:

Then shalt thou inquire, and make search, and ask diligently; and behold if it be truth, and the thing certain (Deut. 13:14).

We read also, both in the Old and New Testaments, the importance of having the assured testimony of two or three witnesses (Deut. 19:15; Matt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1). It need scarcely be added how important this principle of action is in dealing with cases in connection with the discipline of God's assembly. While diligent investigation and prayer to God to make manifest are to be commended, nothing can excuse haste in acting before the evil is most certainly made clear, rendering the person unfit for the assembly of God, until he shall be clean.

It was a priest only, as we have observed, who could discern such cases; and why? Because he was consecrated; the blood and anointing oil were upon him; and he was called and set apart for the service of the sanctuary. This, in a higher sense, every Christian is now; but every Christian is not consciously so; for some do not live on priestly food, nor do they take the place of priestly service, to which, through grace, they are entitled. And, further, as even Aaron and his sons would be unable to discern between clean and unclean, if they drank wine or strong drink, and would die if they washed not their hands and feet when they went into the service of the sanctuary, or came near the altar to minister; so now a Christian, if gratifying fleshly lusts which war against the soul, instead of abstaining from them, will not be spiritual, nor able to discern between holy and unholy. The spiritual not only acknowledge constantly that in them (that is, in their flesh), dwelleth no good thing, but are more exercised about their own souls being in communion with the Lord than anything else. As the priests had to feed on

those things, wherewith the atonement was made to sanctify and to consecrate them (Ex. 29:33), so those only are competent to discern between clean and unclean, according to God, who really know the Lord as their Life-sustainer as well as their Life-giver. Such can truly say,

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}.

He that is spiritual judgeth [discerneth] all things (1 Cor. 2:15);

and it is the "spiritual," (not Christians, who, like the Corinthians, the apostle could only speak of as "carnal"), whom the Holy Ghost would use to restore such among us as have got wrong. When the apostle was addressing those who had through false teachers got into a carnal state, he says,

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted (Gal. 6:1).

For believers to be truly in the exercise of their priestly functions, they must know assuredly, like Aaron and his sons, that they have been chosen and called of God, and that they have been consecrated to the service of the sanctuary. Such know they have been washed with the water of the Word; they know that all their sins have been righteously judged, and put away by Jesus as their sin-offering; they know, too, that they are accepted in the Beloved, in all the sweet savor of Jesus as their burnt-offering; they have realized in their own souls what it is to be cleansed and set apart to God by the blood of Jesus, and to have the Holy Ghost dwelling in them. They know liberty to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, in rest and peace, and for communion and worship. And, in a far higher sense than priests of old, they have all-sufficient direction from God, in His holy word, for every question of clean and unclean that can possibly come before them. And should perplexities arise, and they wait on and for God patiently, He will assuredly make

everything needful manifest. Cases may appear at first sight to be leprous which are afterward clearly seen not to be so; and cases of apparently trivial importance at first, become afterward confirmed as leprosy. We know who alone is sufficient for these things.

Now let us look at some of these cases. We read,

The Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, saying, When a man shall have in the skin of his flesh a rising (swelling), a scab, or bright spot, and it be in the skin of his flesh like the plague of leprosy, then he shall be brought unto Aaron the priest, or unto one of his sons the priests (Lev. 13:1, 2).

A man, then, has a swelling in the skin of his flesh (Lev. 13:2); it is not mere suspicion, but it is a fact. There the swelling is, and it is for the priest, with God's directions in his hands, and the anointing oil upon him, to pronounce upon it. His sphere is limited to Israel; those among whom God dwelt. He had no instructions for cases among Gentiles; and so we have to judge them that are within; God judgeth them that are without.

The apostle speaks of "swellings" in a spiritual sense; of some who were

puffed up {1 Cor. 4:18, 5:2},

and of others who were

vainly puffed up in their fleshly mind {see Col. 2:18}.

Such things are sometimes seen. Self-love, self-exaltation, are at work. A person, hitherto in health of soul, becomes self-inflated, perhaps at some view he may have of a certain Scripture. He speaks of it to others. His vanity about the discovery which he imagines he has made becomes manifest. However, after a little patience, and waiting on God in prayer for him, it soon subsides. It is not heresy, but a temporary rising of self-confident thoughts, and it has disappeared. It was not leprosy; he is clean.

Or it may be he is so puffed up, like some at Corinth, as to exalt himself and look down upon others, because he had not committed the same flagrant sin as another. He ought rather to have "mourned." The word is brought to bear upon his conscience, and it disappears. It is only a rising, or swelling.

Take another case.

A scab (Lev. 13:2)

appears on one in fellowship. He has been long sitting with others at the Lord's table, gathered to the name of Him who said,

There am I in the midst of them {Matt. 18:20}.

The scab has such an unclean appearance that those who are spiritual are much exercised before the Lord about it. But what is it? It looks like leprosy, and if it be so, the person must be put out. But is it really leprosy? They bring him before the priest (the Lord), and wait on Him to make the matter clearly manifest. It is one who states what at first looks like unsound doctrine, and seems to favor laxity; but, after careful investigation, it is found that the brother only advanced something he had read in some book, without considering its serious importance; so that when he found the spiritual

were seriously examining the scab, he was soon recovered. It was not leprosy. He is clean, though the scab be not yet healed. Or, another has been walking in ways apparently very unclean. He was seen in an idol's temple, where there is worship to demons. He was seen eating fruit there which had been offered to an idol. He says, having seen another, whom he knew to be a decided Christian, come out from the temple, he went in on that account; and, till it was pointed out to him, he did not see the dreadful wickedness the act appeared to involve. Thus he fell through the bad example of another. It is not leprosy. He is not to be so treated as unclean.

Look at another instance.

A bright spot (Lev. 13:2)

is seen on one who has hitherto been blameless. It is only one "spot," but "bright" and distinct. He is excited about one point of doctrine of comparatively small moment. He has left the great truths and broad lines of Scripture concerning Christ, (always a sign of declension), and is quite excited about this one point. We once met with a Christian man, who earnestly contended that Scripture made an important distinction between the Holy Spirit and the Holy Ghost; and he did not seem willing to be convinced that in the original they were the same word. In another place, a preacher in one of the sects warmly contended with us that there was a great difference in Scripture between "eternal" and "everlasting." He would not easily yield to the fact that in the original they were the same word. These were spots — the garment spotted by the flesh — but not leprosy. They were not unclean so as to be put outside the camp. It may be that the "bright spot" has disappeared from each of them long ago. Or there may be a "bright spot" of moral delinquency. A brother expressed himself warmly and excitedly on a certain occasion; he had used too strong and unbecoming language; but on examination it was found to have been based on a misunderstanding, and when investigated, the matter was soon cleared up. It was not leprosy — not the leaven of malice and wickedness.

Another case was that of a boil, in the skin of the flesh, a more serious thing than a spot, or a scab, or a mere swelling (Lev. 13:23). It is a work of time for a boil to go through its various stages, and at the end to prove itself to be only a foul and corrupt thing. To give examples of what seems to us to be its spiritual significance, a man exposes himself to the atmosphere of false doctrine, and not knowing his own proclivities, and the danger of such a position, he becomes somewhat infected by the poison before he is aware of it. He tries to convince himself and others that there is some truth, as he says, in the false doctrine; for he is ignorant of Satan's craft to mix a little truth with error so as to deceive, and forgets the divinely-written sentence that

no lie is of the truth {1 John 2:21}.

He thinks much over the subject, talks about it, writes to his friends respecting it, becomes increasingly excited on the point, and pained also at the lack of sympathy and even attention of others; but at last, by turning to God and His word only, in dependence on His Spirit, the real state of this spiritual disorder is manifest, the corruption is exposed, the boil discharges itself of its foul contents, and it ceases to be. He had not fully embraced the leprous doctrine, and he is now most thankful for his escape from the snare. Or, a person exposes himself to the tainting influence of an immoral association. He knows little of himself. He thinks, because he desires to walk uprightly as a child of God, that he is proof against such contagion. This is a serious mistake, as many have

had painfully to prove! for

evil communications corrupt good manners {1 Cor. 15:33}.

The best may be damaged by evil associations. May we take heed to this, and watch with self-distrust, and faith in God! Where this is not the case, the corrupting influence may so work in us as to culminate in a boil, giving pain and distress, as well as drawing out from us such corruption, as self-examination can detect, and from which self-judgment and faith only can deliver us. How true it is that,

he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption {Gal. 6:8}.

A scall (Lev. 13:29-34)

in the head, or beard, would require careful inspection to distinguish it from leprosy. The hair, setting forth our comeliness, might hide it from view. So the comely and attractive features and behavior of some, their amiable and winning ways, at times effectually hide the leaven they carry with them. It is well to be aware of this. We must never forget that leaven may hide itself under the most comely exterior.

Then there may be

white bright spots (Lev. 13:38, 39)

manifesting nothing active, which are defects and weaknesses, and not leprosy.

It is a freckled spot that groweth in the skin; he is clean (Lev. 13:39).

There may also be a bald spot — a bald head, or bald forehead (Lev. 13:40, 41). It is a lack of ordinary strength, and of natural comeliness manifested by one in Israel, yet is he clean. This strikingly shows us that God looks for comely ways — courteous and compassionate behavior; and that rudeness in word or action is like manifesting a bald spot. But whether it be a red spot or a scab, a swelling or a boil, a scall or a bald spot, it is possible that leprosy may spring up in either of them; so that if we are unguarded, and begin to give way to the indulgences and weaknesses of the flesh, or the desires of the mind, it may easily go on to such willful activities as call for the most serious dealing that God can exercise toward man on earth. Even in a bald spot leprosy may spring up. May we be watchful and prayerful, looking off unto Jesus, who is able to keep us from falling!

On account of the variety of maladies, which, without careful discernment, might possibly be confounded with leprosy, God graciously gave these many details so as to enable the priest to distinguish between clean and unclean; and, as we have seen, they read to us many instructive lessons, and, among others, the need of patient investigation, and sure guidance, before arriving at a conclusion in such solemn matters. One thing is clear, that leprosy, when once manifested, must be imperatively and uncompromisingly dealt with, and on no account be tolerated in the place where God is pleased to dwell.

Leprosy in its nature stands alone. It is characterized by three things. It destroys, it defiles, and it spreads. Most carefully and diligently would the priest look to see

if the plague in sight be deeper than the skin (Lev. 13:3);

if so, it showed that there was a destructive process going on, that tissue had actually been consumed, that there was a deep hidden evil at work. It thus sets forth the hidden activities of sin. The workings of fleshly lusts war against the soul; and they destroy everything sacred, and Christlike, which comes under their influence. We are told,

If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another {Gal. 5:15}.

Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died {Rom. 14:15}.

1. We are warned against

foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition {1 Tim. 6:9}.

Evil communications corrupt good manners {1 Cor. 15:33}. If any man defile (destroy) the temple of God, him shall God destroy {1 Cor. 3:17}.

One sinner destroyeth much good {Eccl. 9:18}.

The willful activities of fleshly lusts, either of the mind, which come out in evil doctrine, or, through the members of the body, in evil ways, contrary to the revealed will of God, lie deeper than the surface, and war against the soul, thus eating out as

doth a canker {2 Tim. 2:17}

all spiritual comfort, godly purpose, and energy. With some who thus walk, it is to be feared that their

end is destruction {Phil. 3:19}.

2. Leprosy is defiling. The priest therefore gave deep and solemn attention to discover

if the hair in the plague had turned white {see Lev. 13:20, 25};

that is, if it had been spoiled of its natural comeliness, and become defiled. Most persons know that sin is debasing. If those who have been refined addict themselves to sinful habits, how soon they lose even their natural comeliness and beauty, and become degraded! The activities of fleshly lusts soon turn the affections into an impure direction, and defile the mind and conscience. If false doctrine be the current of fleshly energy, the mind becomes dull and darkened, and the conscience bad towards God. If immoral walk be its line, then the mind and heart become occupied with the objects of lust, and thus get away from God. Whether it be bad doctrine, or bad practice (and they are often found together), it always defiles its victims. May we be kept abiding in our Lord Jesus, that, walking in the Spirit, we may not fulfil the lusts of the flesh!

3. Leprosy is spreading. Even

a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump {Gal. 5:9}.

Some may be ready to say, that, because they cannot see its ravages it does not spread; but the character of leaven is that it works quietly and unobservedly, but most surely. The word of God assures us that leaven, even a little, leaveneth. The priest therefore carefully watched to see if the

plague spread; and if it did, that would sometimes be sufficient evidence to decide the case. This would be a true sign of leprosy, whether in a man, a garment, or a house (Lev. 13:8, 57; 14:39). If, however, the leprosy cover the man all over, have covered all his flesh, then it would show that the malady had fully spent itself, and though its effects were still manifest, yet it is all turned white, so that the priest would pronounce him clean.

If a leprosy break out abroad in the skin, and the leprosy cover all the skin of him that hath the plague from his head even to his foot, wheresoever the priest looketh; then the priest shall consider: and, behold, if the leprosy have covered all his flesh, he shall pronounce him clean that hath the plague: it is all turned white: he is clean (Lev. 13:12, 13).

But when a person is pronounced to be a leprous man, he must be put outside the camp; and then his cry will be,

Unclean, unclean {Lev. 13:45}!

May He, who only is able to keep us from falling, preserve us from all evil, and from every association dishonoring to His name! What need has each to cry to our Lord Jesus,

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

“Leave, oh, leave me not alone!

Still support and comfort me;

All my trust on Thee is stay'd,

All my help from Thee I bring;

Cover my defenseless head

With the shadow of Thy wing.”

## The Cleansing of the Leper— Restoration

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He shall be clean (Lev. 14:20).

God only could cure the leper. When he was thus healed, he had to be pronounced clean by the priest, and also to cleanse himself in a way suited to divine holiness. The man that is to be cleansed could only be restored to the privileges of the people of Israel in the way marked out in holy Scripture.

We have seen that the greatest care was manifested, and the most diligent and clear investigation made, before a man was pronounced unclean, and put outside the camp. We shall also find that there was no less diligence and care bestowed in restoring him, so that the man himself might be happy, and that no doubt should remain in the minds of any as to his being clean, and entitled again to all the blessings and advantages of God's favored people. The man, too, would know that he had step by step gone over the whole question of his personal uncleanness, and had bowed submissively to the will of God as to the way of his restoration.

Sin is no trifle. Those who have walked according to fleshly lusts, so as to necessitate the severe discipline of being

put away {1 Cor. 5:13},

ought solemnly to feel the dreadful character of sin and uncleanness in the sight of God; and such, under divine teaching, will find relief in confessing to God, and acknowledging to others, that their own judgment of themselves, and of their ways, has been according to the truth.

He that doeth truth cometh to the light {John 3:21}.

To the heathen it would appear foolish and needless to be offering sacrifices, washing, cutting off the hair, &c., before he could be properly restored to the camp of Israel; and why? Because such have no sense of its being the place of God's presence. And so now, those who have no true idea of God's people being

the habitation of God through the Spirit {Eph. 2:22},

cannot enter into the deep exercises of soul, and long continued process of sorrow and humiliation, which many who have been

put away {1 Cor. 5:13}

are called to pass through, before the hand of those who are spiritual can be cordially stretched out to welcome them back. We have long been persuaded that some have much to learn on this subject of great practical moment; and may then discover why so many of those who have been brought back to the Lord's table have turned out so unsatisfactorily. The long experience of humiliation and sorrow which the remnant of Jews will yet have to pass through, before, like Thomas, they will be able to look upon the face of Jesus, and say,

My Lord and my God {John 20:28},

is another remarkable illustration that with God sin is a most serious matter. The book of Psalms, and the testimony of other prophets, plainly teach this. The tried remnant will find out that they were rightly put outside the camp, for the dreadful leprosy manifested in hating Jesus without a cause; and they will then thankfully bow to the will of God as to every step of His discipline, even in going through the great tribulation. They will afterward look on Him whom they pierced, and wail because of Him, before they are restored to their own land, and enjoy the promised peace and blessing under Messiah's rule, when every man shall sit under His own vine and fig tree, and the true David shall

reign before His ancients gloriously {in glory, Isa. 24:23}.

It is in the remnant of Israel, now leprous, and by-and-by to be pronounced clean, that this ordinance will have its complete fulfilment.

In the cleansing of the leper, he is first set before us as conscious, that, by the power of God, the foul and spreading disease has been healed, and he is standing before the priest, in order that he may be pronounced clean by him. He realizes that his discerning eye views him all over. And is it not the first point in the history of a restored soul, that the plague of sin is stopped, that he has ceased to do evil? He may be like a man white all over the skin of his flesh, the willful activities of fleshly lusts having all come out; but they are past, the plague of leprosy is stayed. Then must we not think of such an one, that the next step in soul-restoration must bring him before our precious Lord Jesus, to be searched and known thoroughly by Him who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification?

And what will he learn when consciously before Him? What can one in such a state of soul learn, but that Christ loved him, and gave Himself for him? This he apprehends now in a deeper and truer way than he ever knew before. The man is before the Priest. He sees the two birds alive and clean brought out. His eye rests upon the earthen vessel and running water. He stands still. He beholds with intense interest all that passes. He looks at every movement of the priest. He sees one of the clean birds, that had just before been soaring on wing of flight toward heaven, now cruelly put to death, and its blood shed. He notices that it was killed in an earthen vessel, over running water. What does all this mean? The priest is thus setting forth the foundation truth of the gospel, that God's only way of atonement for sin is by the death of Another; and as this bird was killed in an earthen vessel over running water, so did Jesus, who died for our sins, offer Himself, by the Eternal Spirit,

without spot to God {Heb. 9:14},

to purge our consciences by His own blood. There stood the man looking fixedly on the dead bird and its shed blood, and knew that it was all for himself. Still he stands motionless before the priest. He next saw the priest take up the living bird, and a piece of cedar wood, a little scarlet, and a bunch of hyssop, and dip them in the blood of the dead bird. The priest then sprinkled him thus with the blood seven times, and pronounced him clean. Nor is this all; for the living bird (marked with the blood of the dead bird) flew away, while the man was thus pronounced clean. Now nothing, as it seems to us, could possibly portray the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus with greater simplicity, and clearness, than this ordinance; and it is here set forth because every

restored soul has to learn afresh, as it were, what Jesus did for him, when He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. He has to grasp the precious fact, that all our blessings are founded on this work. Two birds are used, because one creature could not illustrate both the death and resurrection of our precious Savior. But the living one is so identified with the dead bird by being dipped in its blood, that, when it was let loose in the open field, it flew away marked with the blood of the dead bird; thus strikingly reminding us of Him who entered into heaven itself by His own blood. The cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop also set forth His personal excellencies of incorruptibility, royalty, and lowliness. Thus we behold the infinite perfections of Him who said, almost under the shadow of the cross,

Now, O Father, glorify thou Me with Thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was (John 17:5).

In this way, the man, who had been put out of the camp for leprosy, had to learn more thoroughly than he had ever done before, that all remission, cleansing, and title to be in the presence of God, is founded on the one sacrifice for sins. It is here a fresh sacrifice, because in the economy of the law there were many sacrifices, and therefore there was a remembrance of sins instead of remission, no sacrifice being more than of twelve months' efficacy; but with us there, is but one sacrifice for sins, and only once offered, because by it we are perfected for ever, and our sins are remembered no more. The instruction is not to us now, as is improperly said, "a fresh sprinkling of the blood"; but while the person is consciously a returning one to the assembly, such learn from the Lord, by His holy Word and Spirit, in this time of deep exercise of conscience, the everlasting value of His death and blood- shedding as cleansing from all sin, and His resurrection justifying us from all things, as well as giving us, by Him, who is gone into heaven itself by His own blood, liberty and title to be there. This we judge is the divinely-taught lesson that all learn, who are really restored to fellowship according to the teaching of the Spirit of God. Not that he did not know the preciousness of the blood before, but he now learns from the Lord, in His own presence, its purification of his conscience, and justification from all things in a deeply solemn way; for He only can

pronounce him clean

It is easy to put people away from the fellowship of

the Lord's table {1 Cor. 10:21};

but the question is, Has it been done according to the Lord's mind? If so, He will confirm the act of discipline; and how very solemn this is!

Whatsoever ye

(two or three gathered together in My name)

shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (Matt. 18:18-20).

It is easy also to bring persons back to the Lord's table; but the question is, Have they ceased to do evil? Do they judge that, by the power of God, they have received healing? Have they learned of the Lord, and in His presence, what He did for them by His death and resurrection? and have

they on this ground been pronounced clean by Him? But if so, he is not restored yet; for the next words which follow are,

And he that is to be cleansed {Lev. 14:8}.

Though pronounced clean, he has now to cleanse himself. Such have to observe the word,

Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit (2 Cor. 7:1).

This is indeed a very solemn ordeal, but a point of great importance, and never to be overlooked.

And he that is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, and shave off all his hair, and wash himself in water, that he may be clean: and after that he shall come into the camp, and shall tarry abroad out of his tent seven days (Lev. 14:8).

After having thus cleansed himself, he might go into the camp; but he must keep out of his tent for seven days. He has thus gained a step in the way of restoration, though not yet restored; and this is important to keep in remembrance. No doubt this sets before us a further step in soul-restoration for communion, though, as we have said, he is not restored. To us we judge the washing of his clothes and himself in water is putting ourselves, and our personal surroundings, under the searching, cleansing power of the word of God –

the washing of water by the Word {Eph. 5:26}.

And what exercise of soul, what thorough self-examination, what searching investigation of our near surroundings and circumstances, and unsparing self-judgment, does this involve! But how can a soul that has been letting out the sinful workings of the flesh to the Lord's open dishonor be restored in any other way? How else could he be really self-judged before God? How could there be, without this, that

godly sorrow which worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of {see 2 Cor. 7:10}?

Thus every step reminds us that sin is no trifle. But this is not all; for he loathes himself. His comeliness, like Daniel's, in the presence of

a certain Man clothed in linen (Dan. 10:5),

is turned in him into corruption. He will not allow he has any comeliness or strength, for he shaves off all his hair, and for seven days walks about the camp, but knows he cannot yet enter into his tent, and there take his place as heretofore as if nothing had happened. For a full period this goes on; for seven days and nights he tarries abroad out of his tent, and on the seventh day the process of self-loathing becomes deepened. Like another, he might 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}.

It is not merely self-examination and self-judgment, but self- abhorrence. Woe is me! for I am undone, I am unclean.

It shall be on the seventh day, that he shall shave all his hair off his head, and his beard, and his eyebrows, even all his hair he shall shave off: and he shall wash his clothes, also he shall wash his

flesh in water, and he shall be clean (Lev. 14:9).

Thus all his comeliness and strength, all natural beauty and energy, are totally disallowed; and both himself and his near associations are again brought under the searching and cleansing power of the Word. The soul taught of God not only hates his sin, but loathes himself. He learns, not only that he has sinned, but that in him (that is, in his flesh), dwelleth no good thing. This is wrought in the soul by the Holy Ghost, who would teach us not only that Christ bore our sins, but that we were by nature so undone, unclean, and incurably bad, as to be totally unfit for the presence of God, or to be used in His service; only fit for divine judgment. For seven days the man, though conscious of partial restoration, was exercised as to his full restoration. How every step reminds us of the exceeding sinfulness of sin!

What a complete (seven days) time of self-judgment and humiliation this must have been. Let us not fail to observe, that it begins with a deep sense in the soul, learned in the presence of the Lord, the Priest, of the value of His own work for us, when He was

delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification {Rom. 4:25}.

There is no true soul restoration that does not begin from the light and power of the marvelous grace of God to us in Christ. Then he cleanses his surroundings and himself by the Word. But when he abhors himself, he goes down to the root of the matter, traces all the willfulness and wickedness of the flesh to a corrupt and evil nature. This marked the repentance of David, and this he wrote in a book, so that his confession and self-abasement may be seen to this day in the word of God, and for the glory of God. He not only said,

I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me;

but he added,

Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

Thus, when he has first judged his sins in their evil fruit, and then traced them to their corrupt and evil source, he cries out,

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow (Psa. 51:3-9).

In this, too, we doubtless have the repentant utterances of the Jewish remnant by-and-by prophetically recorded, while it marks, in principle, the path of the Spirit in soul-restoration from an evil course. How forcibly do all these Scriptures show that sin is no trifle, as well as teach us what a serious matter it is to have to do with Him about it who is holy and true.

But the eighth day arrives. It is the beginning of a new order of things.

The man that is to be made clean {Lev. 14:11}

draws nearer still; for, with unblemished lambs, and meat-offering, and a log of oil, he is now presented by the priest at the door of the tabernacle — the place of having to do with God. One he-lamb is offered for him for a trespass-offering. Thus his sin is confessed, and judged; yea, the lamb is slain in the place where he shall kill the sin-offering and burnt-offering. He knows it is for

him, and it shows that his sin is forgiven by it, so that in this way he can approach the sanctuary of God.

And on the eighth day he shall take two he-lambs without blemish, and one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish, and three tenth deals of fine flour for a meat- offering, mingled with oil, and one log of oil. And the priest that maketh him clean shall present the man that is to be made clean, and those things, before the Lord, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the priest shall take one he-lamb, and offer him for a trespass- offering, and the log of oil, and wave them for a wave- offering before the Lord: and he shall slay the lamb in the place where he shall kill the sin-offering and the burnt- offering, in the holy place: for as the sin-offering is the priest's, so is the trespass-offering: it is most holy {Lev. 14:10-13}.

After the flesh has been broken down, and self-loathing has well occupied the heart, how precious then the work of Jesus becomes to the soul! Not only do such realize the great truth that

Christ . . . once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust {1 Pet. 3:18};

but they perceive that their very trespasses against God were actually judged on the Lord Himself, as our trespass-offering on the cross. While the humbled one is thus gazing on the slain lamb, he cannot but say —

“In His spotless soul's distress

I perceive my guiltiness;

Oh, how vile my lost estate,

Since my ransom was so great!”

Nor is this all. Having before learnt the cleansing power of the blood of Christ, he has now to learn its sanctifying power. He is to know not only that he is cleansed by that blood, but set apart for God by it; that he is himself sprinkled with the blood of the trespass-offering,

that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God (1 Pet. 4:2).

And the priest shall take some of the blood of the trespass- offering, and the priest shall put it upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot (Lev. 14:14).

He is now to be thoroughly alive to the fact that he is consecrated to the service of God; the ear to hearken to His word, the hand to minister in His service, and the foot to walk in His ways. The ear, and thumb, and toe, are also anointed with oil, to still further show the entire consecration to God, which becomes those who are purchased by the blood of Christ, and are anointed by the Holy Ghost. Thus we are not only set apart for God by the blood of Jesus, but anointed and strengthened for His service by the anointing of the Holy Ghost. We can readily perceive what progress there is in all this in restoration to communion. It is well, moreover, to observe that the order in the cleansing of the leper is the same as in the consecration of the priests; firstly, washed with water— clean through the Word; secondly, sprinkled with blood — cleansed and sanctified; and thirdly, anointed with oil — the anointing of the Holy Ghost. This is also the order at

conversion, and seems to be gone over and learnt in a more thorough way in the restoration of a soul to the enjoyment again of the presence of God. But there is a further point to be noticed here. The remainder of the oil is poured upon the head of him that is to be cleansed on the eighth day. This day is, as we have said, the beginning of a new era. Typically, we are on new-creation ground here. The man who has, under the deep sense of having been leprous, honored God in coming back again to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation in His way, in obedience to His own word, is now honored of God.

Them that honour me, I will honour {1 Sam. 2:30}

is His truth. The priest had been anointed, the prophet also, and the king; and now the returning one, who had been loathsome and leprous, is to be anointed also. He who had for seven days been loathing himself is now comforted and honored by Jehovah. He who had laid aside all thought of His own comeliness can now say,

Thou anointest my head with oil {Psa. 23:5}.

The remnant of the oil that is in the priest's hand, he shall pour upon the head of him that is to be cleansed; and the priest shall make an atonement for him before the Lord (Lev. 14:18; also compare 16:32; 1 Kings 19:16).

Thus the leper in the day of his cleansing has really more honor and blessing than he had before; he is ranked with the prophet, priest, and king of Israel. How truly we prove this to be the way of our God with us! He not only restores, but He honors.

He that humbleth himself shall be exalted {Luke 14:11; 18:14}.

How often has His gracious blessing surprised us! How many times, when we have been writing bitter things against ourselves, and thought our conduct so base that He might justly spurn us from His sight, and have been seeking to hide ourselves in the dust, has His own hand been most markedly seen in bringing in fresh blessings, and unthought of honor!

How little did Peter think, when the Lord's look had so melted him, and his base conduct had so overpowered him, that he would ever again be honored by the Lord! What a look of faithful love that must have been to have made him weep; yea, weep so bitterly! Oh, how bitterly did it make him weep! How little could he have thought that not many weeks would pass before he would be able, to say,

Thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over {Psa. 23:5}!

How impossible that any human mind could conjecture that the man, who, in the heat and pride of self-confidence, had boasted of his superior attachment to Jesus, and when tested had denied, even with an oath and a curse, that he knew Him, would have been put by Him in the place of distinguished honor and blessing on the following Pentecost. But in the meantime Peter had been before the Lord. The leprous spots had been under His all-seeing eye. He had keenly felt the indescribable look of Him whom he had so lately offended. What deep exercise of soul it must have given him! He also

remembered the word of the Lord {Luke 22:61}.

The angel's message had reached him. He had had a private audience with his risen Lord. What took place at that favoured interview we are not told; but we do read,

He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve {1 Cor. 15:5}.

One thing, as a result, is certain, that his desponding soul was begotten again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. This he tells us, and for this he blesses God (1 Pet. 1:3). As we have observed, in the cleansing of the leper, all true restoration must begin here. Again we see Peter in this solemn interval gird his fisher's coat unto him, and cast himself into the sea to go to Jesus; for he must be in His presence; he must be near Himself. He was Peter's Priest in the day of his cleansing, as well as his gracious Master. What a Priest! What a Master! Again, Peter saw His mighty power over the fish of the sea; while the fish, and fire, and coals, and the tender utterance,

Come and dine {John 21:12},

affected his inmost soul. Nor was this all; for he who had three times denied his Savior, must now, in the presence of his brethren, have the opportunity given him of confessing his true affection for Him. Peter was now so conscious that he was under the scrutiny of His all-piercing eye, and that every secret of his heart, and every turn of his crooked ways, were naked and open before Him, that he at last exclaimed,

Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee {John 21:17}!

He is then reinstated in service; he is entrusted with the care of His lambs and sheep, though prior to this he was only a fisher of men; and with the sentence of death in himself, he is restored to the privilege of following his gracious Master —

Follow thou me (John 21:22).

Thus, whether it be a leper in Israel in the day of his cleansing, or a fallen apostle in the way of his restoration, the principles are the same as to the only way back according to that which suits the presence of God. And it is most blessed to see, that when any have sinned away their privileges on earth, and in faithful discipline are put away from association with God's people, yet, even then, a path is still left open to faith in which they can honor God, and be honored of God. How wonderful is the grace and goodness of God! Happy they who really weigh sin in the sanctuary, in the just balance of divine truth, so as to bring themselves, and their near associations, under the searching and cleansing action of the infallible word of God.

To return to our chapter. The man that is to be cleansed is still with the priest; as we saw Peter was much in the Lord's presence. Without this, there cannot possibly be true restoration. The man

that is to be cleansed from his uncleanness {Lev. 14:19}

is still with his sacrifices

at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation {Lev. 14:11};

for how could he possibly be there without a sacrifice? The sin-offering, burnt-offering, and meat-offering are all offered upon the altar. To us the instruction evidently is, that the only ground

of our really being in the presence of God is the atoning work of Christ, and acceptance in Him who is risen and ascended. He now apprehends the precious truth of the righteousness of God. This gives the heart undisturbed repose in His presence. The soul that perceives in the work of Jesus on the cross that God is just, and that His justice has been fully satisfied on account of our sin in that sin-offering, can also see that God is just in justifying him that believeth in Jesus. The sin-offering reminds us, that after Jesus had offered one sacrifice for sins, He sat down for ever, or continuously, on the right hand of God. But, in the burnt-offering, the man is taught that he is accepted in all the acceptability of that sweet- savor offering. With it the meat-offering is also offered, because it sets forth the infinite acceptability of Jesus in life, that blessed and perfect One, who always did those things that pleased the Father, whose meat was to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work. The man is accepted in all the sweet savour of the burnt-offering; and he is now therefore pronounced clean. Every question as to his leprosy and uncleanness has been fully settled; all has been gone over between himself and Jehovah in the presence of the priest, the evil traced to its origin, and found to rise from a fallen and corrupt nature. Self-examination only led to self-judgment, and then to self-loathing. But on the eighth day — new creation ground — he learns, through the sacrifices offered, how righteously God now forgives sin to every one that believeth, and he enters into the divine statute:

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}.

He is now clean.

As we have said before, we have here also a picture of Israel's present leprous state, and, in Jehovah's governmental displeasure, put away from their privileges as a people, but by- and-by to know full restoration. After they have gone through deep exercise of soul, a nation will be born at once, and forgiven their iniquity; for

there shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob {Rom. 11:26}.

## The Leper Who Was Poor Considered

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If he be poor (Lev. 14:21).

In the restoration of the man that was to be cleansed and restored to the privileges of the camp of Israel, God was so considerate of his circumstances, that a special provision was made for one who was poor. This principle runs throughout Scripture; for God looks for, and accepts from us, according only to our ability:

It is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not {2 Cor. 8:12}.

In the ordinance of cleansing the leper, this consideration for the poor leprous man in reference to his being reinstated in the camp of Israel is touchingly set forth. The ordinary sacrifices to be brought were two he lambs, one ewe lamb, three tenth deals of fine flour mingled with oil, and one log of oil. But it can easily be understood that some in Israel might be unable to procure three lambs, &c. It is therefore added:

If he be poor, and cannot get so much; then he shall take one lamb for a trespass-offering to be waved, to make an atonement for him, and one tenth deal of fine flour mingled with oil for a meat-offering, and a log of oil; and two turtledoves, or two young pigeons, such as he is able to get; and the one shall be a sin-offering, and the other a burnt-offering. (Lev. 14:21, 22).

It is well to observe here, that there is no difference whatever in the former part of the process of restoration: at his first appearance before the priest the leper has nothing to provide, whether he be poor, or whether he be rich. The two birds typifying the foundation truth of being justified from all things by Him who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification, are not provided by him; he simply looks on. He stands still, and sees the salvation of God. The priest commands that the birds be taken for him. Neither is there any change for the poorest in Israel as to his cleansing himself, washing his clothes, or cutting off his hair; for it is evident that such exercises are totally irrespective of the state of a man's earthly circumstances. All through the complete (seven days) period of being under the action of the word (washing) as to himself, and his clothes, (near surroundings), and also his deliberate laying aside of all idea of creature-comeliness (cutting off all his hair), all in Israel were directed precisely alike. It is clear too, looking at the typical instruction, that self-examination, self-judgment, and self-aborrence become every one under such circumstances. It is only on the eighth day (the beginning of a new epoch) that this difference begins, and even then there must be one lamb for a trespass-offering provided by every returning leper, be he ever so poor.

In both instances this lamb was to be waved alive before the Lord. This was the only time in Israel that it was waved alive, to show that the man who had lost all his privileges by uncleanness did thereby confess and acknowledge his trespass, and saw it all put away by the death and blood-shedding of the spotless lamb. The application of the blood to the ear, and thumb, and toe, and also the anointing of these parts afterward with the oil, as well as the pouring of the remainder of the oil on the leper's head, were the same in every instance.

The real poverty of the Israelite came out in the sin-offering and burnt-offering. Being out of his power to provide so many lambs, God graciously accepted instead a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons, the one for a sin-offering, and the other for a burnt-offering. These the poor man brought for his offerings:

And he shall offer the one of the turtledoves, or of the young pigeons, such as he can get; even such as he is able to get, the one for a sin-offering, and the other for a burnt-offering, with the meat-offering: and the priest shall make an atonement for him that is to be cleansed before Jehovah (Lev. 14:30, 31).

There are some now who are

rich in faith {James 2:5},

whose apprehension and enjoyment of the perfections and glory of Christ are far beyond that of others; but the feeblest in the faith, the most trembling babe, whose estimate of Christ, compared with that of others, would only be like comparing the value of a young pigeon with a

lamb of the first year {Lev. 14:10},

are alike accepted. Yes, God is so considerate and gracious as to accept the offerings, and to give the leper all the atoning value of the sin-offering, and to accept him in all the acceptability of the burnt-offering; not according to the measure of his faith and intelligence, but according to His own estimate of Christ, which the offerings prefigured.

We now leave the man who was to be cleansed, whether poor or rich in Israel, restored to the camp, to his tent, to his brethren, and to all the privileges of association with the sanctuary, where God dwelt. It remains for us to briefly glance at the leprous garment, and leprous house, and to hearken to the teaching of the Spirit in our contemplation of these mystic lines of divine instruction.

## Leprosy in a Garment

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The plague of leprosy was sometimes found in a garment. The garment so infected might be made of linen, or woolen, or skin. Our garments are not our persons, but they are our nearest associations and surroundings. A man might be personally clean; and yet have a garment defiled with leprous spots; so now a Christian man may be personally free from deep and foul workings of fleshly lusts breaking out in open uncleanness to the dishonor of God, and yet be associated with that which is loathsome and forbidden of God.

What was to be done, when a garment was found spotted? We read,

If the plague be greenish or reddish in the garment, or in the skin, either in the warp, or in the woof, or in anything of skin; it is a plague of leprosy, and shall be shewed to the priest (Lev. 13:49).

How important to observe here again that the first step is to bring the matter before the priest, even as we should at once go to our Lord Jesus, and bring before Him any question as to the purity of that with which we have surrounded ourselves! What trouble and sin would be spared if we were more in the habit of going to the Lord, and waiting on Him to decide for us every question of clean and unclean that arises in our path! This suspected garment was to be looked at by the priest, according to Jehovah's instructions in writing by the hand of Moses:

And the priest shall look upon the plague, and shut up it that hath the plague seven days: and he shall look on the plague on the seventh day: if the plague be spread in the garment, either in the warp, or in the woof, or in a skin, or in any work that is made of skin; the plague is a fretting leprosy; it is unclean. He shall therefore burn that garment, whether warp or woof, in woollen or in linen, or in anything of skin, wherein the plague is: for it is a fretting leprosy; it shall be burnt in the fire. And if the priest shall look, and, behold, the plague be not spread in the garment, either in the warp, or in the woof, or in anything of skin; then the priest shall command that they wash the thing wherein the plague is, and he shall shut it up seven days more: and the priest shall look on the plague, after that it is washed: and, behold, if the plague have not changed his colour, and the plague be not spread; it is unclean; thou shalt burn it in the fire; it is fret inward, whether it be bare within or without (Lev. 13:50-55).

Can we fail to admire here the patient waiting, and yet strict scrutiny, before arriving at a conclusion as to the real nature of the spots in the garment? How solemn to a pious Israelite must this priestly discernment have appeared — this shutting up for seven days, then the washing and shutting up for seven days more — and all about a garment! He surely could not fail to learn that God would have His people not only personally free from the loathsome plague of leprosy, but also without a spot on that which surrounds their persons! And is the rule for us, who are redeemed in Christ and by His precious blood, less stringent than it was with the Israelite? Are those in whom God now dwells by His Spirit, who are members of the body of Christ, to be more lax? Are we not enjoined to keep ourselves

unspotted from the world (James 1:27),

hating even the garment spotted by the flesh (Jude 23)?

Can it be according to the mind of Him who is the holy and the true, that, provided we fall not personally into sin, we need not be exercised in conscience as to our near surroundings? Far from it. The Corinthian saints were taught to touch not the unclean thing, and were not even

to eat {1 Cor. 5:11}

with, but to put away from among themselves (think what this involves!) the wicked person; for, as we have before seen, no one can touch evil, not even a little, without being defiled.

A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump {1 Cor. 5:6; Gal. 5:9}.

And yet how many in these last days are allowing themselves to be mixed up socially, commercially, politically, and even religiously with what they admit to be evil, and yet never bring the spotted garment to our Priest for His inspection; but are excusing and even embracing the leprous robe, instead of hating the spotted garment, and burning it in the fire. We are assured that the subject is of all importance, and that few things are more damaging to true children of God at this moment than the unsound and corrupting doctrine, that, provided they are personally sound and moral, they need not be exercised about things wherewith they have surrounded themselves. Nothing can be more contrary to the revealed will of God, or few things more offensive to Him. Were His voice heard as to our garments, how many would soon be tested by His word? How many times they would be brought under the Lord's searching investigation! and how often He would have to say,

It is a fretting leprosy {Lev. 13:52}!

Thou shalt burn it in the fire {Lev. 13:55}!

How many an unclean association would be broken up! What ways of separation and distinct testimony for the Lord would be chosen! How many of us would find unknown blessing, if, with reference to our persons and our surroundings, we were so obedient as to do all in the name of our Lord Jesus, and for the glory of God!

The garment so spotted was not to be mended, but burnt. Such loathsome and unclean surroundings cannot be repaired, nor transferred, but must be destroyed. How many a child of God, having found himself in unclean and unholy associations, is trying to reform, to improve, or to transfer to others, yea, to do anything, so that he could be free himself before the Lord! But if it be leprosy; if it be the outward manifestation of the deep and inward workings of fleshly lusts; if, when washed by the word of God, and brought before the discerning eye of the Lord (our Priest) for His inspection, it be pronounced to be

a fretting leprosy {Lev. 13:51},

there is but one way of deliverance, and that is, giving it up, breaking up, consuming. It must be burnt with fire. May the dear children of God be more than ever exercised about near surroundings; for it is written,

Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them (Eph. 5:11).

Some spots in garments may be removed by washing (Lev. 13:58), but a leprous garment must be burnt with fire (Lev. 13:57). Some spots may be removed also by rending the defiled piece out of the garment; but if it spread after that,

it is a spreading plague: thou shalt burn that wherein the plague is with fire {Lev. 13:57}.

All these details are most suggestive. By bringing the action of the Word to bear upon our surroundings, the unclean spots may disappear, and the association may then be continued. Other spots are so manifestly leprous, that the longer they are brought before the Lord for His judgment, and washed with His searching word, the more evil and inveterate the uncleanness appears. In such cases there is but one alternative for a faithful man — the surrounding must no longer be acknowledged; it must be completely set aside, according to the judgment of God. Oh that our souls might be more truly awakened to the fact of being so truly set apart in Christ, and through His blood, and by His Spirit, that not only ourselves, but all we put on, and everything we have to do, may be done to His glory! When we are really in communion, and happy in the Lord, how we delight to glory in Him, and boast of His love! We can point to Jesus then, and resist the devil. In the face of all our adversaries we can exultingly say —

“Prove Jesus bears one spot of sin,

Then tell me I’m unclean:

Nay, for He purged my guilt

By His own precious blood,

And such its virtue, not a stain

E’er meets the eye of God”

## Leprosy in a House

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Leprosy in a house is another line of instruction. It seems typically to refer to the house on earth now — a local assembly. It did not contemplate any application till Israel got into the land. Canaan to us is typical of heavenly places; not heaven, but heavenly places; where we are spoken of as now having our standing. Though actually living on earth, we are

blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3).

God hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:4-6).

We are not yet in heaven, but as to life and standing we are in heavenly places, and have conflict (like Joshua in Canaan) to stand consciously in this place of blessing, where God in grace has set us, and which Satan would keep us from possessing now by faith if he could. This is why the Israelites in Canaan are figurative of us while now on earth, and why therefore the instruction of a leprous house has a strong typical bearing on an assembly on earth. We therefore read,

When ye be come into the land of Canaan, which I give you for a possession, and I put the plague of leprosy in a house of the land of your possession (Lev. 14:34).

Leprosy in a house, then, was a direct infliction from Jehovah, and about it His directions were most explicit and decided. If found to be really leprous, the plague must be got rid of, even if it necessitated the pulling down of the house. This was imperative. No faithful Israelite could go into a leprous house without becoming unclean; and so now,

Let him that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity (2 Tim. 2:19).

In the case of suspected leprosy in a house, the first thing enjoined, as we have seen with a leprous man and a garment, was to

tell the priest.

The owner of the house being the most interested, and most responsible as to the house, was to tell the priest, saying, It seemeth to me there is as it were a plague in the house (Lev. 14:35).

When sin appears in an assembly, the first thing is to go to the Lord Jesus about it, and to ask Him to make manifest its real character; and those who feel responsibility to the Lord about the state of His assembly will be the persons who will do so. They will spread it all before His all-searching and omniscient eye.

Then, according to the priest's command, there would be the greatest activity and diligence in so emptying or preparing the house, that

all that is in the house be not made unclean; and afterward the priest shall go in to see the house (Lev. 14:36).

And so now, when the Lord is appealed to, and supplicated to shew the real character of the evil, all in the assembly are troubled and moved about it, and fear, lest, if it be a case of leprosy, it should spread and infect others. If saints in an ordinary condition of things were enjoined to be

looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, &c. {Heb. 12:15, 16},

how much more care is called for when any godly soul says,

It seemeth to me there is as it were a plague in the house {Lev. 14:35}.

The inspection takes place. It is not an imaginary case, not one of mere suspicion, which Christian charity always forbids; for love

thinketh no evil {1 Cor. 13.5}.

But there are found to be on the walls of the house

hollow strakes, greenish or reddish, which in sight are lower than the wall {Lev. 14:37},

and the house is shut up for

seven days {Lev. 14:38}.

This shutting up of the house is very solemn, inasmuch as it so brings before us God's mind as to practical holiness, that faithful ones are not permitted of Him to have to do with a local assembly in which flagrant evil is being solemnly investigated, so that it may be dealt with according to His mind. There is never uncertainty in the ways of faith. We see also, as we have been taught over and over again, both as to dealing with supposed cases of leprosy, whether personal or in a garment, that there is to be no haste in arriving at a sure conclusion in the matter.

On the seventh day, (the close of a complete period of time, when patience has had her perfect work), the house is again inspected, and the plague being found to be

spread in the walls of the house, THEN the priest shall command that they take away the stones in which the plague is, and they shall cast them into an unclean place without the city: and he shall cause the house to be scraped within round about, and they shall pour out the dust that they scrape off without the city into an unclean place: and they shall take other stones, and put them in the place of those stones; and he shall take other mortar, and shall plaister the house (Lev. 14:39-42).

This reads to us lessons plain enough. The priest commands the stones to be removed. The Lord says,

Put away from among yourselves that wicked person {1 Cor. 5:13}.

Certain persons, after patient investigation and unquestionable proof, having been found guilty of loathsome workings of fleshly activity, are therefore removed from fellowship — put away. They are left outside in an unclean place — the world, the place of uncleanness in God's sight. That being done, a process of humiliation and self-judgment goes on all through the assembly, when

much uncleanness is scraped from the house; the old leaven being purged out, it all becomes a new lump, as the newly-plastered walls give a new character to the house. Though a stone had been removed at Corinth, yet the apostle intimates they had not

scraped within round about,

as they should have done; and he fears he would be humbled by God among them on account of it, when he comes to them again (2 Cor. 12:20, 21).

Nor does it always follow that the removal of some from fellowship would be enough. The leprosy might have more widely spread than former inspections had disclosed. The evil may have so permeated the assembly that it must be entirely disallowed, and treated altogether as an unclean place; no longer to be regarded as connected with heavenly places, or as a corporate witness on earth of Him, and His truth, who is the

holy

and the

true {Rev. 3:7}

And thus we read,

If the plague come again, and break out in the house, after that he hath taken away the stones, and after he hath scraped the house, and after it is plastered {Lev. 14:43},

THEN the house must be inspected again. The priest must be called in again, and

the priest shall come and look, and, behold, if the plague be spread in the house, it is a fretting leprosy in the house: it is unclean {Lev. 14:44}.

It (that is the house) is unclean. It must be entirely disallowed; it must be razed to the ground.

And he shall break down the house, the stones of it, and the timber thereof, and all the mortar of the house; and he shall carry them forth out of the city into an unclean place (Lev. 14:43-45).

Does not this clearly show that a local assembly may be in happy fellowship with other local assemblies gathered to the Lord's name, and practically acting on the ground of God's one assembly on earth, and afterwards become so leavened by allowed and unjudged evil, as to be entirely disowned by faithful saints, as no longer endeavoring to keep the Holy Spirit's unity?

It is well to notice the purity that God's order of discipline demands, while evil is being investigated and judged. If a man entered the house while it was shut up, he would be unclean till the even. If a man lieth in the house, he would have to wash his clothes; and if a man ate in the house, he

shall wash his clothes (Lev. 14:46, 47).

Such would have to bring their near surroundings under the searching, cleansing action of the word after such an impure association. How repeatedly it is said in Scripture,

Be ye holy; for I am holy {1 Pet. 1:16}.

In the instruction concerning a leprous house, there is also a provision for a house that is healed of the plague. This is the happy side of the narrative:

If the priest shall come in, and look upon it, and, behold, the plague hath not spread in the house, after the house was plaistered: then the priest shall pronounce the house clean, because the plague is healed (Lev. 14:48).

We know who is walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks, and how happy it is to have His approval, even as to separation from what is evil in His sight. He who said to some,

Thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate {Rev. 2:6},

and to others,

Thou . . . hast kept my Word, and hast not denied my name {Rev. 3:8},

and who commended a few in Sardis because they had not defiled their garments, is

the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever {Heb. 13:8}.

If, on the one hand, the heart is sad and humbled, because we find a house shut up on account of grave fears as to evil, on the other hand the spirit is relieved and cheered by the decided way in which an assembly has cleared itself; so that the Spirit's testimony as to its having cleared itself is most unmistakably made known. Though it had been a time of mourning and tears; though the removal of the stones, and putting them away in an unclean place, had been with anguish of heart; though scraping the walls, and carrying away the dust, had not been without much self-judgment and brokenness of heart; and though bringing in, according to the word of God, new material to give freshness and purity to the house had been connected with much diligent labour; yet how blessed it is, even under such circumstances, to have the Lord's approval, and to have the testimony of the Holy Ghost saying by His servant,

I have confidence in you in all things (2 Cor. 7:16).

Of the faithful at such a time it may be truly said,

Ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought

in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter (2 Cor. 7:10, 11).

The house having been healed of the plague, it remains only for the priest to make an atonement for the house, and thus pronounce it to be cleansed. The two birds, with cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop, are used, as we saw in the beginning of the chapter, when the healed man was first brought before the priest; the house is sprinkled with the blood seven times; the living bird, marked with the blood of the dead bird, is let loose in the open fields: an atonement is made for the house, and it shall be clean. For an individual who had had leprosy, and for a house in which the plague had been, a sacrifice was offered. Both were sprinkled with blood; and, atonement being made, they were pronounced clean. Not so the garment; and why? Because we are looked at as redeemed by the precious sacrifice of Christ, both individually and collectively. Individually we can

say,

He loved me, and gave Himself for me (See Gal. 2:20);

corporately we read,

Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it (see Eph. 5:25).

We are never told that Christ gave Himself for our circumstances, our surroundings, that with which we connect ourselves, our garments. Oh, no! But we know that, being children of God, redeemed from all iniquity, and having received the Holy Ghost, we are not to touch the unclean thing, not to connect ourselves with what is dishonoring to God. The omission, then, of any sacrifice as to a leprous garment which was never healed, and only to be consumed by fire; the long details that are given for the cleansing of a leper, first by blood, then cleansing himself, his clothes, &c., &c., for seven days, and also the atonement for a leprous house without such washings and other sacrifices, only show the perfection of holy Scripture, and the reality of its typical instruction.

That Christians have this threefold responsibility to the Lord, Scripture clearly marks out. Individually, we are to present our

bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service {see Rom. 12:1},

and to do all for His glory, because we are not our own, but bought with a price. Corporately, we are to be subject to His rule who is in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, each filling up the place of a member of His body in which His grace has set us. Then as to our surroundings, the Word abounds with instructions in reference to family order and piety, business transactions, separation from the world as not of it, not to be yoked with unbelievers, not to touch even the unclean thing, nor to have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Our houses, family arrangements, social ways, necessary business, and labors of every kind, should all be done for the glory of God. The difficulty is to have such a continual sense in our souls of being redeemed, and of our standing in Christ in all His acceptability, and of having God dwelling in us by His Holy Spirit, as to answer to His desire in all our various obligations to Him. How often you see a man careful about his own soul, but with personal surroundings unclean! Or, you may see another most zealous for the truth in a corporate sense, and yet loose as to his circumstances. What need have we to cry,

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

for —

“It is the Lord, enthroned in light,

Whose claims are all divine,

Who hath an undisputed right

To govern me and mine.”

As it is clear that discipline in regard to God's assembly on earth, can only be carried out, according to the Lord's mind, by such as are really gathered together in His name, we propose in our next paper to consider what Scripture teaches on this important point.

## In {Unto} What Name Are We Gathered {Together}?

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

This is the only place in Scripture where these precious words are found. The Lord was speaking of the Church, or Assembly. Matthew's gospel is the only one which mentions the Church. The reason is obvious. Matthew's line of truth treats of Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham. This is why His title to the throne, birth in Bethlehem, and some other testimonies of the prophets, are exclusively found there; and why the sermon on the mount, parables of the kingdom, and the prophecies as to the future of the Jews, Christendom, and Gentiles, are here so fully given. In a word, Matthew's gospel sets forth in detail that

Jesus came unto His own {John 1:11},

gave continual proofs of His Messiahship, and was there able to bring in the kingdom; but

His own [the Jews] received Him not {John 1:11}.

Instead of the nation welcoming Him, only a few fishermen and women, and some others, received Him as the Messiah; they were thus on kingdom ground, and partakers of His blessing. The people held a council to destroy Him, so that He eventually gave them up as

a wicked and adulterous generation (Matt. 12:14, 45; 16:4).

Such being the case, it seemed a fitting time for our Lord to bring out what had been

kept secret since the world began {Rom. 16:25},

that He purposed to bring in another order of blessing, quite distinct from Judaism — His Church. He said therefore to Peter,

Upon this rock I will

(not I have built, or I do build, but I will)

build my Church {Matt. 16:18}.

What the Church or Assembly was, is not revealed till Paul's apostleship (Eph. 3:5); only, on giving up the Jews for a time as a people under the governmental dealings of God, He would do another thing —

I will build my Church (Matt. 16:18).

Whatever types and shadows of the Church there may have been in the Old Testament, this is the first time in Scripture that it is plainly spoken of. Afterward, in the eighteenth chapter, when speaking of one brother having trespassed against another, He again mentions the Church, or Assembly, as being in the place here, not of infallibility, but of authority as to discipline. In this the

Lord clearly teaches that the power of all authority in the discipline of erring ones here, as well as also the secret of success in united prayer, is His being

in the midst of them.

For where two or three are gathered together in {unto} my name, there am I in the midst of them (Matt. 18:15-20).

It is important to observe, though these words are only found here, that there is a remarkable allusion to them in reference to a case of assembly discipline at Corinth —

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, &c. (1 Cor. 5:4).

Perhaps few passages of Scripture are more frequently quoted throughout Christendom than the verse we are now considering, though apparently by many little understood. It is often misquoted. We have heard it said, "Where two or three are met together in my name," but it is not Scripture; and it is sometimes added, as if it were part of the verse, "and that to bless them." Again, referring to this verse, one has said, "We meet in the name of Jesus"; another, "We meet simply in the name of Jesus"; or, "The name of Jesus is sufficient for our meeting"; but neither of them are Scriptural statements. Jesus said,

My name.

The question therefore is, "What is now His name?" Some also begin a letter with "Dear brother in Jesus," and end it with "Yours in Jesus." And though we do not doubt that such mean well, yet a moment's reflection on the truth of Holy Scripture would show that we were not in Him in the days of His flesh, but are in Him risen and ascended; and, by the gift of the Holy Ghost, we are united to Him there who has been made both Lord and Christ. We never read therefore in Scripture of our being in Jesus, but in

Christ Jesus,

or

complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power {see Col. 2:10}.

We do read of them which sleep in Jesus, but it should be

through Jesus {1 Thess. 4:14, see New Trans., JND}.

It is a point of great importance to souls as to whether their thoughts are continually revolving on Jesus as He was on earth, (most blessed in its place,) or occupied with Christ Himself glorified, our life and righteousness, and in whom we are, through marvelous grace, accepted and blessed.

Instead therefore of its being said met together in my name, our Lord said,

gathered together in my name {Matt. 18:20}.

For us to meet together implies the activity of our wills; to be gathered together implies the putting forth of another power, a Gatherer; and so it is. The Holy Ghost on earth, during our Lord's absence, draws us unto His name, giving us the sense and enjoyment of being around Him who is in the midst. It is not a voluntary association of men, but a distinct action of the Holy Ghost drawing

our hearts to that most precious name, to which the new life we have received delights to come, under the guidance of the Spirit, and the word of truth. How solemn, and yet how unspeakably blessed it is, thus to have the consciousness of being

gathered together

by the Spirit of God! But while this action of the Holy Ghost in gathering together would include those who are in Christ, it necessarily excludes all who are not in Christ; for how could they be truly gathered together in His name in whom they have not believed? What an untrue thing it would be! How this one Scripture demolishes every idea of mere human confederacies and associations for the Lord's work! Surely the Holy Ghost is the Testifier and Glorifier of the Lord Jesus during His absence, and thus, to those who know Him, His

name is as ointment poured forth {see S of S 1:3}.

Jesus said,

Where two or three are gathered together in {unto} my name {Matt. 18:20}.

The question for every heart is, Are we gathered together in His name? for this surely excludes every other name. How solemnly and sternly did the Holy Ghost, by the apostle, rebuke the first sound of one believer saying,

I am of Paul,

and another,

I of Apollos!

He appeals at once to them as members of the body of Christ, and asks,

Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? (1 Cor. 1:12, 13).

It was not that they purposed to give up meeting in the name of the Lord Jesus, but only to adopt their names, perhaps as a mark of respect to Paul and Apollos. This, however, is decidedly resented, and declared to be carnal, and not spiritual. Some might not have apprehended the satisfying and absorbing value of being gathered unto His name, and others might have lost the freshness of it. It is difficult to know how any Christians, who have tasted the comfort and power of being gathered together unto His name, could tolerate the substitution or addition of another name. Did we not know that schism, or sectarianism, is a work of the flesh, we should have thought it impossible. Alas! what is man?

When the Lord mentioned His Church or Assembly, He was referring to what was future, well knowing what would take place as to His death, resurrection, and the descent of the Holy Ghost. Immediately after saying,

I will build my Church, &c.,

it is said,

From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day (Matt. 16:21).

It is said

from that time forth,

because the Church could only be founded upon His death and resurrection, and formed by the descent of the Holy Ghost after His exaltation to the right hand of God. This change in the calling, standing, and essential characteristics of the Church of God, as contrasted with Israel, is why the place of worship, whether Jerusalem or any other place, is no longer the question, but whether we are gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It must have appeared strange to Jews to have heard the Lord thus speaking of His own name as the center of gathering. They might have thought, "Why such silence about the gorgeous temple, and all its imposing ceremonies? Why is all this passed by?" Little did they imagine that their beautiful temple was so soon to become a heap of ruins, and a desolation.

His own {John 1:11}

nation having rejected Him,

His own

would thenceforward be those few who had

received Him {Luke 10:38, 19:6};

and the beautiful house of God on earth being desolate for Judah's sin, the

Father's house {John 14:2}

would be that which would henceforth engage their hearts. Everything is thus changed. Instead, therefore, of being gathered together in the place of goodly stones, as God's house on earth, a spiritual order of things has supplanted the worldly sanctuary; so that now those who are truly gathered according to the Lord's mind are gathered together in (or to) His name.

What are we to understand by

my name?

For now He has a name above every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. His name is now no longer

Jesus only {John 12:9};

for Peter said to the Jews,

God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36).

This is why, in 1 Cor. 5., it is not, as we have sometimes heard, "gathered in the name of Jesus," but

in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ {1 Cor. 5:4}.

The difference is of immense consequence to souls; for those who speak of “meeting in the name of Jesus” have Christ as He was on earth before them, and are like His disciples on earth, who were really on kingdom ground, which is not where the truth has put us. The being gathered together in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ connects our hearts with Christ in glory, where He now is, and now only is known; and there we may be sure the Holy Ghost, the Glorifier of Christ, directs us. Judaism having been laid aside for a time, this new order of things, formed by the coming of the Holy Ghost, and energized by His indwelling power, is brought in; so that now the name of the Lord Jesus is to be associated with everything. We are gathered together in His name; to ask the Father in prayer in His name. Whatsoever we do in word or deed, is all to be done in the name of the Lord Jesus. The apostles wrought their miracles in His name; and by-and-by, at the name of Jesus every knee in heaven, in earth, and under the earth, shall bow, and to Him every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (John 16:23; Col. 3:17; Phil. 2:10, 11).

We have dwelt a little on being gathered together in {unto} His name, because, of the careless way in which many seem to regard these words of our blessed Lord; and because we judge it necessary that their true meaning should be apprehended, if we would really enter into what follows,

There am I in the midst of them {Matt. 18:20}.

It is only when truly gathered in His name, that we are really able to count upon His presence.

His being

in the midst

is something special. It is more easily realized than expressed. The eye of faith discerns Him; the unbelieving see Him not. His being

in the midst

of a company so gathered must not be confounded with the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. All who have the Spirit — the other Comforter — have Him for ever.

He shall abide with you for ever {see John 14:16}.

He is always dwelling in us individually, and in the Church on earth, even when not assembled together. It is a mistake, then, to suppose that the Holy Ghost is only present when gathered together in the Lord’s name. No doubt He is there, and the power of all ministry and worship. But

there am I in the midst of them

is a conditional fact, and not the Lord (as some have said) present by the Holy Spirit, but the Lord in the midst in spirit, though personally seated on the Father’s throne. It is most happy to enjoy His presence thus. Is there anything of a collective character at all comparable to it on earth? Is it not the most heavenly kind of collective blessing that we can know on earth?

In order to our being gathered together in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the full enjoyment of His presence

in the midst,

we must know Him —

(1) as the One who has accomplished our eternal redemption;

(2) as the One who has sent down the Holy Ghost;

(3) as the One who is the Head of the body — one body;

(4) as the One who is walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks, to whom we are individually and corporately accountable;

(5) as the One who is soon coming to receive us to Himself.

There are other aspects of our Lord which might be added to this list; but those would be recognized by such as are in any measure settled in the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ.

1. What liberty of soul the knowledge of His being in the midst gives us, who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood! Those who look at such gatherings as a means of grace in order to obtain salvation, are wholly wide of the Lord's mind. Knowing that we have redemption in Christ and through His blood, we joyfully remember Him who redeemed us at such a cost; and being assured we are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and having received the Spirit of adoption, we

worship the Father in spirit and in truth {John 4:23}.

We remember that Jesus was for us on the cross, we see that He is for us in the glory, and we look for His coming again, when we shall

ever be with the Lord {1 Thess. 4:17}.

How is it possible that unbelievers could share in this, however amiable they may be? Scripture rather contemplates

an unbeliever {1 Cor. 14:24}

coming into such an assembly, and being so struck at what he saw and heard, as to

fall down and declare that God is in you of a truth {see 1 Cor. 14:25}.

This we know has sometimes been the happy testimony of such.

2. The One who said,

There am I in the midst of them {Matt. 18:20},

has sent down the Holy Ghost. Before He left the world Jesus said,

When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, &c. (John 15:26),

thus promising to send the Holy Ghost; and in Acts 2 we read, Jesus

therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear (Acts 2:33).

The Holy Ghost, then, has been

sent down from heaven {1 Pet. 1:12},

consequent upon the finished work of Jesus, and, as we have seen, is to abide with us for ever. This is not merely a spiritual influence, or an emanation from God, but the Holy Ghost Himself, who is one with the Father and the Son. We are builded together (not gathered together, but builded together) for an habitation of God through the Spirit. God is, therefore, dwelling in His people on earth. Individually, He dwells in our bodies, and has been sent into our hearts; collectively, the Church is

the temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19; Gal. 4:6).

What a wonderful fact, that a divine Person dwells in us! God's presence, therefore, being with us, what gravity, what obligations as to holiness, and what devotedness, are necessarily involved! How is it possible that any could be truly gathered together in the Lord's name, who are not conscious of being cleansed from their sins by His blood, and, consequently, being the present abode of the Holy Ghost on earth?

3. The One who is in our midst is the Head of the body — the Assembly. As risen and ascended, He is seated at the right hand of God, who

gave Him to be Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who filleth all in all (Eph. 1:20-23).

How can we, then, be rightly thinking of Him now as in the midst, without

That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me (John 17:20, 21).

Above all, we know that one object of the Savior's death was, that He might

gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad (John 11:52).

Thus the prayer of Jesus, His death on the cross, the place of headship given to Him in ascension, the action of the Holy Ghost sent down to baptize all believers into one body, and His operation in us for keeping the Spirit's unity in the bond of peace, all show that the One who is

in the midst {Matt. 18:20}

of those gathered together in His name, has the highest interest in our practical acknowledgment of

one body

holding the Head {Col. 2:19}?

This was the cause of so much failure with the Colossian

and

one Spirit {1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:4}.

saints. The apostle referred to some who were

vainly puffed up in their fleshly mind, and not holding the Head, from whom all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God (see Col. 2:18, 19).

Thus the One who is in our midst draws out our hearts, while adoringly occupied with Himself, towards every member of His body on earth, and makes us sensible of our own place of privilege and service as members of the

one body {Rom. 12:4, 5},

and of one another. Thus

holding the Head {Col. 2:19},

each member of His body becomes an object of our interest and love. Every circle narrower than this is refused by the faithful as sectarian, and every circle larger than this plainly bears to them the character of a mere human association and confederacy. To such also the loud boast of usefulness fails to dislodge the heart from fidelity to Him who is in the midst of those thus gathered to His name. So weighty is this in the light of Scripture, that the

one loaf

on the Lord's table is the standing witness of the

one body.

For we being many are one bread [loaf], and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread [loaf] (1 Cor. 10:17);

and elsewhere all saints are enjoined to

walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness, and meekness, and long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit (Eph. 4:1-4).

We find, too, that our Lord, in His commendatory prayer to the Father just before going to the cross, earnestly desired that all who should believe on Him through His disciples' word might manifest unity. He said, How else could we be intelligently gathered around Him who is the

Head

of this

one body {Col. 1:18}?

Is not, then, the abandonment of

the name of the Lord Jesus {Col. 3:17},

as the only center of gathering, for that of an ecclesiastical building, the very rejection of Christian ground for the adoption of a Jewish order of things? How dear to the heart of Jesus, and how precious to Him the relationship of those must be, who are spoken of by the Holy Ghost as

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

Need it be added, that there is no other membership recognized in the teaching of the apostles?

“One Spirit with the Lord;

The Father's smile of love

Rests ever on the members here,

As on the Head above.”

4. If the Lord is thus known as

in the midst {Matt. 18:20},

and the power of the abiding Spirit duly regarded, how could there be in those so gathered the absence of dependence, reverence, and the consciousness of being under divine guidance? Who, if summoned by the Queen to a favored audience, would dare to prescribe what should be done during the honored interview? And could we render less homage to Him who is

in the midst

were our souls in the realization of this gracious fact? Impossible that there could be room for any human order of arrangement in such a presence. Nothing is more clearly revealed than that He, as Son over His own house, the One whom John saw

in the midst of the seven candlesticks {Rev. 2:1; see Rev. 1:12-18},

holds us accountable to Him in a corporate as well as in an individual capacity. Almost all the epistles, but especially the second and third chapters of Revelation, show this. To those gathered together in His name He looks for conduct suited to Himself; and that prayer, worship, ministry of the Word, or whatever takes place, shall be according to His mind, and in the power of the Holy Ghost, who divideth

to every man severally as He will {1 Cor. 12:11}. (Read 1 Cor. 12.)

There is no room here for fleshly wisdom. Man in the flesh is not recognized; only saints in Christ. The first is entirely unknown here. This marks the holiness of the ground, as well as its dignity. Had we a truer, deeper sense of the Holy Ghost dwelling in us, of the Lord Jesus in our midst, and of our being a new creation in Him — members of His body, what reverence, what felt weakness and utter helplessness in ourselves would there be; and what power of the Holy Ghost would be realized, while He takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us! Whether it be a question of personal conduct, or of edification, or of discipline, the one thought of paramount importance must be as to what suits Him —

the holy and the true {see Rev. 3:7}

— who is in our midst. If, in dealing with others, both as to binding and losing, we have His mind, how can it be otherwise than the fulfilment of His word,

Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven {Matt. 18:18}.

This, our Lord's wonderful way of ratifying in heaven what is thus done on earth according to His will, not only brings us into very close association with Himself, but cannot fail to invest us with a most solemn sense of the holiness of the ground on earth, on which He has graciously set us during His absence. May the Lord give us all a deeper sense of His own mind in all these things!

5. That He is coming again must ever be the recurring thought and expectation of those who are consciously gathered together in His name. His thrice-repeated,

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

in the last page of inspiration, must make us sensible of the possibility that each time of being so gathered on earth may be the last, or that our gathering together unto Him at His coming may take place the next moment. When Jesus presents Himself as

They are of growing importance, because of the bold and appalling way in which Christendom is appending His precious name to accredit most unscriptural doctrines and proceedings. Some who hold and propagate the most blasphemous doctrines of the day claim the place and name of Christians; and the modern Phariseism, and revival of Jewish doctrines, are professedly associated with Christ and Christianity.

Those who are spiritual, and are kept in the love of God, will perceive in this brief Scripture there is not the least recognition of man in the flesh; the all-attractive Object is Christ.

There am I in the midst of them

is all that is said; and this is enough for faith; for faith only can take hold of the truth of God, and we walk by faith, not by sight {2 Cor. 5:7}.

Observe that this inestimable blessing, and the power too in dealing with others, are for even two or three

thus gathered together. How encouraging to those who desire to be here for the Lord in these last days! What a clear line of demarcation it lays down between being thus gathered together according to the Lord's mind, and being occupied with mere traditions and confederacies of men! May we, through grace, be true to our Lord till He come.

the Bright and Morning Star {Rev. 22:16},

we know that

the Spirit and the Bride say, Come {Rev. 22:17}!

These are only a few of the many lines of instruction which we believe are comprehended in our Lord's words,

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

## The Peace-Offering; or, the Communion-Offering

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It is the food of the offering made by fire unto Jehovah (Lev. 3:11).

Those who look to the offering of Christ on the cross for no other reason than to have peace with God come far short of the Lord's mind. But those who do know Him as having made peace through the blood of His cross, and as having obtained eternal redemption for them, find it their sweetest employment, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, to have to do with Him for communion. The first three chapters in Leviticus are most inviting to us as to this; for they not only shadowed forth the perfections of Jesus when on earth, but also the sweet savor Jehovah found in Him both in life and in death. In neither of these chapters is the subject sin-bearing; though it be true, both in the burnt-offering and in the peace-offering, that a life was sacrificed, blood was shed, and sprinkled round about upon the altar, because God's way of blessing us, or of communion with us, could be founded on nothing less than the precious blood of Christ. Even in the glory this will be had in everlasting remembrance. All these offerings, when tested by the fire of divine holiness, only brought out that which was a sweet savour unto Jehovah. As long as souls are thinking only of their own safety, of what Christ did in the death of the cross to save sinners, there may be peace; but unless they are beholding Him by faith who is now in the presence of God for us, there will be little consciousness of communion. Beholding Him now glorified, and having the comfort of being always

accepted in the Beloved {Eph. 1:6},

and

complete in Him {Col. 2:10},

we are free to look back upon the cross, remembering Him there, and entering into the love of God, and the grace of the Lord Jesus, by the communion-power of the Holy Ghost. We can then, as the Spirit of truth may graciously guide, find delight in thinking of the Father's purposes and grace in Christ, and the personal glory and perfections of Him who accomplished redemption; what He is to the Father, what He is to us, and all the relationships and offices He now so perfectly sustains.

In the first chapter of Leviticus, the unblemished victim set forth Christ as

the burnt-offering {Lev. 1:3}.

It was so called because the fire was always burning —

The fire shall ever be burning on the altar; it shall never go out (Lev. 6:12, 13).

Of this offering, not only the fat, but every part was burnt. Even those parts naturally unclean, the inwards and the legs {see Lev. 1:9},

were washed in water, to be a fit type of Him, who, inwardly,

in thought, feeling, desire, affection, as well as outwardly in walk, was always well-pleasing to the Father. In the burnt, or ascending offering, the whole victim, when tested by fire from heaven, the searching fire of divine holiness, was a sweet savor, a savor of rest to Jehovah. It gives us God's estimate of the perfect surrender, and infinite acceptability, of Christ in death, who was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. It is not here sin-bearing, but another aspect of the death of Christ for the glory of God; and as that death was for us who believe on His name, we are accepted in all the acceptability of the offering —

accepted in the Beloved {Eph. 1:6}.

As the man who brought it put his hand upon its head, thus identified himself with the offering, and was told,

It shall be accepted for you {see Lev. 1:4},

so the one who now approaches God by the one offering of Christ is accepted in all the acceptance of Christ Himself. Precious truth for our souls! But in the burnt-offering, be it observed, no one had part with God. It is the entire surrender of Jesus to God. The priest that offered it had the skin for himself (Lev. 7:8); because all we can now possess of the burnt-offering is what was externally manifested; the inward perfections of devotedness, and every other activity for the glory of God the Father, He only could truly estimate. While the knowledge of the truth set forth in the burnt-offering, then, delights our hearts in the Lord, and furthers communion, yet in it no one could partake; all was for God. This view of the perfectness of Jesus enjoins us to follow in the same path of unreserved obedience, and to

walk in love as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour (Eph. 5:2).

In the meat-offering, we have not the shedding of blood, but that which set forth the perfect acceptability to God of the man Christ Jesus in the days of His flesh. It was composed of fine flour, oil, and frankincense. The

fine flour

represented the spotless purity and evenness of Jesus;

oil

was mingled with it to typify Him who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, or the oil was poured on the flour to remind us of Him who was anointed by the Holy Ghost; while the

frankincense {Lev. 2:1}

foreshadowed the excellencies of the man Christ Jesus. A handful of the fine flour and all the frankincense was burnt upon the altar, and was a sweet savor to God; for all the trial and testing only brought out from Jesus, according to divine holiness, that perfectness in which Jehovah could find a savor of rest. Every thing in Him, every act and word, every step He took, all the activities of that blessed Person, were for the glory of God. The remainder of the meat-offering was to be

eaten by the priests, Aaron and his sons. It was food for God's priests. They were to eat it in the holy place.

The meat-offering was to be offered without

leaven,

because nothing corrupting could be a type of the pure and spotless Son of God, whose flesh saw no corruption. No

honey {Lev. 2:11}

was to be mingled with the meat-offering, because it was not mere amiability, a natural sweetness which soon becomes sour, which characterized the man Christ Jesus, but perfectness as man according to God.

Salt {Lev. 2:13}

was to be mixed with every meat-offering, that the incorruptible and savory qualities of Jesus might be marked.

As priests unto God, believers now feed on Christ,

the bread of God {John 6:33},

the bread which came down from heaven {John 6:41}.

It is the spotless and perfect One, whom the Father sent, who said,

The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world {John 6:51}.

How blessed this is! What precious thoughts of communion are here spread before us by the hand of God, That the priests should eat of the same

fine flour

and

oil

of which a part, with all the

frankincense {Lev. 2:1-3},

had been a sweet savor to God, is wonderful indeed; and that the deep reality of the type should find its fulfilment in the Son of God — in Him who was

the bread of God,

the One in whom the Father found real delight — and yet that it should be presented to us, as

the bread which came down from heaven,

for our sustainment as well as life, is surpassingly marvelous. But such is the case; for by entering into the perfection and excellencies of Christ when on earth, and also His walk and service, as set

forth in Scripture, in which He glorified the Father, we have fellowship with the Father; and while eating of this living bread, we have fellowship with Him who was

a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief {Isa. 53:3}. The bread,

said He,

that I will give is my flesh . . . he that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in Him {John 6:51-56}.

How precious to our souls it is to be thus occupied with Christ!

and how rich the grace that has brought us into it!

It is, however, to the peace-offering that we must look for further lessons on communion. It has been called by some "the communion-offering." It was a sweet savor offering; for it did not set forth Christ as having been made sin for us. The victim was unblemished, killed, and its blood sprinkled round about the altar; because it foreshadowed Christ, and all our blessings are founded on His death. There never could have been communion between the Father and us, unless we had been reconciled to God by the death of His Son; there could have been no liberty to enter into the holiest but by the blood of Jesus.

The peace-offering might be of the herd either male or female, or it might be a lamb, only it must in either case be without blemish. The smallest blemish would render it unfit to be offered; for it could not then portray the holy, spotless Son of God. The directions as to this were most stringent, though anything superfluous, or lacking, would not render it unfit for a freewill-offering. We read:

It shall be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no blemish therein. Blind, or broken, or maimed, or having a wen, or scurvy, or scabbed, ye shall not offer these unto the Lord, nor make an offering by fire of them upon the altar unto the Lord. Either a bullock or a lamb that hath anything superfluous or lacking in his parts, that mayest thou offer for a freewill-offering; but for a vow it shall not be accepted (Lev. 22:21-24).

The male bullock, or a female bullock, that which was weaker, or a lamb, that which was of less worth, teach us that the measure of our communion depends on the estimate we have of the perfections and worth of Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us; though communion would be known, but in a lesser degree, by those who have a weaker apprehension of the personal qualities and worth of the sacrifice. This is comforting.

Again, before the peace-offering was killed and eaten, the offerer must be conscious of his identification with it by having laid his hand upon its head. It was then killed before Jehovah

at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation {Lev. 3:2};

or, if a lamb, or a goat, he killed it before the tabernacle of the congregation. So every believer now looks back on the death of Jesus, and knows that Christ died for him, to bring him to God. He has now, by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, rest, and is at home in the presence of God.

Let us well ponder these points. Communion is founded on the death and blood shedding of the Son of God. Without it we must have for ever been outside His presence. The veil was not rent till

Christ died. The blood too was not only shed, but sprinkled

upon the altar round about {Lev. 3:2};

and we can be before God in the peaceful consciousness of the blood of sprinkling, which speaks to us of liberty to draw near, to be inside the veil with boldness. What a holy ground is here laid for communion! What a way of righteousness, as well as of perfect peace! How it invites us to

draw near {Heb. 10:22},

as well as to

come boldly {Heb. 4:16}!

No doubt, as we grow in the knowledge of the personal glory, perfections, and moral excellencies of Christ, our communion will be enlarged. This is why some saints have a deeper character of fellowship than others; though a feeble apprehension of Christ, and of the value of His blood, as that on which peace and communion are founded, are often in true-hearted souls connected with great joy in the Lord, and an earnest, worshiping heart.

The true ground of communion having been laid in this typical offering, we then find communion itself most blessedly established. Jehovah had His part, the priest his, the son of Aaron who sprinkled the blood had his part, the offerer also fed upon the sacrifice, and as many others as were welcomed to the feast.

All the fat is Jehovah's, and certain inward parts were also offered by fire. It was called

the food of the offering made by fire unto the Lord {Lev. 3:11}.

We read,

He shall offer of the sacrifice of the peace-offering, an offering made by fire unto the Lord; the fat that covereth the inwards, and all the fat that is upon the inwards, and the two kidneys, and the fat that is on them, which is by the flanks, and the caul above the liver, with the kidneys, it shall he take away. And Aaron's sons shall burn it on the altar upon the burnt sacrifice, which is upon the wood that is on the fire: it is an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD (Lev. 3:3-5).

Observe here that the LORD (Jehovah) had His part first, and that part was the inward worth and excellencies of the victim; for He only knew, or could estimate, the real worth and inward energy and affection of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is an important point to notice; for we may be assured that those who are walking in fellowship with the Father seek His glory and His things first. Those whose principle is to attend to the things of God after they have done their own things know little of communion, even if they do of peace. The Lord had the first and the best of the offering, because He only could enter into the infinite depths of His worth; and those who know His grace delight to honor God, and to do all for His glory!

We see this principle often brought out in Scripture. In olden time, the children of Israel spent the first and best of their time and energy in gathering the manna which God provided for them. In the Proverbs it was written,

Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first- fruits of all thine increase (Prov. 3:9).

When God provided for the maintenance of the priests, besides parts of the various offerings, it was written that the best of the oil, and all the best of the wine, and of the wheat, the first-fruits of them which they shall offer unto

the LORD, them have I given thee (Num. 18:12);

which gives us another example that the first and best of all we are, and have, are to be devoted to God. In judging of our own state, it is perhaps scarcely possible to over-estimate the importance of the question, whether we are in the habit of rendering to God our first and best?

Besides

the food of the offering {Lev. 3:11},

the inward parts and fat being tried by fire, and all coming up to the Lord as

a sweet savor {Lev. 3:5},

we find that if any of certain peace-offerings were left till the third day they were burnt.

The remainder of the flesh of the sacrifice on the third day shall be burnt with fire (Lev. 7:17).

This shows how guarded God was as to communion; that it was confined to Himself and those who could have communion with Him; so that any part that was left should not be used by any one, or for ordinary purposes, but be burnt. We see the same principle brought out elsewhere:

They [the priests] shall eat those things wherewith the atonement was made, to consecrate and to sanctify them: but a stranger shall not eat thereof, because they are holy. And if ought of the flesh of the consecrations, or of the bread, remain unto the morning, then thou shalt burn the remainder with fire (Ex. 29:33, 34).

There was the same strict injunction with regard to the paschal lamb:

That which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire (Ex. 12:10).

Nothing can more clearly show that communion is confined between God and His own people; and those who enter into it by the power of the Holy Ghost know that the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. It is not to be wondered at, then, that the apostle should have written,

What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

To return to the offering. As we have seen, Jehovah had His part, and when tried under the action of fire was a sweet savor unto Him. The remainder was eaten. Aaron and his sons, typical of the Church, had

the breast {Lev. 7:34}.

The priest who sprinkled the blood, who thus foreshadowed the Priest in heaven, had the right shoulder {Lev. 7:33}.

The man who brought the offering, and those he associated in fellowship with himself, partook of the remainder. It is a remarkable picture of communion, all having joint participation in the same offering.

There was, however, the strictest injunction that

all that be clean shall eat thereof {Lev. 7:19};

that is, an Israelite who was defiled would be disqualified for eating the peace-offering. If he partook of it while his defilement was not judged and cleansed according to the direction of Scripture, he might come under the severest judgment of God in being

cut off from His people.

But the soul that eateth of the flesh of the sacrifice of peace-offerings that pertain unto the Lord, having his uncleanness upon him, even that soul shall be cut off from His people. Moreover the soul that shall touch any unclean thing, as the uncleanness of man, or any unclean beast, or any abominable unclean thing, and eat of the flesh of the sacrifice of peace-offerings which pertain unto the Lord, even that soul shall be cut off from His people (Lev. 7:19-21).

How guarded then an Israelite had to be, lest, through carelessness, he should do that which would bring down such severe judgment of God upon himself.

And looking at communion as taught in the New Testament by the apostle Paul, we find that many {1 Cor. 11:30}

came under the Lord's discipline, both in being afflicted with sickness, and cut off, because they did not judge themselves as to their walk and state in partaking of the Lord's Supper. They did not discern the Lord's body. Hence we read:

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 (1 Cor. 11:29-32).

How impossible, then, it is that we can be in communion with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, and with one another, with careless, unjudged walk! It was not self-examination with the people to see if they were Israelites, for that was their birth condition; nor is it self-examination with us to discover whether we are children of God, for that was for ever settled when we were born of God by faith in Christ Jesus; but, as an Israelite, who had uncleanness upon him, by reason of having touched what was defiling, had to be cleansed from it, and made clean before he ate of the peace-offering, so we have to be clean when approaching the Lord's table, or to enable us to be in communion with the Lord as to anything else. How blessed it is to know that, having been perfected for ever by the one offering of Christ, when we do, as God's children, sin, it is a question then, not of eternal condemnation, but of communion; and through the advocacy of the Lord

Jesus, and the action of His word and Spirit on our souls, we are bowed before Him in confession, and cleansed by the Word, so that we are again restored to communion with Him

who is the holy and the true.

It is of the most importance that our souls clearly enter into this; for however we may abound in knowledge and gifts, and speak forth high-sounding doctrines, nothing can go on well or profitably, either individually or collectively, if we are acting while uncleanness is upon us as if there were nothing amiss. Happy those who, like the offerer, can wave before God the virtues and excellencies of Christ, who loved us, and gave Himself for us; and can feed upon His perfect love and almighty power to us-ward, as

the breast

and

the right shoulder

so sweetly set forth.

Surely our hearts are filled with abiding consolation and strength for service and worship, when we know the sweetness and power of such precious fellowship. Communion with one another flows out of this; for walking

in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another {1 John 1:7},

and

the cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? {1 Cor. 10:16}

What a wondrous privilege to be thus known and enjoyed on earth! Yet let us never forget the impossibility of its being really known by any, even of God's children, who are careless as to unjudged evil. If evil thoughts, and carnal ways and words, unclean and unholy desires and associations, be tolerated by us instead of bowing us in the dust before God in humiliation and confession, let us not be surprised if leanness of soul be our portion; or the Lord's rebuke and chastening overtake us, because He loves us, and has separated us unto Himself from this present evil world. It is well when self-examination leads to self-judgment, and then to self-loathing. The eyes of our heart become then wholly fixed on the glorified Son of man.

A peace-offering might either be

for a thanksgiving {Lev. 7:12},

or

a vow, or a voluntary offering {Lev. 7:16}.

The offering for a thanksgiving must be offered with a meat-offering, unleavened cakes mingled with oil, a shadow of the perfect man Christ Jesus, as conceived by the Holy Ghost;

and unleavened wafers anointed with oil (Lev. 7:12),

reminding us of that blessed One who was anointed with the Holy Ghost; and cakes mingled with oil and fine flour fried, setting Him before us in His sufferings. Observe thus far the entire absence of leaven, because it might express the perfect purity of the humanity of Christ. Then, besides these things,

he shall offer for his offering leavened bread with the sacrifice of thanksgiving of his peace-offerings (Lev. 7:13).

And why do we now have leaven? Surely not to express what Christ was, but what we are; for even in our thanksgivings to God our Father we still have that in us — the flesh — in which dwells nothing good. When we have glorified bodies, there will be the entire absence, and for ever, of all evil; but now leaven, that which is corrupt and evil, is so in us, that as God's children we are enjoined to lay aside all malice, &c. Moreover, a peace-offering for thanksgiving was to be eaten the same day in which it was offered, because in approaching to render thanks our communion will not be long continued.

He shall not leave any of it until the morning {Lev. 7:15}.

With

a voluntary offering {Lev. 7:16}

the communion is continued longer; it might be eaten for two days. But no peace-offering was allowed to be fed upon for more than two days, because if the offerer and the friends he invited continued to live upon it day after day, it would look like a person slaying an animal for his own feasting, instead of bringing an offering unto the LORD. Besides, we doubt not that the third day in Scripture often refers to resurrection. We therefore read that

the remainder of the flesh of the sacrifice on the third day shall be burnt with fire. And if any of the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace-offerings be eaten at all on the third day, it shall not be accepted, neither shall it be imputed unto him that offereth it: it shall be an abomination, and the soul that eateth it shall bear his iniquity (Lev. 7:17, 18).

What a picture of communion is presented to us here! God finds a savor of rest in the part offered to Him; the priest who sprinkled the blood, typical of the Priest in heaven, had his part; Aaron and his sons, shadowing the Church, had their part; while the offerer and his friend's also fed on the same offering; what was left was burnt with fire. Can anything more touchingly set forth what communion now is? What nearness to the Father, what joy, what thanksgiving, what worship, must be associated with this joint participation of that one Object which has so perfectly pleased and satisfied God!

How all these details speak to us of reality! Though divine grace has called us, saved us, and set us apart for God by the blood of Jesus and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, yet He, to whom we are now brought, is holy. Still He says,

As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy (1 Pet. 1:15, 16).

While rejoicing in Christ Jesus, in whom we are complete in standing and nearness to God, may we be so conscious of all the provision He has made for us, as to be preserved from carelessness about our state, and, by Christ,

offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually; that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name {Heb. 13:15}.

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