

SERMONS OF A SHEPHERD

by A. Shepherd

Shepherd's meditations on Ephesian prayers exploring the spiritual riches found in Paul's epistles, using poetic imagery to describe the spiritual landscape and reflecting on the beauty of Christ and the glory of His kingship.

12 Chapters

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S. A Meditation on the Ephesian Prayers

A Meditation on the Ephesian Prayers.

Ephesians 1:3-23, Ephesians 3:14-21.

No. 1.

While it is my primary intention as enabled by the grace of God, to engage your heart more particularly with the two prayers of the beloved apostle Paul in this epistle, I should like to make a brief survey of this land, where there is much gold. In a spiritual sense it is a goodly land, a land of water brooks, of fountains and depths that spring out of the valleys and hills; a land of barley and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of olive oil and honey. I well remember when reading the 33rd chapter of Isaiah, some years ago, being greatly impressed with the poetic beauty of the 17th verse, "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off." The first part of the Scripture presented no difficulty, the matchless beauty of God's king, in the glory of His Person, entrancing the soul, saturating it with the dew of heaven, yea watered as with the sweet distilling of the Spirit, as Scripture after Scripture concerning God's king passed in review: "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion" (Psalms 2:1-12): and "A king shall reign in righteousness," as declared by Isaiah, the prophet of God's salvation. And I smelled the sweet fragrance of the garments of the king spoken of in the 45th Psalm,

All thy garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces; "the garments of Him, who is "King of kings and Lord of lords." The latter clause of the 17th verse of Isaiah 33:1-24 however, was somewhat difficult to understand, until my attention was drawn to the marginal rendering, "the land of far distances." Moses on Pisgah's lofty height beheld Immanuel's land, the earthly inheritance assigned to the children of Israel, in the dispensational ways of God with men. In Ephesians, we stand upon superlatively greater elevations, and view the glorious landscapes of the new creation, where "all things are of God." This epistle has been aptly described as "The epistle of the heavenlies;" and we stand upon these heavenly altitudes breathing the pure and stainless atmosphere of heaven itself, and see the glorious vistas of this "land of far distances," stretching out far and away beyond our ken, to the limitless bounds of the universe of God. As contemplating this scene, the heart finds relief as the lips utter that beautiful doxology of the apostle, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!

It is unquestionably true that the apostle Paul was specially gifted of God, to communicate to men His eternal counsels and His ways in Christ, and also the glory of Christ, in which our eternal blessing and security are so vitally bound up. A careful and prayerful study of these two sublime prayers, so exquisitely phrased, would amply repay the diligent, exercised student of the word of God. In the narrow compass of a few brief verses we have a masterly setting forth of the great truths which are developed throughout the epistle. Please note the attitude of the speaker, remarkably significant, he makes mention of the saints in his prayers, desiring that the God of our

Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory might give them the spirit of wisdom, etc. Paul desired that the truths he was communicating should lay hold of the heart and conscience of those to whom he was writing. Can we not emulate the apostle in this act of intercession? In spite of the tremendous volume of energy and zeal expended by us in the Gospel, how many are sincerely affected by our preaching? And in spite of all the faithful ministry to the saints of God, both written and oral, why is it that our practical, everyday lives are so low in moral tone, sometimes not exceeding the common standards of the world? Is it not because we have not spent sufficient time before God regarding the matter, desiring that His Word may be productive of good in the lives of saint and sinner? In this remarkable prayer, three great subjects are mentioned; "The hope of His calling;" "The riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints;" "The exceeding greatness of His power towards us," that has wrought to put us into the calling and make us His heirs. Please observe that it is "HIS calling," "HIS inheritance," and "HIS power." Everything in this epistle is operative from God; man after the flesh is regarded as dead in trespasses and in sins, without one moral movement Godward, the object of divine mercy and compassion, the subject of divine workmanship, "For we are His workmanship." We are looked upon, in this epistle, as no longer in Adam, but in Christ, for "If any man be in Christ, there is new creation."

Verses 4-6 bring out the calling of God, taking us back into an eternity that is past, long before the dawn of this world's tragic history. But as yet it is no question of the activity of the divine counsel; it is simply the blessed fact that God chose us in Christ. The time was to come for the effectuation of all the counsels of God, when divine strength would clothe itself in human weakness for the accomplishment of these counsels, which were all divine. As yet, in these verses, it is but the revelation of the benevolent intentions of God, to have us holy and without blame before Him in love. Beloved saint, has your heart laid hold of this amazing conception, that God is to have us before Him as the objects of His love continually, partaking of the blessed features of our glorious Lord, "holy and without blame," so that the holy eye of God can rest upon us with the same delight as it rests on that blessed One, of whom God said, "In Whom I have found my delight." And what position are we to occupy before God? the position of sons, for He has predestinated us to this, not merely to make us happy, or to give us relief from the tremendous load of our sin and guilt, but to gratify His own blessed heart. The prophet Zephaniah says, "He shall rest in His love, and joy over us with singing." God has laid the basis of His eternal joy in the salvation of guilty sinners like ourselves. To have been brought into the position of angels would have been a great mercy, but angelic relationship would never have satisfied the counsels of eternal love. His desire was to have us before Him, as partakers of the divine nature, capable of enjoying His counsels and Himself; so that we are brought into favour in the Beloved. You have no doubt noted the change of expression here; it is not "in Christ," but "in the Beloved;" as though God would emphasise and intensify the thought of the wondrous place of near and intimate affection into which His grace has brought us.

Now we come to the second object of His desire for us, that we might know "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." In His calling we look above: the inheritance, as it were, stretches out beneath our feet. This is found in verses 10 and 11, and brings us to the magnificent result of all God's ways in government in the dispensations of time. It is not merely the kingdom, though it includes the kingdom; but the thought is much fuller; it is everything in heaven and on earth headed up in Christ. We are not the inheritance, we are the heirs, "Heirs of God, joint-heirs with

Christ." Just as God took possession of Canaan as His inheritance, by putting Israel into possession, so when Christ takes possession of all things as Head of the universe, He does so by putting the heavenly saints in possession, and it, becomes the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

Finally, we come to the power, demonstrated in Christ's resurrection, that was to put us into the calling and bring us as heirs into the inheritance. That mighty irresistible power that was operative in giving Christ that glorious triumph, in raising Him from the dead and setting Him down at His own right hand, far above every principality and authority, and power and dominion, and every name named, etc.; a power greater far than that displayed in calling mighty worlds into being, is operative towards us who believe, in bringing us into the unclouded, unspeakable joy and blessedness of those heavenly and eternal things. A wealthy place beloved!

No. 2. The first prayer upon which we have meditated is a prayer of glory, contemplating our standing and God's power for us; the second is a prayer of love, contemplating our state and God's power in us.

It might be profitable for a little to explore the avenues of divine truth, which have been opened up for the unrestricted exploration, and prayerful investigation, of the one whose heart is diligently set upon acquiring a deeper knowledge of God the Father and His ways of grace and glory. In Ephesians 1:1-23 we have a wonderful setting forth of the eternal counsels of God, God working all after the counsel of His own will; everything operative from God. It is God's calling, God's inheritance, God's power, the surpassing greatness of which is displayed in raising His blessed Son from the dead, and setting Him at His own right hand, far above every 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. This same chapter shows us God doing all the wonderful things spoken of according to the good pleasure of His will, according to the riches of His grace, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will. These are the activities of One, who, after man's disastrous fall, fell back upon the resources of His grace and power, and who wrought for the express purpose of giving effect to all these eternal counsels of glory and blessing. In Ephesians 2:1-22 we have the merciful intervention of God on behalf of those who were dead in trespasses and in sins, those who were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, those who were sinners of the Gentiles, outside the pale of national blessing, apart from Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But these were the subjects of divine mercy, and as the workmanship of God grow unto an holy temple in the Lord, and are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit. Beloved saint of God, has this amazing conception thrilled your soul? Has the immensity, of this thought left its deep impression upon you that every redeemed sinner is a member of the body of Christ, and is a living stone, forming part of that divine structure which is the dwelling place of God upon earth?

Ephesians 3:1-21 gives us Paul's administration of the mystery, so preciously disclosed in the previous chapters. Paul was a prisoner for the Gentiles, because he had preached to them the Gospel of the unsearchable riches of Christ, and because he had made known to them this glorious mystery, which had been hid in God from eternity. The mystery discloses that the Gentiles

are joint heirs, a joint body, and joint partakers of God's promise in Christ; and God has created all things to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the all-variegated wisdom of God. These spiritual intelligences had seen creation arise and expand before their eyes, they had seen the mighty acts of God in judgment and in providence, but now these exalted beings saw something altogether new in this divine conception, the assembly of God. With these weighty truths engaging His thoughts and filling His heart, the beloved apostle bows his knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom every family in heaven and earth is named. God had been known as Jehovah, the God of heaven, the Lord of the whole earth, and by other names, all more or less restrictive in application; but at the mention of the name of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, every family in heaven and on earth, angels, Jews, Gentiles, and the assembly, range themselves under it. Then he goes on to say, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit, in the inner man. Here we have the work of the Spirit of God, a work of spiritual formation within the heart, providing for Christ there a suitable dwelling place; so that he can say "That the Christ may dwell, through faith in your hearts." In the first chapter, we are in Christ; here, Christ is in us, so that being rooted and grounded in love we may be able to apprehend with all saints what is the breadth. . . . As Christ dwells in our hearts by faith we become rooted and grounded in love, and in this fertile soil the new nature grows, expands, and becomes exceeding fruitful, and seeks to apprehend with all saints — for love will never leave one saint of God out — the wonderful system of divine glory of which Christ is the centre. The Spirit of God alone can make these things real and precious to us. What mortal tongue, yea, what angelic tongue, can describe those heavenly wonders, that stretch far and away beyond mortal ken to the limitless bounds of the universe of God. As we view these wondrous things, truly we are lost, not in perplexity, but in "Wonder, love and praise."

A. Shepherd.

S. Exodus: The Book of Redemption and Relationship

Exodus: The Book of Redemption and Relationship

A. Shepherd. No greater proof of the spiritual value and significance of the Old Testament Scriptures could be furnished than that of Luke 24:1-53, where the Lord Jesus is seen in the wonderful character of interpreting all the Scriptures. And how wonderful to realise that that Blessed One was the supreme focus of all those convergent rays of prophetic testimony to which He was drawing the attention of the two disconsolate disciples He had met on the way to Emmaus. In Luke 24:27 we have the remarkable statement: "And having begun from Moses and from all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." Then in Luke 24:44 : "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was yet with you, that all that is written concerning Me in the law of Moses and prophets and psalms must be fulfilled."

It had pleased God by the mouths of those Old Testament prophets to disclose in a wealth of variety and detail the things substantiated in Christ risen from the dead. The knowledge of these things, learned in the company of the Lord Jesus, will provide us with an effective safeguard against all the wretched infidel notions of our day, and enable us to rise to those sublime heights of divine truth far above the frivolous and foolish philosophies of men, which constitute the wisdom of the world. In the Book of Exodus therefore is found in part: "The things concerning Himself," and in its typical teaching — and this is our principal concern — brings before us themes of undying interest and of eternal importance to man. As we pass from the contemplation of the rich variety of subjects contained in the Book of Genesis, which has been aptly named "the seed plot of the Bible," and enter this second Book of divine inspiration, we breathe an atmosphere sensibly different.

Exodus has as its main subject Redemption; and as a consequence, Relationship. To the children of Israel it was relationship to Jehovah as their Redeemer: to the believer in this day of grace it is relationship to the Father as revealed in the Son, consequent upon the work of redemption. But what does redemption really mean? It is a very different thought from "Purchase," though this is involved. We read of the assembly as purchased by the blood of God's Son (Acts 20:28); of false teachers denying the Master that bought them (2 Peter 2:1); and of the Lord, in the parable, buying the field, the world (Matthew 13:44). Purchase intimates a change of ownership, but does not necessarily mean a change of state. It is one thing for a slave to be purchased, another for him to be redeemed.

Redemption for us involves a change of position, from Adam to Christ; and a change of state, from the flesh to the Spirit; truths presented to us in God's Word to make our own, and to work out in divine energy in the practical details of life. Redemption in its fullest extent, for Israel, for creation, and for the church, is yet future. The right to redeem rests on the blood of the Lamb, and the power in the glorious Person of the Redeemer. The creation is already purchased, but its redemption is yet future (Ephesians 1:14), and will be effected when it passes from "the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God"; from groans to praises, and from

pain to rest (Romans 8:19-22). In no other Book of the Word of God is the great truth of redemption, and its results in bringing the redeemed nigh to God, more fully unfolded than in these divinely instructive types. In keeping with the general design of the Book, its numerous and varied types are redemptive in character. It treats in the main of two great subjects: Redemption from judgment, from the world and from the power of the adversary and Relationship to God with all the blessed consequences accruing therefrom. In chapters 12 and 14 we have deliverance by redemption, first by the blood of the Lamb, which finds its answer in "Justified by His blood," as in Romans 5:9; the second, by divine power, as in Romans 4:25 : "Raised again for our justification."

After redemption had been typically accomplished by blood and by power, Jehovah could dwell among His people. How great was the blessing for man when God walked in Paradise, and visited the patriarchs; but the first intimation of God dwelling with men is consequent on redemption, and heard in the song of triumph, sung by the children of Israel on the other side of the Red Sea: "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, the place that Thou Jehovah hast made Thy dwelling." The first relationship of the people with Jehovah was on the ground of pure grace, a very brief period of nearly three months, from the time of their departure from Egypt till they reached Sinai. The second principle of relationship was law, and under this they placed themselves voluntarily as the means of maintaining their connection with God. The third ground of their standing with God was of mixed law and grace (Exodus 34:1-35); not of grace only, for that they had forfeited; nor was it pure law, else it would have meant for them God's consuming judgment. In Exodus 1:1-22; Exodus 2:1-25; Exodus 3:1-22; Exodus 4:1-31; Exodus 5:1-23 the people are seen in their misery, because of their grinding servitude; in Exodus 6:1-30; Exodus 7:1-25; Exodus 8:1-32; Exodus 9:1-35; Exodus 10:1-29; Exodus 11:1-10; Exodus 12:1-51; Exodus 13:1-22; Exodus 14:1-31, they are the subjects of God's glorious redemption; and in Exodus 15:1-27 they are viewed as brought near to God in a relationship answering to the revelation of His Name and the perfection of His ways and thoughts.

Exodus 1:1-22 The condition in which the children of Israel are found in Exodus 1:1-22 had been foretold many years before, when God had declared to Abraham: "Know assuredly that thy seed will be a sojourner in a land that is not theirs, and they shall be in bondage to them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years. But also that nation which they shall serve I will judge; and afterward they shall come out with great property" (Genesis 15:13-14). This is the history of the first twelve chapters of Exodus, and so at the first chapter we are brought to the very threshold of the accomplishment of God's ways with His people, as foretold to Abraham. Even the wrath of man is yoked to the chariot wheels of God's decrees, just as when Christ was "given up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," to men to crucify and slay (Acts 2:23). The brief summary of particulars relating to Jacob and his sons who went with him down to Egypt, is dealt with in greater detail in Genesis 46:1-34. No mention is made in these introductory verses of the famine in Canaan, which was the immediate cause of their going down to Egypt, but in the light of further revelation this was no fortuitous circumstance in their history, but part of God's providential ways to effect His purpose concerning them.

It was an intolerable thought that the children of Israel, owned of God as His people in covenant relationship with Him, should be found in servile bondage under the heel of this cruel, tyrannical despot. Since Egypt speaks of the world in its deep-seated enmity towards the people of God, Pharaoh as its prince, would speak of him who is the adversary and oppressor of those who

belong to Christ, and of whom Christ said: The ruler of this world comes, and in Me he has nothing" (John 14:30). This is the one who seeks to keep us in a state of continual bondage, and so prevent us from enjoying what God has given to us. A radical change marks the circumstances of the children of Israel when "There arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph." No longer were they the favoured recipients of Joseph's bounty as preserved and nourished under his beneficent administration; they were made to feel the power of one who was the avowed adversary of Jehovah and His people. In its spiritual application, however, we, as the people of God, while still in the scene where the claims of Christ are still refused, and the usurper wields his baneful influence and destructive power, are preserved and nourished by the heavenly ministrations of our true Joseph from His exalted place on God's throne.

We are reminded that the children of Israel, every man and his household came with Jacob. The natural name of their father appears here in perfect suitability to the Spirit's purpose; just as we came into the house of bondage with our father, Adam. God, in the sovereign actings of His grace, as we shall see, alone can deliver us from the thralldom of a greater rebel than Pharaoh. The bondage itself, however, does not begin at once, for conscious bondage is not the expression of our mere natural state. The man in Romans 7:1-25 is not a mere child of nature, for such does not cry out: "Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" That is an expression of felt bondage. There was the time when this world pleased us well enough, just as there was a time when Egypt pleased the children of Israel; but God, in faithfulness remembering His covenant with Abraham, commences to forge the various links in the remarkable chain of circumstances, which would free them from Egypt with its lusts and bondage.

God saw what was necessary to bring home to His people their need of deliverance, and raised up Pharaoh to procure the smoking furnace of Abraham's vision (Genesis 15:1-21). Egypt became to them a house of bondage; the clear reflection of our own moral condition as sinners; a condition in which we should have remained had it not been for the sovereign intervention of God in mercy. In His wisdom God allows us to feel the mighty burden of our sin and guilt, and taste the bitterness of our bondage to the ruler of this world, and thus by reason of our felt condition, cry unto Him.

Listen to the words of Exodus 2:23-25 : "And the children of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and cried . . . and God heard . . . and God remembered . . . and God looked upon the children of Israel, and God took knowledge (of their state)." Further, in Exodus 3:7-8 : "Jehovah said, I have seen . . . their cry I have heard . . . I know their sorrows, and I am come down to deliver them." What a wonderful moment it was in the world's history when God came down in the Person of Jesus to effect our deliverance! This Book opens with the significant words: "And these are the names of the sons of Israel," a title suggestive of their dignity as standing in relation to the "prince with God." Would this not suggest to us the place of dignity and liberty to which God has called His saints? How this thought is illuminated with divine light as the beloved Apostle declares in Galatians 4:4-7 : "God sent forth His Son . . . that He might redeem those under law, that we might receive sonship. But because ye are sons, God has sent out the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. So thou art no longer bondman, but son, heir also through God." Bondage is inconsistent with the place of sons, and the enemy in his malice and fury would fain hold us under his power. The enemy knows that the presence of the children of God in this world constitutes an ever present danger to his kingdom; and he has sought by means of persecution, and by the introduction of legal principles, to bring us into a false position. In Acts 15:1-41 and Galatians, we

see the enemy at work, endeavouring to entice the saints into unprofitable labour, unworthy of those who have been delivered out of this present evil age. In building the store cities of Pharaoh, which were used to provision his army, the children of Israel were but riveting the chains of slavery more firmly on themselves. The enemy in seeking to hinder the increase and prosperity of the children of Israel, gave his commands to the midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, but these faithful women disobeyed the king, because they "feared God." Because they "feared God," they were prospered by Him.

Like these faithful women, the apostle Paul sought the increase and spiritual prosperity of God's people. He travailed over the Galatian saints (4:19) who were in danger of being brought into legal bondage; his combat was great for the saints at Colosse and elsewhere, lest they should be ensnared by the principles of the world.

How richly compensating is the sense of God's favour to those who are seeking to move in the current of His thoughts with respect to His people's spiritual increase and enlargement in the knowledge of those momentous truths which are secured in all the stability of His eternal counsels. These great truths have been revealed, and remain for the people of God to form and give character to their path, so that while conscious of the immeasurable resources that abide in Christ, they might in sweet communion enter into the enjoyment of all God's thoughts regarding Christ and the assembly.

Exodus 2:1-25 In order to be rightly understood, Exodus 2:1-25 must be considered in conjunction with Hebrews 11:1-40, which forms a divine commentary of at least the main incidents in this chapter, and moreover furnishes us with the divine estimate of those human actions which are given here in a historical mould. It is only in the combination of these two aspects that we can be truly instructed in the true knowledge of God and His ways. With reference to the wonderful declaration of God's Name in Exodus 34:1-35 : "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth . . ." another has written: "The reader must study for himself this unfolding of what God was to Israel — each word employed being in this aspect the declaration of His immutable character. There was indeed a heart of love for His people, but . . . pent up until atonement should have been accomplished, when God could righteously justify the ungodly." God desires to be known to His people, and His ways have ever been consistent with this desire, whether in the soft and partial light of types and symbols, or in the noon-day splendour of the coming of the Son, who could say: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." May the eye of faith therefore be so keen and sensitive as to discern the rays of divine glory radiating from God's precious Word.

We saw in the previous chapter how Pharaoh in his unbridled fury against the people of God decreed that "Every son that is born, ye shall cast into the river." In this chapter God shows us how He uses the very wrath of the king to protect him who would become the deliverer of His people. It is an absorbing story which manifests the perfection and sovereignty of God's ways, providing us with a wonderful and convincing illustration of the remarkable declaration of the King of Babylon, after his abasement at the hands of the Most High: "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and He doeth according to His will in the army of the heavens and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him: 'What doest Thou?'" (Daniel 4:35). In perfect correspondence with this inspired declaration, and as expressive of those ways of

Him who has brought forth meat out of the eater and sweetness out of the strong, we find the deliverer himself appearing in circumstances which the cruel edict of Pharaoh had produced. In Acts 7:1-60, where we have Stephen's solemn arraignment of the Jewish nation, he says of the king who knew not Joseph: "He dealt subtly with our race, and evil entreated the fathers, casting out their infants that they might not live. In which time Moses was born, and was fair to God." In Exodus 2:1-25, where the Spirit of God gives the historical record of these momentous events, it states very briefly of Moses' mother: "And she saw him that he was fair, and hid him three months." In Hebrews 11:1-40 the Holy Spirit links these actions with a divinely inspired faith that laid hold upon a "God who is a rewarder of them who seek Him out," even as we read: "By faith Moses, being born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw the child beautiful; and they did not fear the injunction of the king." Such is the divine valuation of the actions of the father and mother whose natural affection for this son which had been given to them revolted against the decree of the king. While recognising their allegiance to an earthly sovereign, by faith they acknowledged a higher allegiance to their God, to whom this proud despot was also accountable. Trusting in God they were able to rise in superiority above the fear of man that bringeth a snare, and as acting according to the wisdom which the fear of the Lord inculcates, they hide their child from the despot and a hostile world.

It must not be supposed that the parents of Moses entered into the full significance of all that was bound up in the preservation of their child. In this we have a touching example of how the ways of God are powerfully interwoven in the actions of men, for faith does not ignore the affections of the parents, but intervenes to sustain them in quiet, unfailing persistence and undeviating conviction of the mind and purpose of God. This is the way in which God lays the foundation for the accomplishment of His purposes, preparing His instruments and working towards the moment before determined by Him. In how pre-eminently greater measure do we see this exemplified in the coming into the world of One incomparably greater than Moses, and of whom Moses has said: "Jehovah thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me, unto Him shall ye hearken" (Deuteronomy 18:15). That this refers exclusively to Christ is placed beyond all dispute, by Peter in Acts 3:18-22, and Stephen in Acts 7:1-60, who are both moved by the Spirit to quote this Scripture. Moses stands out very distinctly as a type of the Lord Jesus, particularly in his mediatorial character and as one who occupied a place of remarkable and unprecedented nearness to God, for "The Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend." Jehovah alludes to this when vindicating Moses against the aspersions of Miriam and Aaron, saying: "My servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. Mouth to mouth do I speak to him openly, and not in riddles; and the form of Jehovah doth he behold" (Numbers 12:7-8). This remarkable pronouncement from God concerning Moses serves to throw into stronger and brighter relief the superlative excellence of the One of whom Moses was but a figure, even as it is recorded in Hebrews 3:5-6: "And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a ministering servant for a testimony of the things to be spoken after; but Christ, as Son over His house, whose house are we." The house is God's house, and the contrast is between Moses as a servant in and Christ as Son over it.

It is against this sublime background that we seek to interpret these impressive types in which God is working for a design according to His own heart, and also for the securing of His glory in the manner in which the design is accomplished. Moses, as we have seen, was by birth exposed to

the death sentence under which the sons of Israel lay in Egypt, nor was he exempt because faith discerned him "fair to God." And what do we learn of Him of whom Moses was a type? That blessed One, from whose wondrous Person every moral beauty radiated to the full gratification of the Father's heart; neither His own people nor the world at large saw any beauty in Him; there was no room for Him in the homes or the hearts of men; no room for the Lord of glory in a world which lay in bondage to its god and prince. But in the providential ways of God, and in the pursuance of His purpose respecting the deliverance of His people, the very scene of forfeited life was the place where the deliverer of His people was sheltered and succoured, and this not simply with regard to Moses, but also with regard to Him who was incomparably greater, the One who was in supreme measure "beautiful to God," of whom it is written: "Arise, take to thee the little child and His mother, and flee into Egypt. . . . And He was there until the death of Herod" (Matthew 2:13-15). How powerless the adversary is, despite all his vaunted power and authority, to frustrate God in His benevolent intentions concerning His people. Never is the enemy so completely defeated as in the moment of apparent victory. The cross is the eternal witness of this, where "the powers of hell there felt the might of God"; when He who was crucified in weakness was raised by the power of God. With the passing of time, Moses could no longer be hid; but faith is never lacking in resources, for it ever lays hold upon a God who "is a rewarder of those who seek Him out." The mother of Moses therefore "took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink." Her actings were maintained on the high level of God's wonderful movements, and with His marvellous design for the emancipation of His people from the house of bondage.

Another personage now comes under the sovereign power and direction of God; none other than Pharaoh's daughter. No doubt she was moved by her own inclinations, and sought only her own pleasure, as she went down to the river to bathe; yet unknown to herself she was to be the divine instrument to defeat the hostility of her father and foil his plans, and also to ensure under her royal patronage the retaining of Moses under the tender and affectionate care of his parents. It was in this environment, and not in Pharaoh's court or in the colleges of Egypt, that the future deliverer of God's people was trained and prepared for the great destiny that lay before him; and can we not say that this training proved superior to all the powerful influences of Egypt? No doubt Moses became a finished product of the highest education that Egypt could afford, and his accomplishments are noticed by the Spirit of God through Stephen, who tells us that he "was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was mighty in his words and deeds" (Acts 7:22); but all this learning was not of the slightest use to him as the deliverer chosen of God, nor as the king in Jeshurun to order the course of the people of God in the wilderness. The "wisdom of Egypt" would have been baffled to make a way through the Red Sea, and entirely barren of every resource to meet all the exigencies of the wilderness. Egypt's learning could not have furnished the ability to bring water out of the rock or provide the manna to meet the needs of that vast host in the wilderness. But in the training received under the tutelage of his parents, and in the disciplinary ways of God as he kept Jethro's flock in the wilderness, Moses was being divinely educated in the ways of the covenant-keeping God in whom there was every resource for the liberation of His people, and for their sustainment "in a dry and weary land without water." How essential that the saint of God should distinguish between what we may learn of this world's wisdom in the course of God's providence, and that spiritual education and divine teaching which give the knowledge of God, and which give qualification to act for God and the blessings of His people. This alone can

give true spiritual growth and enlargement, even as the beloved apostle states: "To the end that ye may be filled with the full knowledge of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, so as to walk worthily of the Lord unto all well-pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and growing by the true knowledge of God" (Colossians 1:9-10). In our next view of Moses, at the age of forty, we can discern in his actions the fruit of all he had learned, not in the court of Egypt, but when under the care of his parents, and particularly his mother, who is specially mentioned. All that he had learned of the "wisdom of Egypt" had to give place to a very much higher education of an entirely different order, in which the impress of faith was clearly discernible as evidenced in actions which ran counter to the expedients and reasonings of men. Again referring to Acts 7:1-60, we are told that "It came into his heart to look upon his brethren, the sons of Israel." Our chapter says that, when he was grown, he went not merely to look upon his brethren, but also on their burdens. He is identified personally with his brethren with special reference to their burdens. The faith which had preserved him for the service of God nurtured him in a way eminently suited to one who was to be the deliverer of his brethren from the hand of the oppressor. No doubt his mother had given him impressions of the moral greatness of his brethren as "the people of God" and "the sons of Israel," which none of the ensnaring influences of the wisdom of the Egyptians could ever erase. When we turn to Hebrews 11:1-40 we learn that these outward movements were inspired and sustained by inward, personal exercises of faith, and not merely by the impulses of a generous heart, even as it is written, "By faith Moses, when he had become great, refused to be called the son of the Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction along with the people of God than to have the temporary pleasure of sin; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had respect to the recompense" (verses 24-26). Another has very touchingly remarked, "This shows the true value of a position in the world that its possessor has the privilege of surrendering it for Christ, and choosing rather that suffering and reproach which are the portion of Christ and of His people in this world." But nothing of this is mentioned in Exodus 2:1-25, because Moses is viewed there as the Deliverer of God's people, and as a type of Christ in this way. The affections and interests of Moses were bound up with his brethren, and how perfectly this was expressed in Him who, as the lowly and dependent Man, could say, "My goodness extended not to Thee; . . . to the saints that are on earth, and to the excellent (Thou hast said) in them is all my delight" (Psalms 16:2-3). How precious is Christ's love for His own! Viewing them as the object of the Father's love, He says, "I have manifested Thy Name to the men whom Thou gavest me out of the world. They were Thine and Thou gavest them me . . . I do not demand concerning the world, but concerning those whom Thou hast given me, for they are Thine (and all that is Mine is Thine, and all that is Thine is Mine), and I am glorified in them" (John 17:6; John 17:9-10). The Lord Jesus loved to own, as belonging to Him, those who heard the word of God and did His will. Do we not see the spirit of all this in Moses, the Spirit of Christ, the true Deliverer of His people, as he looked on the burdens of his brethren as one conscious that he was there for their deliverance from oppression and bondage, even as it is written, "He thought his brethren would understand that God by his hand was giving them deliverance" (Acts 7:25).

It was God's intention to free His people from the associations and servitude of Egypt, that they might serve Him according to all He had purposed for the pleasure of His love, as is written in Hosea 11:1, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son." In full accord with the thoughts of God respecting His people, Moses thought that his brethren would understand that God would use him as the instrument for their deliverance, "but they understood

not"; and in this rejection he had to experience in measure what the greater than Moses experienced, when "He came to His own things, and His own people received Him not." In the smiting of the Egyptian by Moses we have an example of the forwardness of nature, just as we have the display of the backwardness of nature on a future occasion. We have here an instance of the fearlessness of Scripture in recounting every detail of the incident. It was impossible for the Spirit, on the one hand, to condemn the love that prompted the hand of Moses to defend one of his brethren who was being ill-treated by an Egyptian task-master; it was equally impossible, on the other hand, for God to condone the act. There is no attempt to gloss over this reprehensible act on the part of Moses, nor is there any argument or discourse to vindicate God from participation in what was far removed from that which was according to His will. How beautiful it is to see how God has left what was of Himself to tell its own tale, while bringing before His people that which they could judge was not of Himself in His servant. Faith and spiritual judgment in the people of God will always discern that anything good comes from Him, and that anything contrary to this is not of Him.

Yet in spite of his intemperate act, Moses appears here in the two-fold character of deliverer and shepherd. The hand that smote the Egyptian was the hand of a deliverer; and the heart of the shepherd is revealed in his concern to conciliate his brethren who were quarrelling. But refused by his brethren, and hated by Pharaoh, he flees to the land of Midian, there to reveal to other needy ones the hand of the deliverer and the heart of the shepherd as he intervened on behalf of Reuel's daughters.

It would be instructive to recapitulate briefly, and note that in all the salient features of Moses' intensely interesting movements thus far considered, he is a remarkable type of the Lord Jesus. Before Moses becomes a deliverer he is exposed to death, and is taken out of it; he did not actually die; like Isaac, he was spared; but the Son of God could not be spared, "He who, yea, has not spared His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all . . ." (Romans 8:32).

Moses must needs also take his place in rejection at the hands of his own people in order to fill up the type of Him who is a mightier Deliverer than Moses, and who delivers God's people from a mightier foe than Pharaoh. Rejected by his brethren, Moses flees into the land of Midian with these words ringing in his ears, "Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?" It is in this character we have to do with the Lord Jesus now, for, as typified in Moses, He secures a bride from among the Gentiles, while rejected by His own people Israel.

Moses in Midian is a figure of Christ in rejection, and the sense of this is borne constantly on his heart as indicated in the name he gives his son, Gershon, "a stranger there," And Zipporah represents the assembly as the companion of his rejection, sharing the experience and the sense of it with Him; keeping the word of His patience until that day when, as the result of the work of God, His earthly people will exultingly exclaim, "Hosanna, blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." But the assembly, as the loved companion of her earth-rejected Lord, can never settle down in a scene where there is no place for Christ. In Rebecca, we have a type of the assembly as being a comfort to the True Isaac when Israel yields Him no comfort; in Asenath, the bride of Joseph, we have a figure of the assembly as affording satisfaction and fruitfulness to Christ, so that the sense of toil and exile is forgotten; but Zipporah portrays the assembly as sharing with Christ, with intelligence and affection, the place of rejection and strangership. Each

type shines with its own peculiar lustre and distinctive beauty! The closing verses of the chapter bring before us the deep, unflinching compassion of God as He heard the groaning of His people, and also His unswerving faithfulness as He "remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob." In His love and pity He redeemed them, for His love had covenanted blessing for them long before, and in His pity He heard their groaning, and came down to redeem them out of all their misery and distress. At the close we have the sure pledge of divine deliverance and blessing, for "God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged them," or took knowledge of their state. God is indeed rich unto all them that call upon Him, that call upon Him in truth: "But to this man will I look: to the afflicted and contrite in spirit, and who trembleth at My word" (Isaiah 66:2). The Call of the Deliverer

Exodus 3:1-22 The two previous chapters are in the main introductory in character and are of the greatest importance as serving to bring into full relief the reason for the mighty and effective intervention of God on behalf of his earthly people, no less in grace than in power! The closing verses of the previous chapter provide us with a fitting introduction to this present chapter in which we view the call of the deliverer.

Here we stand upon the threshold of events of the deepest interest and importance; for while these events in their historical sequence relate to God's earthly people, when translated into the language of grace they are shown to be in their spiritual import, details of our own history as His heavenly people; a history transcending in depth and character this wonderful story of God's earthly people as the antitype must needs transcend the type. From the Passover to the Land, the wonderful and majestic dealings of God with a people whose weakness and inveterate waywardness gave Him the greatest and most ample opportunities of demonstrating to the full the reality of all that is implicit in that remarkable declaration, "For thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God; the Lord thy God has chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than all the peoples; for ye were the fewest of all people; but because the Lord loved you and would keep the oath which He had sworn unto your fathers hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh King of Egypt" (Deuteronomy 7:6-8). They were the objects of His tender unceasing care, and the subjects of the display of His power and grace, and as such are our types, "written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages are come" (1 Corinthians 10:11). As another has expressed it so acceptably, "What must we be to Him who has written our history in the records of these bygone ages! Oh, may we adoringly accept the love and bow our hearts to receive the admonition!"

Previously we have looked at Israel's deliverer from Egyptian bondage. We have seen him given over to death and delivered out of it. We have seen him presenting himself — prematurely no doubt and in the energy of nature — as the saviour of his people, only to be summarily rejected by them. Then as rejected by his own people he obtains a wife in the place of his strangership, who bears him a son to whom he gives the name of Gershom — "a stranger there," thereby indicating the deep feelings of his heart as one who had "been a stranger in a strange land." May we see with ever expanding vision the precious lineaments of One — Peerless, Incomparable, Sovereign among all the great personages whom God has raised up as types of Him of whom Moses has borne witness, "A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up to you out of your brethren like unto

me; Him shall ye hear in everything whatsoever He shall say to you" (Acts 3:22).

Now we are called to witness in Exodus 3:1-22, the call of the deliverer, precious and convincing proof the unforgetting heart of God in His remembrance of His earthly people. At the close of the second chapter these poignant words are recorded — "And the children of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and cried; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage; and God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob; and God looked upon the children of Israel and took knowledge (of their state)" (Exodus 2:23-25). As already remarked, these verses furnish us with an appropriate introduction to chapter 3, since in the 7th verse of this chapter we have the wonderful declaration on the part of God, in which we would reverently remark, He lays bare the deep feelings of His heart toward His earthly people in their state of cruel bondage, and so He exclaims, "I have seen assuredly the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and their cry have I heard on account of their task-masters; for I know their sorrows, and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land, unto a good and spacious land, unto a land flowing with milk and honey." God in His deep compassion heard their cry: it does not appear to have been directly or expressly addressed to God: rather it was the cry of hopelessness and despair; no ray of hope to assuage the sense of utter wretchedness, no expectation of some measure of alleviation or eventual deliverance from their state of abject misery and crushing bondage, no looking out to God or counting on His mercy. But God is faithful! How blessed for us that He is so. God heard their cry, He saw their state and He had come down to deliver them, and so again He says in Exodus 3:9, "And now behold the cry of the children of Israel is come unto Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them; and now come and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

Let us put these statements together and see how in such a remarkable combination they present us with a thought of tremendous import. In verse 8 God says, "I am come down to deliver them . . ." Then in Exodus 3:10 He says, "And now come, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth My people . . ." O depth of riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments and untraceable His ways! Truly His thoughts are not our thoughts, His ways are not our ways. God in sovereign wisdom had chosen one whose subsequent actions marked him as being weak and incompetent, yet God would be with His servant, investing him with power and authority in such manner and in such measure that the excellency of the power would be seen to be of God and not of the instrument He had chosen to be the deliverer of His people; and also to demonstrate that God's impressive announcements to Pharaoh was no vain assertion. "And for this very cause have I raised thee up to show thee My power, and that My Name may be declared in all the earth" (Exodus 9:16).

Let us now look at Moses in the circumstances in which he is found when God appears to him as he tended the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, and as he led the flock behind the wilderness and came to the mountain of God — to Horeb. The singular designation, "the mountain of God" is no doubt intended by the Spirit to arrest our attention that we too might "turn aside" and contemplate with reverential gaze and becoming attitude, the amazing scene opened out before us in relation to the call of Moses to the high destiny that lay before him.

It is worthy of note that there are two other mountains specially referred to as mountains of God — Moriah and Zion, and it is not without significance that the truth connected with each stands indubitably connected with God's remarkable ways in grace and power with His earthly people. MORIAH (Jah provides) was the place where the burnt offering would be divinely provided. And is this not the basis of all God's ways in grace and blessing? HOREB was the place where God made Himself known in grace and faithfulness as the One who would deliver His people from the house of bond-men, and bring them into the inheritance He had assigned to them. ZION, "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth " will be the seat of government in the Kingdom in a future day when all that God had pledged at Horeb will be fully accomplished, and all will rest upon and be secured by the value and sweet savour of Christ as the burnt offering. In Mount Moriah we get the righteous basis of God's ways in grace. In Horeb we get the character of those ways and their glorious fruition in Zion. With reference to God's ways of mercy and faithfulness to His earthly people it might be well to state that while the heart of God was deeply moved by the groans and sighs of the people in their seemingly hopeless condition, the time and manner of His acting for their deliverance was in faithfulness to the promise He had made to Abraham many years before. In Genesis 15:1-21, we have the remarkable vision given to Abraham in answer to his question, "Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" when God had declared to him, "I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees to give thee this land to inherit it." God then instructs Abraham to, "Take Me a heifer of three years old, and a she-goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtle-dove and a young pigeon. And he took all these and divided them in the midst, and laid the half of each opposite its fellow, but the birds he did not divide. And the birds of prey came down on the carcasses, and Abram scared them away. And as the sun was just going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and behold a horror, a great darkness fell upon him. And He said to Abram, Know assuredly that thy seed will be a sojourner in a land that is not theirs, and they shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years. But also that nation which they serve will I judge, and afterwards they shall come out with great property . . . And it came to pass when the sun had gone down and it was dark that behold there was a smoking furnace, and a flame of fire which passed between those pieces" (Genesis 15:9-18). In verses 9 and 10 we have what is figurative of the death of Christ; everything for the blessing of the earthly and heavenly seed rests upon this inviolable foundation. God will assuredly establish His covenant, fulfil all His promises and bring in faith's inheritance through that precious and ever-efficacious death. It is not through any goodness or works on the part of Abram or the seed, neither is it brought to pass without deep exercise on their part. How necessary that God should discipline His people and pass them through the furnace in order to bring them into the realisation of how necessary for them is the death of Christ. God is seen here as the smoking furnace — the Refiner of His people — and He refines according to the manner in which He dealt with sin in the cross of Christ. What He judged in the cross He must refine from His people in the crucible of affliction so that nothing may be left that is unsuited to the inheritance. Scripture abounds with references to the refining processes God uses in the purifying of His people. He says in Isaiah 48:10, "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." They needed the purifying fire in which God was; for what were the Egyptians? — they had their part in what the fire symbolised. Nevertheless it was the covenant-keeping God who was dealing with His people in love, a holy love, and in the pursuance of His purposes concerning them. God was using "the fury of man to praise Him" in carrying into effect His purposes concerning those they held in bondage. We see a similar

instance to this in Isaiah 10:1-34 where God says of the Assyrian, "Ah! the Assyrian! the rod of mine anger! and the staff in their hand is mine indignation." In Isaiah 8:1-22, God speaks to His People as having refused, "the waters of Shiloah which flow softly." He declares that in judgment He "will bring up upon the waters of the river, strong and many, the King of Assyria and all his glory," and again in Isaiah 28:1-29 this same power is referred to as "the over-flowing scourge."

Reverting to the vision God gave to Abram we see that the smoking furnace and the burning lamp are what the deep sleep and the darkness demand; and these the sacrifice secures and the faithfulness of God supplies to His people. If the activity and vigilance of faith fail, the furnace of trial will not fail as the appointed means of purification; while for the darkness which is the result of unbelief, the lamp or flame of fire is equally provided. How blessed to see in all this that the fiery trial through which they were passing in Egypt was but the precious indication of God's remembrance of His covenant. To unbelief it might seem otherwise, but to faith the stormy winds are but the fulfilling of His will. Only as we realise how great has been our bondage to sin, the world and Satan, can we rejoice in the wonderful deliverance that has been effected for us. How sure the inheritance to those whom God is thus pledged in Christ to bring them through to enjoy it, securing in His death those conditions which His holiness of necessity imposes, so that He can rest in all the joy of that which is the fruit of His own grace.

It is not without significance that Moses is found here in the character of a shepherd. For forty years those features were being formed which would make him eminently suited to shepherd "the people of His pasture and sheep of His hand" for forty years in the wilderness. A shepherd was the type of the Divine deliverer and King. David, the man after God's own heart is the great example among men. In Psalms 78:1-72 it says, "And He choose David His servant, and took him from the sheepfolds. From following the suckling ewes, He brought him to feed Jacob His people and Israel His inheritance. And he fed them according to the integrity of his heart and led them by the skilfulness of his hands." And what of Him who is the true Shepherd of the sheep — David's Son yet David's Lord? We have that beautiful quotation from Micah 5:2 enshrined in Matthew 2:6. "And thou Bethlehem, land of Juda, art in no wise least among the governors of Juda, for out of thee shall go forth a leader who shall shepherd My people Israel;" and in Micah it is added, "whose goings forth are from of old, from the days of eternity." That is God's thought of a true ruler. Moses was trained for forty years as a simple shepherd until he is fit to be the instrument in the hand of God to lead His people out of the house of bondmen, and also to tend and nourish them in the wilderness. And He of whom Moses is but a shadowy picture, true Shepherd of the sheep, will never, however different the circumstances, give up the service to which love consecrated Him. With love, rule is service, and how blest the time when love alone shall rule!

We find Moses then in the course of his service leading his flock to the back side of the desert and coming to Horeb which was from henceforth to be called the mountain of God, in virtue of what was now to take place. "And the Angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush, and he looked and behold the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed." This might well be a source of great wonder to natural eyes, but God does not appear to men in any spectacular way in order to satisfy their idle curiosity. Though sovereign in all His movements, yet He does not use this sovereignty in an arbitrary manner, but is sovereignly wise as is so convincingly shown in all His gracious appearings to men, for He displays Himself in perfect suitability to the purposes before Him, and this wonderful sight which Moses saw was no

exception. God had before, in reference to this very captivity in Egypt, revealed Himself in symbol as the "smoking furnace" when, in confirming His covenant with Abraham, He had passed between the pieces of the sacrifice. Now if we consider this thorn-bush — for such it is — it is a striking picture of the children of Israel. In Isaiah, chapter 10, the prophet in speaking of the Assyrian scourge says, "And the light of Israel shall be for a fire and his Holy One for a flame! and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briars in one day." Thorns too were the sign of the curse at the beginning. They are in fact, as botanists tell us (with special reference to the kind we have here) abortive leaves, parts of a plant incapable of fulfilling their original purpose. Such were the children of Israel, and such were we in our place of death and distance from God, connected in this symbol with the curse upon sin. But how great is the mercy of a Saviour-God, the thorn-bush is not consumed. It was when "we . . . were living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another, that the kindness and love to man of our Saviour God appeared, not on the principles of works which have been done in righteousness which we had done, but according to His own mercy He saved us . . ." (Titus 3:3-7). So with this burning bush it was meant to be an image of that which would indicate to Moses that God was about to work in the midst of Israel. He would prove Himself a consuming fire, Moses and they must know it; for on the one hand, as surely as He is a consuming fire, so on the other, the bush so weak and ready to vanish away, nevertheless remains to prove that whatever the sifting and judicial dealing of God, and the trials and searchings of man, when He displays Himself in mercy as well as in power, He sustains the object, turning all to his account for good, no doubt for His own glory, but consequently for the best interests of those who are the objects of His mercy. But now we see one whom God had chosen as the instrument of His power in the deliverance of His people manifesting the backwardness of nature, just as he had displayed the forwardness of nature on an earlier occasion. The voice of God, now urging him forward to the execution of the great and glorious mission with which he had been entrusted; a mission authenticated by the authoritative word of God in whom were those sovereign resources of almighty power which faith ever draws upon for the achievement of what is impossible to nature. How beautifully this is exemplified in Hebrews 11:1-40 where in that illustrious "crowd of witnesses" faith is displayed in all its diversity of expression. Caleb too lends his reassuring testimony. "And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up boldly and possess it (the land) for we are well able to do it . . . If the Lord delight in us, He will bring us into this land, and give it us" (Numbers 13:30, Numbers 14:8). And what of David's powerful challenge as he advanced with his sling and stones to meet Goliath encased in all the panoply of war? "I come to thee in the Name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel whom thou hast defied" (1 Samuel 17:45). But Moses had his eye on self, and in the event this was a weakness to which Moses was prone, usually attended with serious consequences for himself, yet providing an ever-faithful God with fresh occasions of displaying Himself in the plenitude of His grace, rising above the failure of His servant in new and ever-unfolding aspects of His glory. And so to all the objections and difficulties pleaded by Moses as proof of his unfitness for the signally great and distinctive honour which God was conferring upon him as the deliverer of His people, God makes this remarkable declaration of His Name, as expressive of who He was and also as indicating the relationship in which His people stood to the One who had espoused their cause. To Moses' question therefore "Behold when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say What is His Name? what shall I say unto them?" God makes this remarkable pronouncement "I AM THAT I

AM; thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." The fact that God does not declare at this point what He is going to do gives added force to these words, for the declaration of Himself as the ever-present, ever-existing One gives reality and meaning to His unchangeable purposes concerning His people so that it could be said of Him, "For the gifts and calling of God are not subject to repentance (Romans 11:29). And again in Malachi 3:1-18, "For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Implicit in this wonderful declaration "I AM THAT I AM" was the assurance that all the resources of divine power were there to bring to fruition all that He had counselled for them. But He goes further and says: "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, the Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob hath sent me unto you; this is My name for ever, and this is My memorial unto all generations." He has taken a name in relationship to men which is to be His continual memorial. How beautifully the Spirit brings this before us in Hebrews 11:1-40. Speaking of Abraham "as a stranger in the land of promise as in a foreign country, having dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise . . . but now they seek a better, that is a heavenly, wherefore God is not ashamed of them to be called their God." In all this we can discern a wonderful expression of grace on the part of God to His people He speaks of His essential being as the I AM, He also declares the Name in which He has taken His people into relationship with Himself; so that Paul could say of them "as regards election beloved on account of the fathers" (Romans 11:28), thereby showing plainly that Israel shall be for ever the centre of God's ways, and of His purposes concerning the earth. As another has said, "He loves and cherishes the Name in which He has bound up the objects of His choice with Himself." The "Almighty" is the Name God took with Abraham, the One in whom were the resources of power to sustain the weak pilgrims of faith in their earthly pilgrimage. "I AM," or "Jehovah," which He took with Israel; as indicating to His failing people the unfailing character of His purpose concerning them. None of these in themselves declare His nature or the character of His ways with us. How inconceivably great therefore is the revelation of the Father by the Son who has said, "I have made known to them Thy Name and will make it known." How this leads into an intimacy of individual relationship with the Father, a place of nearness and intimacy which alone can be measured by the wondrous fact, that we have been brought into a place of grace and favour in the Beloved. And this was realised when as Man He took His place in the Father's presence after declaring, "I ascend to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God."

Moses is then warned that "the King of Egypt will not let you go, no, unless it be by a powerful hand." God then assures Moses that this will be distinctly manifested, as Paul again says, "For this very thing I have raised thee (Pharaoh) up from amongst men, that I might thus show in thee my power, and that My Name should be declared in all the earth. So then to whom He will He shows mercy, and whom He will He hardens " (Romans 9:17-18). Well might Moses and the children of Israel celebrate in their song of triumph on the other side of the Red Sea the glorious achievements of their God and say: "Thy right hand O Lord is become glorious in power, Thy right hand O Lord hath dashed in pieces the enemy" (Exodus 15:6).

Then every woman is told to ask of her neighbours various articles, "and ye shall spoil the Egyptians." Inappropriately the word "borrow" appears in the Authorised Version where the simple meaning "to ask" is intended, and according to his manner the rationalist has been quick to seize upon this word to charge God with enjoining His people to commit an immoral and dishonest act.

There is not, however, the slightest infringement of what is right and proper as the children of Israel had received no recompense for the harsh and bitter servitude which had been imposed upon them, and in the event, at the actual moment when the request was made, the Egyptians showed a conspicuous willingness to accede to their request, "And the Egyptians urged the people to send them out of the land in haste; for they said, We are all dead men! . . . And the Lord had given the people favour in the eyes of the Egyptians, and they gave to them, and they spoiled the Egyptians " (Exodus 12:33; Exodus 12:36). It was an unconditional gift, savouring somewhat of an act of propitiation in the sure knowledge that they would see the children of Israel no more. The God of the Hebrews had taken up the gage of battle thrown down by the haughty and insolent Pharaoh when he defiantly exclaimed "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord neither will I let Israel go" (Exodus 5:2). But the God of their salvation had answered the proud Pharaoh "by terrible things in righteousness," and, as he stood in the midst of the devastation which the desolating judgments of God had brought upon Egypt, he was made to realise as was also Nebuchadnezzar at a later time that "the Most High ruleth over the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will . . . and those that walk in pride He is able to abase" (Daniel 4:32; Daniel 4:37). When He makes bare His arm, Who shall His work withstand? When He His people's cause defends, Who then shall stay His hand?

Signs of the Deliverer

Exodus 4:1-31.

We are now brought to the threshold of those great and solemn events in which we view the irresistible power of God actively expressed in His sovereign ways in goodness toward His oppressed people, and in His sovereign ways in judgment toward their oppressors. As Paul could say in Romans 9:17, "For the scripture says to Pharaoh, For this very thing I have raised thee up from amongst men, that I might thus show in thee My power, and so that My name should be declared in all the earth. So then, to whom He wills He shows mercy, and whom He wills He hardens." But before these events claim our careful consideration, our attention is called to the tender and compassionate dealings of God with His wavering servant in preparing him for the accomplishment of the task with which He had entrusted him. To witness those elements of unbelief, irresolution, and indecision on the part of Moses, persisting even in the presence of these unmistakable evidences of divine power, is very humbling in the extreme. May we see in all this that the Spirit intends no disparagement of Moses, of whom God Himself has marked out as conspicuously enjoying His favour, but rather as a salutary admonition to us, lest we also should be guilty of similar conduct with less excuse; for God has set forth the wavering of a servant so faithful for the express purpose of guarding us from the like or other failures.

God had already declared to Moses that they would hearken to his voice (Exodus 3:18); but Moses in this first verse of Exodus 4:1-31 uses similar words in positive contradiction of the divine assurance. But God does not reject His failing servant, this spirit of unbelief is met by the spirit of grace and the display of divine power, "And the Lord said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said a rod. And He said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent, and Moses fled from it. And the Lord said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand." This is the first of these signs of a miraculous nature in which is revealed the fulness of grace in which God

condescended to dispel the unworthy and unbelieving fears of one who in all these objects demonstrates conclusively that self is the beam in his eye completely obstructing the vision of faith. How forcibly this is seen in Exodus 3:11 where Moses says, "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh?" but had not God, the "I AM THAT I AM" said, "And now come and I will send thee unto Pharaoh." It is ever right to have low thoughts of self, but to virtually call in question the ability of God to carry into effect what He has purposed is far removed from that faith that comes to God believing that "He is, and is a rewarder of them that seek Him out," for without faith it is impossible to please God. How beautifully and instructively this is seen in the beloved apostle in 2 Corinthians 1:9-10, "But we ourselves had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not have our trust in ourselves, but in the God who raises the dead; who has delivered us from so great a death and does deliver; in whom we confide that He will also yet deliver." And again in 2 Corinthians 3:5, "Not that we are competent of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our competency is of God." But how graciously God comes down to Moses in meeting all the fears and falterings of His chosen servant, in the display of his grace and power, and moreover, investing him with that power by which he in turn would convince the children of Israel that he was their accredited deliverer approved and sent of God for their liberation from the "house of bondmen." May we have ears opened to hear as the instructed ones, the voice that speaks to us in all these things, and profit from its timely admonition.

It is a thought of the greatest signification that the faith of the children of Israel in Moses as one sent of God for their deliverance was the vital point upon which everything depended. Not yet the deliverance, but the deliverer to whom was committed the power to ensure their deliverance; and in the consideration of this wondrous theme Moses, favoured servant as he undoubtedly was, pales into insignificance as the vision of faith is filled with the undimmed and perennial glory of One, superlatively greater than Moses, One who must in all things have the first place. How the contemplation of the Person of the Saviour Himself gives a fulness to our thoughts and brings us into a greater measure of correspondence with the thoughts of God the Father as expressed with such an eloquence of feeling in those words, "Behold My servant whom I have chosen, My beloved in whom My soul has found its delight" (Matthew 12:18).

All through John's Gospel we find the possession of eternal life is connected with faith in the Person of the Saviour. "He that believes on the Son has life eternal, and he that is not subject to the Son shall not see life" (John 3:36). The word "subject" in the verse just quoted, involves "obedience of submission to His person." Then again in John 20:31, "But these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life in His Name." This is the due order, the Saviour first then from and in Him the salvation. Noah and those with him realized that the Ark alone could shelter them from the judgment of God and ensure their emergence on to the renewed earth. No doubt our place "in Christ" has' been secured in all the value of that redemptive work in virtue of which He has taken His place at the right hand of God, the blessed and eternal proof of the perfection of that work and of God's unqualified acceptance of it; but let us not forget that the Altar sanctifies the gift.

How forcibly this is brought before us in the beautiful language of the types. In Exodus 27:1-21 of this same book the Spirit of God furnishes Moses with minute and precise instructions regarding the dimensions of the Brazen Altar and the materials from which it was to be constructed. And this Altar has been referred to as a symbol of display in contra-distinction to the Laver and the altar of

incense, which are symbols of approach. The words of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 23:19, "For which is greater the gift or the altar which sanctifies the gift," is no doubt an allusion to this altar and justifies us in concluding that there is a peculiar distinction attaching to it. It is a vessel of display and sets forth in type the manifestation of God in Christ displayed in the fulness of grace as providing the divinely appointed meeting-place between Him and the sinner. It is specifically the "altar of burnt-offering," and speaks of Christ in His perfect suitability and adequacy to sustain the judgment of God, and to glorify Him in the very place where sin had been, so that instead of pronouncing a curse He can show "forth His righteousness at the present time, so that He should be just and justify Him that is of the faith of Jesus." As we contemplate the incomparable greatness and glory of our great Deliverer, having the first place in all things, how we long for the moment when, freed from every restricting influence, our hearts and lips and every faculty we possess shall be fully developed to join in the glad refrain, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour, and glory, and blessing."

We have considered briefly, and no doubt imperfectly, how faith in the deliverer is to precede and produce faith in the deliverance. Now in these signs committed to Moses with the necessary authority and power to display them before the people, in order to dispel their unbelief on the one hand, and on the other to mark with divine approval the person of the deliverer, we can see that these are not unrelated to the condition of abject misery in which the people are found at this time; indeed as we consider them thoughtfully we can discern a striking relevancy between them and the circumstances to which they are addressed. It could not be otherwise since these divinely given signs were indicative of God's intervention in power for the liberation of His people from the state of bitter servitude under which they groaned. The bondage in which we were held necessitated the exercise of power in grace for our deliverance; and another question of the gravest and most solemn import had to be met, the question of our moral state as having to do with "God who is of holier eyes than to behold iniquity." These two things are suggested by the rod and the hand in the bosom. The rod in Moses' hand is a shepherd's rod, and exercised in divine power, as we shall see as we go through the book of Exodus. "All power belongeth unto God," and this shepherd's rod shows us how He uses it. Power with Him always waits upon love. As another has expressed it so beautifully, "The hand that wields the sceptre of the universe is guided by the heart of Him who has revealed Himself not, as power, nor even as righteousness, but as Love." The rod in Moses' hand then, is the type of divine power, exercised in the fulness of His grace in the liberation of His people from a power too strong for them.

Moses is told to cast it on the ground, and out of his hand the rod changes its character; it becomes a serpent. As we look around us today with thoughts of power being in the hands of Him who "sitteth sovereign on the throne and ruleth all things well," must we not own to a measure of bewilderment as we see the sure and certain marks and evidences of the "mystery of God" not yet completed, the time in which God appears to be taking no account of what is taking place in the kingdoms of the world — the time of His silence! And in this connection another has said, "The silence of God is the greatest mystery of our existence." Scripture itself puts the perplexing question, "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with Thee which frameth mischief by a law?" Surely the rod is to all appearance out of the Shepherd's hand, and the prince of this world is not Christ but Satan. The claim he makes to worldwide dominion when he displays before the self-humbled Son of Man, all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, with the boast "All

that is given unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it" seems no empty boast. The rod seems not in His hand to whom it rightly belongs, but upon the ground, and Satanic. But observe the beautiful accuracy of the type and the comfort which the Spirit has prepared for us in it. At the command of God the rod was cast out of Moses' hand, it did not slip out. God has not lost control of the world, after all; of His own will, and for His own wise purposes He has subjected man to the sway of him whom man has chosen to be his god and prince. Then, when all has been fulfilled according to the mind of God, the great voices in the heaven will be heard saying, "The Kingdom of the world of our Lord and of His Christ is come, and He shall reign to the ages of ages." Then with joyful hearts and lips, we, the saints in heaven, will swell the glad refrain and say "We give Thee thanks Lord God Almighty, He who is, and who was, that Thou hast taken Thy great power and hast reigned" (Revelation 11:17). Our principal concern, as enlightened by the Spirit, is the moral application of these deeply instructive and interesting types as illustrative of God's sovereign ways in grace towards us in the glorious work of redemption whereby we have been delivered from the whole sphere and power of the adversary, and brought into such a wealth of relationship with Himself according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He has taken us into favour — put us into a position of grace and favour — in the Beloved! in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of offences, according to the riches of His grace. What are we to learn then from the rod of power in Moses' hand cast on the ground becoming a serpent, and on his seizing it becoming a rod again? At the beginning man was set up in authority, the rod of power being placed in his hands; "And God said, Let us make man in our image after our likeness, and let them have dominion . . . over the whole earth . . ." (Genesis 1:26). But in Genesis 3:1-24 do we not see the rod of power cast from his hand and the power becoming satanic, assuming the character of evil? But in Moses taking the serpent by the tail we see Christ taking up all the consequences of man's sin, and Satan's power, wielded by him as the might of death. This Blessed Man of a new order, a heavenly order, One who is from above, and above all, has been made sin, and has gone into the very strong-hold of the adversary's power, the domain of darkness and of death, annulling the usurper's power and delivering his captives from a power out of which they were unable to extricate themselves. "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, and shall he that is rightfully captive be delivered? For thus saith the Lord, Even the captive of the mighty shall be taken away; and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered" (Isaiah 49:24-25). Power, exercised in grace has now been regained by Man in the Person of Jesus, and is being displayed for man's deliverance from every expression of the enemy's power.

He Satan's power laid low;

Made sin, sin's reign o'er threw;

Bowed to the grave, destroyed it so, And death by dying slew.

Christ is alive for evermore — the Beginning of the creation of God and has the keys of death and hades. He is at the right hand of power — the true Benjamin, Son of the right hand — exalted by God's right hand to be a Leader and Saviour (Acts 5:1-42). Power is in the hands of the Man Christ Jesus for man's deliverance, it is available for all, none need remain in bondage to one who is a greater rebel than man himself. The God who committed Himself in promise and covenant to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, has secured all power in the hand of Christ for the fulfilment of every promise, and the complete deliverance of man from the power of the oppressor.

Moses fleeing from the serpent would indicate man's inability to face the power of evil. The Lord Jesus alone could do this. It is remarkable to see in Mark's Gospel God's perfect Servant presented as the One able to meet and overcome every element of Satan's power, and able also to invest His disciples with this power so that they can "take up serpents." And so we, as indwelt by the Spirit, are invested with all the power of Christ risen at God's right hand, so that we can meet and overcome all the power of the enemy in a power not our own. But there is another question to be considered. Moses was instructed of God, "Put now thy hand into thy bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom, and took it out, and behold his hand was leprous, as snow. And He said, Put thy hand into thy bosom again. And he put his hand into his bosom again, and took it out of his bosom, and behold it was turned again as his flesh." Leprosy in the scriptures is a type of sin in its loathsomeness, its virulence and its power to spread. In its incipient stages its existence may not be proved by any external evidence, but the spot on the skin while not truly representing the extent of the disease might yet indicate that which lay much deeper reaching to the blood, the very life-stream, no localised infection, but corrupting the whole man. Its invariable tendency unless checked by the intervention of God is to spread continually, blanching the hair and exposing the raw flesh and finally reducing the wretched victim to the state described so vividly by Isaiah, "From the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, no soundness in him, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores." In its capacity to spread, passing from one to another, it infected first those most in contact with the leper, his nearest and dearest, the inmates of his home and heart.

God's treatment of it was to prescribe the complete isolation of him who was the victim of this loathsome disease. Shut out from his home, from the society of his fellowmen, he had to cover his upper lip and proclaim himself to be a source of pollution in the despairing wail, "Unclean, unclean." All these descriptive details relating to one afflicted with leprosy can be seen in Leviticus 13:1-59, and all the surrounding circumstances described in typical language stresses very forcibly the thought that sin is thus with God neither fortuitous nor limited in its incidence, but a growing, virulent, contagious, evil, deeper than its superficial appearance would suggest, not to be measured by any outward appearance, and absolutely fatal in result apart from God's sovereign intervention in mercy. Let no man delude himself with the fallacious theory that sin is the effect of his circumstances, and that he is the victim of his environment. "The tree is known by its fruit." "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." Depend upon it, if the hand be leprous, the heart is no better, but worse as being the very seat, the source of the disease, and cleansing must begin, not with the hand but with the heart.

How powerfully does the type speak of how effectively God has dealt with sin, both in its source and its expression. Moses' hand thrust into his bosom became leprous, thrust into his bosom again it is restored. Defilement and cleansing both begin at the source — the heart. Leprosy in the heart is sin hidden; in the hand is sin exposed. God has used the water and blood which flowed from the side of the Lord Jesus, as the efficacious means of cleansing us from the guilt and defilement of sin.

These then are the signs of the Deliverer. The third sign is a prediction of judgment for obstinate unbelief, but there is no suggestion that the third sign was performed as necessary to overcome their unbelief. "And it shall come to pass if they will not believe also these two signs, neither hearken unto thy voice, that thou shalt take the water of the river and pour it upon the dry land, and

the water which thou takest out of the river shall become blood upon the dry land." Water represents that which refreshes — the means of life and refreshment as coming from God; but poured out on the ground becomes the symbol of judgment and of the consequences of judgment executed. Must not the stream of life and blessing from God ministered to needy man in "an accepted time and a day of salvation" become wrath and judgment if His goodness leads not to repentance? Every blessing is so much judgment if a Saviour's voice be disregarded.

Despite these signs, however, in which was evidenced the invincible power of God, and which witnessed to the sovereign control of God over every circumstance through the instrumentality of His servant and in favour of His people, Moses still shows the hesitancy of unbelief; self still obtrudes between this mighty God who had espoused the cause of His oppressed people and the magnitude of the task with which he was being entrusted and invested with that authoritative power which would ensure the successful accomplishment of all that God had committed to him. "I am not eloquent neither heretofore, nor since Thou hast spoken unto Thy servant; but I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue." Moses was truly presuming upon the long-suffering and forbearance which God had shown to him while he was manifesting in a very pronounced degree his facility for objecting. But now the anger of the Lord is kindled against His servant and He says, "Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well — And also behold he goeth out to meet thee." And so the wavering of Moses is overcome, but he has lost much. Aaron was now to share with him what God had intended for him alone. Moreover Aaron as the mouth-piece of his brother would have the prominent place before men; yet in spite of Moses' persistent obstinacy and slowness of heart to respond to these divine promptings, God does not act in any arbitrary or capricious manner towards His servant, God is not a man that He should repent. He will not be thwarted in the least degree in the carrying out of his purposes, and so in tender grace He still reserves to His servant Moses the chief place before Him, "And thou shalt speak unto him, and put the words into his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and his mouth, and I will teach you what ye shall do. And he shall speak for thee unto the people; and it shall be that he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be unto him instead of God." It is as Moses' "prophet" that Aaron is here announced — his associate and complement in the great work which God had committed to them. In all this we have a two-fold type of the Lord Jesus as King and Priest — redemption by power and by blood: without the latter there could not be the former. Priesthood sets forth the Deliverer, and sacrifice procures the salvation. This in its true import Israel has not yet learned: there Moses is delayed by his need of Aaron; in a coming day when they look upon Him, they shall not only see One whom they have pierced, but know why He had to stoop to that unexampled humiliation, "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities." And now Moses returns to Jethro, to find him willing to accede to his desire to see if his brethren in Egypt are yet alive. Then we have another wonderful expression of grace on the part of God in the opportune assurance that all the men are dead that sought his life. Thus we see the removal of every difficulty as he advances now with firm tread to the momentous climax that lay before him wherein the wrath of man would praise God, and what would not would be restrained. Once more he is warned of Pharaoh's stubbornness of heart, which, in the sovereign ways of God, would but subserve His purposes by providing Him with the occasion of manifesting Himself in all the glory and majesty of that Name in which He had declared Himself to be for His people, "I AM THAT I AM."

God then speaks of Israel as His son, His first-born. They owe their place among the nations to His adoption of them, in accordance with His faithfulness to the covenant He had made with their fathers. They had not worked for this, it was according to God's sovereign choice, but as it was said to their father, Jacob, so is it with them, "The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth" (Romans 9:11). Yet this grace to Israel in no wise implies the rejection of other nations, but rather the reverse, as the promise to Abraham long before declared, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." It is indeed blessed to know that "Israel's God is ours." In connection with the covenant with Abraham the scene in the inn is pregnant with divine instruction. Circumcision was the sign of this very covenant (Genesis 17:1-27). It was the expression of that renunciation of all confidence in the flesh in order to the display of God in almighty power. To borrow the words of another, "God was going to put honour on Moses but there was dishonour to Him in the house of Moses already. How came it that there lacked that which typifies the mortifying of the flesh in those who were nearest Moses? How came it that God's glory was forgotten in that which ought to have been prominent in the father's heart? . . . it endangered Moses . . . Moses was the responsible person, and God held to His order." But Moses received grace to bow before His chastening hand. Nevertheless his neglect in this matter was so serious in the sight of God, He sought to slay him. In our practical ways in service and testimony in order to "be a vessel to honour sanctified and serviceable to the Master, prepared for every good work," there must be the practical cutting off of the flesh; guilty weakness in any form or degree is connected with the flesh, but in circumcision there is the setting aside of all that savours of fallen nature, giving place to the power of the Spirit. "But ye are not in flesh but in Spirit, if indeed God's Spirit dwell in you. But if, by the Spirit ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live: for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Romans 8:9; Romans 8:13-14).

"Let My People go"

Exodus 5:1-23; Exodus 6:1-30 The question in controversy was whether the world-system was to have the service of God's people, or that service was to be exclusively for Him. This service — priestly in character — could not be rendered in the land of Egypt. The expression "three days' journey" is pregnant with divine meaning and instruction for our souls. God's first announcement through Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh was "Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, Let My People go that they may celebrate a feast to Me in the wilderness" and again in verse three, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us; let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to Jehovah our God." First of all it is a "feast to Jehovah" they are to celebrate in the wilderness; then we learn as necessary and complementary to this of "a sacrifice to Jehovah our God." In this we see the heart of God revealed displaying the glory of His grace, while in the sacrifice we see how God has unfolded to us the riches of His grace through the sacrificial work of the Lord Jesus whereby as set free from all that held us in bondage, we might enter into that unspeakable joy, which is characteristic of His presence. "Thy countenance is fulness of joy." But as already remarked this feast cannot be held in Egypt, there must be the "three days" remove — the distance between death and resurrection alone can effect our complete severance from this world in which we were enslaved under the despotic power of him, who is its god and prince, and bring us in all the liberty of that grace which has set us free into our place of heavenly blessing and intimacy with God, now made known to us as Father in the Person of the Son. The practical import

of this to each one of us cannot be stressed too strongly, as we see the dark turbid waters of infidelity rising in all their menacing power around us and the repellent features of apostasy developing with amazing rapidity, its corrupting ramifications spreading themselves throughout the systems of the world.

How graciously the Spirit has warned us of this, as depicted in the address to the church at Laodicea. No doubt should remain in the minds of those taught of God, that we have reached this solemn phase of the Church's history as the vessel of testimony for God in this world. It is remarkable that the development of this phase should be accompanied with a resurgence of religious activity hitherto unknown in the history of the religious systems of the world. That which is producing this condition is the effort to Christianize the natural man. Man is supposed to be already in relationship with God, all men without distinction are said to be His children, therefore the new birth, a life derived from the Last Adam, is explained away and made simply to mean an outward change in character, a reformation of the old man. As another has said, "There is no zeal for Christ, no hatred of sin, but a mild, self-complacent toleration of all, and of all things, and connected therewith the substitution of humanity for Christ." The world system as represented by the land of Egypt demands everything for itself, everything must be contributory to its enrichment and advancement. And herein lies the crucial issue for every true child of God. It is a question of the greatest moment for each one to consider — are we so completely liberated from every element and principle of the world, that we can engage in priestly service Godward, according to God, in "the beauty of holiness"? All that is of this world — whether it be the flesh-pots, the idolatry, or the servile labour, all conspire to render us incapable of rendering this worthy and obligatory service. How sad to come short morally of the desires and intentions of "Him who loves us, and has washed us from our sins in His blood and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father." With uncompromising finality, Egypt must be left behind. Worship in Egypt is worship in the flesh; Cain's worship which owns not our total ruin, nor the death of Christ as righteously meeting it. The Cross stands as an insuperable barrier between the world and the child of God. As Paul could say, "Far be it from me to boast save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ through which the world is crucified unto me, and I to the world."

Thy Cross has severed ties which bound us here, Thyself our treasure in a brighter sphere. Were we living in the full power of the truth of the fellowship of His death, this world would be stripped of every vestige of its bloom and attractiveness.

These wonderful types shine with added lustre in the light of our heavenly calling. It has been very acceptably expressed: "The Law, the Psalms and the Prophets are made to speak, as it were, with new tongues . . . once earthly in the letter now heavenly in spirit." It is not without significance that God is spoken of in the third verse of our chapter as "the God of the Hebrews." The root of this word means "to pass over," as when one passes over a river or from one region to another. Abraham is spoken of in Genesis 14:13 as "Abram the Hebrew." Abraham was bidden to leave his country and his kindred and to go into the land of Canaan, and the word Hebrew is not employed until Abraham had left his country and was in the land of Canaan, and when he was there he was a "sojourner" in a strange country dwelling in tents (Hebrews 11:9). The context in which the term Abram the Hebrew appears is very striking — In Genesis 14:13 it says, "And one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew." This was after Lot had been taken captive by the kings after they had overthrown the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah. It is stated very significantly of

Lot in Genesis 14:12, "For he dwelt in Sodom." Lot had settled down in this world. At the beginning he "pitches his tents as far as Sodom" but in the end he is found "sitting in the gate of Sodom"; a city of which God has said, "But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." The path of strangership with the man of faith had lost its attractiveness for Lot, resulting in shame and dishonour, and in-calculable loss. But "Abram the Hebrew" a true son of Eber, one "passing through," maintains with undeviating purpose of heart, the path of faith with his tent and altar. With what depth of feeling the Spirit mentions those footsteps of faith of Abraham, the friend of God "who sojourned as a stranger in the land of promise as a foreign country, having dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, of which God is the artificer and constructor . . . All these died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them from afar off and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and sojourners on the earth. For they who say such things show clearly that they seek their country — that is a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God; for He has prepared for them a city," (Hebrews 11:8-16). Abraham, by his path of strangership in this world was clearly distinguished as "the friend of God," as James says in Chap. 4 where he draws our attention to a spirit entirely contrary to that of Abraham, "Adulteresses, know ye not that friendship with the world is enmity with God. Whoever therefore is minded to be the friend of the world is constituted enemy of God." But the path that Abraham trod, and he is the father of all them that believe, is the only path for every true believer in Christ. It is essentially so, since we are heavenly in calling, character and destiny. In continuing the tenor of these thoughts, we are reminded of John 17:1-26 where we are privileged to hear those profoundly moving expressions as the Son speaks to the Father concerning the men whom He had given Him out of the world. Doubtless these expressions had immediate reference to the little company then around Him, who had companied with Him in His earthly pathway, but there can be no doubt they are inclusive also of those who would believe on Him through their word. In the 6th verse, the Lord Jesus says, "I have manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world. They were Thine and Thou gavest them Me, and they have kept Thy word." Then in John 17:9, "I demand concerning them, I do not demand concerning the world, but concerning those whom Thou has given Me, for they are Thine, (and all that is Mine is Thine, and all that is Thine Mine) and I am glorified in them." Again in John 17:13-19, "And now I come to Thee. And these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in them. I have given them Thy word, and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, as I am not of the world. I do not demand that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them out of evil. They are not of the world as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by the truth, Thy word is truth. As thou has sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world; and I sanctify myself for them, that they also may be sanctified by truth." The main consideration in quoting these sublime and impressive utterances of the Son in full is to draw attention to those definitive assertions where He declares repeatedly that "they are not of the world as I am not of the world," for the Father had given them to Him "out of the world." Again in John 8:23, the Lord Jesus says to His opposers "Ye are from beneath I am from above. Ye are of this world, I am not of this world."

We will now return to our chapter in Exodus and glean more of this heavenly teaching and instruction from these earthly types. We must always remember that the great thought before us is the redemption of the children of Israel from the house of bondmen, and their being brought into

relationship with the God who had redeemed them according to the glory and power of that name in which He had declared Himself to be for them. In all this, as taught of the Spirit, we can discern a shadowy outline of the greater redemption that has been wrought for us and the infinitely greater place of intimacy and relationship we have been brought into as knowing the Father whom the Son has fully revealed. The manner in which Moses and Aaron, as sent of God, comport themselves in the presence of Pharaoh, and the form in which the request for the release of God's people from bondage is presented to him, is yet another instance of the perfection of God's ways which are ever sovereign in expression and ever superior to all the circumstances in which they operate. Here we find, as in all things, God acting in perfect consistency with all that He is in Himself, every divine attribute in their individual identities displayed in harmonious completeness as expressive of the nature and character of God. How truly remarkable therefore, the spirit of grace and long-suffering with which He requests the liberation of His people. At once, the heart of the proud Pharaoh is exposed in its inveterate hatred and opposition to God and His people, in those defiant and insolent words, "Who is Jehovah to whose voice I am to hearken to let Israel go? I do not know Jehovah, neither will I let Israel go." We have now come to the solemn moment where we see the inexorable enforcement of the divine assertion in Romans 9:17, "For this very thing I have raised thee up from amongst men, that I might thus show in thee My power, and so that My name should be declared in all the earth." And so God displays His all-mighty power in those successive judgments which fall with increasing severity upon the land and people of Egypt. His grace and forbearance having been spurned, those inflexible judgments will assuredly bring the knowledge of who He is to Pharaoh, according as He says in Exodus 9:13-14, "Thus saith Jehovah the God of the Hebrews, Let my people go that they may serve me. For I will at this time send all my plagues to thy heart, and on thy bondmen and on thy people, that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth." The first movements of God towards the deliverance of His people served only to intensify the bitter toil of their servitude. Pharaoh had no intention of allowing his bondslaves to slip so easily from his grasp. Their burdens therefore were increased. They had now to gather straw for the making of bricks, yet the number of bricks was not to be diminished; "Thus says Pharaoh: I will not give you straw; go ye get yourselves straw where ye may find it; but none of your work shall be diminished." How suited a type is Pharaoh in every respect of Satan, the god of this world. Satan's object is to connect the service of the people of God with this world, and so prevent them from carrying out their true and proper service to God in relation to an entirely different order of things, even a heavenly and spiritual order, of which the tabernacle with its services and sacrifices was a type. How many of the people of God with a zeal which is "not according to knowledge," are toiling under the delusive power of the adversary to improve the world, to reform man, to elevate the masses. But the more earnest people are on this line, the more heart-breaking is the fruitless toil. It is fruitless labour from a spiritual point of view as the fruit of all this labour can only result in the building up and enrichment of a system which lies under the solemn judgment of God. The children of Israel making bricks in Egypt is a figure of all the toil that goes to build up and enrich the world system. There is no spiritual joy or liberty in this service; it is bondage. The people were set to make bricks without straw. There is a great deal of labour expended in this way. Self-improvement and world-improvement entails labour which has no suitable material to work with and can end only in bitter disappointment.

"Be not men's servant, Think what costly price was paid That thou mayest His own bondmen be, Whose service, perfect freedom is."

How often has our well-intentioned service proved to be merely a distraction and far from conformity to the will of God? Like Martha "cumbered with much serving" while ignorant of, or indifferent to, the place that Mary occupied, sitting at the feet of Jesus, that blessed One who, in selfless devotion to the Father's will, came into the world declaring, "I came not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me." The will of God ought to be of prime consideration to every child of God. As born of God we have a nature capable of delighting in all that savours of the will of God. What does John say in 1 John 2:17? "And the world is passing and its lust, but He that does the will of God abides for eternity." There is a remarkable statement concerning David in Acts 13:36 relative to the will of God, "For David indeed, having in his own generation ministered to the will of God . . ." We can only be here for the pleasure of God in relation to His surpassingly great and vital interests as we grow in the full knowledge of His will. As the beloved apostle could say to the saints in Colosse, "We also . . . do not cease praying and asking for you to the end that ye may be filled with the full knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, so as" — the following is a blessed consequence of what he desired for them — "to walk worthily of the Lord unto all well-pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and growing by the true (or full) knowledge of God" (Colossians 1:9-10). This of necessity involves our complete deliverance out of the whole sphere and condition in which the will of man operates.

Paul in writing to the saints at Ephesus regarding the surpassing greatness of the power of God towards us who believe, according to the working of the might of His strength, in which He wrought in the Christ in raising Him from among the dead, continues this thought at the beginning of Ephesians 2:1-22, and assures the saints at Ephesus, that as "once nations in the flesh," being dead in their offences and sins, this same sovereign invincible power was exercised toward them in life-giving power in order to raise them up together and make "them sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus." But the apostle is careful to remind them of the place of death and of distance in which they were before God's mighty intervention on their behalf. Verses 2 and 3 state, "In which ye once walked according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience; among whom we also all had our conversations in the lusts of our flesh, doing what the flesh and the thought willed to do, and were children, by nature, of wrath, even as the rest." How trenchantly does the beloved apostle address the assemblies of Galatia in these words, "Grace to you and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, so that He should deliver us out of the present evil age — or course of this world — according to the will of our God and Father." Paul could say, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ." Mark that beautiful expression, "the grace of Christ." The adversary had introduced the leaven of evil doctrine which was insidiously working to the subverting of the truth of the glad tidings that Paul had preached to the assemblies of Galatia. The character of this evil was a mixture of law and grace, of legalism and Christ, whereas the characteristic of their call had been simply and solely, "the grace of Christ." By taking up the law as the rule of life, they had descended morally to the world, the sphere where the law operated in relation to man in the flesh. There cannot be such a thing as separation from the world if we place ourselves under law. By reminding them that "our Lord Jesus Christ gave Himself for our sins, so that He should deliver us out of the course of this world, according to the will of our God and Father," the beloved apostle was applying the divine remedy to extricate the people of God from those worldly and fleshly entanglements. This imperative call to complete and uncompromising separation from every aspect of the world system

is sustained by the word and Spirit of God and will continue without cessation until the moment of love's full satisfaction when that blessed One who gave Him-self for the assembly shall "present it to Himself glorious having no spot or wrinkle or any such things; but that it might be holy and blameless." How powerful the inducement presented to the people of God in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 to walk in separation from all that is unsuitable to the holiness of God. In clear and forceful language the apostle demonstrates the incongruity of agreement of God's temple with idols, etc. The language is all the more remarkable as the apostle quotes from the Old Testament, Leviticus 26:11-12; Isaiah 52:11; showing that God's great thought of separation for His people is unaffected by dispensational change, "According as God has said, I will dwell among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be to Me a people; wherefore come out from the midst of them and be separated, saith the Lord, and touch not what is unclean, and I will receive you and I will be to you for a Father, and ye shall be to Me for sons and daughters saith the Lord Almighty." How appropriate are the Names employed by the Spirit in this remarkable connection, Almighty or Shaddai, Jehovah and Father. Each of these Names indicates the measure of revelation which God has vouchsafed to men in those relationships which He has established with them. As another has so helpfully remarked, "His Name too is significant, as the name of a divine Person contains in it the character of the blessing to be known according to it." To the weak pilgrims of faith the "Almighty" gave them their resources of power: to failing Israel Jehovah the "I AM THAT I AM" secured to them the unfailing unchangeability of His purpose and counsel regarding their blessing. While to us in this dispensation of grace the revelation of the Father in and by the Son has brought us into this intimate individual relationship set forth as to place and relationship in Christ as Man before His Father and His God, and won for us in righteousness by His work of redemption. Well may our hearts respond with ever increasing delight to that announcement of singular beauty, spoken to Mary by the Lord Jesus on the morning of His resurrection, "Go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father and to my God and your God" (John 20:17).

Having been brought by infinite grace into this wealth of relationship with the Father and the Son, how imperative is this separation from a world characterised by hatred of the Father and the Son, "They have both seen and hated both Me and My Father," a world that knows not the Father: "Righteous Father, and the world has not known Thee" (John 17:25), and again in 1 John 2:15 "Love not the world nor the things in the world. If anyone love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." But in order to be brought into responsive communion with the mind of the Father concerning His own we may have to pass through deep searching exercise in order to learn the character of the god of this world, our great adversary, and the nature of his servitude by which he would rivet our chains more firmly to the world over which he rules, and so neutralise our service to the One who has brought us to Himself. Furthermore in these exercises we learn in measure the competency of God who will not allow any power, however formidable, to thwart Him in bringing to complete fruition all that He has purposed for His own glory and the blessing of those whom He has purposed for so great a blessing.

How beautifully this is brought before us in the manner in which God meets the bitter disappointment and reproaches of His people with a renewed declaration of His Name. In Exodus 6:2-3 we read, "And God spoke to Moses and said to him, I am Jehovah. And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, unto Jacob as the Almighty God (Genesis 17:1, and Genesis 28:3), but by

my Name Jehovah I was not made known to them," or as the alternative rendering reads, and suggests the truer thought, "But by my Name Jehovah I did not make myself known to them." Let us not draw wrong inferences from these words which speak with remarkable precision and clearness, by concluding that the Name of Jehovah was not known before this. Abraham provides us with very convincing evidence that this was not so, when after he had offered up the ram which had been caught in the thicket by its horns in place of Isaac, "he called the name of that place, Jehovah-jireh," Jehovah will provide. This and other instances therefore furnish us with proof beyond all question that the name of Jehovah was well known previously. But this was the name he had taken in covenant relationship with the children of Israel in faithfulness to all the promises made to the fathers.

Notwithstanding the arrogant refusal of Pharaoh to accede to His request for the liberation of his people; in spite of the faithfulness of His people, whose bitterness of spirit resulted from viewing their increased burdens as mountains through the distorting mists of unbelief, and despite the inability of Moses and Aaron to rise to the full level of God's intentions for His people, God Himself, on whom all depends, moves forward as the following words declare, to the accomplishment of all He had purposed for their blessing. "I have heard also the groaning of the children of Israel . . . I have remembered my covenant . . . I am Jehovah, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians . . . I will bring you into the land concerning which I swore to give it unto Abraham, unto Isaac and unto Jacob." By the reiteration of the name Jehovah, God displays how He loves and cherishes that name by which He has bound up the people of His choice with Himself. But how truly has He magnified His word above all His name, as we consider how the fulfilment of all His purposes has surpassed any and every expectation founded upon the names in which He has taken men into relationship with Himself and which are descriptive of the character of their blessing. In the genealogy given in the latter part of the chapter we see how the spiritual takes precedence over the natural. This is invariably the divine order. "But that which is spiritual was not first but that which is natural, then that which is spiritual." In verse 26 it states, "This is that Aaron and Moses, etc.," but in verse 27 the expression is reversed, "This is that Moses and Aaron." God ever recognises those natural relationships which He Himself has established, and so ought we as intelligent in His mind; but in doing so we must maintain the superiority of grace in every particular. It is worthy of note that the Epistles which present our supreme place of blessing in Christ give full recognition to these relationships as furnishing us with the heavenly springs and motives for a walk in them in consonance with the mind of God. But as to spiritual action, Moses retains the place of superiority. Moses and Aaron combine to present a beautiful type of the Lord Jesus as Mediator and Priest. As Mediator He brings all that God is in the fulness of grace and blessing to men. As Priest, He is Head of the priestly family, sustaining them in affection and activity which find their expression in worship, as desired by the Father, on the part of the true worshippers whom He seeks to "worship Him in spirit and in truth."

Exodus 7:1-25; Exodus 8:1-32; Exodus 9:1-35; Exodus 10:1-29.

"None can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?"

These chapters must be taken as a whole since they present to us a continuous record of those great and momentous events which are unique in the history of the nations of the world.

God in His infinite wisdom has anticipated the attempts of infidelity and unbelief to reduce those solemnly impressive events to the level of ordinary occurrences, occasioned by the laws of nature. This latter term is distinctly misleading and erroneous, since there are no "laws of nature" but "laws in nature" established by God, the Creator, for the orderly and systematic control and regulation of those forces which are the agents of His sovereign power, the laws of which can be suspended as He wills in His providential dealings with men. In Exodus 9:14, the manner in which this solemn announcement is made suggests that there is a special and singular character attaching to these grave events, unparalleled in the history of nations, then or since. "For I will at this time send all My plagues to thy heart and on thy bondmen, and on thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like Me in all the earth."

God was about "to do His work, His strange work, and perform His act, His unwonted act." Judgment is His "strange work"; He delights in mercy, but He must act consistently with all that He is, and having borne with much long-suffering the many provocations of this proud and insolent monarch, who had by his refusal to let God's people go constituted himself the avowed enemy of God and brought upon himself the necessity of learning, that "Every proud heart is an abomination to Jehovah, and certainly he shall not be held innocent." He will be brought to know that his tenure as Pharaoh over the Egyptians is at the disposal of the great and terrible God of the Hebrews, and to learn with the equally proud King of Babylon that this God is the "God of gods and the Lord of kings," who "deposeth kings and setteth up kings," and that "It is He that revealeth the deep and secret things; He knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with Him" (Daniel 2:21-22).

How solemn therefore the testimony of the Word of God that these plagues which swept through the land of Egypt in all their devastating power were demonstrative of the judicial action of God, revealing Himself as the God who "doeth according to His will in the army of the heavens, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?" And to the proud Pharaoh who in the haughtiness of his spirit had said, "Who is Jehovah, to whose voice I am to hearken to let Israel go? I know not Jehovah neither will I let Israel go" (Exodus 5:2). God revealed to him his own nothingness as one of the inhabitants of the earth who are reputed as nothing before Him. The Psalmist in recounting the history of God's dealing with His earthly people mentions that "In the sight of their fathers had He done wonders in the land of Egypt, the field of Zoan" (Psalms 78:12); and again in Psalms 105:26-27, "He sent Moses His servant, and Aaron whom He had chosen; They set His signs among them, and miracles in the land of Ham." God said to Pharaoh, "I will at this time send all My plagues to thy heart," but to Moses He says, "I will . . . multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt." In relation to Egypt, God's dealings were plagues and each was the manifestation of the wrath and power of God by which His Name was made known throughout all the earth and by which Pharaoh, despite his persistent and stubborn though futile resistance, was overthrown. His spirit, however, still remaining unchanged. But to the people of God these "great judgments" were signs and wonders, for it was by these that God would bring His people from out of the adversary's power; out of the house of bondmen. And in that wonderful song of victory, when the children of Israel saw their enemies dead upon the sea shore, "And saw the great work which Jehovah did upon the Egyptians," Moses and the children of Israel celebrated the glorious achievements of their God with joy and great exultation saying, "Sing unto Jehovah for He hath triumphed gloriously; the

horse and his rider hath He thrown into the Sea; My strength and song is Jah, and He is become my salvation, This is my God, and I will glorify Him . . . : Thy right hand Jehovah is become glorious in power; Thy right hand Jehovah hath dashed in pieces the enemy." In the opening verses of Exodus 7:1-25 God gives His final instructions to Moses and Aaron by which He brings them into communion with His own thoughts and intentions. It is truly remarkable the confidential manner in which the God of Israel makes known to His servants the manner and result, which could be left in no element of doubt, of His intervention on behalf of His downtrodden people. In like manner God says in Genesis 18:17, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing?" It is a very touching thought that this "God who is greater than man . . . and giveth not account of any of His matters" is pleased to take those who are His friends, as Abraham was (Isaiah 41:8), into His confidence, making them conversant with His intentions in His dealings with men. It is worthy of note that as a result of the disclosures God made to Abraham concerning His judgment of Sodom, Abraham became an intercessor. The path of this beloved man of faith while displaying uncompromising separation from the spirit and course of the world around him, even to the refusing of the rewards of the king of Sodom, was not a path of selfish isolation nor of unconcerned detachment with regard to the blessing of men. And what of those to whom the beloved apostle Paul can say, "And be to one another kind, compassionate, forgiving (or showing grace to one another), so as God also in Christ has forgiven" (or shown grace to you), (Ephesians 4:32). All God's dealings with us in sovereign grace have taught us something of the heart and compassions of a "Saviour-God who desires that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth." On the ground of this Paul makes this powerful appeal in 1 Timothy 2:1-15 "I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings be made for all men; for kings and all that are in dignity, that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all piety and gravity; for this is good and acceptable before our Saviour-God." This exhortation to every variety of prayer is founded on the broad basis of God's relationship to all mankind, and we too as born of God, of His family, and as conversant with His mind and thoughts as revealed in His Word, are in a corresponding relation. As the beloved apostle again, speaking to the saints at Ephesus concerning their demeanour toward each other, exhorts them to be "imitators of God, as dear children," so is it equally applicable in the attitude of the saints to the world. It is of the greatest moment that the children maintain the family character, acting in love at all times, as reflecting the love of God, that has surmounted and surpassed the wickedness of man, overcoming evil with good, and displaying also the beneficent attitude of the Father who causes His sun to rise on evil and good and sends rain on just and unjust.

Then when we come to the inner circle of divine affections, the circle of the Father's love, we find the same principle of divine communication, but of an infinitely greater depth and character of truth. In John 15:13-16, we find these remarkable declarations, "No one has greater love than this, that one should lay down his life for His friends, Ye are My friends if ye practise whatever I command you. I call you no longer bond-men, for the bondman does not know what his master is doing, but I have called you friends, for all things which I have heard of My Father I have made known to you. Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you." Here we have an entirely different thought from what we have in Timothy. It is not the love of a Saviour-God for poor sinners, a love purely divine and sovereign, but the love of Jesus for His friends. In that wonderful pathway in which the disciples had companied with Him, His love was ever in constant expression toward them, yea, their weaknesses and short-comings but furnished Him with fresh occasions to display His unwearied and changeless love toward them. But in His death was displayed in a fuller way

the sublime and ineffable glories of that love, for "No one has greater love than this that one should lay down his life for his friends." Jesus then goes on to speak of the new position in which they were placed as chosen of Him, no longer bondmen but friends with the communion of love this implied. As Jesus on earth had been the Object of His Father's love, so now were His own the objects of His love. As to Him it was a love of complacent delight as one walking in the way of His Father's commandments, ever doing the things that pleased Him. So would He have His own walking in the path of His commandments, and in this way answering to His own heart and so tasting of the deep joy that was ever His, even in the sorrows of His path.

They were His friends, those to whom He could unfold as being His confidants, all that lay upon His heart — the things He had heard from His Father, opening out to them the truth of all those precious counsels of the Father's love with which He had been entrusted, as the Son of His love; leading them too, in the power of those communications which the Father had made known to Him, into an ever-increasing knowledge and enjoyment of the depths of the Father's heart. In pursuing these exceedingly precious thoughts of how God has been graciously pleased to make known His mind and purposes in those profound communications to those He has brought into relationship with Himself, it is singularly instructive to observe that the mode and measure in which those disclosures have been made known have not followed any formal or haphazard method, but are in perfect suitability to the character of the things made known. The Spirit has given us a striking instance of this in the beginning of The Revelation. There John announces "Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to Him, to show to His bondmen what must shortly take place, and he signified it, sending by His angel to His bondman John, who testified the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, all things, that he said" (Revelation 1:1-2). How unlike in character and mode the unfolding of the Lord's mind when on earth as suggested in the following words, "Now there was at table one of His disciples in the bosom of Jesus, whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23). There in love's own sweet retreat John received those precious communications of the love of Jesus which make his writings throb with divine love and light. But in Revelation all is distant and in a way mysterious, but in exact keeping with the character of these communications. The medium of communication between Christ and John is an angel and the object of these awe-inspiring communications is to show to Christ's servants, or bondmen, things which "must shortly take place." Servant is a more distant place of relation than son-position; or child-relationship; or friend-intimacy; but how suited to the general character of the book which addresses itself to every believer in Christ. May these remarks beget in the heart of every true child of God a deep abiding love for the word of God, finding the words of Job truly descriptive of the deep satisfaction of our hearts in the reading of this precious word in which are enshrined those wonderful thoughts of heavenly grace and blessing. "I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12). Walking closely in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus, who is our great Exemplar in this as in all other things, who through the prophet Isaiah has said, "The Lord God hath given Me the tongue of the instructed, that I might know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth Mine ear to hear as the instructed." (Isaiah 50:4). That blessed One displaying the perfection of His entire dependence upon God met all the temptations of His implacable adversary with the words, "It is written," and declared "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which goes out through God's mouth" (Matthew 4:4). The words which God spake to Moses and Aaron at the beginning of Exodus 7:1-25 were no doubt intended to strengthen and fortify their hearts and

brace their spirits for the impending struggle with this proud adversary who had repulsed every overture with contempt and stubborn refusal. God warns His servants of Pharaoh's unrelenting obduracy while at the same time assuring them with divine certitude, as the One who "calleth those things which be not as though they were," of the triumphant conclusion of all that He had purposed regarding the liberation of His people.

Despite the gracious manner in which God had dealt with Pharaoh, giving him repeated opportunities to accede to His request, Pharaoh hardened his heart, thus displaying his inveterate hatred and antagonism to God and His people. Now this proud adversary is to come under the judicial hardening of God, as these solemn words declare, "And I will render Pharaoh's heart obdurate and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt . . . and I will lay My hand upon Egypt and I will bring forth My hosts, My people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments" (vv. 3, 4). Unbelief in the first instance is never the consequence of judicial hardening on God's part. But let there be no doubt that there is such a thing as hardening. It would be equally wrong to suggest that this hardening process precedes the giving of God's initial testimony to men, as to deny the righteous exercise of the divine prerogative of sovereignty in hardening after His testimony has been refused. Both are true, as anyone can see whose thoughts are guided and formed by the Word of God.

There are live outstanding instances of this intensely solemn action of hardening on God's part. The Gentile or heathen world, Romans 1:28; Pharaoh or Egypt, Exodus 9:12; The Kings of Canaan, Joshua 11:20; Israel, Isaiah 6:1-13; Christendom, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17. This hardening precedes destruction, but it comes after much long-suffering on God's part, and after man's incurable unbelief and obstinate refusal to accept God's testimony has proved the necessity of this judicial visitation and the display of yet another aspect of God's glory, this time in judgment. God endures with all long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, as He fashions by His Spirit His own elect vessels of mercy before He glorifies them. "Whom He will He hardens," is surely true: but He wills to show His wrath in this way of hardening only in the case of those whom He has endured in much long-suffering (Romans 9:11-22). In our own day is there not irrefutable evidence that the "strong delusion" mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17 has gone forth? The fruit of this is unmistakably seen in the speech and actions emanating from men in high places reputedly great and eminent in this world.

It will not be necessary for our purpose to deal exhaustively with the "ten plagues" as they are commonly referred to. Being "signs," they are doubtless intended to arrest the attention of every believer in Christ as to what is of moral significance, the whole suggesting a course of moral instruction in the sovereign ways of God in judgment as a fitting prelude to the liberation of His people from the hand of their oppressor. But before these plagues are unleashed in all their devastating power upon the land and people of Egypt, a miracle is performed which displays the presence and activity of divine power. Aaron's rod cast down before Pharaoh and his bondmen became a serpent. In this we see the wisdom of the Spirit in introducing the thought of the serpent, thereby suggesting the display of divine power in relation to what is evil. This thought is confirmed by John's remarkable statement, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, thus must the Son of man be lifted up" (John 3:14). The brazen serpent was the type of the

Lord Jesus coming sacrificially into the place of sin. And Aaron's rod becoming a serpent seems to suggest divine power manifesting itself in the presence of the power of evil which sought to thwart God in the carrying out of what He had purposed for the blessing of His people. In 2 Timothy 3:8, Paul mentions Jannes and Jambres as those who withstood Moses; to whom he compares those who by imitation were resisting the truth in the Assembly. "Now in the same manner in which Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, thus these also withstand the truth; men corrupted in mind, found worthless as regards the faith." These two men were doubtless the leaders of the magicians in Egypt who were able to imitate the initial plagues, but when it came to the creation of life they had to confess that the finger of God was there, and they too came under the blighting effect of the power of God, for they were smitten with boils and blains. Just as their folly was manifested in contending with the God of Israel, so with those who withstand the truth. "But they shall not advance further, for their folly shall be completely manifest to all, as that of those (Jannes and Jambres) also became" (2 Timothy 3:9). But in marked contrast to the mere imitators Paul can say, "But thou hast been thoroughly acquainted with my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, long-suffering, love, endurance, persecutions, suffering . . ." (2 Timothy 3:10-12). The presence of the saints on earth is characterised by their having life in Christ Jesus — 2 Timothy 1:1, faith and love which are in Christ Jesus — 2 Timothy 1:13, the grace which is in Christ Jesus — 2 Timothy 2:1, the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory — 2 Timothy 2:10, and by living piously in Christ Jesus — 2 Timothy 3:12. All that is ours in Christ Jesus is a constant and indisputable witness of how God has wrought to deliver us from the power of the enemy; and as we walk in the practical power of what God has wrought for us there is the positive and convincing evidence of what the Spirit is working in us in a scene of contrariety to all that is of God. In the plagues which ensue, God would instruct us in the true moral character of the world that we might be desirous of answering intelligently to the thoughts of His own heart as those born of Him, resulting in complete moral separation from a "world that lies in the wicked one" for "He that has been begotten of God keeps himself and the wicked one does not touch him" (1 John 5:18-19). The character of the plagues displays the wisdom of God, as specially suited to bring about the humiliation of Egypt and its king. It was not merely an infliction on the land, with its consequent pain and anguish to the people, but it was a solemn contest between Jehovah, the true God, and the false gods of Egypt. It was upon these false gods which the Egyptians worshipped that the judgment of God was directed, staining their vaunted glory, and making them an object of loathing and detestation. The first of a series of compromises suggested by Pharaoh was with the evident intention of retaining the children of Israel in the land of Egypt, still under his oppressive domination (Exodus 8:25). But worship in Egypt is worship in the flesh, Cain's worship, where there is no confession of man's sinful condition, nor of God's remedy in the work of Christ as meeting that condition in righteousness. The death and resurrection of Christ have no place there. Moreover there is no thought of redemption and consequently no necessity for a Redeemer. But the answer of Moses shows clearly how wholly unacceptable was this suggestion of the adversary. "It is not proper to do so; for we should sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to Jehovah our God . . . We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to Jehovah our God as He shall command us" (Exodus 8:26-27). The word "abomination" stands here as elsewhere for idolatry, as Chemosh was the abomination of the Moabites and as Milcom was of the Ammonites. The worship of Egypt was that of Apis — the sacred bull. Throughout Scripture the ox is used as the type of the labourer. How pre-eminently is the ox suited to be the type of God's

Labourer, the patient, tireless Worker for God's glory and man's blessing. But of this Worker and His work, the Egyptian world knows nothing. By His death Christ has passed out of this World, and in resurrection has taken a new place for us before God. It is for us therefore to find by faith, our true place, in the wilderness, as separated morally from this world by Christ's death and resurrection, for there only can we keep the feast unto the Lord. That cross by which the world is crucified to us, and we unto the world, can never be but an offence in it. The full remove of death and resurrection — these three days' journey in the wilderness is the only place of keeping the sacrificial feast. "Our Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins, that He might deliver us from the course of this world, according to the will of our God and Father" (Galatians 1:3-4). Thus our feast is connected with His sacrifice. Salvation in God's thought takes us out of the world. We are no more of it than Christ is, and we henceforth know Him no longer after the flesh. But how many have succumbed to this device of the god of this world. They are worshipping in Egypt, without the knowledge of redemption and are still in bondage. They have assimilated their forms of worship to the patterns of the world, making it so accommodating that men of the world can join with them. The second compromise, Exodus 10:8-11, is as unacceptable as the first since it imposes limits on the redemption wholly incompatible with God's thought for His people. The men may go but the little ones must remain behind. In God's thought, however, the little ones' place was with their parents. Pharaoh's intention was to retain his hold of the fathers by means of the children.

Scripture speaks with exceptional clarity regarding God's thought for the children of His people. This is seen very early in His dealings with men. In Genesis 7:1-24, God says to Noah, "Go into the ark, thou and all thy house"; and in Hebrews 11:7, we are told, "By faith Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house." Then we have the blessing of Abraham's seed, and the rite of circumcision is given for the Israelite's house as the divine rule for His earthly people. The New Testament too continues this principle. The Lord says to Zacchaeus, "This day is salvation come to this house" (Luke 19:9). Peter on the day of Pentecost declares, "The promise is unto you and to your children" (Acts 2:39). To Cornelius the angel says, "Who shall tell thee words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved" (Acts 11:14). And to the Philippian jailor Paul says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31). These distinct testimonies from the word of God reveal the universal character of this principle, and moreover display the all-embracing love of God reaching out to those bound to us in the bonds of natural affection and relationship, and bringing them by the work of the Spirit into that heavenly sphere of affection and relationship with Himself as born of Him. The children of believers are of course like others; as having the old nature. In this they differ nothing from others. The work of the Spirit of God is necessary as John says, "Except anyone be born anew, he cannot see the Kingdom of God" (John 3:3). It must be a new source and beginning of life. How necessary for those who are parents to demonstrate before their children the practical effects of having taken up faith's true position in the wilderness, where the death and resurrection of Christ has placed us morally — the three days remove from the Egypt world. It must be the combined influence of our words and ways, mere teaching is not enough.

Now we come to the third and last compromise, in which Pharaoh agrees to the little ones going with them "only let your flocks and your herds be stayed" (Exodus 10:24-26). Again Moses unhesitatingly rejects this proposal, emphasising the complete severance of the people of God from every element of Egyptian bondage by declaring that "not a hoof shall be left behind." The

children of Israel were a shepherd people and their flocks and herds represented their wealth or possessions in this world. This has ever proved a crucial test for the people of God, for these possessions constitute our closest associations with the world and by reason of their legitimacy are attended by an ever-present danger to the child of God. Only as we regard these possessions as "belonging to another" even our Lord Jesus Christ, as presented in the parable of the unrighteous steward, Luke 16:1-31, can we faithfully administer these things as coming within the sphere of a stewardship with which we have been entrusted.

Possessions tend to wind themselves around our hearts, giving us a false place of importance before men — "the pride of life" John speaks of — and shutting out God. Then we discover the futility of seeking to attain to that which is impossible, as the scriptures so plainly declare, to serve God and mammon — to make the best of both worlds. It can only be the one or the other, not both. But we can make friends with the mammon of unrighteousness, we can turn these things to profitable account as we use them as belonging to Him, spending them lavishly on His interests in view of entering into the possession and enjoyment of our own things. Our own things lie with Him where He now is, where we shall enjoy them with Himself in His own blessed presence forever. "If ye have not been faithful in that which is another's who shall give to you your own?" May the riband of blue be displayed more vividly where our garments touch the earth.

Exodus 11:1-10. The tenth and last plague — the slaying of the firstborn — is one of peculiar solemnity. In Exodus 4:1-31 God had instructed Moses to say to Pharaoh. "Thus saith Jehovah: Israel is My son, My firstborn, And I say to thee, Let My son go, that he may serve Me, and if thou refuse to let him go, behold I will kill thy son, thy first-born" (Exodus 4:22-23).

How great is the moral instruction to be derived in observing the conduct of Pharaoh at this time, as illustrating the awful consequences of the judicial hardening of God. As His chastening hand lay heavy upon the land, and as each successive infliction witnessed to the irresistible might and majesty of God, Pharaoh, whose puny hand could not stay or mitigate in any degree the force of those acts of divine power, professes to accede to God's oft-repeated requests to let His people go, only to retract whenever respite was granted, thus revealing the heart to be as obdurate and as intractable as at the beginning. Nor was it otherwise with the death of the firstborn, which filled the land of Egypt with mourning and the voice of lamentation. In spite of this further calamity, however, we read in Exodus 14:3-4; Exodus 14:8, "And Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness has hemmed them in." And again we read this solemn pronouncement, "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he may pursue after them, and I will glorify Myself in Pharaoh and in all his host . . . and Jehovah hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel." These words tell of the inexorable and irrevocable progression of events leading up to the wide and indiscriminate judgment of God in the complete overthrow of Pharaoh and his host in the devouring waters of the Red Sea. "And Jehovah said to Moses, Stretch out thy hand over the sea . . . And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its strength . . . and Jehovah overturned the Egyptians into the midst of the sea. And the waters returned, and covered the chariots and the horsemen of all the host of Pharaoh that had come into the sea after them; there remained not one of them," Exodus 14:26-28. This, however, is the complementary aspect of redemption by power and must await our attention while we consider the essentially fundamental aspect of redemption by blood, as forming the righteous basis of all God's dealings with us. May the eyes of our hearts,

enlightened by the Spirit, discern in all those wonderful types, "the things concerning Himself." Our warrant for the unreserved acceptance of these types as illustrative of Christ and His work lies in the authoritative declaration of the Spirit in Luke 24:1-53 "And having begun from Moses and from all the prophets, He (Jesus) interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." It is this precious truth which invests those types with such absorbing interest to those whose ears have been opened "to hear as the instructed." And now Moses, consciously invested with that divine authority by which he had been sustained in all those momentous interviews with the proud oppressor of God's people, submits as instructed by God, his last message to Pharaoh. The scene is a very arresting one. Pharaoh as one, who in the arbitrary and despotic exercise of his regal authority had doubtless condemned others to death, now warns Moses, "...see my face no more; for in the day thou seest my face thou shalt die." But Moses is unafraid; his earlier irresolution and timidity are gone; in intelligent communion with the mind of God, whose servant he is, his calm and dignified deportment in keeping with the solemnity of the occasion replies, "Thou hast spoken rightly; I will see thy face again no more!" In Hebrews 11:1-40 Moses is mentioned as one of that illustrious cloud of witnesses who testified so convincingly to the power of faith in their lives. "By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the King; for he persevered as seeing Him who is invisible."

Then in Exodus 11:1-10 we have the solemn announcement of the death of the firstborn, "from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sitteth on his throne even unto the first-born of the bondwoman that is behind the mill." Each infliction of divine judgment had deepened the solemnity of having to do with God in judgment, but in this last infliction the sense of solemnity is immeasurably deepened as God deals directly with the Ruler and the people of Egypt. Every instrument and agency is set aside as we read in verse 4, "Thus saith Jehovah, About midnight I will go out into the midst of Egypt. And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die." Again in Exodus 12:12, "I will go through the land of Egypt in that night, and smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast: and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment, I am Jehovah."

Egypt was made to realise what it was to be under the unsparing judgment of God; He "smote Egypt in their firstborn" (Psalms 136:10). The firstborn was the chief of their strength, all that man would glory in; the gratification of his hopes and desires. That which was representative of the "excellence of dignity," the "excellency of strength" according to human standards, He smote "all the firstborn in Egypt, the first fruits of their vigour" (Psalms 78:51). Regarding Egypt as typical of the world in its opposition to God and Pharaoh as its god and its prince, whose spirit animates those over whom he rules, not by right but by usurpation, it is of the greatest importance for the children of God to realise that all that man glories in lies under the judgment of God; death is on everything here, all is shut up under death.

It is remarkable that the death of Christ is the pre-eminent proof that all have died, "For the love of Christ constrains us, having judged this: that One died for all, then all have died" (2 Corinthians 5:14). His death proved that all men were in that state of death by nature. But the apostle continues to unfold what was involved in the purpose of God. "And He died for all, that they who live should no longer live to themselves, but to Him who died for them and has been raised" (2 Corinthians 5:15). Those who live, who have life in Christ risen, have been delivered entirely from the world which lies under the judgment of God and are now connected with a scene where all things are of God. "If any one be in Christ, there is a new creation; the old things have passed

away, behold all things have become new, and all things are of God" (2 Corinthians 5:17). So far as this world is concerned Christ is dead. He might have been Messiah living in this world with all the glories and dignities attaching to Him as such, and it was on this ground that Mary of Magdala would have claimed Him, only to hear the wonderful declaration from the lips of the victorious and risen Lord, "Touch Me not, for I have not yet ascended to My Father but go to My brethren and say to them I ascend . . ." Rejected as the Messiah He was about to enter into those new and heavenly conditions, greater, fuller and richer than all that pertained to His Messiah-ship, and not only as the One whom the Father had glorified but in the profound consciousness of the intrinsic greatness of His own Person, as co-equal with the Father, He says, "I ascend." And now He brings "His own" into His own place and relationship with the Father in full accord with that wonderful announcement in which He intimates the establishment of that relationship in which we are set, while at the same time He is careful to distinguish His own unique place with His Father and His God; "I ascend to My Father and your Father and to My God and your God" (John 20:17).

How great are the practical consequences for the believer in Christ flowing from this new and heavenly place that the Lord Jesus occupies. Referring again to Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians, the beloved apostle says, "So that we henceforth know no one according to flesh: but if even we have known Christ according to flesh, yet we know Him thus no longer" (2 Corinthians 5:16). Christ is in a new sphere altogether, an entirely new creation where all things are of God. Such is our place as associated with Him there, and our corresponding place in this world is in moral separation from it, where we know no one according to flesh. In a world where men are lovers of themselves and wholly ignorant of the solemn fact that they are "estranged from the life of God by reason of the ignorance which is in them," the believer in Christ as instructed in the mind of God sees men either "in Christ" or in a state of death as under the judgment of God. For those in Christ "the old things are passed away" in the wonderful position we have through God's sovereign grace according to a new creation: but those not in Christ are dead: dead in their sins though still within the reach of Christ being presented to them as a Saviour in order to have life in and through Him. This and much more will come before us as we consider the death of Christ, in this precious aspect as the Passover. The beloved apostle has given us inspired interpretation as to it, "Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Corinthians 5:7-8). The passover prefigures Christ Himself, while the blood that sheltered them prefigures the precious, atoning blood of that Lamb, the Lamb of God's providing "foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:20). In this last plague, however, Israel was made to realise its own solemn position before God. Every word is used designedly by the Spirit to impress them with the solemn reality that naturally they were subject to the judgment of God as much as the Egyptians. They had to meet not a more modified infliction than the Egyptians, but death itself, as God's sentence upon all men, "for all have sinned." Death they must meet, pass through it, and leave behind them before they could be freed from bondage of Pharaoh, or their feet leave the house of bondmen forever.

God appears as a Judge, as One who is of holier eyes than to behold iniquity and to whose holy nature sin in all its aspects is completely abhorrent. This momentous question therefore affected the children of Israel not less than the Egyptians. But how was this question to be resolved? It must be met in such a way as to glorify God, to vindicate the holiness of His nature, while

displaying His righteousness in showing mercy to the children of Israel, while his hand was stretched forth in judgment upon the firstborn of the Egyptians. The sprinkled blood of the Paschal Lamb is the blessed answer to every question which sin has raised. For while the slaying of the firstborn is spoken of as a plague, it is of an infinitely more solemn character than the preceding plagues since it brought into prominence other requirements on God's part which were not affected by those preceding plagues.

Exodus 12:1-51.

It is worthy of note and of no little significance that it was in Egypt that Israel had to keep the Passover. The first verse of Chap. 12 points to this, "And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt." God has been moving steadily onwards towards the accomplishment of His purposes with regard to their deliverance; but to the children of Israel as to us, "sinners of the Gentiles," the mercy of God reaches us where we are, in our state of darkness and of death. "The people which sat in darkness saw a great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up" (Matthew 4:15-16). There may be much exercise and earnest groping after light in order to escape from the oppressive darkness by which our hearts and minds are enveloped, a darkness which can only be defined as ignorance of God. But all our efforts only confirm that no advance can be made in our relationships with God until the shelter of the Cross is reached and known. The truth of this is borne out in a very remarkable way in verse 2: "And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying: This month shall be unto you the beginning of months, it shall be the first month of the year to you." Grace gives us this new beginning: our past history — that dark tragic history when we were without God in this world — is blotted out forever. Oh, the kindness of God to blot out the past, yet how solemn to contemplate that we may have lived many years which God regards as of no account. Time counts for nothing before God as long as the sinner is in his sins; we have not begun to live in God's estimation until we are sheltered under the blood of Christ. Until then every day adds to our guilt and how pregnant with results for eternity should we continue in that condition. How blessed to hear the pardoning voice of a Saviour-God, as in sovereign grace He brings us under all the value of the shed blood of the Mediator of a new covenant, saying, "I will remember no more." He does not remember our sins and iniquities when He treats us as though these had never happened, in virtue of the atoning work of Christ. How blessed to see nothing whatever in His conduct toward us which would indicate His remembrance of them. As another has said, "When not only they are no more a shadow in our heavens, but not a mote even in the sunshine of His perfect love." His "not remembering" has its solemn as well as its gracious side. Love would gladly remember. What must our past have been when love graciously draws the veil over it? The blood of the Lamb of God's providing is that which alone could righteously blot out our sinful past and introduce us to the glorious vistas of that new creation, that system of divine glory of which the Father is the Source as "the Father of glory." With regard to the selection of the lamb for sacrifice, the numbers mentioned are of more than passing interest, since there is little doubt that numbers are employed in Scripture as symbols — symbols of infinitely great realities, particularly in regard to what is now before us. In Exodus 12:3; Exodus 12:6, the Spirit has used these numbers with consummate care and excellence — if one may so speak reverently of the Spirit's work — and has thus given them a character of profound signification since they refer typically to a period of the life of the Lord Jesus which was of exquisite pleasure to the heart of God the Father. But let us ponder for a moment the

description of the lamb which had to be selected. Human sentiment and imagination have combined to give us a completely erroneous idea of this lamb, and since this involves the solemn question of what was necessary to meet the divine requirements, it is not only desirable but also essential to have our thoughts corrected and brought into complete correspondence to the mind of God. In the fifth verse the children of Israel are told, "Your lamb shall be without blemish, a yearling male; ye shall take it from the sheep or from the goats." It was to be a mature animal. It was a type of that blessed One of whom we read in Luke 3:23, "And Jesus Himself was beginning to be about thirty years old" — the Levite age. Coming from the obscurity of despised Nazareth, He identified Himself with the repentant remnant by being baptized in the river Jordan, "fulfilling," as He had said, "all righteousness," while by their baptism they confessed how far they had departed from it. As He stands on the banks of the Jordan praying as the dependent One, heaven is opened, the Holy Spirit descends in bodily form as a dove upon Him, and a voice out of heaven declares, "Thou art My beloved Son in Thee I have found My delight." How blessed to discern in the "voice out of heaven" the voice of the Father in His acknowledgement of the Son. So the Lord Jesus stands on the threshold of His public ministry in perfect maturity, in the full vigour of manhood, and yet does not the description "without blemish" fall far short of what He was in all the flawless, spotless purity of His own unique Person? A real Man in very truth! yet the sinless One who knew no sin, and did no sin. No flaw of mortality lurked in His blessed Person. Holy in His conception by the Holy Spirit, and sinless in His birth by a virgin-mother as she brought forth her first-born Son. Untainted by defilement as He passed through this scene in the power of the Spirit of holiness. This was the Lamb chosen of God, as answering in every detail to the divine requirements. Can we not say with adoring hearts that He was more than "without blemish"? This "yearling male" could be taken from the sheep or from the goats. The selection was left open, but whichever was chosen, each presented some aspect of the moral glory of the Lord Jesus. Taken from the sheep would speak of Him as the meek and unresisting One, as the prophet Isaiah speaks of Him, "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep dumb before her shearers, and He opened not His mouth." Taken from the goats speaks of that holy uncompromising separation from evil on the part of Him of Whom the beloved apostle can say to the Hebrew Christians, that He was "holy, harmless" — or preferably "guileless" without an evil thought — "undefiled and separate from sinners." These precious traits and many more were consummated in the Person of the Lord Jesus and constituted that moral excellence which was displayed in all its fulness and perfection in that wonderful pathway which called forth the deep appreciation of the Father's heart.

Attention has already been drawn to the importance of the numerical structure of the word of God, and as we consider the numbers mentioned in verses 3 and 6 will, as they are intended to do, yield much valuable instruction concerning the pathway of that One who came into this world as the divinely-appointed Sacrifice for sin. The lamb was to be taken not on the first of the month, but on the tenth and kept for four days until the fourteenth day at even when it was killed. Ten days elapse before the lamb is taken. Ten speaks of the measure of human responsibility and refers to that period in the life of the Lord Jesus which is passed over in silence in the four Gospels. What account have we of those thirty years in which our Lord grew up in the retirement and obscurity of Nazareth and carried out the common tasks of toiling men? We have a brief yet absorbing account of those scenes of heavenly joy when the angelic hosts celebrated His lowly birth at Bethlehem. How great the joy of those heavenly hosts, greater far than that by which they celebrated the

laying of the foundations of the earth, when "the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy."

More just those acclamations, Than when the glorious band Chanted earth's deep foundations,
Just laid by God's right hand.

We have a still briefer account of his visit to the temple as a boy of twelve years, when in reply to His parents' remonstrance He utters these imperishable words, "Did ye not know that I ought to be occupied in My Father's business?" And of this Mr Darby says, "If He was the Son of God and had the full consciousness of it, He was also the obedient man, essentially and ever perfect and sinless — an obedient child; consciousness of the one did not injure His perfection in the other. But there is another important thing to remark here; it is, that this position had nothing to do with His being anointed with the Holy Spirit. He fulfilled, no doubt, the public ministry which He afterwards entered on according to the power and the perfection of that anointing, but His relationship to His Father belonged to His Person itself. The bond existed between Him and His Father. He was fully conscious of it, whatever might be the means or the form of its public manifestation, and of the power of His ministry. He was all that a child ought to be, but it was the Son of God who was so. His relationship to His Father was as well known to Him as His obedience to Joseph and to His mother was beautiful, becoming and perfect" (Syn. Vol. 3, page 283). From this point the inspired record is silent as to any further account concerning that unique and beautiful life upon which the eye and heart of the Father rested with abiding satisfaction and complacent delight. As a tender sucker rising From a dry and rocky land, Object of proud man's despising, Grew the Plant of God's right hand.

Then, as divinely instructed, the lamb was taken on the tenth day and kept until the fourteenth day. In John 1:1-51, we come to the moment set forth typically in the tenth day when John the Baptist makes that wonderful announcement, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Truly He was the Lamb "foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world," but in the ways of God in grace this announcement on the part of John marked the entrance of the Lord Jesus on the path of devoted service, so short yet exceedingly fruitful for the glory and pleasure of God and the blessing of men. This short period of three and a half years of the Lord's public service is foreshadowed in the four days the lamb was kept in the house. How near this blessed One has come to us. A Man amongst men. This is Jesus of the Gospels; One we could have seen in the streets of Jerusalem every day pressed by the throng as His loving, ministering hands with their life-giving touch brought relief to the oppressed and afflicted, One, the hem of whose garment could be touched by the trembling hand of faith and secure that healing virtue for her great affliction. The number four speaks of testing and this follows immediately the announcement of the Father's delight and satisfaction in His Son. During the thirty years of obscurity in Nazareth He had lived under God's eye alone; now man and the adversary are to test Him as they please. The fourfold presentation of that wondrous life in the Gospels, which covers those three and a half years, displays Him as the Second Man in circumstances designedly permitted to be as adverse, as to the first Adam they were favourable, surrounded as he was in Eden with all that witnessed to the munificence and favour of a beneficent Creator. But in all the circumstances through which the Lord Jesus passed, and through all the testing to which He was subjected at the hands of His enemies, He approved Himself in all His words and works as the One who always did the things that were well-pleasing to the Father, so that every circumstance and testing served only to

magnify this blessed One of Whom we can say, "Thine ointments savour sweetly: Thy Name is an ointment poured forth: Therefore do the virgins love Thee" (Song of Solomon 1:3). There was the fragrance of the love of God displayed in grace as with lavish hand He dispensed the rich favour of God to needy sinners. How sweet was the savour of His ointments to the Syrophenican of Mark 7:1-37, to the woman of Luke 7:1-50, and to the woman of John 4:1-54 His Name conveys all that He is in Himself, and if we do not know who He is, how can we rightly estimate all these precious features and excellencies and perfections that may be seen in Him? This then is the One who is none other than the Lamb of God's providing. At the end of these four days, the lamb was slain. On the fourteenth day; how full of meaning is this fourteenth day for the passover, a number compounded of the number of testimony — two and that which speaks of divine and perfect workmanship — seven. How suggestive of that perfect work which is the great subject of God's testimony. The blood of the unblemished and unresisting victim was to be "put on the door-posts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it," in accordance with the divine prescription. The blood was for the eye of God alone. "And I will go through the land of Egypt in that night . . . And the blood shall be for you as a sign on the houses in which ye are, and when I see the blood I will pass over you." It is God whom sin has offended, it is to Him that the blood of atonement speaks. There is no reference to the state of the people, their sole concern was to sprinkle the blood according to the prescribed manner which through the obedience of faith brought them under the sheltering power of the blood according to God's estimate of it. How blessed to dwell on the words of the beloved apostle in Romans 3:24-26, "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." The One whom "God has set forth as a mercy-seat through faith in His blood, . . . for the showing forth of His righteousness at the present time, so that He should be just, and justify him that is of the faith of Jesus." No doubt this has reference to the two-fold work on the great day of atonement, here and in Romans 4:25, but it demonstrates in a very profound way the infinite value to God of the blood in all its abiding efficacy in virtue of which "the righteousness of God is manifested . . . by faith of Jesus Christ towards all and upon all those who believe" (Romans 3:21-22).

While the blood was their sure and effective shield from the hand of the destroyer, inside they were to feed upon the lamb. All was the provision of His love — the blood to shield them, the flesh to sustain them in that path with God upon which they were now entering. The lamb is to be eaten — all of it. If the household were too little for the lamb — we read nothing of the lamb being too little for the house — then, says the Lord, "Let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of souls; every one according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb." This blessed One is all-sufficient either as Saviour or as the Sustainer of His people. "Our whole Resource along the road, Nothing but Christ, the Christ of God."

Thus God would have our souls sustained. Christ's death has become the food of life — of a life eternal. It is as sheltered and saved from death that we can feed upon Him who is our life. Here is the fulfilment of Samson's riddle, "Out of the eater comes forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness." Eating is appropriation for our need, and God would have our souls sustained by feeding upon Christ and thus appropriate to ourselves what Christ is, for what we appropriate becomes part of ourselves. In the measure in which we spiritually feed upon Him, we shall be assimilated to His likeness. As the Bread of God which came down out of heaven the Lord Jesus has said, "As the living Father has sent Me, and I live on account of the Father, he also who eats

Me shall live on account of Me" (John 6:57). In the measure in which we spiritually feed upon Christ, our lives will bear the impress of those supremely beautiful lineaments of the life of Jesus.

We will now consider the mode of eating the lamb. "And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and with bitter herbs (or bitterness) shall they eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; its head with its legs, and with the purtenance thereof." How entirely out of communion are the thoughts of men with the mind of God, in speaking of the death of Christ as merely that of a martyr, apart from any reference to its atoning worth. But "roast with fire" ought to destroy the dangerous dreams and delusions engendered by the false theorizings of men with regard to the sacrificial work of the Lord Jesus. This solemn expression tells of the manner in which God has dealt with the question of sin. Fire speaks of the holiness of God expressed in judgment. So in the lamb roast with fire, we see in type, the Lord Jesus, personally exempt from sin and its penalty yet as our sinless, unblemished Substitute exposed to the full, intense and searching action of the fire — the judgment of God expressed in wrath against sin. The Holy One "who knew no sin was made sin for us that we might become God's righteousness in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). They were not to eat of it "raw nor boiled at all with water." Nothing was allowed to hinder the action of the fire. The Word of God, as typified in the water, which was His constant delight and whose life in its entirety as the wholly devoted and obedient Man was regulated by it, was not allowed to soften nor enfeeble the sense of divine wrath which pressed in upon His holy soul. Who can measure the depths of His suffering as He speaks of being laid in the dust of death and cries in the deep anguish of His spirit, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? . . . Be not far from Me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help" (Psalms 22:1; Psalms 22:11).

How the Spirit loves to linger over these typical details which serve to bring out the imperishable glories of the One who suffered unto death, even the death of the Cross. "Its head, with its legs and with its inward parts" were all exposed to the searching action of the fire. The head would suggest those thoughts and counsels which He shared with the Father as a dependent Man in this world, in full and uninterrupted communion with the Father, as He walked (the legs) in that path in which was demonstrated by words and works the precious character of those thoughts and counsels, and moreover testify to that love (the inward parts) which impelled Him to the accomplishment of that work the Father had given Him to do. All the testing of these various parts brought forth nothing but sweet savour to God, and all this the Spirit would make available for us, for our intelligent appropriation as the food of that life which is ours in Christ Jesus. All is graciously set before us to enjoy and make our own as our feet stand in the way that leads through those "desert lands where drought abides." But how much do we desire to possess these things; to know more and still more of that lowly mind which was in Christ Jesus; to walk devotedly in those ways which are fragrant with a love that many waters could not quench nor floods drown; to know more of that love that passeth knowledge? All is found in Him, and possessing Him we possess all things.

How precious to the heart of God the Father is the passover aspect of the death of Christ. In the rich mercy of a Saviour-God we rejoice in all its precious and eternal fruits; our deliverance from death; our identification with Christ in resurrection life and our place in heavenly glory; but let us not forget for a moment that what stands alone in depth of suffering and efficacious value in the thoughts of God is the death of Christ. The Spirit's further references as to its observance in the wilderness (Numbers 9:1-23) and in the land (Joshua 5:1-15) stamps it with a fundamental and

permanent character beyond all other feasts.

Exodus 12:10-51.

Suited Preparations for the Wilderness

How blessed for the saint of God to have the "eyes of the heart enlightened" so as to discover with ever-increasing and absorbing interest, in all these types which the Spirit uses to instruct us, the deeper glories of Him who is the Substance of all these shadows and the Fulness of all these figures. In the lamb whose shed blood shielded the children of Israel from the sword of judgment which claimed the firstborn of the Egyptians we have presented to us one of the most affecting themes in the word of God — Christ, the true passover Lamb, the Lamb of God's providing, "foreordained before the foundation of the world."

It is therefore of more than ordinary interest that the solemn warning and admonition of the 10th verse of Exodus 12:1-51 is included, "And ye shall let none of it remain until the morning; and what remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire." A similar direction is given with regard to the eating of the sacrifices (see Leviticus 7:15). It could be eaten only in association with the judgment through which it had passed. As they ate the lamb "roast with fire" they were to remember that in its substitutionary character, its blood had sheltered them from the judgment of God. Having regard therefore to all the solemn implications of its sacrifice, how necessary these specific instructions as to the disposal of what was left; it must not be laid aside to be consumed afterwards as common food.

How this speaks with solemn admonition to our souls. As we feed upon Christ as that which alone can nourish and sustain that life that we have derived from Him we can only do so as livingly connected with Christ and His sacrifice, in the sweet and precious realization that we can reckon His death as ours and rejoice in our identification with Him in life and in nature as the last Adam, the life-giving Spirit in resurrection; enjoying abundant life as the fruit of His death. "Verily, verily I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24). No doubt at Corinth they spoke of the Lord's death, but their spiritual condition had so deteriorated that they had lost all sense of being morally near to the sacrifice of Christ with the resulting ascendancy of the flesh in various forms. We see this in a very pronounced way in 1 Corinthians 11:1-34, where the apostle charges them, when professedly coming together to partake of the Lord's Supper, "every man was eating his own supper before others." Then with unwonted severity the apostle asks, "What shall I say unto you? Shall I praise you? In this point I do not praise." Furthermore, as guided by the Spirit, he relates to them in language calculated to touch their affections, the circumstances in which the Lord Jesus instituted the memorial of His deep sufferings and His changeless love. It is not a question of the efficacy of His death but of that which speaks of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus as expressive of a "love that many waters could not quench nor floods drown" and by which He claims the undivided affection of devoted hearts and the homage of responsive and willing lips. As the children of Israel fed upon the lamb they were reminded that it was the blood of that lamb which had procured their deliverance. We, too, in partaking of the Lord's Supper announce the Lord's death as that by which our deliverance has been effected with all its profound and far-reaching consequences for us. The saints at Corinth, however, in their low carnal state, had lost all sense of the deep significance and moral import of the death of Christ, so that what ought to have been an occasion

of communion became for them a subject of judgment as the beloved apostle utters these words of solemn warning, "Whosoever shall eat of the bread, or drink the cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty in respect of the body and of the blood of the Lord." In the language of the type the thought suggested is that the eating of the lamb was not to be separated from the reality of its being sacrificed. To eat it next day would be to dissociate it from the import of its death as bearing the judgment of God in a substitutionary way, being "roast with fire." There was to be no weakening in the soul of the sense of what the death of the Lord Jesus as bearing the wrath and judgment of God really was. In the accompaniments of the passover the Spirit brings before us the attitude or the character which becomes those who now stood in relationship to God on the ground of accomplished redemption. The children of Israel did not at this time know the joy of salvation in its fullest measure, this alone would be realized when on the other side of the Red Sea they celebrated in lofty strains of unrestrained joy, the triumph of God over their enemies in their complete overthrow and the destruction of their power and thus ensuring the complete redemption of His people. But the blood which had sheltered them from the judgment of God formed the righteous foundation upon which the subsequent movements of God on their behalf were established. The pilgrim garb in which the passover was to be eaten is full of meaning to the true child of God since it constitutes the character in which he appears before men in all his practical ways and manner of life. It also emphasises the moral state so essential to our preservation from the defiling influences of a world out of which we have been delivered by the death of Christ. It is of the first importance to note how closely the instructions concerning the manner of their dress stand in relation to eating the passover. If we desire to be here for the pleasure of God our walk must be in moral consistency with the death of Christ — His cross through which, as the beloved apostle declares, "the world is crucified to me and I to the world." The mind of man has no place in all this, the instructions come from God, clear and precise: "And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste; it is the Lord's passover." First "your loins girded." This is an expression used in various contexts, conveying in each its own distinctive teaching with regard to the truth stated. In our present connection it refers spiritually to our "habits," referring to the character in which we appear before men. Those ways which man can take account of and by which we are identified. Our habits though not actually "ourselves," yet our characters are determined by those features which are descriptive of us. It might be lowliness or pride, meekness or self-assertiveness or other discernible traits. The long robes of the East required a girdle, that they might not hinder in a journey such as Israel had now before them. Flowing loose they might get entangled with the feet of the wearer and gather the dust of the road. No doubt the truth is to be our girdle, instructing us in the mind of God as to our walk and associations in a world characterized by "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." Only as having our loins — the seat of our strength — securely girded by the truth of God can we be kept from loose and negligent contact with the ever-ready defilement of a defiling world and the spiritually enervating entanglements to our feet into which moral laxity would lead us. It is "as pilgrims and strangers" we are exhorted to "abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." The girded loins are part of the suited dress for the wilderness and this ought to be the moral character of the world to the children of God. The children of Israel could not be in the land of Egypt and the wilderness at the same time, but the world as typified by the land of Egypt and the wilderness are coalescent in their moral significance to us. The Lord Jesus uses the same figure in Luke 12:35-36, with special reference to His coming for "His own." "Let your loins be

girded about and lamps burning; and ye like men who wait their own lord." This is the normal attitude of every true believer in Christ; the heart cherishing the hope of His coming throughout the long dark night of His absence untrammelled, unencumbered by earthly things, so that when He knocks, according to the figure, we may open to Him immediately. The heart, sustained by the power and reality of this hope, undistracted by the objects of this world requires no preparation but responds without hesitation to the summons of the object of its love.

Peter also lends his testimony to the thought of girding up the loins while adding "of the mind"; "Wherefore, having girded up the loins of your mind" (1 Peter 1:13). In this clause there is an evident allusion to that memorable night when the children of Israel celebrated their first passover and the manner in which they were to eat it. As still pilgrims here we are exhorted by the apostle Paul to "seek the things which are above . . . have your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth" (Colossians 3:1-2). As in that attitude of constant readiness to do His will with faithfulness and diligence, the heart must be relieved of every impediment such as wandering affections and distraction of mind would impose upon it. Only as the loins of the mind are girded up can we escape the fatal fascination of the objects of this world, and have our hearts and thoughts absorbingly engaged with those heavenly objects in all their transforming power. The effect of this will then be seen in our practical ways in accordance with the apostle's exhortation: "As children of obedience, not conformed to your former lusts in your ignorance; but as He who has called you is holy, be ye also holy in all your conversation (or behaviour)" (1 Peter 1:14-15).

Then again in Ephesians 6:14, Paul exhorts us to "Stand therefore, having girt about your loins with truth." As has already been said, the loins are the seat of strength, but in active expression they are representative of those tender, intimate affections and movements of the heart. How solemn the warning implicit in this timely exhortation, since this piece of armour suggests the application of the truth in all its governing power to the first and most intimate movements of the heart; for if we allow our hearts to wander where they will, instead of abiding in strengthening communion with God, we shall fall an easy prey to the adversary and render ourselves incapable of waging war against those determined and implacable enemies, who, without respite, seek to prevent us from possessing the inheritance which God has so graciously assigned to us in the sovereign counsels of His love. You will observe that this exhortation is given before the other parts of the armour are described. Does this not indicate how highly important this is; since it is a work with God carried on in His presence so that the heart is formed by all that God has revealed to us of His truth and in this way suitably conditioned and equipped for the conflict. How suited therefore are those girded loins with the unleavened bread and bitter herbs. We must arise and depart, for this is not our rest, and all around is defiled and defiling.

Then we have "Your shoes on your feet." Travellers tell us that shoes are cut to pieces in a very short time in the wilderness the children of Israel passed through. How wonderfully and miraculously they were shod in the faithfulness of God, borne witness to in these inspiring words of Moses. "Thou shalt remember all the way which Jehovah thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness. . . Thy clothing grew not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell those forty years." But what are we to learn from this spiritually? Scripture gives us a twofold aspect of it. Israel's shoes or sandals were of badgers' skin. In Ezekiel 16:10, God says, in recounting His mercies to Israel, "I shod thee with badgers' skin." The mention of this reminds us that the outermost covering of the Tabernacle was of badgers' skins. Underneath were the curtains of fine twined linen, the curtains

of goats' hair, and the covering of rams' skins dyed red. The badgers' skin was fitted by its nature to repel outside influences and protect the more destructible materials beneath. In external appearance it was rough and unattractive but perfectly impervious to all the injurious and disruptive influences that were around. How beautifully this speaks of the blessed Person and ways of the Lord Jesus, as each curtain gives its own distinctive presentation of the beauties and perfections of Christ. Isaiah 53:1-12 gives us the aspect of the badgers' skin, "For He shall grow up before Him as a tender sapling, and as a root out of a dry ground: He hath no form nor lordliness, and when we see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him." Yet was He ever "marked out Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness, by resurrection of the dead" (Romans 1:4). It was in the power of the Spirit of holiness by which He guarded Himself from being touched by sin and its defilement. It was in the same power by which He was holy in all that wondrous pathway so pleasing to the eye and heart of the Father, that He was raised from among the dead. Another has expressed it very acceptably in the following words, "Resurrection is a public manifestation of that power by which He walked in absolute holiness during His life — a manifestation that He is the Son of God in power." The eye of faith never fails to discern the fine gold beneath the badgers' skin. This character therefore, so repellent to external influences, makes it a suited type of the holiness that abides unchanged by all that surrounds it, preserving the more susceptible things from deterioration as salt does from corruption. This shoe, then, represents that faithfulness to God in our walk which remains undeviating in its constancy, resisting all that would seek to undermine and weaken its morally elevating purpose in an apostate world. Another instructive reference to this shoe is found in Ephesians 6:15, "Have your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." How the thought of peace pervades all God's dealings with us. "Being justified on the principle of faith we have peace towards God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). And was not this the first word that fell on the ears of His disciples from the lips of their risen Lord, "Peace be unto you"? There as the living One He showed to them the marks in His hands and His side as the One who had "made peace through the blood of His cross." Having brought us into this unalterable peace with Himself, God would have us to walk in the sense of this peace towards all men. "The fruit of righteousness in peace, is sown for them that make peace" (James 3:18). If the fruits of righteousness are sown in peace, the path of peace is found in righteousness. How wonderful the provision our faithful God has made for us as we traverse this wilderness waste entirely devoid of every resource to refresh and sustain His pilgrim people —

"Garments fresh and foot unwearied, Tell how God hath brought thee through."

Then there is that precious exhortation in Colossians 3:15, "And let the peace of Christ preside in your hearts to which also ye have been called in one body and be thankful." No doubt this is the divine peace that was seen in Christ in all the perfection of its expression as He walked here, enjoying in undisturbed and uninterrupted repose the Father's love in which He ever dwelt. We have been called to this peace of Christ in one Body, for it is in the peaceful affections of Christ with which saints walk towards each other that the unity to which we have been called for the manifestation of Christ in us is displayed. The feet being shod suggests what ought to characterise the saints of God in all their practical ways in every sphere of relationship in this world.

Finally the children of Israel were instructed to eat the passover with "your staff in your hand." This is the word of God, our unfailing prop and stay. "Scripture cannot be broken," for "Every scripture

is divinely inspired and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, fully fitted to every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Solomon in the great day of the dedication of the house of Jehovah said, "Blessed be Jehovah who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised: there has not failed one word of all His good promises which He spoke through Moses His servant" (1 Kings 8:56). The word of God is referred to under various figures, but as the staff it speaks of that which alone can support us throughout our wilderness journey, "Eagle strength He'll still renew" through the medium of His precious word. The more we lean upon it, the more we shall prove its unfailing and enduring strength, until at last we reach "Canaan's long-loved dwelling." In verses 14-20 the feast of unleavened bread is mentioned in connection with the passover. The feast was not kept in the land of Egypt, for the same night on which God smote the firstborn the children of Israel commenced their journey. It is mentioned here however, as maintaining its true typical significance and as suggesting in the most solemn way, that it is only as we enter into the truth of what has been effected for us by the death of Christ, our true Passover, not merely as those delivered from the power of the adversary, but as those brought to God, can we keep the feast of unleavened bread in all its practical implications as still in a world alienated from Him. This will be dealt with more fully however when we come to consider the setting apart of the firstborn mentioned in the opening verses of Exodus 13:1-22 as answering to the claims of God who says, "It is Mine." But in Exodus 12:43 God gives Moses and Aaron still further instructions relating to the keeping of the passover under the designation, "This is the ordinance of the passover." Since this remarkable passage holds such invaluable instruction for every saint of God, and as we are in the midst of a religious system which completely ignores the prescribed restrictions which God has imposed in regulating the keeping of the passover in accordance with the requirements of His holiness, it is incumbent upon us to consider these things as those desirous of answering to His thoughts. What we see around us today in the religious systems of men is the result of the substitution of man's mind in place of the declared mind of God.

We do well to give heed to these restrictions which are here mentioned for the first time, since they have to do not with redemption itself but with our enjoyment of it. It was as sinners God dealt with us because of our state of estrangement from Him. In meeting our need as such, "being justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus," God has not only been glorified, but "His righteousness shown forth at the present time so that He should be just and justify him that is of the faith of Jesus."

There are three classes mentioned therefore in verses 43-45, 47 and 48 who might keep the passover: the children of Israel, their servants bought with money, and the strangers sojourning with them, but the distinguishing feature among all three was circumcision. This rite, in its typical significance speaks of death to the flesh and finds its great anti-type in the death of Christ. So we find Paul applying this emancipating truth to the beloved saints at Colosse. "In whom also ye have been circumcised with circumcision not done by hand, in the putting off of the body of the flesh in the circumcision of the Christ" (Colossians 2:11). Only by circumcision could the children of Israel be brought within the terms of the covenant which God had made with Abraham (Genesis 17:9-14), and on the ground of which God in faithfulness to His promise was bringing the seed of Abraham from out the house of bondmen.

How clear and unmistakable is the thought conveyed in these words that the seed of Abraham, the family of faith alone can commemorate a deliverance which they only have known, for this feast derived all its meaning from the blood-shedding of Him, who was the true Paschal Lamb. It is very blessed to see the household character of this feast. In the beginning of this chapter God speaks of "all the assembly of Israel" and "the whole congregation of the assembly of Israel," but here we have the thought of the household brought into prominence as though God would indicate how pleasing it is to Him that there should be households where Christ is known as the true Passover, and where He is fed upon as the One whose shed blood has sheltered us from divine judgment, and established the righteous foundation for our complete deliverance from the power of the adversary and the world over which he rules. "All the children of Israel had light in their dwellings." How blessed to have our households illuminated by the light of divine and heavenly things, and in so far as it is effective in us so in corresponding measure will we be delivered from the defiling influences which prevail in this world.

"No uncircumcised person shall eat thereof:" a simple yet clear emphatic statement which permits of no doubt or uncertainty as to its meaning. But to reach its true and spiritual significance we must read this in the light of the apostle's declaration, "We are the circumcision who worship by the Spirit of God, and boast in Christ Jesus, and do not trust in flesh (Php 3:3). The cross of Christ, the circumcision, or cutting off, of Christ in death is God's sentence upon the flesh; remedial measures could be of no avail, for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh" and cannot be remedied. "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, for neither indeed can it be; and they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:7-8). God could find no pleasure in it and has removed it judicially in the death of Christ, removed it out of His way and out of ours, so that in resurrection we find our-selves as true believers in Christ, in all the acceptability of the Beloved One, the Son of the Father's constant and abiding delight. There is a new creation where all that is of the old is completely displaced; a new man morally conformed to the image of God's Son with new faculties formed and developed by the Spirit, and a new sphere of origin as those who "are enregistered in heaven."

Very precious it is to see that God kept the door open for the stranger who would submit to Israel's law, no more stringent conditions were asked of him, than from the "home-born." How blessed to see all the barriers removed in the presence of a faith which asks, "Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also of the Gentiles?" And faith receives the answer of superabundant grace, "Yea, of the Gentiles also!" "So then ye are no longer strangers and foreigners but ye are fellow-citizens of the saints and of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19).

There are some further distinctions to be considered. "A foreigner and a hired servant shall not eat thereof." Not only a foreigner but a hired servant also is excluded. A bondservant born in the house or bought with money may eat. Paul delights to call himself the bondman of the Lord Jesus. It is worthy of note that in the opening of his Epistle to the Romans he says, "Paul, bondman of Jesus Christ, a called apostle"; the thought of bondman is given precedence to that of his apostleship, even though this great and honoured position can be said to be by the "calling of God." Peter too in the opening of his second Epistle speaks of himself in like manner. Paul in writing to the saints at Corinth and speaking to them of abiding "in that calling in which they had been called" puts before them the most exalted motives of this service. "For the bondman that is called in the Lord is the Lord's freeman; in like manner also the freeman being called is Christ's

bondman" (1 Corinthians 7:20-22). As has been expressed by another: "The believing freeman is Christ's slave. The Lord's authority breaks the fetters of the one to his faith, the grace of Christ reduces the other to slavery for his heart." In the previous chapter Paul reminds the saints at Corinth as those whose bodies were the temple of the Holy Spirit that they belonged to Another, "Ye are not your own, for ye have been bought with a price; glorify now then God in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:20). So he adds in 1 Corinthians 7:23-24, "Ye have been bought with a price, do not be the bondmen of men. Let each wherein he is called, brethren, therein abide with God." The force of the calling here appears to be the circumstances in which we are found in the providential ways of God, as has already been pointed out in the apostle's reference to the circumcised and the uncircumcised, and also to the bondman and the freeman. It does not allude to earthly occupations since these, though not in their entirety, may yet contain elements which clash with the word of God, and would render them completely disturbing and offensive to sensitive consciences, and thereby make it impossible to "therein abide with God."

"Be not men's servant, Think what costly price was paid That thou mayest His own bondman be,
Whose service perfect freedom is;

Let this hold fast thy heart. His claim is great to thee, None should thy soul enthral to whom 'tis given,
To serve on earth with liberty of heaven."

How different from the spirit that animates the religious world around us where all is on the principle of hire and where eternal life itself is regarded as something attainable through service. Doubtless it is the natural thought in man's heart, as it was in that of the prodigal, "Make me as one of thy hired servants." No, "A foreigner and a hired servant shall not eat thereof."

Then we have, "In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth aught of the flesh abroad out of the house, neither shall ye break a bone thereof." Only in the house whose doorposts and lintel were sprinkled with the blood of the lamb could its flesh be eaten according to the mind of God. Our appropriation of Christ as the food of our souls cannot be dissociated from the profound significance of His death. The Lamb can only be eaten where the atoning virtue of the blood is owned. With richly embellished words of human sentiment men have expressed admiration of Christ, while ignoring or denying the reality and atoning virtue of His death; but apart from this He cannot be known or appreciated, for it is the Lamb of God's providing which has borne away the sin of the world, and so the denial of His work leads to the denial of His Person.

How beautiful therefore the command which follows: "Neither shall ye break a bone thereof." God would have us preserve from disfigurement in any way the deep perfections of Christ. Ungodly men with daring audacity and presumption have foundered to their eternal undoing in attempting to reduce to human concepts the inscrutable glory of the Son of God. It is wholly inconceivable that one dwelling in "the house," feasting upon the Lamb of sacrifice whose blood has sheltered us from judgment, could be guilty of such profanity and irreverence. In ever deepening affection may we be found preserving the beautiful symmetry of the truth concerning the perfections of the Lord Jesus, until that "day of wondrous promise" when "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

How remarkable too to see according to the witness of John that when the soldiers came to Jesus on the cross, when they saw He was already dead, "they break not his legs"; not because of any

humanitarian considerations but as John significantly adds, "For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled, Not a bone of Him shall be broken" (John 19:36). Other scriptures show us how precious was the body of Jesus to the Father, prepared in accordance with eternal counsels, and in which He glorified the Father in that life of devoted love on earth, and which reached its supreme expression when He suffered even unto death "and that the death of the Cross."

Exodus 13:1-22.

We have seen in Exodus 12:1-51 how each household was identified with the firstborn, and with the lamb that bore, typically, the judgment of the firstborn. Now in Exodus 13:1-22 God claims the firstborn for Himself. The One that said, "When I see the blood I will pass over you," now says, "Hallow unto Me every firstborn." All that is sheltered by blood is hallowed to God. He has a distinct and irrefutable claim in virtue of their deliverance which He alone had effected with His "right hand" which had "become glorious in power." The measure of importance which God places upon the assertion of His righteous claims upon us can be gathered from the fact that the Spirit at this point suspends the history of events in order to expressly introduce the truth of God's claims upon us; a truth largely neglected by the people of God, resulting in a low spiritual tone and reflected in an equally low practical walk. The explicit purpose of God as the fruit of redemption was to bring us to Himself. As He declares in Exodus 19:4, "Ye have seen what I have done to the Egyptians, and how I have borne you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself." Surely those redeemed become the property of the One who has redeemed them. And does it not touch our hearts beloved saint of God to consider the mighty ransom price that was paid to secure our redemption. Man could not pay it, he is a bankrupt sinner, whether as a fifty or five hundred pence debtor. Listen to what the psalmist says, "None can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him. For the redemption of their soul is costly, and must be given up forever" (Psalms 49:7-8). There are those who, in their altruistic and benevolent activities toward their fellowmen have conferred many benefactions upon them, but in this solemn matter, in which they would have bestowed the greatest of all benefits, their resources were wholly insufficient, and any attempt to ransom his brother must be given up for ever, it is "too costly." But the great Creditor has in righteousness met the whole condition of man's moral and spiritual bankruptcy — we were unable to meet the debt — "through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus": "Not by corruptible things as silver or gold . . . but by precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, the blood of Christ, foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:18-20). The precious blood of Christ alone could meet the debt we owed, and on the ground of this precious blood that was shed, God can righteously cancel the guilt of every believing sinner. This however serves only to strengthen His claims upon us, as the beloved apostle reminds the saints at Corinth in these decisive words, "Do ye not know that . . . ye are not your own? for ye have been bought with a price: glorify now then God in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). But another thing is introduced in this connection, and which is of great practical importance to us, the feast of unleavened bread. This feast was enjoined in the last chapter, immediately after the sprinkling of blood (Exodus 12:14-20). This was to show that the two things — shelter by blood, and the obligation to walk in moral conformity with that death — can never be separated. We will therefore consider the truth connected with the feast of unleavened bread in greater detail, and as related to the setting apart of the firstborn to God, who says, "It is Mine." It is as belonging to Him that our

walk should in every way be consistent with this relationship. As the beloved apostle John says, "He that says he abides in Him ought, even as He walked, himself also so to walk" (1 John 2:6).

Throughout the word of God, leaven, without exception, is a type of evil. It has been explained that unleavened bread literally means "compressed bread" the particles of which have not been separated by the action of leaven. Leaven causes an active, virulent fermentation never ceasing in its action until it assimilates the mass through which it works to its own character. Moreover leaven is depicted in Scripture as having varied characteristics. There is "the leaven of malice and wickedness" in 1 Corinthians 5:8. In the Gospels we have "the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees," which we are expressly told is their "doctrine"; then there is the leaven of Herod, which in its connection with these we must interpret similarly. The presence of the Lord Jesus in this world provoked the relentless antipathy of these men toward Him and in their attempts to nullify His doctrine, the true character of theirs has been revealed, and can be identified as Ritualism, Rationalism and Worldliness, each distinguishable from the other yet acting together in their opposition to all that was of God. In these various doctrines we can see they are but different forms of "the leaven of malice and wickedness" in contrast to "the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." There are two words used for leaven; one means a "leaving or remainder" because it was a lump of dough left from a former time; the other is simply leaven or ferment. In 1 Corinthians 5:7, we have reference by the apostle Paul to this "old leaven" in a very striking connection, and it gives the inspired explanation of the significant action of the "old leaven" as the lump of old dough which was used to ferment the new lump. This exhortation to the saints at Corinth provides us with remarkable instruction as to the uncompromising and peremptory manner in which leaven is to be dealt with, as those desirous of answering intelligently to the mind of God with regard to what is evil. "Purge out the old leaven that ye may be a new lump, according as ye are unleavened. For also our Passover, Christ, has been sacrificed, so that let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with leaven of malice and wickedness, but with unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." The introduction of the "old" into that which God has made "new" is what the adversary is ceaselessly engaged in, never relaxing his activities in his endeavours to corrupt what is of God. It may be the spirit of the "old" legal covenant into God's "new" covenant of grace, according to the epistle to the Galatians; or that which is of the "old" natural man, into the "new" man in Christ, as presented in the first epistle to the Corinthians. It may assume a very subtle form by way of formalism and superstition, or it may take the more positive and daring forms of unbelief degenerating to open and avowed infidelity, or to accommodating conformity to the religious system of the world. But whatever form it may assume it is leaven with all its inherent ability to corrupt. In every case it betrays real departure from God. And let us not be deluded by the persuasive words of man's wisdom; this evil is neither negative nor passive, but intensely active, for the nature of all evil is a ferment, a revolt, an antagonism to all that is of God. In his exhortation the beloved Apostle in 1 Corinthians charges them to "purge out the old leaven," that they "might be fresh dough according as ye are unleavened." This is of the greatest importance. The true believer in Christ is unleavened. It is not merely we ought to be, but that we are, since this is the result of the sovereign work of God in grace, and constitutes our standing before Him. Then as to our practical ways, this is grounded on our standing. So being unleavened, it is incumbent upon us to purge out the old leaven. The purpose of God was to form the Church in all the purity of a chaste virgin for Christ, and the responsibility of the saints is to walk, individually and corporately according to this truth so positively stated. In this connection how beautifully the Apostle introduces the thought of

the true Paschal Lamb and the consequent putting away of sin by His atoning sacrifice. The feast of unleavened bread is inseparably bound up with the passover, and this deepens the ground on which the Apostle demands the removal of that which necessitated the death of the passover Lamb to deliver us from its dread power. This is turned to practical account here. There might be new forms of evil besides those of old habits and associations, but as all leaven had to be excluded by the Children of Israel, so the believer is called to judge evil unsparingly in every shape. The unleavened bread is that of sincerity and truth. It is that spirit of integrity with God, and results in that whole-hearted surrender to His blessed will. It is the spirit of transparency which the psalmist exemplified in Psalms 139:1-24. At the beginning he says "O Lord Thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine uprising; Thou understandest my thought afar off." Then in verses 24 and 25 he says, "Search me O God and know my heart; prove me and know my thoughts; and see if there be any grievous (or idolatrous) way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Since the uncompromising refusal of leaven, as typical of the active power of evil, is of such vital importance in the practical life of those who partake of "the feast of unleavened bread," as being in practical conformity with the death of Christ, a brief reference to another aspect of the baleful working of leaven might yield valuable instruction to us. I refer to Matthew 13:33, "Another parable spake Jesus unto them, The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." Since Scripture is its own interpreter the language used in this parable reminds us at once of the meal or meat-offering. Of this offering Scripture speaks very clearly, "No meat-offering which ye shall bring unto the Lord shall be made with leaven; for ye shall burn no leaven . . . in any offering of the Lord made by fire" (Leviticus 2:11). The woman is here shown to be doing what the word of God expressly prohibits, and further-more the surreptitious manner in which she acts marks her movements as being in entire opposition to the mind of God, for she took and hid the leaven in the three measures of meal.

"Three measures of meal" is no meaningless or arbitrary phrase. As employed by the Spirit the number three is expressive of divine completeness or fulness, and hence of the perfection of testimony. "Three measures" is the full divine measure, God in manifestation, as seen in the wondrous pathway of Jesus, the Son of God, the true Meat-offering. In this world where all was opposed to it, there was manifested before men a life of transcendent grace and holiness, essentially heavenly in all its aspects, displaying all that God was for man and all that man ought to have been for God.

He was "the true, the heavenly living bread" which came down out of heaven. The truth of Christ as the bread of life is what the professing church has been entrusted with, for her own sustenance and the blessing of others. The doctrine of Christ is her most precious deposit, and the maintenance of this in purity her great responsibility, and by the introduction of leaven in all its corrupting tendencies, as variously described in the word of God and as already referred to, resulting in the gross perversion of all that God committed to her as the responsible vessel of light and testimony in a dark world. This is very strikingly brought out in the addresses to the churches in The Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22. In Revelation 2:20, the Lord Jesus, presenting Himself in His personal dignity as the Son of God, lays the church at Thyatira under the solemn charge, "I have against thee that thou permittest the woman Jezebel, she who calls herself prophetess, and she teaches and leads astray my servants to commit fornication and eat of idol

sacrifices." This woman is mentioned in Scripture not merely as one whose spirit was corroded with a malignant hatred and opposition to all that was of God, but as personating a principle, the dominant quality of which is one of hostility to the truth of God — a persevering, persistent and persecuting spirit, actively and energetically carrying out, against all opposition, the work of leavening the truth of God. So the Lord speaks to the church of Thyatira, and warns it of the woman Jezebel, "she who calls herself prophetess, and she teaches and leads astray my servants to commit fornication and eat of idol sacrifices." Balaam, as mentioned in the address to the angel of the Church in Pergamos, was a seducer outside, and represents the snare which the world became to the Church. Jezebel was a corrupter inside and represents the shameless alliance of the Church with idolatry and with the world.

What a dreadful state of things is here made manifest, not only has first love to Christ declined, but adulterous love of the world and idolatry, or spiritual fornication, have taken its place. In all this we can discern the corrupting influence of evil doctrine like leaven assimilating the mass to its own proportions and character to such an extent as to produce a monstrous system of religion which is but a vile caricature of Christianity, and to which other systems of worldly religion are converging, under the plea of a spurious unity, which in its ultimate formation will constitute a religious entity designated by the Spirit of God in Revelation 17:5, as "Mystery, great Babylon, the mother of the harlots, and of the abominations of the earth." Refusing to repent, though given time to do so in the long-suffering mercy of God, her doom is irrevocably sealed, and upon this corrupt and blasphemous system will be poured the exterminating judgment of God — "for strong is the Lord God who has judged her."

There is another reference to leaven in chapter 12 "And the people took the dough . . . And they baked the dough . . . into unleavened cakes for it was not leavened; for they were driven out of Egypt and could not wait" (Exodus 12:34; Exodus 12:39). It would seem that the divine command was carried out, not because God commanded it, but because of necessity, because the Egyptians urged them to depart. When we think of the spiritual significance of all this, the admonition is doubly solemn. Is it not a solemn reminder of how little the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth has ever characterized any considerable proportion of the people of God? When the world has forced them out of it, in times of tribulation and affliction, how bright the testimony shone of their being a heavenly people, in uncompromising separation from a world through which they were passing as "pilgrims and sojourners." But when the storm relaxed how quickly the leaven was again introduced. What a challenge to the people of God in days of ease and material prosperity. Are we keeping the passover feast according to the mind of God, or merely retaining that which we regard as necessary for external appearances, and which will enable us to accommodate our mode of life with the spirit and systems of an alien world? May the Lord in His faithfulness preserve us from such a beggarly estimate of heavenly things and from such unworthy standards of conduct on the part of those who are called with a heavenly calling. And let us not forget the duration of this feast, "Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread" (Exodus 12:15-20). This marks a complete period of time and typifies the whole period of our life here as saints. The feast of unleavened bread immediately followed the partaking of the Passover — indeed the two are identified in Luke 22:1 — "the feast of unleavened bread which is called the passover." The type, in its interpretation, suggests a truth of profound practical importance, that holiness in thought and in walk is incumbent upon all who are sheltered by the blood of the

Passover Lamb. The true character of saints is to be unleavened; the complete exclusion of every element of corruption and inflation belonging to our old estate as pertaining to all that was judged in the cross of Christ. In Exodus 13:1-22 we have the sanctification of the first-born. In the preceding chapter we saw how each household was identified with the firstborn, and how the lamb in its substitutionary character bore the judgment of the firstborn. The purpose of God in delivering the children of Israel from the land of Egypt was to bring them to Himself. "Thou by Thy mercy hast led forth the people that Thou hast redeemed; Thou hast guided them by Thy strength unto the abode of Thy holiness" (Exodus 15:13). He redeems and delivers that He might have a people in relationship with Himself. The same Voice that said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you," says, "Hallow unto Me every firstborn." All that is sheltered by the blood, is hallowed to God. He has a distinct claim upon all who are sheltered by the blood of Christ.

It is remarkable how the feast of unleavened bread is introduced in chapter 13. In the preceding chapter the keeping of the feast was enjoined immediately after the sprinkling of the blood of the passover lamb. This was to show that a holy life alone is consistent on the part of those who had been redeemed by blood. Mention again is made of this feast in chapter 13, but with added instructions relating to its observance when God should bring them into their inheritance, and also with special reference to the sanctification of the firstborn. The beloved apostle could say to the saints at Corinth, "For who makes thee to differ? and what hast thou which thou hast not received?" (1 Corinthians 4:7). So in verse 3 of our chapter the children of Israel are exhorted by Moses. "Remember this day in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Does this not speak with deeper meaning to us who have been delivered from a bondage greater far than that out of which the children of Israel were delivered? The Lord would ever have us remember the day of our great deliverance. As a result of that wonderful deliverance we can "give thanks to the Father who has made us fit for sharing the portion of the saints in light, who has delivered us from the authority of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Colossians 1:12-13).

Secondly, they were not to forget the mighty power which wrought their deliverance, "For with a powerful hand the Lord hath brought you out from this place" (Exodus 13:3). This hand of invincible power alone could break the fetters of their cruel servitude; could destroy the power of their pitiless adversary and lead them in triumph from the scene of their long enslavement. It is blessed to see that this same power is not forgotten in the day of their deliverance. "Thy right hand, Jehovah, is become glorious in power, Thy right hand, Jehovah, hath dashed in pieces the enemy" (Exodus 15:6). We too rejoice in the glorious achievements of our great Deliverer who was crucified in weakness but raised by the mighty power of God, and, "Having spoiled principalities and authorities, He made a show of them publicly, leading them in triumph by it" (Colossians 2:15).

These two things are particularly stressed by reason of the simple yet important prohibition which immediately follows, "There shall no leavened bread be eaten." In effecting our deliverance God has acted with a specific purpose before Him and the beloved apostle brings this before us very forcibly in Titus 2:13-14, "Awaiting the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all lawlessness and purify to Himself a peculiar people zealous for good works." Being holy, those in relationship with Him must be in moral resemblance to Himself, "But as He who has called you is holy, be ye also holy in all your conversation (or behaviour); because it is written, "Be ye holy for I am holy" (1

Peter 1:15-16).

Passing on to the consideration of the sanctification, or setting apart, of the firstborn of man or of cattle — for God, who in clear and unmistakable language claims it for Himself saying, "It is Mine," we see how closely associated this is with the feast of unleavened bread as being yet another one of the memorials of the passover. How beautifully, and with consummate skill, the Spirit of God has woven these remarkable types together, each with its own distinctive message, and presenting a pattern of divine instruction relating to those who, as holy brethren, are partakers of a heavenly calling, and whose ways ought to be accordant with that calling.

These two things therefore are put together as flowing from the sense of a divinely wrought deliverance; the feast of unleavened bread and the sanctification of the firstborn, and both are founded on the Passover. The instructions regarding the setting apart of the firstborn for God as belonging to Him includes the firstborn of animals, for if the firstborn of an animal could not be sacrificed, it must, like man's firstborn, be redeemed, "...the firstling that cometh from a beast which thou hast; the males shall be the Lord's. And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck" (Exodus 13:12-13). But why from the whole range of the animal world should the ass be selected for special mention? As the specific reference to the firstling of an ass stands in such close relation to man, as the last clause of Exodus 13:13 clearly states, "and all the firstborn of man among thy children thou shalt redeem," any thought of mere chance or irrelevancy must be refused, while accepting without reservation the purely intentional character of the statement. There is much valuable instruction to be gathered from what might seem at first a rather unusual comparison. The interpretation of this must be sought for in the history of Abraham. We have only to listen to what God says of Ishmael as He characterizes him not merely as "a wild man" as in our version, but as it is literally, "a wild-ass man"; "And he will be a wild-ass of a man, his hand against every man and every man's hand against him" (Genesis 16:12). The wild-ass man is Hagar's son, a child of nature. As we find in the epistle to the Galatians, Hagar is a type of "the law which gendereth to bondage." Hagar's seed is therefore the child of law, the law by which God sought to teach Israel in the holiness of His ways, and of the holiness of His house, but which after many centuries of patient training showed them to be but a race of wild-ass men, unable to meet the righteous requirement of that law which formed the basis of their relationship with God, yet refusing the "easy yoke" of Him who says, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me . . . for My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:29-30). But Ishmael is not merely Israel's picture, he is also ours in our natural state, whether educated and refined or ignorant and degraded, we are of that race possessing a neck that refuses to bear a yoke, and thus the wild-ass nature declares itself as that which God cannot own, but who in sovereign grace has provided the Lamb that has yielded up its life for our redemption as those who were stiff-necked and obdurate in our rebellion against God. How precious the thoughts of grace which radiate from such a seemingly commonplace consideration as the redemption of "the firstling of an ass," bringing home to our souls the emancipating truth that our exemption from death, which, as rebellious sinners we richly deserved, and our possession of a life that death cannot touch, is solely on the ground that the ransom price has been paid in the shed blood of Him the spotless Lamb of God's providing. This great truth the father was to impress upon the son (Exodus 13:14-16). It is very searching to observe that this is a household matter. How gratifying to the heart of the Lord if, as parents, our ways are so distinct

from the world, that it raises the question with our children as to why this should be so. We ought to carry ourselves as those who are "the ransomed of the Lord," holding ourselves as hallowed for God and belonging to a heavenly inheritance. How great is the gain of holding ourselves and our families as belonging to Him, even though as individuals they may not be owning His claims; only thus can we bring up our families in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord." In Exodus 13:17, we have a touching proof of the tender compassions of God for His people. He had other purposes for them, but in consideration of them as entering into their feebleness and fears, it is sweet beyond expression to see how He leads them by another way, lest they should see war and desire to return to Egypt. And we also know that He led His people another way that they might learn His all-sufficiency to meet every exigency of the wilderness, and also learn of the unfailing grace with which He bore with them in all their perversity. How rich and seasonable the instruction for us in all this.

They also took the bones of Joseph with them (Exodus 13:19). As another has said, "There was surely enough to occupy the mind of Moses on this passover night . . . What leisure could he have had to care for the bones of Joseph?" But Joseph had given "commandment concerning his bones." At that time, when Joseph was dying, the probability of the children of Israel ever leaving Egypt was remote indeed. Almost four hundred years were to elapse, but God honoured the faith of His servant. We have the Spirit's seal of approbation placed on this act of faith on the part of Joseph: "By faith Joseph when dying called to mind the going forth of the sons of Israel, and gave commandment concerning his bones" (Hebrews 11:22). And so, in accordance with Joseph's wishes they embalmed his body, not for burial in the sumptuously adorned tombs of the Pharaohs of Egypt, but in readiness for the day when the hosts of Israel should march out on their way to the inheritance which God had promised to Abraham.

It is blessed to see at the close of the chapter how God went before them as the Guardian, the Guide and the Light of His people. How reassuring the words of the last verse, "He took not away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night from before His people." The apostle's word to the Hebrew believers is but an echo of this, "Satisfied with your present circumstances; for He has said, I will not leave thee, neither will I forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5-6).

"Light divine surrounds thy going, God Himself shall mark thy way, Secret blessings, richly flowing, Lead to everlasting day."

Exodus 14:1-31. The closing verses of the previous chapter furnish us with an admirably suited introduction to the passage now before us. The verses referred to, Exodus 13:21-22, have been used of the Spirit as an unfailing source of rich and effectual consolation, cheer and encouragement for the tried and tested saints of every dispensation. These symbols of the presence of God, "the pillar of cloud" and "the pillar of fire" have sustained and succoured the hearts of His own when assailed by the adversary, who is ever evilly disposed toward what is of God and brings the pressure of all that lies under his authority to bear upon those who were once under his power in order to deprive them of the present possession and enjoyment of their God-given inheritance. These precious words inscribed by the Spirit of God upon this wonderful page of inspiration still shine in all their imperishable glory, a glory undimmed by the passing of the years, their power to strengthen and sustain unimpaired by the constant demands of needy saints who have availed themselves of the varied resources implicit in these words, pregnant with divine

comfort and encouragement, "And Jehovah went before their face by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them in the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could go by day and night." The pillar of cloud did not remove from before the people by day nor the pillar of fire by night. God becomes the Guide and Light of His people; He would not have His people take one step in uncertainty as they pass through this "trackless desert" where there is no clearly defined path marked out by natural means, and He would be the Light of His people in a world where the darkness is of a specific character, that of ignorance of God. Man, as being "dead in trespasses and sins" is completely insensible to God come in grace in the Person of His Son as is so convincingly demonstrated in John's Gospel. "And the light appears in darkness and the darkness apprehended it not . . . The true light was that which coming into the world lightens (or is light to) every man" (John 1:4-5; John 1:9).

"Our God is light and though we go Across a trackless wild, Jesus Thy footsteps ever show The path for every child." In this chapter we see God opening up the way for the complete deliverance of His people from the whole sphere of their bondage, which involved and necessitated the destruction of that power by which they had been enslaved. It is no longer a question of what was necessary to meet the righteous requirements of a holy God who was acting in grace for the deliverance of a people whose state as sinners required that God should act in the character of Judge. This question had been exhaustively settled to the glory of God, where the blood of the slain lamb sheltered the children of Israel, enabling God to pass over them in virtue of the death of their substitute, as He passed over the land of Egypt on that night, when death as the judgment of God claimed the firstborn of the Egyptians. God had declared in Exodus 11:7, "that ye may know that Jehovah distinguisheth between the Egyptians and Israel." God was able to demonstrate His righteousness in making this distinction, not by any moral superiority of Israel over the Egyptians but solely on the ground of redemption by blood. Their complete redemption, their full deliverance from the power of their adversary, was not known and enjoyed until the Red Sea was crossed, but the work of atonement, typically set forth in the blood-shedding of the passover lamb, formed the righteous basis by which God had been glorified concerning the question of His people's sin, and on which He displayed all His attributes in all their harmonious completeness in the eventual deliverance of His people.

How rich the divine instruction of those various aspects of God's dealings with the children of Israel, for the Spirit tells us that "these things happened as types to us." We see here a people whose history is but a reflection of our own in all God's dealings with us in view of our deliverance from the enemy's power. We are, as His heavenly people, sheltered by the blood of the true passover Lamb, and the new life which is ours in Him is nourished and sustained as we feed on Him who, in love, bore the judgment of our sin and sins. In seeking to be in conformity with His death there is to be the removal of all that savours of leaven, a true severance from the world out of which we have been called by Him who claims us for Himself as having "bought us with His blood." But the children of Israel are not yet clear; the enemy can still regard them as "entangled in the land," and make a last effort to retain them in the house of bondmen. How wonderfully the Spirit uses these historic events and circumstances to teach us profound lessons of the truth of God, for we come now to learn typically of another aspect of the death of Christ — the Red Sea aspect as opening up the way for us out of this world. In all these various aspects of the death of Christ, the great and emancipating lesson of man's total inability to contribute in any way or degree

to his deliverance is brought home to us in all the authoritative power of the Spirit. We have to find out how helpless we are. The position in which the children of Israel found themselves is intended to teach us this lesson. It was a position resulting from the instructions God had given to Moses in Exodus 14:1-4; far removed from the stratagems of men which human expediency and resources would have inspired. The people themselves were conscious of their extremely vulnerable position as evidenced in their cry of unbelief and despair, "Is it because there were no graves in Egypt thou hast taken us away to die in the wilderness?" (Exodus 14:11-12). Shut in between the desert and the sea with their implacable enemy and the flower of his army in full pursuit, and no doubt exulting in an easy victory, their position did seem hopeless in the extreme. But the God who had brought them thus far would not fail them in the moment of their extremity, for here the question was no longer between the people and God, but between God and their enemies. The question with God was fully and entirely settled on the night of the passover. From that time God had unreservedly shown Himself to be for them and with them, but how little they realised the greatness of the God who had espoused their cause.

Let us remind ourselves of the words God spoke to Moses when Moses asked Him, "Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you, and they shall say What is His Name? what shall I say unto them? and God said to Moses, I AM THAT I AM. And He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you (Exodus 3:13-14). How blessed to see how spontaneously God makes known His great Name to Moses and indicates thereby the relationship which existed between Himself and His people according to the revelation of His Name. How this invests the last clause with a grace and tenderness which the renewed mind cannot fail to discern.

Despite the unbelief of His people and their lack of confidence in Him, as the psalmist declares, "Our fathers in Egypt considered not Thy wondrous works; they remembered not the multitude of Thy loving kindnesses, but they rebelled at the sea, at the Red Sea (Psalms 106:7). Yet God had respect to the greatness and glory of His Name and His faithfulness in carrying out the terms of the covenant He had made with Abraham of old, and so we read, "And Moses said to the people, Fear not, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord which He will work for you today . . . the Lord will fight for you and ye shall be still (Exodus 14:13-14). Then He commands Moses, "Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward." There is nothing inconsistent between the command to "Stand still" and "Go forward." The one action is passive and the other is active; one is inward, the other outward, but both require the exercise of faith in laying hold of the never-failing divine resources to enable one to "Stand still" as well as to "Go forward." As Jeremiah the prophet has written, "The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him. It is good that one should both wait, and that in silence, for the salvation of the Lord" (Lamentations 3:26). Then again, in Psalms 46:1-11, as the winds and waves of adverse circumstances are sweeping and surging in all their menacing power around the beloved remnant of a coming day, who can say, "God is our refuge and strength, a help in distresses, very readily found," and as "the waters thereof roar and foam and the mountains shake with the swelling thereof," the One whom they will prove to be "a Sanctuary to which they can ever resort," comes those precious words in all their tranquillizing power, "Be still and know that I am God."

How comforting for the tried and storm-tossed saint today as having the Spirit of truth to guide us into all the truth, that such an one can experience the assuaging of those "fears within" while the

"fightings without" may continue. God, in His formative ways with us may allow the pressure of external things to continue, but will enable us by the Spirit's power not only to be superior to the disquieting influences of these things, but also to enjoy positively the deep and unruffled serenity of His own blest presence, in sweet anticipation of "that rest secure from ill." How reassuring to the most timid and fearful are the words. "The Lord will fight for you and ye shall be still." Faith, that inward energy of grace, while never underestimating the power of the adversary, roots itself confidingly in the word of God, assured that what God had promised He was able also to fulfil.

Let us now consider those momentous events preparatory to the children of Israel passing through the Red Sea beyond the power of their adversary forever. In the first event we are given visual evidence that God is for His people, and as the apostle Paul wrote to the saints at Rome, "What shall we say then to these things? If God be for us, who against us?" (Romans 8:31). The same apostle writing to the saints at Philippi speaks of their "labouring together in the same conflict with the faith of the glad tidings, and not frightened in anything by the opposers, which is to them a demonstration of destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God" (Php 1:27-28). When He His people's cause defends, Who then can stay His hand?

Therefore we read in Exodus 14:19-20, "And the Angel of God who went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them, and the pillar of the cloud went from before them and stood behind them. And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel, and was a cloud and darkness and lit up the night, and the one did not come near the other all the night." What gave light to the children of Israel was a cloud and darkness to their enemies. How secure they were, did they but know it, behind this impenetrable shield of invincible power. Before they could be reached God Himself must be met and overcome. Those sheltered by the blood of the passover Lamb were now shielded by divine power, and would soon be rejoicing in the completeness of their salvation. The second event to be noted is that God commands Moses to "lift thy staff, and stretch out thy hand over the sea and divide it, and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. . . . And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the Lord made the sea go back by a strong east wind all the night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided" (Exodus 14:16-21). Though the "strong east wind" was the instrument used of God to cleave the Red Sea so that the waters stood as "crystal walls" on either side and made a path through which His people should pass to the other side, it was the rod stretched out by Moses in which the power and authority of God was invested. "He clave the sea, and caused them to pass through and made the waters to stand as a heap" (Psalms 78:13); "And He rebuked the Red Sea and dried it up" (Psalms 106:5; Psalms 106:9).

Thus this seemingly impassable sea which they so much dreaded, and which seemed to aid their adversary in his last desperate effort to bring them again into bondage, becomes the means of their deliverance. The One of whom it is said, "The sea is His and He made it," in the exercise of His sovereign power causes this formidable barrier to become the means of His people's defence, for we read "And the children of Israel went through the midst of the sea on the dry ground, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left."

Here we have the solemn account of the destruction of the enemies of Israel. In their daring presumption, despite many unmistakable indications of the power of God acting on behalf of His people, the Egyptians "pursued and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's

horses, his chariots and his horsemen." The pillar of fire, the symbol of Jehovah's presence, did not deter them; blinded by their boastful and arrogant confidence in their own vaunted resources they pressed on to their sure and certain doom from which there was no return. As the Spirit so beautifully comments, "By faith they passed through the Red Sea as through dry land, of which the Egyptians having made trial were swallowed up" (Hebrews 11:29). In seeking to extricate themselves from their hopeless position, the truth, too late for their recovery, is confessed by that which represented the might and chivalry of Egypt, "Let us flee before Israel for Jehovah is fighting for them against the Egyptians!" At the command of God, "Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea and the sea returned to its strength toward the morning." The waters which were a defence to the people of God and the means of their deliverance was the instrument used of God for the complete destruction of the enemy and his power, "for there remained not so much as one of them." "Thus Jehovah saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the sea shore." How solemn these historical events appear in the light of Exodus 14:17-18, lifting them entirely above the superficial thoughts and ideas of men and showing them to be the expression of the sovereignty of God in His judicial dealings with those who, with unsubdued wills, contend with Him in seeking to thwart Him in carrying out what He has purposed for the blessing of His people. "And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall pursue after them; and I will glorify Myself in Pharaoh and in all his host, in his chariots and in his horsemen. And the

Egyptians shall know that I am Jehovah when I have glorified myself in Pharaoh, in his chariots and in his horsemen." How vain indeed is the help of man, how weak and powerless the arm of flesh. As the psalmist declares, "Some make mention of chariots and some of horses but we of the Name of Jehovah our God . . . We will triumph in Thy salvation and in the Name of our God will we set up our banners (Psalms 20:5; Psalms 20:7).

While all that we have been considering is intended by the Spirit to minister divine comfort and encouragement to the children of God as they pass through the turbulent waters of trying circumstances, feeling the power and pressure of the adversary in many ways, yet in all these momentous events there is further instruction to be gathered as we consider them in their doctrinal aspect. In our consideration of this the beloved apostle's epistle to the saints at Rome will furnish us with those doctrinal interpretations which are implicit in all that has been recorded in the history of His earthly people, and are so recorded for our instruction. The truth of this is confirmed in the remarkable statement of the apostle Paul, "Now these things happened to them typically, and were written for our admonition unto whom the ends of the ages have reached" (1 Corinthians 10:11). It is not the "ends of the world" but the ends of the dispensations which are past — those probationary ages in which man was under trial; in innocence, without law, under law, under law tempered by mercy, under kings, priests and prophets, each and all, because of man's incurably and irremediably sinful condition, conclusively certifying the necessity of God's intervention in grace reigning through righteousness if man was to be blessed. The consideration of these things assumes a very solemn character when we realise that these dispensations were closed for us by the death of Christ, in which the utter condemnation of man is reached, but where "the river of God's grace through righteousness supplied, is flowing o'er the barren place where Jesus died."

We can now look back over those ages and find them all ministering their special lessons to us. How wonderful the place in which we have been set, as receiving divine instruction from all that

happened to past generations in God's dealings with them. It seems clear from a consideration of those past events, mentioned in 1 Corinthians 10:1-33, that they are intended to be a warning to us, "that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted," and then the timely admonition is added, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." How gracious of the Spirit to cast those scriptural histories of His own recording, in moulds of divine truth, applicable to the whole sphere and character of divine teaching as the beloved apostle declares in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "Every scripture is divinely inspired and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, fully fitted to every good work." Let us therefore apply these things to this exceedingly instructive portion of the word under consideration. As has already been expressed the Red Sea is another aspect of the death of Christ. For every true believer in Christ it means the way of deliverance out of this world. While the children of Israel were still on this side of the Sea they were not beyond the reach of their enemies who regarded them as "entangled in the land," and so made a last determined effort to retain them in the house of bondmen. But God's salvation is a complete salvation involving as it does the defeat of the enemy and the crushing of his power, with the deliverance of God's people from the world over which the adversary exercises usurped authority and from all the influences which obtain there. As the god and prince of this world, Satan's power and influence pervades the whole scene which is called in Colossians 1:13 "the authority of darkness," and the principle on which his kingdom is ordered is that all shall be according to the supremacy of man's will. This, according to God's judgment is sin, "and sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4), for it is the insubordinate will of a creature who has rebelled against God, and this is the root principle of the world.

Every aspect of the world's system demonstrates the truth of this assertion — the sphere of politics, the sphere of pleasure, the sphere of religion, and also the sphere of culture, where the most refined forms of the human mind are supposed to be expressed. Such is the world in which the adversary seeks to retain the people of God, but we can praise God that He has provided an effectual way of escape from it, a way of deliverance through the death and resurrection of Christ. It is this which is typically depicted in the children of Israel's passage through the Red Sea.

It was between "Migdol and the Sea" that the enemy came upon the host of Israel. We have seen what the Red Sea typifies, but what does Migdol speak of? It's meaning is "watch-tower." Since the Sea marked the border of Egypt, representing the world away from God, so this watch-tower, as part of the defence-works of a border region, did not regard the children of Israel with friendly eye, for they were still in hostile territory. The truth of Romans 7:1-25 may help us here as suggesting how the law looms threateningly in the path of one seeking to escape from sin's law. It may seem strange that the word of God states so decisively "The strength of sin is the law," which is further strengthened by the remarkable declaration, "For we know that the law is spiritual," followed by the words, "But I am fleshly sold under sin." There is the mistaken idea with men that because the law is spiritual it must be power for spirituality, power against sin. But again, Scripture says, "But I was alive without law once, but the commandment having come, sin revived, but I died. And the commandment which was for life, was found, as to me, itself to be unto death; for sin, getting a point of attack by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me." As sure as Migdol was in the enemy's country and that Israel must be out of it to escape attack, so must we be out of reach from the law to escape its condemning power. But in the 7th of Romans all the questions, objections and reasoning show the difficulty with which we apprehend the truth

concerning the law of God.

It is not a question of guilt but of conflict on the part of one who can say, "For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man, but I see another law in my members, warring in opposition to the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which exists in my members." It is the vital question of being "delivered from the law . . . that we should serve . . . God in newness of spirit, not in the oldness of the letter," so that "we should bring forth fruit unto God." We may be perfectly clear as to the truth that the law cannot justify, but as hindering the yielding of fruit for God it presents a great difficulty to many. The struggle is often a painful one, but at last, having realised "that in me that is in my flesh good does not dwell," one is constrained to cry out, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me out of this body of death." I cannot improve this flesh in which sin dwells; I cannot bring about the spiritual state I long for. I desire the consciousness of holiness but His law gives me the consciousness of sin. From whence and from whom can we expect deliverance?

Looking at the type again we find that God did not arm His people and lead them out against Pharaoh and his host to wage war against them. Instead they are commanded to "stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." So with us in this memorable struggle God does not call us to fight against the flesh to subdue it. Only one course is open to us, and divine power alone can provide it. So now, as Moses' rod is lifted up over the Sea, the east wind rises, and as the night falls the Sea is divided from shore to shore. Truly God's ways are not our ways, neither His thoughts our thoughts. How strange is this path according to the thoughts of men, yet it is the divinely appointed way of deliverance for His people from the whole scene of the enemy's power. Christ's death alone has effected it. The dark night of His unequalled sorrow and suffering, as the "east wind" of divine judgment swept over Him, has opened up the path of deliverance. This precious death in all its abiding efficacy is ours. We are dead by it, dead with Him, passed out of the condition of men in the flesh, and this is true of every child of God. It is not only that our sins are forgiven, how blessed to know it, but that is not all — myself has gone in that death, my wretched, worthless self has gone. I have died with Christ, and His death has ended my history before God as being in the flesh. It is what has taken place from the first moment of faith in Christ as a Saviour — not a matter of progress or attainment, though there is the thought of attainment as reaching in the faith of our souls what is already ours in God's purpose for us. To enjoy the blessedness of this place we must reach it experimentally. The passage of the Red Sea did not take place on the passover-night, but several stages of the journey beyond — by Migdol through the Sea. How invaluable the teaching of all this is in setting us free from every desire and effort to cultivate that which "is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be." As possessing the new nature we can say, "For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man," but we also find "another law in my members warring in opposition to the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which exists in my members." It has been said that the command to "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord" answers to the close of Romans 4:1-25 and the beginning of Romans 5:1-21, "But speak to the people that they go forward" corresponds with Romans 6:1-23, for here we take new ground as those having died to sin. Christ has died, and we are entitled to go out in a very real and spiritual sense, by way of His death. We are entitled to pass out of this world as the sphere of sin, and this aspect of the death of Christ was clearly set forth in our baptism as Romans 6:3-4 declares, "As many as have been baptised unto Christ Jesus have been baptised unto His death.

We have been buried therefore with Him by baptism unto death in order that even as Christ has been raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life." We must learn death with Christ, and leave ourselves as it were in the Sea, and take our true place as "in Christ."

How complete the work which has effected our deliverance from the enemy's power and the sphere over which he rules. "And it came to pass in the morning watch that Jehovah looked upon the camp of the Egyptians . . . and embarrassed the camp of the Egyptians . . . and the Sea returned to its strength toward the morning . . . and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the sea shore. And Israel saw the great power with which Jehovah had wrought against the Egyptians" (Exodus 14:24-31). Well might we celebrate the glorious achievements of our Saviour-God and say, "Thou hast prevailed Thy people Lord are free." How bright is this morning for us, surely "a morning without clouds," as with overflowing hearts we apprehend our acceptance "in Christ" in all the unchanging value of His wondrous death. Our standing is now in Him who "was raised from among the dead by the glory of the Father." And God has made His blessed Son everything to us. "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who has been made to us wisdom from God and righteousness and holiness and redemption; that according as it is written, he that boasts let him boast in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:30-31).

Exodus 15:1-27. In this chapter we are introduced to the first song in Scripture. It is a song of redemption, expressive of those deep feelings of joy and gratitude which filled and flooded the hearts of the people of God, who, conscious of their new position and tasting the fruits of their complete deliverance as seeing their enemies dead upon the seashore, celebrate with rapture and unrestrained joy the triumphs of their God, who had risen up in the full majesty of His power on their behalf and had brought them, by the overthrow of the enemy's power, into the joy of full salvation. The expressions used in their song are truly remarkable as being prophetic in character and not the incoherent outburst of a people overwhelmed with the thought of a new-found liberty after such a lengthy history of enslavement. There can be little doubt that all is inspired by the Spirit of God, in giving expression to the purposes of God concerning them until they reach the rest God has prepared for them — when "Jehovah shall reign for ever and ever!" (Exodus 15:18). "And Jehovah shall be King over all the earth; in that day shall there be one Jehovah and His Name one" (Zechariah 14:9).

How blessed to see in their song how completely they are set free from themselves and all concern respecting their deliverance. When they do refer to themselves it is as "the people that Thou hast redeemed," "Thy people," "the people that Thou hast purchased." He is the One with whom they are absorbed, expressing too the sense of relationship into which they have been brought. There is no need to declare His Name to them as at the beginning, for they declare in their song of triumph, "My strength and song is Jehovah and He is become my salvation," "This is my God," "My father's God." How precious are these expressions as indicating the lifting of their hearts to their great Deliverer in the full and willing acknowledgement of Him as the Source of the mercy that has been displayed in the effectuation of their complete deliverance. But this has a twofold character, and while this does not set aside its primary application to Israel, yet, inasmuch as the crossing of the Red Sea was pre-eminently typical in character, so this song, with the position in which it was sung and the occasion which called forth the singing of it, will furnish the children of God in this day of measureless grace with much needed instruction as to a more

worthy response on our part to "Him who has raised from among the dead Jesus our Lord who has been delivered for our offences, and has been raised for our justification" (Romans 4:24-25). In loftier strains of joy we celebrate the greater achievement of our God — the same God to whom the children of Israel sang at the Red Sea — but we rejoice in Him as "the God of peace, who brought again from among the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, in the power of the blood of the eternal covenant (Hebrews 13:20). The death and resurrection of Christ is the righteous foundation on which all our relationships with God have been established in accordance with the eternal covenant of peace. How precious to note the connection between "the God of peace" and "the eternal covenant" of peace. This was the reassuring word spoken by the Lord Jesus to "His own" on the resurrection day, "Peace be unto you." His triumphant resurrection was the incontestable proof that the enemy's power had been destroyed, not an enemy left to hinder God from carrying into effect all He had purposed for the blessing of His redeemed people. Not only "Pharaoh's chariots and his army hath He cast into the sea," but "all the inhabitants of Canaan melted away." In the unclouded joy of present deliverance they also anticipate in their song of praise their entrance into the inheritance God had given to them. He had delivered them and would deliver and "bring them in and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance." Thus we see, as led of the Spirit, how they apprehended the greatness of their deliverance in the fulness of its meaning: not merely what they had been saved from but also what they had been saved for. This is a distinction of no small importance in its application to those who, as the children of God, have learned that a way has been opened up for us through the death of Christ to go out of this world morally as those entirely set apart for God and as having to do with a system of things which is essentially heavenly in character. We, too, have been purchased, redeemed, led forth out of all association with this world to find ourselves blessed according to the purpose of God "who is rich in mercy, because of His great love where-with He loved us, has quickened us with the Christ, and has raised us up together, and has made us sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:4-10). Surely it is in loftier strains of joy that we sing of the God of our salvation "who has saved us, and has called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the ages of time, but has been made manifest now by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who has annulled death, and brought to light life and incorruptibility by the glad tidings" (2 Timothy 1:9-10). In the morning "Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore." Not an enemy was left to hinder God from carrying into effect all He had purposed for the blessing of His redeemed people. Nevertheless, because of their persistent rebellion against God, their obdurate refusal to hearken to His word, and above all, their culminating act of impiety in refusing and crucifying Jesus the Son of God, their Messiah, "wrath has come upon them to the uttermost." All God's dealings with the children of Israel as the nation of His choice are meanwhile suspended; but when reinstated into divine favour, all they have given expression to in their song on the other side of the Red Sea will be fulfilled according to the glowing prophecies of the Old Testament prophets.

While the blessing of the saints of this dispensation of grace is of an infinitely deeper, fuller and richer character, and the hope we cherish of being with Christ in the Father's house sweeter far than words can express, yet to be insensible or unresponsive to what is equally the interests of Christ in relation to the blessings of this world, would be to display a spirit unworthy of those whom sovereign grace has given such a favoured and distinctive place in that day of manifestation, when the Assembly, the bride, the Lamb's wife, is seen by John as the holy city, Jerusalem, coming

down out of the heaven from God, having the glory of God" (Revelation 21:10), coming to reign with Him over the earth as those who in Christ "have also obtained an inheritance" (Ephesians 1:9-11). For we are to reign with Christ over the earth and, as the Assembly, be the intermediary vessel for the display of Christ's glory "when He shall have come to be glorified in His saints and wondered at in all that have believed." This is the glorious moment for which the groaning and travailing creation around us looks, anxiously and expectantly, the day of "the manifestation of the sons of God" which will mark its complete emancipation from "the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God" (Romans 8:19-21).

Oh, what mighty movements of God are contingent on the restoration of His earthly people to divine favour in the faithfulness of God to His promises of old, and in accordance with this song of deliverance which we are considering, and also according to their predicted blessing celebrated anticipatively in the glowing and fervent language of the prophets of old (See Isaiah 18:1-7 and Hosea 2:14-15). This too will ensure the blessing of this poor world now groaning in all its sinful wretchedness, when "the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea." Speaking of the children of Israel, Paul says, "But if their fall be the world's wealth and their loss the wealth of the nations, how much rather their fulness. . . . For if their casting away be the world's reconciliation, what their reception but life from among the dead?" (Romans 11:12; Romans 11:15). In perfect harmony with this the prophet Isaiah is moved by the Spirit to write, "Arise, shine! for thy light is come, and the glory of Jehovah is risen upon thee . . . Jehovah will arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen on thee. And the nations shall walk by thy light, and kings by the brightness of thy rising" (Isaiah 60:1-3).

Reference has already been made that in the morning "Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore." All that sought to thwart God in the carrying out of his purpose of blessing for his redeemed people had been effectively dealt with. How blessed for us the morning of Christ's triumphant resurrection in the full accomplishment of the work the Father had given Him to do. But there is more of an infinitely precious character to be noted, for as the fruit of that wonderful work of redemption, there is the intimation of a new creation where "the old things have passed away and all things have become new and all things are of God," in those greatly cherished words of the Lord Jesus to Mary. "Go to My brethren and say to them, I ascend to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God" (John 20:17). All our relationships with God are established in resurrection, and we can sing of Him as our strength, our song, and our salvation. How sweet the assurance that He is our strength for the wilderness pathway, in a scene "where foes and snares abound."

Like the children of Israel we too can say "This is my God," not a God afar off, but a Saviour-God, who "has given to us the ministry of reconciliation: how that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not reckoning to them their offences, and putting in us the word of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). So that those once alienated and enemies in mind by wicked works have now been reconciled through the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus who "has made peace through the blood of His cross." This was the One in whom the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell, and in the power of whose Person the Godhead will reconcile all things to Itself, while every true believer in Christ is now "reconciled in the body of His flesh through death," in order to our presentation, "holy, unblameable and irreproachable," before those divine Persons forever (Colossians 1:19-22). To the clause of verse 2. "I will glorify Him," there is an equally

acceptable alternative rendering, "I will make Him a dwelling." It is not that one displaces the other, but that they are complementary to each other; for is it not the case that the way in which God chose to be glorified was in dwelling amongst them in a habitation answering in every respect "to the pattern shown to Moses on the mount"? We are now considering the fruits of redemption, and the thought of God dwelling with men is by far the choicest of them all.

There had been men of God of old in whom the Spirit of God had wrought, such as Abraham, the friend of God, and to whom God appeared under the oak at Mamre. There was also Enoch who walked with God, and others. There are wonderful references to God visiting those saints of old, appearing in various forms, expressing thereby His profound pleasure in communing with His creatures; but only after the work of redemption had been accomplished was mention made of a dwelling-place for God in this world. The thought of building a Sanctuary in which He could dwell in the midst of His people came from God, according to Exodus 25:8, "And they shall make Me a Sanctuary that I may dwell among them." There was One who gave utterance to those imperishable words in Proverbs 8:22-31. "Jehovah possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old . . . then I was by Him, the nursling of His love, and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him, rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth, and My delights were with the sons of men."

Redemption however was a divine necessity as providing the righteous basis on which the dwelling place of God could be established to the full gratification of His desires. But as soon as expiation for sin had become an accomplished fact through the blood of the slain lamb, and Israel had been brought through that which typified death and resurrection, brought into an entirely new place as brought to Himself, completely delivered from the domination of the world and its prince, then the Spirit inspires them to speak of preparing a dwelling-place for God. Egypt, the enemy's territory, was not a suited place in which to erect this habitation for God. Only as brought to Himself can God identify Himself with them and be their God and they can be His people. All this has specific reference to the erection of the tabernacle which we hope to consider in its appropriate place.

Meanwhile, God has now a dwelling-place here upon earth, not of an earthly order but, distinctively heavenly in character. The Lord Jesus having accomplished the work of redemption "ascended up far above all heavens that He might fill all things," and from thence sent down the Spirit at Pentecost as the promise of the Father for the express purpose of gathering "together in one the children of God which were scattered abroad." How the apostle Paul, to whom was committed the administration of the mystery which had been hidden throughout the ages in God, rejoices in the favour bestowed upon him to administer the truth of the Assembly. How he revels in this wondrous theme with its limitless dimensions, unfolding the truth of it in rich variations of phrase and sublimity of thought. The apostle on his way to Damascus learned from the risen Jesus that such a company existed on earth, so intimately associated with Himself, as a body to its head, that in persecuting those "disciples of the Lord," he was persecuting Him. Saul, true son of Benjamin, "ravening as the wolf," recounts in graphic language the manner of his arrestment as he stands before Agrippa in Acts 26:9-14, "I indeed myself thought that I ought to do much against the name of Jesus the Nazarene . . . myself shut up in prison many of the saints . . . I compelled them to blaspheme. And being exceedingly furious against them, I persecuted them even to cities out of our own land. . . . I saw, O king, a light above the brightness of the sun shining from heaven . . .

and I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? . . . And I said, Who art Thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." How wonderful to hear such words from this one who but a short while before had been a "blasphemer and persecutor and an insolent, overbearing man." To Paul was committed a twofold ministry, that of the glad tidings and also of the Assembly, and of which he says concerning the latter, "I became minister according to the dispensation of God" (Colossians 1:24-27). In speaking to the saints at Ephesus of the administration of the grace of God which had been given him he declares, "Ye can understand my intelligence in the mystery of the Christ, which in other generations has not been made known to the sons of men as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the power of the Spirit, that they who are of the nations (Gentiles) should be joint-heirs, and a joint-body and joint-partakers of His promise in Christ Jesus by the glad tidings" (Ephesians 3:1-7). How marvellous the grace that has included the poor despised Gentiles in the purpose of God, not as an afterthought but "according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will." This is the present dwelling-place of God where He dwells in the midst of the praises of His people, while the courts in Zion are silent and as the captives sitting by the rivers of Babylon can say, "We wept when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song. . . . How should we sing a song of Jehovah's upon a foreign soil?" (Psalms 137:1-9). But the courts of Zion will again resound with the praises of His earthly people when they shall sing. "Great is Jehovah and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the hill of His holiness" (Psalms 48:1). Then the whole earth, "filled with the knowledge of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea," will take up the glad refrain and "Everything that hath breath (will) praise Jah. Hallelujah!" (Psalms 150:6). As verse 18 of our chapter declares, "Jehovah shall reign for ever and ever." In the singing of Miriam, the sister of Aaron, and the women who went out "after her with tambours and with dances," we have the thought of response so far as they entered into the reality of what God had done for them in the overthrow of their enemies. It was a true and spontaneous response according to their subjective apprehension of what God had done for them. In this was revealed the state of the people. Their song is noticeably limited in extent and does not go beyond celebrating the complete victory of Jehovah; it did not go on to the fruits of victory as was celebrated in the great song sung by Moses and the children of Israel.

How precious is the thought of intelligent response on the part of those who, so richly endowed by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, have the moral competency to respond to Him who without reserve has been pleased to make known to us by the apostle "all the counsel of God." How responsive is the apostle as viewing the vast and measureless extent of those eternal counsels of the Father as presented in the Epistle to the Ephesians. The apostle, gazing by faith with ever increasing wonder on that vast system of glory, of which the Father is the Source, his heart, too full to contain itself, overflows in responsive praise, as expressed in these words, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). In Exodus 15:22 we come to their actual entrance into the wilderness, with all its humbling yet health-giving lessons for those who, as the children of God, find this world to be morally a wilderness. Though not part of His purpose, it forms an essential part of His ways, as revealing to us our complete destitution of any and every resource, and making known the unfailing resources of divine power, grace and wisdom for all the exigencies of the wilderness pathway (See Deuteronomy 8:2-6). Had they been able to procure

bread in the wilderness, there would have been no necessity to send bread from heaven. Had they found water it would not have been necessary to bring water out of the rock. All was met by the plenitude of divine resource. But divine provision is not proportioned by the needs of the wilderness, it is merely occasioned by them, and God not only displays His power in meeting the need, but also His grace in the super-abundance of His giving. In the desert God will teach thee, What the God that thou hast found, Patient, gracious, powerful, holy, All His grace shall there abound.

What a change has come over this great host that sang so jubilantly at the Red Sea. They begin to murmur for there is no water. It was a trying experience but God was seeking to teach them an entirely new manner of life. To be in the wilderness is not a condition of failure, but a consequence of redemption. Here we find "three days" mentioned, suggesting, as so frequently in Scripture, the distance of death. In figure they had passed through death and now they were to learn it in all its practical significance. And so we, as brought into all the joy and blessedness of these heavenly relationships as founded upon the death and resurrection of Christ, are identified with Christ in death as to sin (Romans 6:1-23), as to the law (Romans 7:1-25), and to the world (Galatians 6:1-18). Walking in conformity to His death we find this world, as the psalmist says, to be "a dry and thirsty land, where no water is" (Psalms 63:1-11). We ought to expect this as having gone three days journey into the wilderness. Every spring from which at one time we sought refreshment is completely dried up. There is nothing to refresh or to sustain that new and heavenly life which is ours in Christ Jesus. How blessed then to realise that "all our springs are in Thee."

Then they come to Marah. Here was water in abundance, but it was bitter. In this we have a further application of the death of Christ. This is the application of that death by which they had been delivered. All that is of the flesh shrinks from it but how necessary it is. It involves suffering, instead of refreshment it is bitterness, as bringing death upon all that is naturally pleasing to us. Then as instructed by the Lord, Moses casts the tree into the waters, and the waters, become sweet. We know this tree; it is the cross in which the apostle could boast, "But be it far from me to boast save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ through whom the world is crucified to me and I to the world" (Galatians 6:14). How it sweetens every bitter cup; all that is bitter for flesh and nature to die to. "Christ then having suffered for us in the flesh, do ye also arm yourself with the same mind; for he that hath suffered in the flesh has done with sin" (1 Peter 4:1). There is too the precious thought of our suffering with Christ in a scene of complete contrariety to Him, a world of which He can say, "They have both seen and hated both me and my Father." Taking up the cross daily we are to follow with increasing devotion in the footsteps of Him who is still disowned and disinherited, according to the word of the apostle to the saints at Philippi, "Because to you has been given, as regards Christ, not only the believing on Him but the suffering for Him also" (Php 1:29). Though for us it may be our suffering with Him.

Then there is the thought of obedience introduced in verse 26. How prone we are to import an element of legality into the thought of obedience, instead of seeing this as but the activity of the divine nature which delights in God and all that is of God, and regards as an engrossing occupation the doing of His will. "And the world is passing and its lust, but he that does the will of God abides for eternity" (1 John 2:17). Then in John 14:21, the Lord Jesus says, "He that has my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me, but he that loves me shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him."

Then they come to Elim. How desirable was this resting-place to the weary pilgrims as they encamped at Elim beside the twelve wells of water and threescore and ten palm trees. As the Shepherd of Israel, God graciously provides the "people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand" with that refreshment, rest and shade so much needed in the wilderness. The words of another will furnish us with the typical meaning of the wells and palm trees: "They are types of those living springs, and of that shelter which had been provided, through instruments chosen of God, for the consolation of His people." This is the place to which obedience leads us; it is not necessary to sweeten these waters — they are already refreshingly sweet to be enjoyed in communion with the Good Shepherd who leads us "by the green pastures and by the waters of quietness."

Death's bitter waters met our thirst, Thy cross has made them sweet;

Then on our gladdened vision burst God's shady, cool retreat.

Exodus 16:1-36. At the close of the previous chapter we find the children of Israel enjoying the rest and shade of Elim. In all this we can discern the loving, tender care of their faithful God, in preparation for the next stage of their journey. Elim was but a temporary resting-place, they were still pilgrims; they had yet to traverse the "waste, howling wilderness" that lay between them and the inheritance God had given to them. The wilderness is the sphere of testing, according as Moses has written, "And thou shalt remember all the way which Jehovah thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee to know what was in thy heart . . . and know in thy heart that as a man chasteneth his son, so Jehovah thy God chasteneth thee" (Deuteronomy 8:2-5). As has previously been remarked, divine provision is not proportioned by the needs of the wilderness, but occasioned by them. It will be seen therefore, in the remarkable history of the wilderness which follows, that the moment of man's extremity is the moment of God's intervention on his behalf. If the wilderness was the place of proving what was in the heart of the children of Israel, it was also the place for the most wonderful display of divine power and love called forth by the necessity of the people whom, in the sovereignty of His choice, God has taken into relationship to Himself, according to Exodus 19:4, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself." This thought, expressive of the faithfulness of God, in spite of their persistent unfaithfulness, is beautifully sustained in the words of Moses as he re-counts the ways of God with His earthly people, "For Jehovah's portion is His people, Jacob the lot of his inheritance, He found him in a desert land, and in the waste, howling wilderness; He led him about, He watched over him, He preserved him as the apple of His eye. As the eagle stirreth up its nest, Hovereth over its young, Spreadeth out its wings, Taketh them, beareth them on its feathers, so Jehovah alone did lead him, And no strange god was with him" (Deuteronomy 32:9-12). May these sublime utterances, inspired by the Spirit of God, produce that singleness of heart and that readiness of mind to understand the mind and will of God for us as conveyed in those remarkable types of old. It is nothing new to say that we can only understand the mind of God in accordance with our spiritual state. Anyone may learn what the Bible says, but to know the mind of God is an entirely different matter. To have this knowledge, a certain spiritual condition is necessary as Colossians 1:9-10, and many other passages of Scripture insist upon. Human ability has no place here, but two attitudes are necessary, namely, diligence in acquiring (Proverbs 8:34; Proverbs 13:4), and readiness to express in a practical way what has been acquired (John 7:17). As having the Spirit of God indwelling us as the Spirit of truth, our capacity to acquire this knowledge is ensured. "The natural man does not receive the things of

the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him. But we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we may know the things which have been freely given to us of God" (1 Corinthians 2:12-16). How desultory is our tillage of this goodly soil where there is much treasure. Let us ever remember "there is much increase in the tillage of the poor." When the children of Israel came into the wilderness of Shur it was the test of "no water" which confronted them, then at Marah it was not the lack of water but the character of it which tested them, it was "bitter." Thirst speaks of that for which man craves in the way of inward satisfaction, and so God, in satisfying the thirst of the children of Israel, would teach us that the satisfying of our thirst stands in relation to the will of God, involving the acceptance on our part of suffering in the flesh and thus ceasing from sin. The quenching of thirst refers to what is inward, so that in heart and mind and spirit we are brought into a state of complete satisfaction. The truth of this is brought before us very forcibly in John 7:1-53. The chapter opens with the announcement of another feast of the Jews, the feast of Tabernacles. The keeping of this feast was in remembrance of the fact that the people of God had once dwelt in booths, or tabernacles, in the wilderness, but were now gathered into the pleasant land. It was celebrated after the harvest and the vintage — the well-known figures in prophetic Scripture of the execution of divine wrath in both its forms. The former is discriminative in character, distinguishing between the good and evil. The latter — the vintage speaks of the unsparing judgment of God falling upon all that was actively hostile to Him, and inflexibly opposed to the realization of all He had purposed for the blessing of His earthly people, and also that of the world at large.

These judicial actions just referred to were essential to the setting up of the kingdom of the Son of man as spoken of by Daniel, "and there was given Him dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations and languages should serve Him; His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Exodus 7:13-14). Judgment must do its necessary work in searching out and removing every offensive element from that kingdom for "where the carcass is, there shall the eagles be gathered" — before God's people enter into the reality of all that is prefigured in the feast of Tabernacles. But that time is not yet, as the Lord Jesus intimates to His brethren who did not believe on Him, but were demanding that He should show Himself to the world. "If Thou doest these things, manifest Thyself to the world." to which Jesus replied. "My time is not yet come" (John 7:4-6). According to Leviticus 23:1-44, where we have the feasts of Jehovah brought before us, we learn that the feast of Tabernacles had one day more than the other two great feasts, which gives an added significance to the words of John 7:37. The great day of the feast, the last day, was really the first day of another week, since seven days, speaking of a complete testimony to what is earthly, was wholly occupied in celebrating the feast, so that this last day is actually an eighth day, which speaks of what is beyond earthly things, and introduces us to what is new, heavenly and eternal. It was on this day Jesus spake these memorable words, "If anyone thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me as the Scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this He said concerning the Spirit which they that believed on Him were about to receive, for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not been glorified."

Jesus, rejected as the Messiah, after having accomplished the work of redemption, ascends as Man into that heavenly glory according to God's eternal counsels. Having glorified God in regard to the momentous question of sin, God has glorified Him in Himself and has glorified Him

immediately (John 13:31-32). And from that place of heavenly glory the Spirit has come, as the Spirit of truth, according to the words of the Lord Jesus, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes forth from with the Father, he shall bear witness concerning me" (John 15:26). This gracious Comforter is here to engage our hearts and affections with a glorified Saviour. One who has been raised from among the dead by the glory of the Father and has been given glory. His hour is not yet come for His manifestation to this world in all His manifested glory as He will be glorified in His saints and admired in all them that believe. Meanwhile He is "the object bright and fair to fill and satisfy our hearts." and as having the Spirit we are introduced into a divine and heavenly order of things, and enter into the enjoyment of these things, which alone can be revealed by the Spirit, things pertaining to that heavenly One: and as our hearts drink in that which is of Jesus, the heart, fully satisfied, overflows and becomes the means of refreshment to others. In John 4:1-54 we have that which speaks of worship, where we have the Holy Spirit associating the believer with the Father and the Son, resulting in worship on the part of those worshippers whom the Father "seeketh to worship Him in spirit and in truth." In John 7:1-53 it is clearly more the thought of testimony. "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water," for the refreshment of others. How blessed to be so occupied with Jesus that those living waters of which He is the Source, can flow out in living power for the refreshment of others. It suggests too that such an one is superior to, and independent of, the whole condition of things in a scene of barrenness, where there is not a green spot to refresh the eye and heart, and not a palm-tree under which to rest. When we come to the seventeenth chapter of Exodus we shall have occasion to again consider the Spirit, when water is brought forth from the rock, but since this is mentioned in such an immediate context with the coming of Amalek to fight with Israel in Rephidim, it would seem to suggest the Spirit as the power for conflict. The opening words of this chapter are simple yet cannot fail to arrest the attention of the careful reader. "And they journeyed from Elim, and the whole assembly of the children of Israel came into the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai." Elim would remind them of the place where they had rested and been refreshed according to the tender compassions of their God whose "compassions fail not," while Sinai would cause them to remember those awe-inspiring evidences of the holiness and majesty of that law, obedience to which they had fatally pledged themselves as the basis of their relationships with God. Up to that stage of their journey every circumstance served only to display what God was for them in all His matchless, long-suffering and unwearied love. From Sinai, by assuming this place of responsibility, the whole character of their relations with God was completely changed, and placed on an entirely different footing. It was no longer a question of what God was for them, but of what they should be for God. This brings out the great distinction between grace and law, and thus invests the journey between Elim and Sinai with a peculiar interest for those who desire to be instructed as to these two weighty and contrastive truths with which the Spirit has dealt so exhaustively in the word of God.

However, in the constant murmurings of the children of Israel, we see how incorrigible is the flesh in all its corrupt and incurable propensities whether under grace or under law. How strange to hear again the voice of complaint on the part of those whose previous murmurings had been answered — at Pi-hahiroth, when they saw the army of Pharaoh approaching, and again at Marah where the waters were bitter — not in the spirit of judgment, but in the spirit of unqualified grace, and the display of divine power on their behalf. How trenchantly has the Spirit recorded of them by the psalmist, "They soon forgot His works, they waited not for His counsel; but lusted exceedingly in

the wilderness and tempted God in the desert" (Psalms 106:13-14). Nor were their fears expressed in the spirit of intercession or supplication, but in words of bitterest reproach, "Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh-pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger." Their present necessity is one of hunger and not of thirst. Occupied with their present distress they thought only of the flesh-pots of Egypt and the bread which they ate to the full; but what of the bitter bondage and the cruelty of their task-masters during the time of their enslavement in the land of Egypt?

How great and enriching are the lessons to be learned from all that happened to the children of Israel as we realise that we too are dependent upon this provision of divine grace, a provision which is the necessary result of redemption. Since therefore this world is a moral wilderness to a heavenly people, it can yield nothing to sustain this heavenly life, but the God who has redeemed us and brought us to Himself will ensure that His inexhaustible and limitless resources are available for us, "Bread shall be given them, their water shall be sure." The kind of life that Egypt's food ministered to was the life of the old corrupt nature with "the lusts of the flesh . . . doing what the flesh and the thoughts willed to do" (Ephesians 2:3). Everything was there to sustain that kind of life; there was no lack, "We sat by the flesh-pots, when we ate bread to the full." But God has taken His people out of this world by redemption and has brought them into relationship with Himself in a scene where that food which once sustained is no longer available. But will our faithful God fail us in our extremity? Assuredly not, though He allows the need to be felt before He supplies that which will meet the need, in super-abundant measure, which characterises all His dealings with us, yet not indiscriminately, but in accordance with divine wisdom and love, as bringing us in increasing measure into correspondence with His own thoughts concerning us. As has already been quoted from Deuteronomy 8:2-3, "And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna . . . that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live." How salutary and enriching are the lessons which this barren, sterile world yields to the one who is walking in the light of heavenly and eternal realities. On to Canaan's rest still wending, E'en thy wants and woes shall bring Suited grace from high descending, Thou shalt taste of mercy's spring. In suffering us to hunger, the Lord's intention is clear and unmistakable, nothing short of weaning us from the flesh-pots of Egypt, and to attract us to Christ as "the true, the heavenly living bread" which came down out of heaven, and thereby teach us that true satisfaction and sustenance can only be found in Him and His word. The contrast is between the flesh-pots of Egypt and Christ, the bread of God's providing; and very blessed it is when we learn that that blessed One in whom the Father finds His full, constant and abiding delight, is sufficient for all our needs. The flesh ever craves that which meets its desires, but as truly delivered from Egypt, there will be not only the refusal of its desires, but the uncompromising disallowance of the flesh, as that which has been already judged in the death of Christ (the Red Sea). Therefore the beloved apostle states in Romans 8:12-13, "So then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to flesh, for if ye live according to flesh, ye are about to die, but if, by the Spirit, ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live." The flesh, as opposed to the Spirit, has its own objects, and ever craves that which meets its own desires, but the words of the apostle in Galatians 6:7-8, speak with timely warning and admonition to our souls, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatever a man shall sow, that also shall he reap. For he that sows to his own flesh shall reap corruption from the

flesh."

It would seem that we must draw a very clear distinction between the giving of the quails and the giving of the manna; both were given to meet their hunger. But the giving of the quails was more in the chastening ways of God with a people who desired what they had eaten as they sat by the flesh-pots in Egypt, so the psalmist speaks of them "lusting exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempting God in the desert, and He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul" (Psalms 106:14-15). In Numbers 11:1-35 the giving of the quails is again brought before us, and in a very solemn manner. The people are now under law, and God therefore deals with them in accordance with the measure of their responsibility towards Him. At the beginning of the chapter the divine record reads, "And the children of Israel also wept again and said Who will give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt for nothing, . . . now our soul is dried up, there is nothing at all but the manna before our eyes." Again God answers their request, but now, let us ponder these solemn words, "The flesh was yet between their teeth, before it was chewed, when the wrath of Jehovah was kindled against the people, and Jehovah smote the people with a very great plague." The Spirit, again through the psalmist, refers with pointed emphasis to this solemn occasion, and speaks of them thus, "They were not alienated from their lust" (Psalms 78:26-31). The quails were given to satisfy the desires of the people, but they brought no blessing, whereas the manna, God's provision for the wilderness, precious and eloquent type of that blessed One "once humbled here," was that food which sustained the host of Israel for forty years.

Let us, who have been called with a heavenly calling, have the loins of our mind girded, "leading captive every thought into the obedience of the Christ," lest our eyes and hearts should rest desiringly on any object of this world. In this way many a true believer in Christ, forgetful of his true position in Christ, has turned in heart again to the world out of which he has been called, and sat again by the flesh-pots of Egypt, so to speak. God has allowed him to attain the object he had set his heart upon, but accompanied by great barrenness of soul; and how incalculable the loss for eternity. With what deep sorrow of heart Paul says of Demas, "Demas has forsaken me, having loved the present age" (2 Timothy 4:10). If we turn back in heart to Egypt and are permitted to gratify our fleshly desires, in whatever form these may find expression, our leanness of soul will be great.

How different are God's dealings with His people in this chapter, all their murmurings are met in the spirit of unqualified grace. Their very murmurings are the occasion for the display of God's glory. In Exodus 16:7-12 Moses makes the solemn pronouncement, twice over, that their murmurings were not against him and Aaron, but against Jehovah. "In the morning then shall ye see the glory of Jehovah; for He has heard your murmurings against Jehovah; — and what are we that ye murmur against us — . . . for Jehovah hears your murmurings which ye murmur against Him Come near unto the presence of Jehovah; for He has heard your murmurings. And it came to pass, when Aaron spoke to the whole assembly of the children of Israel, that they turned toward the wilderness, and behold the glory of Jehovah appeared in the cloud. And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak to them saying, Between the two evenings ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread, and ye shall know that I am Jehovah, your God."

How faithful is God to all that He had declared Himself to be for His people. As Paul could say to Timothy, "If we are unfaithful, He abides faithful, for He cannot deny Himself" (2 Timothy 2:13). How accordant is this with what Moses has declared, "And ye shall know that I am Jehovah your God." How precious is this display of divine grace, and how brightly it shines against the dark background of man's sin which occasioned the display of it. The exposure of what is in the heart of man brings out of the depths of the heart of God all that He is in blessing to man. This has ever been the manner of God's dealings with man, from the moment man listened to the voice of the tempter and became the enemy of God. All sin is against God (Psalms 51:4; Luke 15:18-21); but in the cross where we see the utter degradation of man in his rejection of the Son of God, we see the full revelation of the heart of God in grace. So far as man was concerned the cross was the close of that wonderful pathway in which the Son of God, in deep humiliation and abasement displayed, without intermission, the glory of the power of God in goodness to men. In the light of these precious things, how solemn and affecting are these words, "Despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads thee to repentance? but according to thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up to thyself wrath, in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who shall render to each according to his works" (Romans 2:4-6).

Let us now consider God's provision for the wilderness in fulfilment of His promise that "Bread shall be given them, their water shall be sure." The present chapter deals with the first part of this unailing promise — the bread from heaven; the chapter following gives the second part — the water from the rock. We do not get the history of the wilderness in Exodus, this we find very fully in the book of Numbers. Exodus is the book of redemption with the place of relationship for those redeemed, so that in the giving of the manna we have the provision of divine grace for the need of the people — a provision which is the necessary result of redemption.

It is important to note that the giving of the quails is very briefly referred to, a mere incident to the main purpose of the Spirit as bringing the manna before us in the fullest detail. We need not wonder at this since the manna is a type of Christ — "of Christ once humbled here" — as the bread of God who came down out of heaven. Here is opened up to us the vast treasury of divine wealth and resource, the vast treasure-house of grace — "a mine of wealth laid open to the poor." But only those who have life in Christ by feeding on His death, as Jesus declares in John 6:53-54, can feed upon Him as the manna. "Jesus therefore said to them, Verily, verily I say unto you, unless ye shall have eaten the flesh of the Son of Man and drunk His blood, ye have no life in yourselves. He that eats My flesh and drinks My blood has life eternal and I will raise him up at the last day."

Having obtained life eternal through the appropriation of Christ in death, we are further told, "As the living Father hath sent me and I live on account of the Father, he also who eats me shall live also on account of me" (John 6:57). Christ is the food of His people while in the wilderness, and, as feeding upon Him, we are enabled to bring the heavenly grace of Christ into all the commonplace circumstances of the desert pathway — His meekness, gentleness, tenderness, sympathy, patience, in short, the life of Jesus manifested in our bodies.

How blessed and sustaining to feed upon Christ as the One who has passed this way before us, tempted in all things in like manner to ourselves, sin apart. As Peter declares, "Leaving you a

model that ye should follow in His steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth, who, when reviled, reviled not again; when suffering, threatened not, but gave Himself over into the hands of Him who judges righteously" (1 Peter 2:21-23). In the midst of all the toil, the weariness and the conflict of the pilgrim path, how sustaining to feed upon Him as the apostle says in Hebrews 12:2-5, "Looking steadfastly on Jesus . . . consider well Him who endured so great contradiction from sinners against Himself, that ye be not weary, fainting in your minds."

According to John 6:27, it is the Son of man who gives us this food, and, as we have seen, how appropriate that it should be so. This is all the more remarkable since this is presented in that Gospel in which His divine glory as the Son is its paramount theme. But the manna is the Son of man down here in this world, in this scene that witnessed the display of the glory of His humiliation in all its perfection in words and ways. It is thus He becomes the Bread of God's providing for us, the One whom the Father has sealed and sanctified and sent into the world; the One who has received from the Father those expressions of fullest approbation and delight as a Man in this world; One in whom we find what is near and intelligible to us, yet withal the Man Christ Jesus in whom was pleased to dwell the fulness of the Godhead bodily. The character of grace is stamped upon this gift of the manna to meet the people's need. Their murmurings, instead of bringing down judgment, are met by the supply of this food from God, according to verses 14 and 15, "And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar-frost on the ground. . . . And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat." In Numbers 11:9, we read that the manna fell upon the dew, "And when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it." Dew is often referred to in Scripture as a source of refreshment, and the Spirit is the Source of this divine refreshment and reviving. In this connection there is a beautiful thought in Hosea 14:5, "I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall blossom as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon." The effect of the Spirit's work in the remnant of Israel in a coming day will be their spiritual revival, and will produce exuberant fruitfulness and beauty. This refreshing is the sovereign work of the Spirit, as the prophet says, "a dew that tarrieth not for man, neither waiteth for the sons of men" (Micah 5:7).

How blessed to see that no human hands bestowed this bread. God caused it to fall softly and silently around their tents while they slept. But the manna fell upon the dew and "when the dew was gone up," the manna was left: beautiful figure of the Spirit who ministers Christ and not Himself. As the Lord Jesus says in John 16:13-14, concerning the Spirit, "He shall not speak from Himself . . . He shall glorify me, for He shall receive of mine and shall announce it to you." How precious it is, if only we experienced it more, to awake in the morning with thoughts of the Lord Jesus filling our hearts. Our hearts and affections wrought upon in all the refreshing power of the Spirit and prepared for the reception of the manna as the food of God's providing, so that as strengthened and invigorated thereby, we might bring into active expression the grace of that heavenly One in all the everyday circumstances of our wilderness life. This life is reproduced in us as we walk in the path of God's will, for it is the life of One who came into the world not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. Do not the words of the psalmist bear out the truth of this? "He . . . had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them the corn of the heavens: man did eat the bread of the mighty" (Psalms 78:24-25). This is the bread which strengthens us to walk as Jesus walked in this world, even as the apostle says to the Colossian saints, "strengthened with all power according to the might of His glory, unto all endurance and

longsuffering with joy" (Colossians 1:11). The gathering "every morning" speaks of spiritual diligence, and an ever present desire for that spiritual development which alone can be ensured by feeding upon the manna, but there must be the desire on our part, for "He hath filled the hungry with good things: and the rich He hath sent empty away" (Luke 1:53). How sad to have our taste so vitiated by the things of this world that in our hearts we regard this "bread of the mighty" as "light food." How solemn the warning in Numbers 11:1-35, "We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt for nothing, the cucumbers . . . and now our soul is dried up: there is nothing at all but the manna before our eyes.

Then the Spirit of God gives us a brief, yet beautiful description of the manna, speaking of it as having "the taste of oil cakes" or "fresh oil" (verse 8). In Exodus 16:31, it is described as "the taste of it was like cake with honey." There the sweetness of it is emphasised, what it would normally be to those whose tastes were formed by grace. But in Numbers, where there is a sorrowful distaste for it, its spiritual character is brought out distinctively. What is of the Spirit will never be appreciated by the flesh; therefore if we seek to enjoy what is of the Spirit there must be the continuous judgment and refusal of the tastes and tendencies of the flesh. Only by such exercises can we arrive at a true appraisal of the precious character of the manna, and of the greatness and adequacy of the provision, with a resultant diligence of acquiring what God has provided for us, in accordance with John 6:27, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give you; for Him hath God the Father sealed."

Then there was an equality of supply; no lack and no surplus. "And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some much, some little . . . every man according to his eating" (Exodus 16:16-18). As another has truly said, "We all have as much of Christ as we desire — no more and no less." Think of what the psalmist says, "Whom have I in the heavens? and there is none upon earth I desire beside Thee" (Psalms 73:25). How searching this is. We cannot desire too much, and our greatest demands will never be disappointed. Where there are enlarging capacities they can never over-reach the greatness of the supply, for God has said, "I am Jehovah thy God that brought thee up out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide and I will fill it" (Psalms 81:10). The measure, therefore, in which we feed upon Christ, our true wilderness food, depends entirely upon our spiritual needs, just as the body craves the food that is essential to its well-being and development.

How blessed to see how the manna is spoken of in connection with the Sabbath. "This is that which the Lord hath said, Tomorrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto Me" (Verse 23). "Sabbath" means rest, and surely the thought before us is that rest for our hearts is found in connection with the appropriation and enjoyment of Christ as the One who came down out of heaven to be the food of His people. It is not peace of conscience, for we are a redeemed people, but that peace, that rest which He gives in a world estranged from Himself. Circumstances are not what give us this peace; "These things have I spoken to you that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye have tribulation, but be of good courage: I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Peace, His tranquil peace, is known in the midst of tribulation, and thus God glorifies Himself. The long Sabbath of eternity never to be disturbed, will be due surely, not only in the knowledge that He has made peace, but also that He is our peace; and as feeding upon Christ now we shall surely enjoy sweet anticipations of that "rest, divinely sweet." Would the cooking and the baking mentioned

here speak of those spiritual exercises which are necessary in order that we might derive the fullest measure of profit from our feeding upon Christ? The grinding it in mills, or beating it in mortars, as in Numbers 11:1-35, speaks rather of the expedients to which men are resorting in these days, in order to make Christ palatable or agreeable to the men of the world? These were the actions of those who had lost their taste or appetite for "the corn of the heavens" and were regarding it as "light food."

How precious are the thoughts which cluster around the closing verses of our chapter where the Lord commands Moses to "Fill an omer of it to be kept for your generations; that they may see the bread that I gave you to eat in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt (Exodus 16:32-36). It is truly remarkable that though the manna could not be kept for one day's need in the wilderness, it could be kept for the land of Canaan. And so we are assured from this, that while we cannot feed upon our yesterday's experience as meeting and satisfying the need of today, it will be for rich and eternal blessing when reviewed with our blessed Lord as we enjoy the rest of the Father's house. In Exodus 16:34 we read, "As the Lord had commanded Moses, so Aaron deposited it before the Testimony to be kept." This too, is worthy of note, for here we have the first mention of the Testimony in connection with the manna. As we trace all God's dealings with men, we can discern a specific truth attaching to the various testimonies which He committed to men in the gradual revelation of Himself, until we come to the full revelation of Himself in the Son as the opening verses of Hebrews tell us. This is the testimony committed to us, a testimony of heavenly things consequent upon the death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus to the right hand of the greatness on high. It is as feeding upon the manna, therefore, as that "divine and heavenly food," that we are enabled to maintain "the testimony of the Lord" in a hostile world, not being ashamed of it, but walking in moral accord with it.

Hebrews 9:1-28 speaks of "the golden pot that had manna." The golden pot would tell us of how God is glorified in what the manna discloses. We shall learn with ever increasing wonder, how much that spotless life of "Christ once humbled here" ministered constant and sustained delight to the Father's heart. Although it speaks of Him as a Man in this world, we shall find Him the same above, and God will be glorified in Him forever. We shall find in the One upon the throne of glory the same blessed One who had nowhere to lay His head in this world. We shall not only "see" the hidden manna but "eat" of it as promised to the overcomer in Pergamos. Fresher than ever will be our realisation of His love and that unfailing grace that has sustained us in the midst of a vast profession that dwells in this world and has those who hold the doctrine of Balaam. When we are at home with Him we shall have the full enjoyment of all we have found Him to be in the wilderness. Our feeding upon the manna here will determine the capacity of our enjoyment of Him throughout eternity. The manna is not merely to meet our present need, it is not merely to furnish us with strength and courage for the desert path, but it is for our eternal enjoyment, and in a fulness in which we have not yet known it.

Exodus 17:1-16. The scripture which has been repeatedly quoted in relation to previous chapters, "Bread shall be given him, his water shall be sure" (Isaiah 33:16) has, in its contextual setting, special reference to the godly remnant of a future day, those fearing His Name and walking in righteousness. It is not difficult to savour the sweetness of divine compassion and assurance conveyed in these words, which will sustain and strengthen the hearts of the beloved people of God, as they are intended to do in a moment of extreme peril. Jerusalem, the beloved city, the city

of the great King, will be under siege by the implacable enemies of God's people, intent on their extermination, even as recently avowed, and in accordance with the prediction of Psalms 83:1-18, "They say, Come and let us cut them off from being a nation and let the name of Israel be mentioned no more." But all the evil machinations of their enemies will come to naught as Isaiah 33:10-11 declare. "Now will I arise, saith Jehovah; now will I be exalted; now will I lift up myself." The insolent foe shall not go unpunished. "And the peoples" — the nations gathered against Israel — "shall be as burning of lime, as thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire." We know from other Scriptures that God will relieve the beleaguered city and deliver His people; "Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty; they shall behold the land that is far off," or "the land of far distances."

While acknowledging its primary application to the people of God on earth in a coming day, there is an appropriateness in its application to the circumstances through which the children of Israel were passing in our present consideration of them. Moreover, all their need was met according to the unfailing compassions of God and in the full display of His power towards them. Bread had been given them, as seen in the manna rained upon them from heaven; now, in our present chapter we shall see how their water was to be made sure. And when these things are translated into the language of grace for the instruction of a heavenly people, how incomparably great they become, as we see the manna as a type of Christ, the Bread of God which came down out of heaven, and the water, as typifying the Spirit of God.

All these incidents which occurred in the journeys of the children of Israel are by no means undesigned occurrences, but are intended to subserve the great purpose of God concerning the blessing of His earthly people; and also to furnish us, upon whom "the ends of the ages have come" with those invaluable types which are of the deepest significance in their application to us, for whom their accumulated wealth of blessing is reserved. Hence we are told in the first verse of our chapter that the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, "according to their journeys, at the command of the Lord." Nothing is left to chance, nor the changeable, capricious workings of the human mind, but according to the settled purpose of God as intimated in Deuteronomy 8:2, "And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments or no." From innumerable scriptures we learn how the experiences of the wilderness brought to light the hearts of the people of God; hearts swathed in the dark and impenetrable mists of unbelief as the result of "not hearkening to the word." The apostle Paul, reminding the Hebrew Christians of how their forefathers had provoked, refers to Psalms 95:1-11 and asks the solemn question, "And with whom was He wroth these forty years? Was it not with those who had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware He that they should not enter into His rest, but to those who had not hearkened to the word? And we see that they could not enter in on account of unbelief" (Hebrews 3:17-19).

There was however a need to be met, for when they pitched at Rephidim, "there was no water for the people to drink." Truly this new circumstance again exposed the inveterate unbelief of hearts that had tasted so unfailingly of the goodness of their faithful God, for "the people did chide with Moses . . . and the people murmured against Moses." This is extremely solemn, for Moses, rebuking them for their murmuring in the previous chapter, prefers this solemn charge against them, "Your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord." Nevertheless, God answers

them in unqualified grace; without reservation He demonstrates the magnitude and the munificence of the resources of His grace in bringing water out of the flinty rocks to satisfy their thirst.

While it is unquestionably true that these circumstances, through which the children of Israel passed in their journey through the wilderness, were instrumental in bringing to light the deep-seated unbelief of their hearts; yet it would appear that the paramount object in the mind of God was to bring them into circumstances of need so that they might learn how great and effectual was the grace of their God, who had brought them to Himself, and by whose word they were to live. As Moses declares in Deuteronomy 8:1-20, "That He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread alone, but by everything that goeth out of the mouth of Jehovah doth man live." It has already been noted that their journeys were not according to human devising but according to divine direction, as intimated in Exodus 15:22, "And Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea, and they went into the wilderness of Shur," and again in the first verse of our chapter "And all the assembly of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, according to their journeys, at the command (or mouth) of Jehovah." In these divinely-intentioned journeys, despite, yea, because of their murmurings and guilty unbelief, they were to see God's grace unfolded in all its wealth and sufficiency in meeting their need, every intervention of God on their behalf bearing upon it the stamp of grace, grace that triumphs over judgment, for grace is a mightier triumph over sin than is judgment: and how great are the triumphs of grace displayed in all the varied circumstances through which the children of Israel passed, all of which have been preserved to us by the Spirit of God for our enrichment, who have been blessed with infinitely greater blessings; nevertheless they are shadowed forth in all those remarkable types for our instruction. In all these memorable happenings we can discern how God is desirous of our being led by the Spirit into an ever increasing knowledge of the perennial and surpassing glories of Christ, the One in whom He finds constant and unfailling delight and upon whom His eye and heart rests with deep and abiding complacency. God desires that we should enter, with an ever enlarging apprehension, into His own thoughts concerning the preciousness of Christ; as Peter declares in his first epistle, 1 Peter 2:4-7, "To whom coming a living stone, cast away indeed as worthless by men, but with God, chosen, precious, . . . To you therefore who believe is the preciousness." And as finding Him to be precious to us, we realise how utterly indispensable He is for the growth and development of the life that is ours in Him. This thought is strengthened and sustained by the assertions in John 6:53-57, "He that eats My flesh and drinks My blood has life eternal . . . for My flesh is truly food and My blood is truly drink." Then the thought of communion is introduced, "He that eats My flesh and drinks My blood dwells in Me and I in him."

We then have the precious thought of how this life is sustained, "As the living Father has sent Me and I live on account of the Father, he also who eats Me shall live also on account of Me." We belong to that "countless host," resulting from "the grain of wheat" falling into the ground and dying, and as the Spirit adds, "But if it die, it bears much fruit." This involves our complete identification with Christ in death, and thus bringing to an end what we were as after the flesh, so that in resurrection, as the quickening or life-giving Spirit, He might bring us into association with Himself in the new place He has taken as Man, after having accomplished the work of redemption. In virtue of accomplished redemption, and in the "abundance" of this heavenly life, He brings us into relationship with the Father and Himself, the Head of this new and spiritual race. To such,

being morally qualified, He imparts the Spirit, thus giving ability to comport ourselves with spiritual intelligence and moral decorum in these new and heavenly relationships into which we have been brought. Moreover, He enables us to feed constantly on His death (John 6:54; John 6:56), and thus to enjoy communion with the Father and Himself, which is "life eternal": but this can only be realised and enjoyed as we abide in Him.

These words have been written with the desire of emphasising the all-sufficiency of Christ. As John Newton, the converted slave-trader, has expressed it so beautifully in the hymn, "How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds" — Our never-failing treasury filled With boundless stores of grace. And beyond all doubt, this is the desire and intention of the Spirit in bringing before us these incidents in the life of the children of Israel. As another has said, referring to 2 Corinthians 3:6; 2 Corinthians 3:17, "The apostle unites in the selfsame thought, the mind of God in the word according to the Spirit, the glory of Christ who had been hidden in it under the letter, and the Holy Spirit Himself who gave its force, revealed that glory and by dwelling and working in the believer enables him to enjoy it . . . Christ glorified is the true thought of the Spirit which God had hidden under figures." The children of Israel ate material bread from heaven, and drank material water from the flinty rock, but what is the spiritual import of these things to us? As we have already seen, Christ is the true Manna, the bread of God "which has come down out of heaven." As to the interpretation of the water from the rock, we are not left to the capricious and misleading surmisings of men, but the Spirit himself has, clearly and distinctly, interpreted this for us, "they drank of a spiritual rock which followed them: (now the rock was the Christ)." How the Spirit would instruct us in the full knowledge of the wealth and sufficiency of this grace which found its supreme expression in Christ, while every expression of it witnessed to the inexhaustible fulness of the One who administers this grace to the glory of Him who is the "God of all grace."

Before considering the precious truths connected with the smiting of the rock, it might be profitable to note how the Spirit uses two words as though to perpetuate the sin of the children of Israel. In verse 6, God says to Moses, "Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock on Horeb," then in verse 7 it states, "And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they had tempted Jehovah saying, "Is Jehovah among us, or not?"

Massah means temptation, Meribah means contention, and these names, expressly used by the Spirit, are descriptive of the moral state of the people, and indisputably proved their hardened hearts of unbelief towards God. For in chiding or contending with Moses, who was God's representative, they were veritably contending with God and putting Him to the proof by doubting or virtually denying His presence among them. Solemn words! and there they stand today with all their solemn and seasonable admonition for our own souls. May they produce that watchfulness against every movement of the flesh, lest we too should be guilty of manifesting those morally disfiguring features of contention and unbelief. Rather let us profit thereby and, as walking in the consciousness of companionship with the Lord Jesus, be able to say with the beloved Psalmist, in deep assurance of faith, "For Thou art with me"; the One of whom he had said at the beginning of the Psalm, "Jehovah is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside still waters."

How pregnant with divine refreshment are the words of the beloved apostle, "At my first defence no man stood with me, but all deserted me . . . But the Lord stood with me, and gave me power" (2 Timothy 4:16-17). May each one of us be marked increasingly by that simple, unquestioning, child-like confidence in our faithful God, as it is written, "Satisfied with your present circumstances, for He has said, I will not leave thee, neither will I forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5).

Let us now consider this remarkable scene as God stands before Moses on the rock of Horeb. How affecting this is to our hearts when spiritually interpreted according to the design of the Spirit. Moses is told "Thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go." In this incident we have another instance of the grace of God rising above the sin of His people, for it was their sin which occasioned the smiting of the rock; and here too we have another aspect of the death of Christ by which we are further instructed in the immensity of blessing accruing to us as the fruit of the death of Christ. The rod in the hand of Moses was the symbol of God's power and authority; this was the rod that Moses stretched out over the Red Sea to divide it as God had commanded him. As we have already seen, the stretching forth of the rod by Moses, in which was invested the power and authority of God and which was exercised in judicial power — as indicated in the language employed in our chapter — "the rod with which thou didst smite the river" — was a type of the death and resurrection of Christ, the righteous means by which we are delivered completely from the enemy's power and by which we may leave the world morally, as the sphere in which he exercises his power. Christ "has been delivered for our offences and has been raised for our justification" (Romans 4:25). This aspect of the death of Christ is clearly set forth in baptism, according to the teaching of Romans 6:3-4, "Are you ignorant that we, as many as have been baptized unto Christ Jesus, have been baptized unto His death? We have been buried therefore with Him by baptism unto death, in order that, even as Christ was raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life." His precious death is ours, we have died with Him, and as He has died to sin and lives to God, so we, in virtue of that death, are entitled to regard ourselves as dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. The world is the sphere of sin, where man finds unlimited scope for the exercise of a will entirely unsubjected to the will of God. The Lord Jesus had no moral contact with such a world. There was nothing in common between Him, the perfectly obedient One, and a world dominated by the will of man. In death, He has gone out of this world, and we, as having died with Him, reckon ourselves "dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus." In the smiting of the rock we have, in type, the death of Christ in vital connection with the giving of the Holy Spirit as the power of life. In the giving of the manna we have the type of the Lord Jesus in the place of humiliation and rejection in this world; the giving of the living water depends upon His exaltation and glory. But that wonderful pathway trodden by the Son of God, a life sustained by the Spirit of holiness and exhibiting in superlative degree every feature of moral excellence so precious to the Father's heart and concerning which He expressed His deep and lasting appreciation, was not the ground upon which the Spirit, as the promise of the Father, was given. A work had to be done which involved the death of the Son of God. How precious therefore are the thoughts which cluster around this scene at Mount Horeb; how affecting to the hearts of those who can say, "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities." The smitten rock speaks to us of a crucified Saviour, and crucifixion is a penal action. It was not merely a martyr's death, as men speak of it; it was the death of One, when, "He who knew no sin, was made sin for us," and as our substitute — absolutely sinless in Himself — was smitten with the rod of God in all its judicial and unmitigated power. Nothing was allowed to

enfeeble the sense of divine wrath at the moment when He was "smitten of God and afflicted," and we can discern the measure in which the sinless Sufferer realised this, as expressed in the moment of His great extremity, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me." There was no hand put forth to stay the avenging rod; no voice to say, as in the case of Abraham and Isaac, "Stretch not out thy hand against the lad, neither do anything to him." Neither was there a substitute found for Him, for He was the true Ram of sacrifice, displaying that energy of devotedness to the will of God even unto death, "and that the death of the cross." When dealing with the question of sin, "God spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all." The death of God's own Son was a divine necessity because of sin which had called in question every attribute of God's character. But in virtue of His atoning work, we see the conciliation of every attribute of God, for in the cross we see that "Loving-kindness and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Psalms 85:10). God has been fully glorified according to the words of the Lord Jesus, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God also shall glorify Him in Himself and shall glorify Him immediately (John 13:31-32).

How blessed to have our attention drawn by the Spirit of God to the smiting of the rock as indicative of the unexampled sufferings of Christ, where the sin of man reached its fullest expression, and the love of God, supreme in goodness, surmounted and surpassed the hatred of men, for He "was given up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." He was alone in that dark hour, as the "sparrow alone upon the house-top." He had "looked for sympathy, but there was none, and for comforters," but found none. His was a loneliness that none could share, and with which none could sympathize, for they did not understand. The work of atonement, as typified in the smitten rock, is now accomplished, and on the ground of this the Spirit has been given. "He opened the rock and the waters gushed forth; They ran on the dry places like a river" (Psalms 105:41). It is worthy of note that Horeb means "the dry place." Only when the rock was smitten could "the waters gush forth," and not before, in order to meet and satisfy the need of the thirsty multitude. The smiting of our living Rock, which is Christ, has provided us with a spring of refreshment and power as eternally satisfying and inexhaustible as the source from which it flows, the heart of a God whose name is love. The water which flowed from the rock is the symbol of the Holy Spirit. It has been said that all streams carry with them the witness of their source and the soil through which they flow. The presence of the Spirit of God in this world, according to the words of the Lord Jesus, is the mighty and irrefutable witness to His glorification at the right hand of the Father, "And I will beg the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, and he may be with you forever, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it does not see him nor know him; but ye know him, for he abides with you and shall be in you" (John 14:15-17). The Spirit being here is the fruit of accomplished redemption and our acceptance before God in all the abiding efficacy and value of that accepted work, and by which the flood-gates of the heart of a Saviour-God are opened wide to pour streams of grace, of life, and of unutterable blessing upon a barren and thirsty world.

Before this work of redemption, the heart of God was in measure restrained in expression, though not in its disposition to bless. The momentous question of sin had to be righteously resolved in order that His glory as a Saviour-God might be secured and demonstrated in grace to men. In the light of this, how precious to read these imperishable words written by the Spirit, "And Jesus,

having again cried with a loud voice, gave up His spirit, and lo, the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom" (Matthew 27:50-51). God, now no longer hidden in thick darkness as when His people were under law, immediately comes forth in fulness of grace toward men. The result of the smiting of the rock was that water came out of it. Such is the amazing result of the death of Christ, that God can give us His Holy Spirit. No doubt, with a burdened conscience and a deep sense of guilt as having to do with a sin-hating God, our great concern is for the forgiveness of sins and relief from this intolerable burden; but having experienced this relief, how soul-sustaining for every true child of God to consider the death of Christ in relation to the giving of the Spirit. The Spirit dwelling in us is "the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father," and "the Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:14-16). The Spirit of God has come down as the fruit of accomplished redemption and of our acceptance in the Beloved, and brings us consciously into the enjoyment of our new relationship in accordance with the words of our Lord Jesus, "In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you" (John 14:20). The Spirit engages our hearts with Christ and with the Father, so that communion with the Father and the Son is our present portion, known and enjoyed in the Spirit's power, who also enables us to respond to the love of the Father and the Son; and in this our joy is full.

How great are the divine resources available to us as having the presence and power of the Spirit. Yet the truth of this is a constant rebuke to our feeble apprehension of it; for as having the Spirit dwelling in us as the power for testimony, there should flow from us "rivers of living water" for the blessing and refreshment of others. May we be encouraged in knowing that the vessel is not the measure of the stream. God gives not the Spirit by measure. This was said in connection with the Lord Jesus who had come from heaven (though ever the Son of man who is in heaven) in order to bear witness of those heavenly things, the things which He had seen and heard. John had borne witness of earthly things, but the testimony of Jesus, who is above all, had reference to heavenly things, and, as sent of God, His testimony was the testimony of God, "for He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives not the Spirit by measure" (John 3:34). Every true believer in Christ is indwelt by this selfsame Spirit, who is the power for the intelligent apprehension and enjoyment, in responsive affection of those heavenly relationships with the Father and the Son, and the power whereby we bear witness of these heavenly things, for the blessing and refreshment of others. The remaining verses of the chapter bring before us a new foe — and yet one too well known to those who are the people of God, and conflict with whom is regrettably an all too constant experience, to our spiritual detriment and loss. Amalek is referred to as being typical of the flesh's will or lust. It should be noted when Amalek came and fought with Israel. The connection is very solemn and commands our prayerful consideration since it bears vitally upon those who "walk according to Spirit" and not "according to flesh."

Verses seven and eight give us not merely the literal connection but also the moral connection. In the former verse, it reads, "And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord saying, Is the Lord among us or not?" The language of verse eight suggests a consequence, "Then came Amalek and fought with Israel in Rephidim." From this we can observe that the moral connection is not between the gift of water from the smitten rock and Amalek's onslaught, but between the unbelief of the people and Amalek's attack. This conflict is not of God's proposing, but is the result of the lack of faith in

active exercise toward God; in the absence of this we fall an easy prey to this ever-watchful enemy who gains the ascendancy over us with all that is a positive hindrance to the formative work of the Spirit in us. God does not call to this conflict. He did not say, "Seek out Amalek and destroy him," but Amalek — the power of the adversary acting through the flesh — seeks out Israel, and it was Israel's unbelief which exposed them to attack. How appropriate therefore the exhortation of the apostle; he does not say, "War against fleshly lusts," but "Beloved, I exhort you, as strangers and sojourners, to abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11). If we would abstain, there would be no warfare, but if not, fleshly lusts, under the powerful stimulus of the enemy, war against us and we are entangled by those things which hinder us in our onward march to the possession of our inheritance. The lusts of the flesh would have no hold over us, did we but walk in the practical realization of death with Christ to sin, by faith "reckoning ourselves dead indeed unto sin" as we are bound and entitled to do. Thus this character of conflict would be unknown to us. The apostle Paul stresses this thought in the words, "He that has died is justified from sin." A dead man cannot be charged with sin or sins; this is faith's reckoning of course, but real and necessary. May we live more and more in the power of faith's reckoning, that we have died with Christ, and thus give no place to the flesh and its lusts. This reckoning is faith's prerogative as it is our privilege and our duty.

God, in His surpassing grace, has not left us to our own devices in the resisting and overcoming of this foe. A new leader is appointed, none other than Joshua — Jah, the Saviour, who is here a type of the Lord Jesus, who, as leader, is bringing those many sons to glory. With such a leader there can be no thought of temporizing with the enemy, no thought of defeat, or of compromise, or of surrender. Supreme and sustained courage is necessary in which to wage this conflict, as Paul exhorts us, "Quit yourselves like men; be strong." Our leader will not fail us, it is Christ in the energy of the Spirit which is distinctively set forth in Joshua, leading us into the present, practical apprehension of our portion in those heavenly places into which He has gone, as those who have been made to "sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus."

It is well, however, to remember the words written by Moses regarding the coming of Amalek: "Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come out of Egypt; how he met thee on the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, all the feeble that lagged behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary, and he feared not God" (Deuteronomy 25:17-18). Does this not suggest some evidence of decline, for when they were brought out of Egypt in all the triumph of a divinely wrought salvation, the Psalmist tells us that, "there was not one feeble among their tribes" (Psalms 105:37). How all-sufficing is God's provision for the wilderness — "the manna and the springing well suffice for every need" — but it is only as we appropriate this rich provision as food for our souls that we can be maintained in spiritual energy and freshness; otherwise we become enfeebled spiritually, and it is then we are assailed by Amalek — the adversary acting in all his subtle power through the flesh — and so our progress is retarded.

How essential therefore is such a Leader in order to be victorious over every movement of this enemy. A positive and sustained link with Christ in the scene to which He has gone is necessary for successful warfare in this scene. The appearance of Joshua fittingly follows the water from the rock, a type, as we have seen, of the ministry of the Spirit. Here, as has also been pointed out, we see how Canaan experience coalesces with wilderness experience for the believer of this present dispensation. While, in a certain sense, wilderness experience may precede Canaan, yet for our

successful crossing of these "desert lands" on to the actual possession of our inheritance, the two must go together. We want the positive enjoyment of the portion that is ours in the heavenlies in Christ in order to be really pilgrims and strangers in this world. Is it not of great moment that these types teach us this in a very remarkable way? But more than the inspired leadership of Joshua — representative of Christ acting in us in the energy of the Spirit of God — is necessary for the overthrow of Amalek. Success with Joshua on the plain is dependent on the activities of Moses on the hill-top before God, for if Moses' hand was raised, Israel prevailed; if it was let down, Amalek prevailed. In order therefore to support Moses in that attitude which ensured victory to Israel, a stone was placed under him, while Aaron and Hur supported his hands with the rod of power — the rod of God, as significantly stated here, "and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua broke the power of Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword."

Moses is here a type of Christ, as he is principally throughout the history of the children of Israel; but here, as representative of Him who "is not entered into the holy places made with hand, figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us," One who carries on without ceasing His present service of intercession on our behalf. "Whence also He is able to save completely those who approach by Him to God, always living to intercede for them" (Hebrews 7:25). In the supporters of Moses' hands we have typified what characterized the Lord Jesus as our great High Priest, as set forth in Aaron; One of whom we can say, "For we have not a high priest not able to sympathize with our infirmities, but tempted in all things in like manner, sin apart" (Hebrews 4:15). In Hur, meaning "purity" or "light," we have the Lord Jesus presented as the One who fully displays the character of God, as light. Here we have, on the one hand, mercy towards man, and, on the other, righteousness Godward, suggesting at once the scripture in 1 John 2:1, "My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." It is well that it was "with the edge of the sword" Joshua discomfited his enemies. The "sword of the Spirit is the word of God" which "is living and operative . . . a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). This is necessary for self-judgment, which is really the judgment of our foes. Our Amalek is within, our hearts are the battle-ground.

Let us again remember that we are not called to this conflict, it is we, who, at a distance from the Lord through unwatchfulness, expose ourselves to Amalek's attack. Yet, how gracious of our God to have furnished us with the means of meeting the attack; "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall in no way fulfil flesh's lust. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh; and these things are opposed one to the other, that ye should not do those things which ye desire" (Galatians 5:16-17). The path for us, according to the mind of God, is the happier path of those who have died unto sin once, and live unto God. Amalek is not destroyed; the flesh is still in us, though in our standing before God we are no longer in flesh but in Spirit. In Philippians, the epistle of true Christian experience, the flesh is mentioned only once, in order to say we have no confidence in it, "For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and boast in Christ Jesus, and do not trust in flesh" (Php 3:3). May we know something of this in our walk from day to day.

Exodus 18:1-27. In this chapter we have introduced, in type, an enlargement of thought consistent with the promise of God to Abraham that he should be the father of a multitude of nations, and that all the families of the earth should be blessed in him, blessing on the principle of faith, he being "the father of all them that believe." We have also the coming in of the Gentiles, which will be fully

realized in the world to come. This expression, "the world to come," was very familiar to the Jew, as comprehending all that would be brought in by Christ, the Messiah. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews presents truth calculated to detach the hearts of those to whom he wrote from all that savours of this world, engaging their thoughts with the world to come with its heavenly character of blessings. They had been partakers of the rights of Israel in relation to an earthly calling, but were now addressed as "holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling" (Hebrews 3:1), as confessing the One rejected by the guilty nation, and partaking of the unmeasured blessings of the heavenly calling.

Though the greatest prominence is given to the heavenly character of the believing Jews, there are nevertheless many references in the Old Testament Scriptures to the future blessing of Israel as God's people on earth, "For the gifts and the calling of God are not subject to repentance." In our present chapter we are brought, in type, to the day of Israel's complete deliverance and reinstatement in Immanuel's land, in accordance with God's promises to Abraham, to which abundant and convincing testimony has been borne throughout the word of God. Here too we have the bringing in of the Gentiles, for it has always been God's intention that the Gentiles should rejoice with His earthly people. as Moses declares in Deuteronomy 32:43, "Shout for joy, ye nations, with His people." (See also Isaiah 11:10 and Zechariah 8:23). In this connection it is of the greatest moment to see in verse 12 of our chapter how Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, "took a burnt-offering and sacrifices for God." Here we see the Gentile, one of the nations, taking his place before God in all the sweet savour of the offering of Christ, surely indicating the apprehension by Gentiles of Christ in all His acceptability to God, both as to His Person and His sacrificial work that form the sure foundation of all blessing. Had Israel been amenable to instruction in the ways of God, the abundant and convincing testimony of their prophets ought to have prepared them for the outflowing of God's grace beyond the limits of their own blessing, even of an earthly character. Yet how far removed they were from understanding these divine ways, in any period of their history, as presented to us in Acts 7:1-60, where Stephen, by the Spirit, gives such a remarkable summary of God's dealings with the nation of Israel, and closes with the most solemn indictment which has ever been passed upon any nation, "O stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers, ye also." Well might Isaiah say of them, "I have stretched out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, who walk in a way not good, after their own thoughts" (Isaiah 65:1-2).

While holding clearly in our minds that what is prefigured in Exodus 18:1-27 is the bringing in of the Gentiles for earthly blessing in "the world to come," yet, in this present dispensation of grace, we find the bringing in of the Gentiles according to the eternal purpose of God, but for an infinitely deeper and fuller measure of blessing, as suited to a people called with a heavenly calling. This, however, was an entirely new revelation, the mystery made known to the Apostle Paul, and which, as we learn from Ephesians 3:9, was not hidden in the Old Testament Scriptures, but "hid in God" from the beginning of the world. The appropriateness of this reference to God's present activity in grace, in the formation of the Assembly, will be seen in the introduction of Zipporah, the wife of Moses, who is a very interesting type of the Church. The mention too of her sons, whose names are specially mentioned, provides us with instruction of no little significance. In Exodus 2:1-25 we see Zipporah given to Moses in the time of his separation from Israel, and the name he gives his firstborn son indicates his profound consciousness of this, for "Gershom" means "A stranger

there," even as Moses said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land." To his second son Moses gives the name of Eliezer, meaning "God is my help," for he said, "the God of my father was mine help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh." The names of Moses' sons are also prophetic, the first speaking of the long, weary centuries of exile from Immanuel's land, because they had forsaken Jehovah for other gods, and had therefore come under His chastening hand, and were scattered through-out the world (1 Peter 1:1). The name of the second son foretells Israel's final deliverance by God their helper. Then will the words of the prophet be fulfilled, "Jehovah thy God is in thy midst, a mighty One that will save: He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love; He will exult over thee with singing" (Zephaniah 3:17).

Zipporah, the Gentile bride given to Moses in the day of his alienation from Israel, prefigures in a very beautiful way the giving of the Church to Christ during His rejection by the nation at the present time, but in view of millennial blessing in the world to come, as typified in this chapter. (In the case of Joseph, another attractive type of the Lord Jesus, we have in Asenath, his Gentile bride, another type of the Assembly. The names of her sons mean "Forgetting," and "Fruitfulness"; the Lord finding His joy among the Gentiles during the time of His rejection by Israel.) The bride of Moses typifies the Assembly in its intimate association with Christ in the day of His power and manifested glory, sharing all with Him, as brought out in Ephesians 1:22-23. There we see Christ as "Head over all things to the assembly, which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all." Heaven and earth will be united in that day, though in marked contrast to each other, the heavenly and the earthly companies finding their true and vital centre in Christ alone. This is brought before us in a very instructive manner in John 1:49-51, where Nathaniel, representing the faith of the nation of Israel in a day to come, confesses Christ as "The Son of God . . . the King of Israel," according to what was written in Psalms 2:1-12. As Son of God, Jesus was rejected in the high priest's court, and as King of Israel, He was rejected before Pilate. In answer to the confession of Nathaniel, Jesus answered, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, henceforth ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." The word "henceforth" suggests the immediacy of this homage of the angels of God to the Son of Man, while the introduction of the kingdom in power may be deferred, and then those who received the Lord while He was here will see Him as the object of the service on the part of those "ministering spirits." By His becoming Man, Jesus claimed His title as the Son of Man in this world, and it is to Him as Man the angels of God render this service to Him; and when Jesus receives everlasting dominion, and the kingdom which shall not be destroyed, "all peoples, nations and languages shall serve Him" (Daniel 7:1-28).

Truly these are "greater things," and they introduce to us the working out of those heavenly counsels of God, counsels regarding an incomparably larger sphere of blessing and glory than that which concerns the blessing of Israel as a nation. The truth of this is borne out in Psalms 8:1-9, where, prophetically, Jesus is spoken of as the Son of Man, and also in those Scriptures where this Psalm is referred to (1 Corinthians 15:1-58; Ephesians 1:1-23; Hebrews 2:1-18).

How precious it is to trace the rich unfolding of divine truth concerning the manifested glory of the "Man whom the King delights to honour," both in heaven and on earth, and in both of which the Gentiles have a favoured place of blessing. It is good for us to distinguish between the heavenly and earthly aspects of that day of glory for which the groaning creation is ever looking with earnest expectation, to "be set free from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the

children of God" (Romans 8:18-22), the day when the "heirs of God, and Christ's joint-heirs" will be manifested with Him, even as it is written in Colossians 3:4, "When the Christ is manifested who is our life, then shall ye also be manifested with Him in glory." This chapter also brings us to the end of the first part of Israel's journey through the wilderness. In the first part, up to Sinai, it is grace, unrestricted, which has brought the children of Israel thus far on their journey, the same grace which redeemed them from Egypt, and by which they experienced, in full measure, the boundless resources of God in the midst of all their infirmities. The manna was given as food for the wilderness — a type of Christ for us. From the smitten rock the waters gushed forth to satisfy their thirst, precious type of the death of Christ for us with the subsequent giving of the Spirit. Then, as in our present chapter, following the dispensation of the Spirit, we find, in figure, the blessing of Jew and Gentile, and the establishment of governmental order as will exist during the millennium. Furthermore, we have the Assembly brought in as pre-figured in Zipporah. In meeting with Jethro, his father-in-law, Moses gives a touching account of all that the Lord had done to Pharaoh and the Egyptians for Israel's sake, and how He had delivered them out of all the travail that had come upon them by the way; and Jethro rejoiced with Moses in all the goodness of the Lord to His people. Typically, this scene looks forward to the time when all the sorrows of Israel's dispersion will be past, when they will be delivered from the hands of all their enemies, and they will be in possession of their long-expected and long-delayed blessing, and be brought to "inherit the desolate heritages."

It is beautiful to observe how Jethro, the Gentile, acknowledges the absolute and unrivalled supremacy of Israel's God, where he says, "Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods, for in the thing they dealt proudly He was above them." The psalmist, inspired by the Holy Spirit, looks forward to the day when this supremacy will be manifested, when the Lord Jesus, David's Son and David's Lord, shall have taken His great power, reigning over all, and all His enemies made the footstool of His feet: "And Thou girdest me with strength to battle: Thou didst subdue under me those that rose up against me . . . Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people; Thou hast made me the Head of the nations; a people I knew not doth serve me. At the hearing of the ear they obey me; strangers come cringing unto me" (Psalms 18:39-44).

We have in Exodus 18:12 of our chapter what is figurative of the uniting of Israel and the Gentiles in the worship of the true God in the fulness of earthly blessing. The "burnt offering and sacrifices to God" remind us that all blessing, whether earthly or heavenly, is the fruit of the sacrificial work of Christ, which meets the claims of God and is so delightful to His heart. It is necessary to emphasise the reality of the sacrificial work of Christ in atonement, since one of the deadliest errors within the vast sphere of Christendom's systematized evil teachings, which are so rapidly developing, is the lie of the adversary that man is brought into association with Christ by incarnation, thereby completely ignoring the necessity for the atoning suffering of our blessed Lord. The incarnation of the Son of God was only the first, and necessary, step in that wonderful pathway over which the devoted heart loves to ponder with "unchanging, fresh delight," but the "death of the cross" was the end of that pathway, and the supreme expression of that unflinching, undeviating obedience to the will of God in that "path uncheered by earthly smiles," and which "led only to the cross." This was the great purpose of the coming of the Lord Jesus into the world in accordance with His own words, "Wherefore coming into the world He says, Sacrifice and offering Thou willedst not, but Thou hast prepared me a body . . . Lo, I come to do Thy will" (Hebrews

10:5-9). When found in this world, in that body specially prepared for Him, He declares the purpose of His being found among men, "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). In this act of worship on the part of Jethro with Moses, Aaron, and the elders of Israel, there is the typical setting forth of what is predicted in the prophets. Moses, the "king in Jeshurun" (Deuteronomy 33:5), typifies the Lord as spoken of in Zechariah 14:9, "Jehovah shall be King over all the earth; in that day shall there be one Jehovah, and His Name one." Then Micah, in perfect harmony with this, declares, "And it shall come to pass in the end of days (when Messiah reigns) that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and the peoples shall flow unto it. And many nations shall go and say, Come let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, and to the house of the God of Jacob . . ." (Micah 4:1-4). Israel's place of blessing in that day is also declared, "And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as dew from Jehovah, as showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, neither waiteth for the sons of men" (Micah 5:7). As has already been mentioned, this particular portion of the word of God sets before us, in type, the world to come. Israel is blessed of God, and the Gentiles rejoice with Israel in communion with them, and in the glad and unjealous acknowledgement of its place of supremacy in the midst of the nations. Zipporah is a type of the Assembly, the bride of Christ, associated with Him in heavenly glory, and she is His companion in His administration of that vast scene of blessing, when "The kingdom of the world of our Lord and of His Christ is come, and He shall reign to the ages of ages" (Revelation 11:15). The closing section of the chapter brings before us, typically, the order and administration of Christ's earthly kingdom. It will be a scene of divine order, for "a King shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment" (Isaiah 32:1). Here is what the Lord referred to in Matthew 19:28 when speaking to His disciples, "Verily, I say unto you, That ye who have followed me, in the regeneration (the millennium) when the Son of Man shall sit down upon His throne of glory, ye also shall sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Do we not have the fulfilment of this in Revelation 21:1-27 where the Assembly, as the holy city, forms the administrative centre, the seat of Christ's government over Israel and the nations during the millennium? In that city which has come down out of heaven from God — not to be on the earth, but over it — having the glory of God, we see how the number twelve and its multiples predominate, since the number twelve signifies the perfection of government on or over the earth. So in verse 13 we have "twelve gates" mentioned, and on the gates were inscribed names, "which are those of the twelve tribes of Israel." The glorified saints in general shall judge the world and angels, according to 1 Corinthians 6:2-3, but the judgment of the tribes of Israel has been given specially to the apostles. In Psalms 72:1-20, a beautiful millennial psalm, which as its superscription denotes is "concerning Solomon," it declares in verses 2 and 3, "He will judge Thy people in righteousness, and Thine afflicted with judgment. The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the hills, by righteousness." How this wonderful prediction glows with a divine and heavenly radiance when viewed, according to the Spirit's intention, in connection with Him who is "a greater than Solomon," and the true "Son of peace." Then "judgment shall inhabit the wilderness, and righteousness dwell in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places" (Isaiah 32:16-18).

While God in grace overruled all that passed between Moses and Jethro with regard to the judging of the people for the good of the people, it cannot be said that Moses was acting in strict conformity to the mind of God. God has seen fit to leave on record this incident in His precious word, which is the product of divine inspiration, for our profit and admonition. Jethro's concern was for Moses; his reasoning was subtle, and would be regarded by the world as prudent, but it was not wise since he left God entirely out of his calculations. It is ever dangerous, if not disastrous, to listen to the specious reasonings of the human mind with regard to those divine and heavenly things which God has so freely given us.

How great is the example of the beloved Apostle in this connection. As he stands before king Agrippa, recounting with deep fervour the details of that wonderful experience he had while journeying to Damascus, when a light shone from heaven brighter than the sun at noon-day, and he heard the voice of Jesus telling him to "rise up, and stand on thy feet; for this purpose have I appeared to thee, to appoint thee to be a servant and a witness both of what thou hast seen, and of what I shall appear to thee in," then Paul declares, "Whereupon king Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision" (Acts 26:12-20).

Furthermore, in writing to the Galatians, in alluding to this experience, he says, "For do I now seek to satisfy men or God? or do I seek to please men? If I were yet pleasing men, I were not Christ's bondman . . . But when God, who set me apart even from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me, that I may announce Him as glad tidings among the nations, immediately I took not counsel with flesh and blood" (Galatians 1:10-16). Then in writing to the saints at Corinth he says, "And such confidence have we through the Christ towards God; not that we are competent of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our competency is of God, who has also made us competent, as ministers of the new covenant" (2 Corinthians 3:4-6). In these days of vaunted religious activity, with the adoption of the methods of the world in order to make the Gospel palatable to the men of the world, and consummately organised, the question is, Are we seeking to please God or men? Moses complied with the counsel of Jethro. Man thinks he can improve upon the order of God. Is this not the secret of the ruin of the Assembly as the public witness for God in this world? To all external appearances the governmental system advised by Jethro may have been very orderly and beautifully proportioned, but did it answer to the mind of God?

Another has written, "How many have got apparently the Gospel in another way than this. They call it 'the glorious gospel,' but they do not know it as what Scripture really entitles it, the 'Gospel of the glory of Christ.' They have not learned it in His own presence from Himself. They preach and believe in a utilitarian gospel in which man's blessing is everything and God's claim very little. They are orthodox and evangelical, with a 'great heart for the Gospel, and a little one for Christ.' His claims, His commandments, the truths of His blessed word, are pared down to the smallest fraction that the Gospel may be exalted into His place, and souls may not be hindered from accepting that which brings with it little responsibility and introduces into no 'narrow' path. Thus the Christian life is marred, Christ dishonoured, and the Gospel itself pitifully disfigured, while unconverted crowds are its adherents, and men scoff without rebuke at cheap religion." These words were written many years ago, but how applicable they are to the days in which we find ourselves.

Exodus 19:1-25. In this chapter we are brought to a very crucial stage in the history of the children of Israel. The chapters which we have considered show in a very touching manner what God is for man, revealing the manifold ways in which His never-failing grace was manifested towards them. Even their murmurings, so unworthy of a people that had been so richly blessed of God, became occasions for fresh demonstrations of His grace which were so lightly esteemed by them. How all those manifestations of His measureless grace bore witness to the worthiness of their faithful covenant-keeping God; One, who "if we are unfaithful, he abides faithful, for he cannot deny himself" (2 Timothy 2:13). Mark this latter clause, especially the word "cannot" as indicating that God must and will act consistently with the full and harmonious display of all His attributes.

How perfect was the grace in which God dealt with them, in accordance with the relationship which He had established in fulfilment of all His promises, and the tenderness of that relationship is borne witness to in a very powerful and convincing manner in those Scriptures inspired by the Spirit of God. Not only had God blessed them in His own super-abundant way, but He had brought them to Himself. In that song of triumph sung by Moses and the children of Israel on the other side of the Red Sea, we have this remarkable declaration, "Thou by thy mercy hast led forth the people that thou hast redeemed, thou hast guided them by thy strength unto the abode of thy holiness" (Exodus 15:13). In the fourth verse of our present chapter we read these words, over which the heart ponders with ever increasing delight in its suited application to the children of God of this present dispensation, "Ye have seen what I have done to the Egyptians, and how I have borne you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself." Complementary to this are these heart-moving expressions of the prophet Isaiah, "in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bore them and carried them all the days of old" (Isaiah 63:9). In Jeremiah 31:32, Jehovah speaks of "the day of my taking them by the hand, to lead them out of the land of Egypt." And what shall we say of the tender, affectionate solicitude expressed in these touching words so expressive of parental affection, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him . . . and I it was that taught Ephraim to walk — He took them upon his arms" (Hosea 11:1; Hosea 11:3). Just as a mother holds her child in her arms as the object of her protecting love and care, and holds its arms when teaching it to walk, so God dealt with His earthly people. He carried them as an infant is carried, and sustained them by His everlasting arms when teaching them to walk in His ways in complete dependence upon Him, and in unwavering confidence in Him. But how unsteady and uncertain were their steps, stumbling all the way — at Marah, in the wilderness of Sin, Rephidim — but still those mighty arms sustained them with a patience that was inexhaustible, "for a time of about forty years he nursed them in the desert" (Acts 13:18). In all these words the Spirit would convey to our hearts the compassionate tenderness with which God dealt with the people whom He had brought into relationship with Himself on the ground of accomplished redemption. But henceforth all is changed in the people's relationships with the God whose perfect and long-suffering grace in all their murmurings had declared, beyond all shadow of doubt, that He was for them, and also in the manner and measure in which He had supplied all their desires. The great change in their relationship with God can be seen in the fact that similar desires, under the law, brought upon them very bitter chastisements. This was the result of their being no longer under grace, as the ground of their relationship with God, but under law. In Exodus 19:5-6 God makes a proposal by way of testing them. The substance of this proposal was: Hitherto I have done everything for you, but now I propose to make the continuance of my favour dependent upon your obedience to my commandments. Are you willing to accept these terms as the ground of my future relationships with you? We shall see

how their unreflecting acceptance of these conditions brought them under law and the bitter consequences resulting from their inability to meet God's righteous demands. The opening verses of our chapter witness to the faithfulness of God to the promise given to Moses in Exodus 3:12, "And he said, Certainly I will be with thee: and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee. When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain." Mount Sinai is really a range of high hills, sometimes called Horeb as in chapter 3, which may be a more general name for the whole of the range, Sinai being one of the mountain peaks.

Before placing such a momentous proposal before them, as mentioned in verses 5 and 6, through Moses as the Mediator, God reminds them of what He had done for them, in language calculated to touch their hearts and arouse feelings of deepest gratitude for all that He had done for them; how those mighty resources of divine grace and wisdom and power in all their sovereign expression on their behalf, ensured their complete deliverance from the enemy's power and their preservation and sustainment thus far, in a scene where God alone could spread a table for them in the wilderness. He appeals to their own knowledge of these things in proof of it, "Ye have seen what I have done," in the working out of His purposes of blessing concerning them which could only reach the consummation of all His desires in bringing them to Himself.

We shall see that in the terms of God's proposal to them, the enjoyment of blessing and relationship was conditioned by their obedience to the word of God, to their faithfulness, and not exclusively to the faithfulness of God as had been the case during the period of grace which was brought to a close by the people's acceptance of the divine proposals. It was a solemn moment in the history of the children of Israel, as in these fateful words, "All that Jehovah has spoken will we do!", they committed themselves to an obedience upon which so many solemn issues depended, and which subsequent events were to prove their complete inability to fulfil. The readiness with which the people accepted these proposals reveals how little they had profited from the teachings of grace; how out of keeping with all the failure and unbelief, which hitherto had marked them, was this spirit of irresponsible self-complacency and self-satisfaction. Had they truly been brought to the end of themselves, they would have been utterly distrustful of themselves, acknowledging their incompetency to meet the righteous requirements of God, casting themselves unreservedly upon Him, thereby indicating their confidence in the God who had met all their need from the never-failing resources of His grace. But they did not avail themselves of these resources which were still available for them and therefore lamentably failed. When Moses took back their answer to the Lord, a profound change is discernible in His attitude towards His people: an attitude which was necessary, having regard to the new conditions which formed the basis of God's relationships with them as no longer under grace but under His government. However, as God draws into the thick darkness and as the necessary distance is established which will characterise all God's dealings with them, how the whole sombre scene is illuminated as with a ray of divine grace, by His appointment of Moses as mediator, "And Jehovah said to Moses, Lo I will come to thee in the cloud's thick darkness, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee also forever." In these words too, God emphasises the thought of the distance which has ensued, and how He has provided, in a manner worthy of Himself, for the maintenance of this relationship with His people.

We shall learn as we proceed the precious and far-reaching effects of this mediatorship, and also in its typical application to our immeasurably nearer and more intimate place of blessing as those

of whom the beloved apostle can say, "For ye have not come to the mount that might be touched and was all on fire . . . But ye have come to mount Zion . . . and to the assembly of the firstborn who are registered in heaven . . . and to Jesus, mediator of a new covenant . . ." (Hebrews 12:18-24). It must be remembered that the people undertook this obedience in a state which necessitated God withdrawing into the thick darkness because of His intrinsic holiness and that majesty to which obedience is due on the part of man, whatever his relationship to God may be. The nature of God's proposal to His people is set forth in verses 5 and 6, "And now if ye will hearken to my voice indeed and keep my covenant, then shall ye be my own possession out of all the peoples — for all the earth is mine — and ye shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." This was truly a wonderful place of blessing and relationship, but the enjoyment of this place of relationship rested now on the ground of their unqualified obedience. The question may be asked, "Why did God test them in this way?" Was it not to show to them and to us the deep depravity of a fallen and corrupt nature, the moral tendency of which is ever to act independently of God, revealing the innate lawlessness of the heart of man? This is sin and "sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4), and this is displayed in a very positive way by the substitution of man's will, as so prevalent in our day, for God's will.

How solemnly the Psalmist speaks of this, "The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips, And the tongue that speaketh proud things; Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail, our lips are our own; who is lord over us?" (Psalms 12:3-4). Man in this way ever sins against his mercies, and were it not for the intervention of God in sovereign mercy, the God who "is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great loving-kindness," the whole race of mankind would be swept along on the dark, swiftly-flowing waters of apostasy, flowing swifter as they near the brink to fall to their eternal destruction in the boiling waters beneath. How gracious of our God who "delights in mercy" to give men these timely warnings, both in type and direct statement, as to the futility of man to work out his own soul's salvation.

Let us now consider the necessary preparation of the people according to this place of responsibility to which their imprudent acceptance of God's proposal had committed them. Everything was to be from their side as having to learn what it was to have to do with a God "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity" (Habakkuk 1:13). So the people are instructed to "wash their clothes; and let them be ready for the third day." Moses was to sanctify them, which implied their being set apart for God on the ground of their promised obedience. But it meant an obedience at a distance from God, for despite this prescriptive cleansing which was merely a ceremonial qualification, the distance from God was still maintained; a solemn witness, as it was intended to be, of the total inadequacy of this external cleansing to give them an abiding place of nearness to God on the ground of their responsibility. A deeper inward work was necessary, founded on the work of redemption, and this will be fully realised in a coming day, in accordance with the word of the prophet, "Behold days come, saith Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day of my taking them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt; which my covenant they broke, although I was a husband unto them, saith Jehovah, For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith Jehovah, I will put my law into their inward parts, and will write it in their heart; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother saying,

Know Jehovah, for they shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith Jehovah, for I will pardon their iniquity and their sin will I remember no more" (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

Six times does God declare in this short passage of His word what He will do, and so ensure the ultimate blessing of His earthly people, in full conformity with those unconditional promises made to Abraham. How precious to place these words of God, "I will," with their divine certitude of fulfilment over against the "we will do" of the people in which they so persistently and so lamentably failed, and in which they displayed their utter incapability to enjoy relationship with God on the ground of their responsibility. They did not avail themselves of all that God was for them and all that God had for them as set forth in those unconditional and absolute promises made to Abraham (Genesis 12:7; Genesis 13:14-17; Genesis 15:13-14; Genesis 15:18-21). As will be observed from these Scriptures, the culmination of all God's thoughts for His earthly people was the possession of the land of Canaan, which to them became Immanuel's land, secured to them by indefeasible right according to the unfailing promises of God to Abraham, to Isaac (Genesis 26:3), and also to Jacob (Genesis 28:13-14). They included a great deal besides the possession of the land of Canaan, though this was assured to them in the most explicit terms, with the boundaries most accurately defined.

All will be brought to pass according to those promises of an ever faithful God, as Joshua could say in his day, "not one thing hath failed of all the good words that Jehovah your God hath spoken concerning you; all are come to pass unto you — not one thing hath failed thereof" (Joshua 23:14). Solomon, too, in his day, witnesses to God's faithfulness (1 Kings 8:56). Blessing for man of either a heavenly or earthly order, can only be realised as God in His faithfulness brings all His purposes to full and perfect fruition.

Before we proceed to the wholesome exercise of applying these solemn circumstances in their typical meaning to ourselves, so instructive to those who stand in an immeasurably nearer and more intimate relationship to God, let us note the expression "the third day." This, with reference to other similar scriptures, would seem to denote typically the distance which death has brought in; each of course must be taken in its own particular context. Here it was on the morning of the third day, when the Lord came down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. But how did He come? Listen to what the psalmist says; "The earth shook, the earth also dropped at the presence of God; even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel" (Psalms 68:8). These words are in perfect agreement with Exodus 19:17-18.

How awesome is the description of that which was intended to impress the people of the holiness and majesty of the God to whom, in their consummate folly, they had fatally pledged themselves to maintain their relationship with God on the ground of what they were in themselves and their declared ability to meet His righteous requirements, instead of casting themselves on Him, who in His love, His mercy and His compassion, had dealt so graciously with them. In distance lay their safety. Bounds were set round about them; they were not to go up unto the mountain nor touch the border of it, "not a hand shall touch it." Paul, as used by the Spirit in writing to the Hebrew believers centuries afterwards, employs very impressive language in describing this solemn occasion, "For ye have not come to the mount that might be touched and was all on fire, and to obscurity and darkness, and tempest, and trumpet's sound, and voice of words, which they that heard, excusing themselves, declined the word being addressed to them any more; (for they were

not able to bear what was enjoined: And if a beast should touch the mountain, it shall be stoned; and, so fearful was the sight, Moses said, I am exceedingly afraid and full of trembling)" (Hebrews 12:18-21). In Deborah and Barak's song too, appear these remarkable words, "The mountains quaked before the face of Jehovah, that Sinai; from before Jehovah the God of Israel" (Judges 5:5). Other scriptures could be adduced with reference to this solemn moment in the history of the children of Israel; and the remaining verses of our chapter from the 16th continue this note of warning.

Since there is no vain repetition in the word of God, where every word has divine significance as chosen by the Spirit of God, the divine Author, why those frequent references to this vital matter? Is it not to bring home to men, all men, the futility of seeking to approach God on the ground of their supposed good works? Never was insistence of this truth more necessary than the day in which we live, when men, who "have gone in the way of Cain," bring an offering, the work of their hands, to which God has no respect, while slighting or rejecting that "more excellent sacrifice," Christ, God's unblemished Lamb, the Bearer away of the sin of the world (John 1:29). The truth conveyed in the typical import of this solemn event in the history of the children of Israel has, without exception, its application to all men. While it is true that the nation of Israel was sovereignly chosen of God, separated from the corruptions of the idolatrous nations around, singularly favoured of God, as Paul tells us in Romans 9:3-5, "who are the Israelites; whose is the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the law-giving, and the service, and the promises; whose are the fathers; and of whom, as according to flesh, is the Christ, who is over all, God blessed forever," it would appear from the teaching of Romans 3:1-31 that they were in the nature of a sample nation in which God made His last trial of the human race, before His wonderful and all-availing intervention in the fulness of His grace in Christ. In Romans 3:19, the apostle declares, "Now we know that whatever the things the law says, it speaks to those under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world be under judgment to God." In the verses previous to verse 19, the apostle gives an appalling description of the moral condition of the nation of Israel, testifying to their irremediable failure under the law, in accordance with the words of Isaiah, "The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in him, wounds and wheals and open sores, they have not been dressed nor bound up, nor mollified with oil" (Isaiah 1:4-6).

If such is God's judgment of the favoured nation of Israel, whom He refers to under the figure of a vineyard, saying, "What was there yet to do to my vineyard that I have not done in it?" what hope is there for poor "sinners of the Gentiles" wallowing in all the corruptions of unspeakable idolatrous practices, and as the apostle states so clearly in Ephesians 2:11-12, "Wherefore remember that ye, once nations (Gentiles) in the flesh . . . that ye were at that time without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." The subsequent history of the children of Israel has shown beyond all disputation that their relationship with God according to His nature could not be sustained on the ground of their obedience. They could never substantiate their claim to this obedience, for their failure was immediate, as we see from Exodus 32:1-35. There we are brought face to face with the solemn fact that the law was broken and the curse merited before the tables of stone, borne by 'Moses from the presence of God, and on which the law was written, had reached them. How blessed to see in the succeeding chapter how God dealt in mercy with them, for under the law, not

tempered by mercy, they must have instantly perished. The law has singularly achieved its purposes, and this was to expose man to himself. As Moses said at the time it was given, "God is come to prove you." It was the proving of man, who had already been pronounced a sinner, as God had declared at the time of the flood, "And Jehovah saw that the wickedness of Man was great on the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). The law was the revelation of man's state to himself, and as Paul declares, "The law entered that the offence might abound" (Romans 5:20), and also in Galatians 3:19, "Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions." As an institution of God, the law has fully achieved its purpose, and all men stand under its solemn rebuke, even the most self-conceited religionist. And since the law is a divine institution, it is of the greatest importance that our thoughts should be governed by the word of God as to its intrinsic character. Though grace now reigns through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord," we must not suppose that the law has been either annulled or set aside as being worthless. Its majesty was never more truly upheld than when our spotless Substitute died under its solemn curse (Galatians 3:13). Speaking of the law, another has said, "Multitudes will quail before its impeachment at the day of judgment" (see Romans 2:12).

Because of man's incurably sinful state, the law can only condemn him, grace alone can save him. So John, by the Spirit, makes that wonderful declaration, "for of His fulness we all have received, and grace upon grace. For the law was given by Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:16-17). The question may be asked, "For what purpose then was the law given?" Let the word of God itself answer this question since it alone is competent to deal with these profound and eternal issues, dealing with them definitively according to its own infallible authority. The apostle Paul in clear and precise language states, as already quoted, "Now we know that whatever the things the law says, it speaks to those under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world be under judgment to God" (Romans 3:19), and again, "Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions" (Galatians 3:19). Observe it is not "because of sins," and in this instance it is very necessary to draw the distinction between sins and transgressions. Sin is in everyone as belonging to the fallen and corrupt race of Adam. Paul's words again confirm the solemn fact, "For this cause, even as by one man sin entered into the world, and by sin, death; and thus death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned; (for until the law sin was in the world; but sin is not put to account when there is no law; but death reigned, from Adam until Moses, even upon those who had not sinned in the likeness of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him to come)" (Romans 5:12-14). This refers to Hosea 6:7, where we read, "They (Israel) like Adam, have transgressed the covenant." To Adam was given a law, to the children of Israel the law. Both were disobedient in doing that which was expressly prohibited and so became transgressors as well as being sinners.

Man, being a sinner, has a nature "not subject to the law of God," and under that law, every motion of this fallen nature, the moral tendency of which is ever to do evil, is shown to be a positive transgression, bringing upon him condemnation and death. This, therefore, is the state of man after all God's patient dealings with him during those probationary ages which were brought to an end by the coming of the Lord Jesus into this world, "But now once in the consummation of the ages He has been manifested for the putting away of sin by His sacrifice" (Hebrews 9:26). Is God to be thwarted in carrying into effect what he has set his heart upon with respect to the blessing of

men, both in the heavenly and earthly spheres of blessing? By no means! As another has said, "God then retires into His sovereignty and falls back upon His promises. If it were not so, no human being would get blessing at all." The fact that God made these promises to Abraham invests them with inestimable importance to every exercised soul. In Genesis 12:1-20, the last clause of verse 3, we have the first mention of God's promise to Abraham, "and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." Then in Genesis 22:16-18 we have a wonderful confirmation of this promise, solemnly affirmed in these words, "By myself, I swear, saith Jehovah." Paul, in writing to the saints in Galatia, alludes very distinctly to these two occasions. "But to Abraham were the promises addressed, and to his seed; he does not say, And to seeds, as of many, but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (Galatians 3:16). In Genesis 22:1-24 Isaac is a beautiful type of Christ and of Christ risen. It was not till after Abraham received Isaac back as from the dead that the promise is confirmed in Isaac. "By faith Abraham, when tried, offered up Isaac, and he who had received to himself the promises offered up his only begotten son, as to whom it had been said, In Isaac shall thy seed be called; counting that God was able to raise him even from among the dead, whence also he received him in a figure" (Hebrews 11:17-19). A substitute was found for Abraham's son, but there was no substitute provided for God's Son. He died and rose, and now in resurrection life and power every promise is confirmed and established in Him. "For whatever promises of God there are, in Him is the yea and in Him the amen, for the glory to God by us" (2 Corinthians 1:20).

It is of the greatest importance to see that the promises made to Abraham, in the form of a covenant, were given many years before the law was given. "Now I say this, A covenant confirmed beforehand by God, the law, which took place four hundred and thirty years after, does not annul, so as to make the promise of no effect" (Galatians 3:17). So declares the beloved apostle in strong, energetic language as he contends for the truth against those who were troubling the saints in Galatia by bringing in the corrupting doctrines of Judaism, seeking to undermine the faith of those who had been justified by the "hearing of faith" and not "by works of law"; and had also received the Spirit according to "the glad tidings of the Christ" which the Judaizers were seeking to pervert.

Blessed as it is to see that the law does not make the promises of God of no effect, there is the further thought that the law has proved conclusively the necessity of carrying into effect these self-same promises if man is to be blessed and made to stand before Him in a righteousness which He has provided for us. So the apostle poses the question and answers it in these words, "Is then the law against the promises of God? Far be the thought. For if a law had been given able to quicken" (such as was able to quicken) "then indeed righteousness were on the principle of law; but the scripture has shut up all things under sin, that the promises, on the principle of faith of Jesus Christ, should be given to those that believe" (Galatians 3:21-22). It should be observed that in verses 6-14 of this same chapter, no fewer than six quotations from the Old Testament appear as showing that the righteousness of God, pledged in these promises, was borne witness to in the law and the prophets. Two of these quotations are from the promises to Abraham, three from the law, and one from the prophets.

Moreover, in these precious promises God is acting in the supremacy of His grace, rising above all the restrictions imposed and enforced by those ordinances under the law, in order that His grace, expressive of the heart of a Saviour-God, might flow forth without restraint, not only to Israel, but

also to the other nations or Gentiles. "For the grace of God which carries with it salvation for all men has appeared" (Titus 2:11). In these promises therefore, the "sinners of the Gentiles" are included: those who were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise" (Ephesians 2:11-13). Nor is this any after-thought on the part of God, for this is distinctly introduced in figure in Genesis 22:1-24. As already mentioned, and it is of supreme importance to bear this in mind, that it was after Abraham had received Isaac back, as in a figure from the dead, that the promises were made to him, in which was included the blessing of the Gentiles in this present day of grace, as blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ, and also the nation of Israel in a day to come, the Gentiles also included for earthly blessing, and all brought to pass on the ground of the death and resurrection of the true Isaac. Let us seek therefore to distinguish between these two companies. Where the seed is spoken of without reference to number, the blessing of the nations is intended, but where the numerous seed is mentioned, "as the stars of heaven, and as the sand that is on the seashore," this brings the nation of Israel, the Jew, into prominence: this is confirmed by the expression, "...and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies," language entirely unsuited to believers in this day of grace, but perfectly suited to God's earthly people, whose blessing is conditioned by the putting down of all their enemies, while they are brought into the place of supremacy. Where Christ typified by Isaac is meant, it is "thy seed" simply, without a word of seed as innumerable as the stars or the sand. "But to Abraham were the promises addressed, and to his seed; he does not say, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed (Genesis 22:18) which is Christ" (Galatians 3:16). In Christ, the true Seed, as risen from the dead, the blessing of the Gentiles has been secured, and realised only by faith and not by works of law. "Know then that they that are on the principle of faith, these are Abraham's sons; and the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the nations (Gentiles) on the principle of faith, announced beforehand the glad tidings to Abraham (Genesis 12:3). In thee all the nations shall be blessed" (Galatians 3:7-9). The promises referred to in Genesis 22:1-24 are those in which the Gentiles have a part, and the one to the seed indicates the heavenly character of the blessing as in Christ risen from the dead. All this will be fulfilled in Christ, as also the blessing of the Jews, when they are brought into the possession of their earthly inheritance. It is well to note the difference between these promises which are, however, brought together in one grand whole in Christ, while at the same time rejoicing in the wondrous grace that has granted us a place infinitely higher in character as connected with heavenly things, according to these unchangeable promises and the exercise of faith.

Another weighty consideration as to why the law, as a proposed means of blessing on the ground of man's obedience to its righteous requirements, could only prove ineffective, was that the law was "ordained through angels in the hand of a mediator, but a mediator is not of one, but God is one" (Galatians 3:19-20). As is well known, a mediator comes in between two parties, and it is cited here to show that under law there were two contracting parties, God and men, with Moses standing between as mediator. The fulfilment of the law, as a covenant between God and men, depended consequently, not upon God, but upon man, and since he was unable to fulfil his part, the law, as the ground of blessing, was completely nullified. God's part was sure and unchangeable, but as has been expressed by another, "The law is like a bridge that may be ever so strong, but, resting on one end, on no foundation." Man cannot obtain blessing under law, he can only merit its solemn curse because of his constant infraction of its righteous demands. But how rich the import of the expression "...but God is one." Where it is a question not of law but of

promise, all depends upon God for "what He hath promised (He) is also able to perform," and at last, infinite blessing is secured. In promise there is only one, and that is God; and here there can be no failure or breakdown; all must be accomplished. When God spoke to Abraham concerning His promises, there was no distance. He spoke to him directly, no one came between, God spoke to him face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend. How great the contrast in the giving of the law, where distance is brought in at once, bounds are set, and Moses is constituted mediator. In Psalms 68:17 we read "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, thousands upon thousands, the Lord is among them; it is a Sinai in holiness," then in verse 18, "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts in Man (that is as man, in connection with men), and even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them." Here the law in the hands of a mediator is in contrast to Christ, the One who, after accomplishing the work of redemption, ascended as Man "far above all things" and as Man received gifts for men, which He dispenses with lavish hand "according to the riches of his grace."

Then another question is raised. "Is then the law against the promises of God? Far be the thought. For if a law had been given able to quicken (or give life, such as was able to quicken), then indeed righteousness were on the principle of law" (Galatians 3:21). The law could do nothing else but condemn; under the law there is no life, no righteousness, no blessing. The law proved conclusively the necessity of the promises if man was to be blessed according to God's great thoughts of blessing. And so God has secured all in Christ for the blessing of men, in virtue of His redemptive work; even as Paul declares to the saints at Corinth, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who has been made to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and holiness and redemption; that according as it is written, He that boasts, let him boast in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:30-31). To the saints at Rome, Paul can say, "But law came in that the offence might abound, but where sin abounded grace has overabounded, in order that, even as sin has reigned in the power of death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 5:20-21). The apostle, writing to the assemblies of Galatia, asks with unmistakable severity of tone, "This only I wish to learn of you. Have ye received the Spirit on the principle of works of law, or of the report of faith? Are ye so senseless? Having begun in Spirit, are ye going to be made perfect in flesh?" (Galatians 3:2-3). To such he speaks with the greatest solemnity in Galatians 5:2-6, "Behold I, Paul, say to you, that if ye are circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. And I witness again to every man who is circumcised that he is debtor to do the whole law. Ye are deprived of all profit from the Christ as separated from him, as many as are justified by law; ye have fallen from grace. For we, by the Spirit on the principle of faith, await the hope of righteousness." The "hope of righteousness" is the glory itself, to be there with Christ who has "made our heaven secure" even as we boast in hope of that glory now. With reference to the separation mentioned above, as another has said, this is "not separation from Christ personally, but from what is for us in Him."

Exodus 20:1-26. The children of Israel, having accepted the law as the ground of their relationship with God, have now presented to them in this chapter, through the agency of Moses, in a detailed and specific form, those righteous requirements of a God who is "of purer eyes than to behold evil." Undeviating obedience to these commands, to which they had pledged themselves, could alone ensure the continuance and enjoyment of their relationship with the only true God who desired to dwell among them. Since these commandments, commonly referred to as the Ten

Commandments, were to form the basis of this new relationship, nothing is left to the vague conjectures of men: no scope or latitude is given to the human mind to arrive at its own conclusions. The Spirit of God, in explicit and unequivocal language, extends and develops each of these commandments, and reveals the solemn character of what was demanded of the children of Israel; demands which could not be modified in the slightest degree. But the children of Israel had to learn, as we have to learn, that man in his natural state as a sinner, without the Spirit as the fruit of the work of redemption, cannot meet those requirements of God as embodied in the law. There can be no nearness to God, for man's place under law is in the distance of condemnation and death. Even a partial fulfilment of the law offers no relief from its exacting demands, nor any measure of exoneration from its inflexible conviction, for any infraction of its righteous demands invokes the penalty of the law, as James so distinctly declares, "For whoever shall keep the whole law and shall offend in one point, he has come under the guilt of breaking all" (James 2:10). In the contemplation of these solemn realities it is most blessed for every true believer in Christ to consider the benign movements of a Saviour God, One who has brought meat out of the eater, and sweetness out of the strong; coming forth in the plenitude of His grace as One who can deliver from going down to the pit, as having found a ransom through the atoning sacrifice of Christ. The law has done its needed work as God intended it should, having stripped man of every vestige of his supposed righteousness in which he so incontinently boasts. The law still stands, its authority unimpaired, and upheld inviolate by the blessed Lord, who died under its solemn curse as our Surety and unblemished Substitute, and made a curse for those who lay under the curse of a broken law (Galatians 3:13), and who, moreover, were unable to render that righteousness which God demanded under law, but who, in the riches of His grace, has brought forth the best robe of heaven, reserved from before the ages of time, and now conferred on those who had no righteousness of their own, even Christ our righteousness (1 Corinthians 1:30). In considering the commandments in detail it will be observed that the first four relate to the responsibility of the children of Israel towards God, while the remaining six define their responsibility towards man. The Lord Jesus has given us a divine summary which reveals the very essence of the law in quoting Leviticus 19:18 and Deuteronomy 6:5. To the question by one of the Pharisees, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" the Lord Jesus replied, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy understanding. This is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments the whole law and the prophets hang" (Matthew 22:34-40).

It will be noted that these precepts are presented in a strongly negative form. It does not say "Thou shalt," with the underlying assumption that man was capable of doing so, but "Thou shalt not," and in this is revealed the natural and innate tendency in man to do that which is evil. Man is prone to do every one of the things forbidden, otherwise the necessity to forbid them would never have arisen. What a humbling proof of man's natural tendency to delight in what was abhorrent to God, hence the necessity for the imposition of those curbs on the movements of a nature which is "not subject to the law of God," for "the mind of the flesh is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God; for neither indeed can it be; and they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:7-8).

God was dealing with Israel as the people whom He had redeemed by His mighty power from the thralldom of their oppressors, bringing them into relationship with Himself, though in an outward

way, without the new birth and not knowing justification by faith. They were a people in the flesh, and had shown themselves wholly insensible of the grace that had delivered, nourished and sustained them until they came to Sinai. They forgot God's great promises to the fathers, in which were set forth His great desire to dwell among them, in conditions compatible with the revelation He had made of Himself as the "I AM THAT I AM" (Exodus 3:14-15). Yet this is the people of whom Jeremiah has written, "not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day of my taking them by the hand, to lead them out of the land of Egypt; which covenant they broke though I was a husband unto them saith Jehovah" (Jeremiah 31:32).

Again, as in the previous chapter, we see the effect produced on the people by the formal giving of the law, for "They trembled and stood afar off" (Exodus 20:18; Exodus 20:21), and expressed the desire that Moses should speak to them rather than God, "lest we die." Even the words of Moses as the mediator, given of God, did not dispel their fear, "Fear not: for God is come to prove you (for the purpose of proving you), and that His fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not." These words, however, did nothing to assuage their fears as the following words indicate, "And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was."

It has been convincingly demonstrated in the word of God that, irrespective of dispensation, whether of law or of grace, distance from God can never be the ground of obedience to God. The people were at a distance from God, not merely as to their actual position as prescribed by God, but more vitally as to their moral state, which necessitated God remaining in obscurity and unrevealed, so long as the law was the basis of His relationship with His people.

While God insisted on this distance which the holiness of His nature justly required, He had other and more precious thoughts cherished in His heart concerning the blessing of His people, wholly consistent with His own desire to have His people near to Himself, so that He could dwell in the midst of their praises, the expression of their love and devotedness to Him. This demanded conditions of righteousness and holiness unattainable by man on the ground of his obedience to the righteous requirements of God as embodied in the law under which the children of Israel had placed themselves. This thought of distance will be brought more decisively before us when we come to consider the tabernacle, with special reference to the priests. In their priestly activities they enjoyed a nearness to God denied to the common people, yet this nearness was not absolute except in the case of Aaron, the high priest, to whom was granted once a year only, on the solemn day of atonement, entrance into the holiest of all, the immediate presence of Him who dwelt between the cherubim of glory. This access to God was not without the blood of the sin-offering and the over-shadowing cloud of incense, in accordance with the divine instructions. These types, wonderful in themselves, yet mere shadowy representations of infinitely more precious things, will engage our hearts at a future time in their appropriate context.

It is not necessary to our purpose to consider in detail the commandments presented to us in this chapter. There are certain points, however, which claim our attention as bearing on the practical ways and manner of life of the children of God in this present dispensation of grace. Take, for example, the law governing one's conduct toward one's neighbour (Exodus 20:16-17): to obey the divine injunction "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Leviticus 19:18) would ensure the observance of these prohibitions to the very letter.

Though these and other commandments undoubtedly set a very high standard of conduct before those who are under law, and in outward relationship with God, how far short this falls of the conduct expected of those who "are not under law but under grace." Christians are exhorted to "let nothing be in the spirit of strife or vain glory, but, in lowliness of mind, each esteeming the other as more excellent than themselves; regarding not each his own qualities, but each those of others also. For let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Php 2:1-5). The law was the rule of life for the children of Israel, but Christ and Christ alone is the precious and unvarying standard of those who are born of God. To such Paul declares, "So that, my brethren, ye also have been made dead to the law by the body of the Christ, to be to another, who has been raised up from among the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God" (Romans 7:4). Under the law there was no fruit for God, but under grace the new nature, growing by the true, or full, knowledge of God, becomes exceedingly fruitful as engaged with those heavenly objects in which it delights.

Furthermore, in Romans 8:1-39, the Apostle under the Spirit's guidance opens up to us those emancipating truths by stating, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and of death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God having sent His own Son, in likeness of flesh of sin, and for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law should be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to flesh but according to Spirit" (Romans 8:2-9).

Again, in Romans 13:8-10, Paul expands this truth by saying. "Owe no one anything, unless to love one another; for he that loves another has fulfilled the law. For, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not lust; and if there be any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love works no ill to its neighbour; love there-fore is the whole law." With reference to the above another has remarked, "By the conduct which flows from love the law is already fulfilled before its requirement is applied." In the Epistle to the Galatians, where the Apostle is combating the pernicious doctrines of those seeking to bring these Gentile believers under law, Paul exhorts, "but by love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, in Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself; but if ye bite and devour one another, see that ye are not consumed one of another" (Galatians 5:13-15). In the foregoing Scriptures the Apostle does not go beyond the fruits of righteousness as manifested in our practical manner of life, because he is dealing with the question of subjection to the law and of man's fulfilling it. But in the teaching of grace, as shown in the epistles to the Ephesians, Colossians and others, we reach supremely greater and more sublime heights in the expression of our love one to another. There it is seen to be the reproduction of the character of God, who is love; not merely what man should be for God as under law, but as walking according to the Spirit, dwelling and delighting in all that is of God, and producing the fruit of the Spirit which is "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, self-control; against such things there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23). As partakers of the divine nature, we are to walk in the power of "the Spirit of God" with which we have been sealed "for the day of redemption," a Spirit who is to be ungrieved by anything that savours of the flesh. We are exhorted to "be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another, so as God also in Christ" has forgiven us. As God's beloved children we are to be imitators of God, "and walk in love, even as the Christ loved us, and delivered Himself up for us, an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour" (Ephesians 4:32; Ephesians 5:1-2).

While humbled by the realisation of how far short we come of these divine standards, let us not miss the sweetness and heavenly fragrance of these sublime statements, "as God also in Christ has forgiven you"; "imitators of God as beloved children"; and "walk in love, even as Christ loved us." Let it not be thought that this is beyond the practical realisation of the Christian, for these are the features of the new man as the workman-ship of God, "which according to God is created in truthful righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:24). As indwelt by the Holy Spirit we have the power and the spiritual capacity to be "imitators of God" who is love.

What we are now considering has already been displayed in all its perfection and fulness and fragrance in the matchless life of Jesus as a Man in this world. "The truth as it is in Jesus" brings before us that lowly One, yet withal, "the image of the invisible God," "God manifest in flesh," here in the fulness of grace, manifesting the life that was with the Father, a life essentially heavenly and eternal. This eternal life has been communicated to us, but its manifestation in us involves the putting off the old man, and the putting on the new, answering to the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Christ then is the object that God has set before us, the object of His own constant delight, and as occupied with Him we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, and are thus made morally capable of being "imitators of God as beloved children."

Let us now consider the closing verses of the chapter as bringing before us the solemn yet precious thought of worship. From Exodus 20:24-26 we learn that there are certain conditions necessary in order to worship God in accordance with His holy and righteous requirements, and to the exclusion of all that savours of man's order. The first thing concerns the manner of approach as signified in the altar and sacrifices. How precious is this thought of approach to God. We have spoken much, and rightly, of the distance and curse which the law brought in, but here God speaks of a means of approach, as He says "in all places where I shall make my Name to be remembered, I will come unto thee, and bless thee" (verse 24).

Observe the character of the sacrifices, "An altar of earth shalt thou make unto me, and shalt sacrifice on it thy burnt-offerings, and thy peace-offerings." One would have thought that after bringing in the law God would have spoken of sin and trespass offerings, but He does not. He speaks, in type, of all that Christ is, "who by the eternal Spirit offered Himself spotless to God," and as such was found in that path of devotedness to the will of God, in an obedience even unto death, which went infinitely beyond the obedience which the law demanded. In that path, and in that death, He glorified God where man had dishonoured Him, and not only so, but He glorified Him about that very dishonour. Jesus delighted to do the will of God, and the perfections of His Person and of His affections were seen in the fat and the breast that were laid upon the altar, which rendered His sacrifice of Himself a sweet-smelling savour to God (Leviticus 7:30).

Two altars are mentioned in verses 24 and 25, one of earth and one of stone. Various altars are mentioned in the word of God, most with the predominant thought of drawing near to God on the ground of sacrifice as worshippers. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob built altars, and these no doubt had been built of earth or stone. What is remarkable about these altars is that we seldom read of sacrifices being offered on them. At times it is simply stated that they built an altar unto the Lord, and at other times they built an altar and called upon the Name of the Lord. In their typical meaning the thought was sustained that approach to God could only be through the death of

Christ, who was in Himself both the altar and the sacrifice. With regard to the altar of stone it is specifically stated: "thou shalt not build it of hewn stone; for if thou lift up thy sharp tool upon it, thou hast profaned it. Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon." What a gross violation of God's principles we see all around us today in the lifeless profession that bears the Name of Christ. Not lacking in skill, and of exquisite workman-ship, their richly embellished altars bear eloquent witness to man's complete ignoring of this divine prohibition, and to his unwarranted intrusion in the holiest things of God. Man's handiwork, no matter how gifted, is not required in the worship of God; all must be according to the thought of God, who must be worshipped in "the beauty of holiness." Nor were God's people to "go up by steps" to His altar. Man's pretension to approach God as a worshipper in his own way only reveals his nakedness before God. Without the righteousness which God, in the fulness of His grace, has conferred upon those who believe, man is a sinner before God, and as such cannot be a worshipper of God. The Apostle Paul in Romans 3:21-26 shows how divine righteousness is obtained, "being justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God has set forth a mercy-seat, through faith in His blood . . . for the showing forth of His righteousness in the present time, so that He should be just, and justify him that is of the faith of Jesus." Only thus is the shame of our nakedness covered before God by God Himself. This precious thought of God covering the shame of man's nakedness is brought before us immediately after Adam's disastrous fall, when "the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked." Their efforts to cover their nakedness proved unavailing, for when they heard the voice of the Lord walking in the garden in the cool of the day, they hid themselves from His presence among the trees of the garden. But in that dark and solemn hour, fraught with eternal issues for good and evil, the light of God's infinite and matchless grace shines in all its gloom-dispelling power in the promise of the woman's Seed, Christ, who would bruise the serpent's head; and also by God providing coats of skin with which to clothe Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:7-21). The provision of coats of skin involved the forfeiture of the life of some innocent victim, a simple yet beautiful type of Christ as the innocent victim, "brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth" (Isaiah 53:7). Thus only could we be clothed with the best robe of heaven, Christ our Righteousness; and thus arrayed we stand before God in all the acceptability of Christ to God, and in all the abiding excellency and efficacy of His finished work. By Christ's finished work we are also constituted priests to God. Let none rob us of the certainty of this blessed truth, founded as it is on the infallible and unchanging word of God, that every true believer in Christ is a priest before God, even as it is written, "To Him who loves us, and has washed us from our sins in His blood, and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father: to Him be the glory and the might to the ages of ages. Amen" (Revelation 1:5-6). But the place of true worship, where every believer in Christ offers "the sacrifice of praise continually to God" is not on earth, but in heaven, since the present place and position of the Lord Jesus determines the place and character of our worship. Of Christ's present place it is written in Hebrews 8:1-2, "Now a summary of the things of which we are speaking is. We have such a One high priest who has sat down on the right hand of the throne of the greatness in the heavens: minister of the holy places and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord has pitched, and not man." In the true tabernacle there is no human instrumentality whatever; all is of God. What we see in the religious profession all around today is but the imitation or what God owned in a former dispensation, but which has been set aside by the coming of Christ, and by the introduction of heavenly things, consequent upon His

death and resurrection, See also Hebrews 9:11-14. The tabernacle of old, with all its costly vessels and rich furnishings, was but a figurative representation of what has been established and maintained by the Spirit of God, as the Scripture says, "It was necessary then that the figurative representations of the things in the heavens should be purified with these:" (the blood of calves and goats): "but the heavenly things themselves with sacrifices better than these. For the Christ is not entered into holy places made with hand, figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us" (Hebrews 9:23-24). All that belonged to the legal dispensation was but the "shadow of good things to come."

How blessed to know that the shadow has passed, that the good things have come, and all are secured in Christ for us to God's glory and praise, as is written in Colossians 2:17, "the body (or substance) is of Christ." The furniture and vessels connected with the tabernacle of old, so curiously wrought by skilful workmen specially endowed by the Holy Spirit for this work, were but types of those transcendent glories and graces which alone are found in the Lord Jesus Christ and His various offices which He adorns with the glory of His own Person. All these are now seen and exercised in heaven for us, and there, in the immediate presence of God, He presents us in all the fulness of His own excellency.

Another has said, "Moses the servant could not bear the glory conferred on the tabernacle he had pitched; he was much inferior to that which his own hands had reared; but Christ is Son over God's House, and is Himself its furniture and glory. And as associated with the Son, we belong to the priestly family and there we worship according to John 4:23-24. May we, as those worshippers whom the Father seeks to worship Him in spirit and in truth, be preserved from allowing our thoughts to linger around the earthly shadows, or occupied in the least degree with the things made with hands, instead of those which are made without hands, and which are of God."

There is yet another precious thought to be considered in connection with the altars and what was sacrificed thereon. Speaking of these sacrifices being offered "in all places where I shall make my Name to be remembered," God assures His people of His presence with them in this wonderful expression of grace, "I will come unto thee, and bless thee." This He would do, notwithstanding all that they were in themselves, on the ground of the sweet savour of the offerings. As has already been remarked, these sacrifices partook of the character of the burnt-offerings and peace-offerings. The burnt-offering speaks of the preciousness of Christ's sacrifice to the heart of God; all its excellence and its abiding value before Him furnishing the unchangeable basis of our acceptance before God. The thought of atonement, however, is not lacking, as the following words convey, "at the entrance of the tent of meeting shall he present it, for his acceptance before Jehovah. And he shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt-offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him" (Leviticus 1:3-4).

Sin may have been the occasion for the presentation of this offering, but the dominant thought is that, because of the superlative excellency of this sacrifice, prefiguring Christ, "who by the eternal Spirit offered Himself spotless to God," the sinner is accepted in all the acceptability of Christ to God, being identified with Him thus, as having put his hand on the head of the holy victim.

If the burnt-offering speaks of what Christ is to the heart of God, as furnishing the ground of acceptance of His people, the thank-offering speaks of what He became to their hearts, as furnishing them with an object of eternal praise, as it is written in Psalms 84:4, "Blessed are they

that dwell in Thy house; they will be constantly praising Thee."

Exodus 21:1-36. In this chapter we have various "judgments" or "fixed ordinances" recorded, the observance of which is enjoined upon the people as regulating their conduct in all their relationships with each other, and as befitting those who are in covenant relationship with God. The penalties attaching to any breach in the strict observance of these is demonstrably consistent with the character and principle of that relationship, which was law.

It is not necessary to our purpose to consider each statute in detail, a few only will be sufficient, though the consideration of each would yield valuable instruction as witnessing to God's gracious care and protection of those who were weak and in a position of inferiority, and, as such, might be subject to oppression, and of being unjustly dealt with by those who were stronger and in a place of authority over them.

What we see around us today is a sad and sobering testimony of how far man has departed from God, with his consequent refusal to be subject to these ordinances. As the Preacher declares, "And I returned and saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors was power, and they had no comforter" (Ecclesiastes 4:1). The first statute brings before us a beautiful and expressive type of the Lord Jesus as God's perfect Servant. Many Scriptures speak of the greatness, the excellence and the perfection of this Servant and His service. How profound the rich concentration of glories which shine undiminished and unchanging in the remarkably brief testimony of the Apostle Paul in Php 2:1-30. There our attention is drawn to this blessed One, the disposition of whose mind was to go down, but how transcendently lovely and endearing was that pathway even in its lowest depths of humiliation, every step being marked by moral excellence, dignity and perfection.

He is spoken of as "subsisting in the form of God," and did not regard "equality with God" as something to be grasped after, seeing He was God. The mention of this is no doubt an allusion to the first Adam who succumbed to the temptation presented in Satan's lie, "God knows that in the day ye eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and ye will be as God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5). Unlike the first man Adam, the Lord Jesus, the second 'Man, made Himself of no reputation, emptied Himself of every external evidence of deity, and took "a bondman's form, taking His place in the likeness of men." By becoming Man the Lord Jesus became what He was not before, and this is another of the many proofs that He is God, for no creature can leave the estate in which God has placed him with impunity (see Jude 1:6). Only the Creator had the right to come as Man into His creation. In all these wonderful movements which evoke our wonder and our worship we see the heart of the perfect Servant, who loved His Master, His wife and His children, and would not go out free, thereby pledging Himself to perpetual service. It was His own sovereign, gracious choice, revealing the deep love of His heart to those who were the objects of that love, and, moreover, it was not to be merely for a transient period during His stay upon earth, but for ever. The boring of the ear by the master suggests not only the devotedness of the bondservant to this master, but also the acceptance by the master of his service. How appropriate this is in its application to the Person and ways of the Lord Jesus. How truly He loved His "Master," for the main purpose of His presence in this world was to glorify God the Father and finish the work He had given Him to do. Consider His own remarkable words, "As the living Father has sent me and I

live on account of the Father" (John 6:57): and, again, "My food is that I should do the will of Him that has sent me, and that I should finish His work" (John 4:34). Then, anticipatively, He can say, "I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have completed the work which Thou gavest me that I should do it" (John 17:4). The bondservant also loved his wife, and "Christ also loved the assembly, and has delivered Himself up for it" (Ephesians 5:25). He was "like a Merchant seeking beautiful pearls; and having found one pearl of great value, He went and sold all whatever He had and bought it" (Matthew 13:45-46). In the third verse of this chapter, the literal rendering of the expression "If he came in alone" is "If he came in with his body." Do we not see in Hebrews 10:5 the manner in which Christ came in with His body? "Thou hast prepared me a body." In Psalms 40:1-17, from which the writer to the Hebrews quotes, it reads, "Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire; mine ears hast Thou opened (or bored)."

Christ also loved His "children," His own considered individually, loving them unto the end, with a changeless, measureless and unwearied love. That holy body, prepared for Him, the Son of God has devoted to God, to the assembly, and to the children whom God has given Him. In the light of this, how deeply moving are His own words, spoken on the night in which He was delivered up, "This is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:23-24). It is a memorial in which Christ is called to mind.

There is a very blessed expression in verse 4, "If his master have given him a wife." How precious is the thought that those who constitute the assembly were given to the Son as the expression of the Father's love to Him. It is on account of this that the Son says to the Father, "I demand concerning them; I do not demand concerning the world, but concerning those whom Thou hast given me, for they are Thine (and all that is mine is Thine and all that is Thine mine), and I am glorified in them" (John 17:9-10). Then in Hebrews 2:13 we have the remarkable words spoken by the One that sanctifies, "Behold, I and the children which God has given me."

Those precious tokens of Christ's suffering love become expressive of His serving love, as He declares to His disciples, "I am among you as one that serveth." How blessed is His present service of love to His own as set forth in John 13:1-38, in order to our having part with Himself where He is, while we are still treading these defiled scenes where He was. And when we are with Him forever, still those loving, ministering hands will minister to us, according to His words of Luke 12:37, "Verily I say unto you, that He will gird Himself and make them recline at table, and coming up will serve them."

Much spiritual profit can be derived from the prayerful consideration of the remainder of the chapter, which is specially suited to private study. These statutes contain moral principles which are unaffected by dispensational changes. While the law is not the rule of the believer's life, yet, as the Apostle says in Romans 8:3-4, "God . . . has condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law should be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to flesh but according to Spirit." May we have a heart like Solomon's, a "heart that hears," a heart of unquestioning obedience to God's word, giving heed to the following words written many years ago, "Is it not appalling to think of Christians generally, now accepting truth so set forth in terms, without any apparent intention of carrying it out practically? On the contrary, pressing the world and its ways into it. I think that adopting the terms of the truth, without submission to what it involves, is a very fearful aspect of the times."

Exodus 22:1-31. In chapter 22 we continue our consideration of the "judgments" introduced at the beginning of chapter 21 and extending to chapter 23. There is, however, an observable difference in the character of God's judgments from Exodus 21:33 onwards, for these deal mainly with the possessions or property of the children of Israel. The most scrupulous observance of God's demands is enjoined, as in the case of their persons, to which our attention has already been drawn, and in which is displayed God's tender and compassionate care for the lives and persons of His people. We see, therefore, that every aspect of their lives is taken into account with a comprehensiveness of detail which is truly remarkable and worthy of God, who, as the psalmist says, is "the God of my mercy" (Psalms 59:17). By these ordinances God would instruct His people, who were in covenant relationship with Himself on the ground of law, as to the solemn character of all that was righteously required of those whose continuance in "the goodness of God" was determined by their unswerving obedience to those requirements. The character and measure in which God has been pleased to reveal Himself, whether under law or under grace, is that which determines the conduct of those who stand in relationship with Him, so that we should reflect and express the character of God according to that relationship.

While these "judgments" reveal the true character of the law, inflexible righteousness with its inescapable demands of restitution and penal sanction, for there could be no evasion of their responsibility, yet the spirit in which the children of Israel dealt with each other, according to these divine instructions, was expressive of the beautiful features of grace and compassion. The following words sustain the truth of this assertion: they were not to vex a stranger, or afflict the widow and the fatherless (Exodus 22:21-22); no interest was to be charged to the poor who borrowed money (Exodus 22:25), and a neighbour's pledged garment was not to be kept overnight (Exodus 22:26-27). To this last God adds this beautiful expression, "for I am gracious." As has been already stated, there are self-evident truths presented which are specially suited for private study, but there are certain points which merit closer study, since in these there is a strongly marked relevancy between what is enjoined on the children of Israel and the circumstances in which the people of God find themselves today. Let us therefore consider these points with the desire that the Spirit of God will increase our knowledge of that which will enable us to walk worthy of "the God who calls us to His own kingdom and glory," in a world where "The wicked (saith), in the haughtiness of his countenance, He doth not search out: all his thoughts are, There is no God!" (Psalms 10:4). The fearful result of this is that man, in daring presumption by parliamentary enactment, has virtually set aside that which God has established for the protection of life. In Exodus 21:12-17 certain offences to which the penalty of death is attached are given, the case of murder being specifically mentioned. This, however, is no new enactment as Genesis 9:5-6 unquestionably shows. God who alone knows the heart of man, and has pronounced it "deceitful above all things and incurably wicked," when investing Noah with the government of the earth, provides in the most solemn terms, which no human laws can set aside, for the preservation of man's life, "at the hand of Man, at the hand of each (the blood) of his brother, will I require the life of Man. Whoso sheddeth Man's blood, by Man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God He hath made Man." In Genesis 4:1-26, after Cain had slain his brother Abel, God asked him, "Where is Abel thy brother?" to which Cain insolently replied, "I know not; am I my brother's keeper?" So God, in giving these instructions to Noah, places man's responsibility for the life of his fellow-man beyond all dispute. Life belongs to God, and in the exercise of His prerogative as the Giver of life demands the forfeiture of the life of one who has taken a life he cannot restore, and there can be

no mitigation of the sentence. Even though one guilty of murder should lay hold of God's altar (verse 14) this would avail him nothing, as is seen in the case of Joab (1 Kings 2:28-34). All the misplaced philanthropic movements of men, with their substitution of men's ideas in place of God's established order, display not merely an ignorance of His ways but a deliberate rejection of God's righteous claims. Behind it all are the evil machinations of Satan, the adversary of God, a rebel greater far than man himself.

There is, however, in Exodus 21:13 a notable exception made, according to the words, "But if he have not lain in wait, and God have delivered him into his hand, I will appoint thee a place to which he shall flee." This provision is dealt with in fuller detail in Deuteronomy 19:1-21 and Numbers 35:1-34, where the cities of refuge are spoken of. How precious is the grace, and the compassion of the heart of God, expressed in Deuteronomy 19:6, "Lest the avenger of blood pursue the manslayer, while his heart is hot, and overtake him, because the way is long, and smite him mortally; whereas he was not worthy of death, since he hated him not previously."

It would appear that in this statute, mentioned in Exodus 21:12-13, we have a typical allusion to the guilt of the Jewish nation in the slaying of their Messiah. Had they not "lain in wait?" Time and again we are told of how they counselled together as to how they might destroy Jesus, yet in grace, which surmounted and surpassed the murderous hatred of their hearts, this crowning act of rebellion against God is declared to have been done in ignorance, even as Peter declared, "I know that ye did it in ignorance, as also your rulers" (Acts 3:17). In grace their awful deed is not regarded as wilful, but is attributed to God having delivered up Jesus by His determinate counsel and foreknowledge (Acts 2:23). How often had they sought to take Jesus, but this could not be until God Himself delivered Him into their hands, as Jesus said to Pilate, "Thou hadst no authority whatever against me if it were not given to thee from above." But through the atoning death of the Lord Jesus, Peter was able to point the way to the city of refuge, saying, "Repent, and be baptised, each one of you, in the Name of Jesus Christ, for remission of sins, and ye will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). This blessing was not only for the Jew, but also for the Gentile, as Peter said, "For to you is the promise and to your children, and to all who (are) afar off, as many as (the) Lord our God may call" (Acts 2:39). In the super-abundance of His grace, grace that reigns through righteousness, God has given us by two unchangeable things, His word and His oath, "a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus" (Hebrews 6:18-20). And we our great Forerunner see, In His own glory there;

Yet not ashamed, with such as we, As Firstborn, all to share. In Exodus 21:15; Exodus 21:17, the solemn sentence of death is passed on those who are guilty of smiting or cursing their father or mother. By this God sanctions the exercise of parental authority, and the children's regard for that authority as flowing from filial affection. Since this is included among those other enactments, it clearly shows the importance God attaches to these filial obligations, and how gravely He regards any breach in conduct coming short of this. Paul, in writing to Timothy concerning "the last days" when "difficult times shall be there," mentions specifically "disobedience to parents" and "without natural affection" as characteristic of these last days. The fact that believers in Christ are not under law, but under grace, does not relieve us of these obligations, since the great point to be pressed is that of obedience to a God-given authority. Under grace, according to the teaching of Paul in the

Epistle to the Ephesians, we rise to greater heights in our observance of these things, as being animated by heavenly motives and springs of action. The Spirit of God gives the following exhortation, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is just" (Ephesians 6:1), and to the Colossians, who were in danger of being entangled by legal ordinances, the word is, "Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing in the Lord" (Ephesians 3:20).

It is with deep reverence that we refer to the Child mentioned in Luke 2:48-52, whose earthly parents had sought Him sorrowing, and to His mother's gentle reproof, "Child, why hast thou dealt thus with us? behold thy father and I have sought thee distressed." He replied, "Why is it that ye have sought me? did ye not know that I ought to be occupied in my Father's business?" How remarkable is this statement, revealing to us the amazing thought that even as a boy of twelve Jesus realised His relationship with the Father who had sent Him into the world. In this connection how precious are the words brought before us in Proverbs 8:22-31, where the Lord Jesus as Wisdom makes known His relations with the Father in the solitude of eternity before ever the worlds were created. How wonderful are His words, "Jehovah possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old . . . when He appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by Him, His nursling, and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him; rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth, and my delights were with the sons of men." In the light of this transcendent glory, how wonderful are the words of Luke 2:51, "And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and He was in subjection to them." In Exodus 22:1-15 the thought of restitution is brought to our notice, a very necessary principle since there can be no evading of responsibility on the part of one who has to do with "the righteous Lord that loveth righteousness." In this God has shown not only His concern for the guarding of the life and persons of His people, as already noted, but also a concern for their possessions, demanding restitution from the offender as being accountable to Him in their relations with one another. This raises a question of deeper import and far-reaching significance, for if God regards the robbing of one's fellow-man in such a grievous light, what of our infinitely greater sin of having robbed God, a sin of which all men are guilty; and what can we bring to God as restitution? It is utterly impossible for bankrupt sinners to make restitution to God, but another has done so, One who was not only the sin offering and the burnt offering, but also the true trespass offering (Leviticus 5:1-19), and in Leviticus 14:1-57 both a sin offering and a trespass offering were necessary. In the case of a Nazarite being defiled, the same two offerings were required. While the trespass offering is in effect a sin offering, it has more to do with the government of God, whereas the actual sin offering has to do with the holiness of God's nature. The Lord Jesus is the true trespass offering in Isaiah 53:10-12 and also in Psalms 69:1-36, where, in prophetic language, He says, "then I restored that which I took not away." This is a very precious aspect of the death of Christ, the One who "stood between us and the foe, and willingly died in our stead." Our debt has been paid fully and adequately. Every demand against us as sinners has been righteously met; every accusing voice is hushed in the presence of that all-atoning and all-sufficient sacrifice of our Saviour and Lord. How worthy He is of every tribute we can lay at His blessed feet.

Yet, Saviour! Thou shalt have full praise:

We soon shall meet Thee on the cloud,
We soon shall see Thee face to face,
In glory praising as we would.

How blessed it is to sit in restfulness of heart in the unclouded light and joy of the presence of God, and say, "If God be for us, who against us? . . . Who shall bring an accusation against God's elect? It is God who justifies: who is he that condemns? It is Christ who has died, but rather has been also raised up; who is also at the right hand of God; . . . Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? . . . neither death, nor life . . . nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:31-39). The solemn sentence, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (Exodus 22:18), arrests the mind by reason of its severity, God thereby indicating His abhorrence of that which, in its true character, was a trafficking with evil spirits. Many derisory remarks are made regarding this repelling evil, either to mitigate its dreadful influence or disprove its actual existence, but the word of God speaks of it as one of the features of the great apostasy in the last days, "But the Spirit speaks expressly, that in latter times some shall apostatise from the faith, giving their mind to deceiving spirits and teachings of demons speaking lies in hypocrisy" (1 Timothy 4:1-2).

Throughout Scripture there are solemn warnings given as to the avoidance of the various forms of this great evil and strong denunciations against it because of its satanic origin. It is recorded of Manasseh, the son of the godly Hezekiah, that he built again the high places that his father had broken down, and built altars to all the host of heaven in both courts of the house of the Lord, "and he used magic and divination and sorcery, and appointed necromancers and soothsayers: he wrought evil beyond measure in the sight of Jehovah to provoke Him to anger" (2 Chronicles 33:4-7).

Consider, too, Saul's grievous sin in consulting the woman at Endor who had a familiar spirit, after having "put away those that had familiar spirits . . . out of the land" (1 Samuel 28:3). In his extremity, as his enemies gathered together their armies, Saul enquired of the Lord, but God had already rejected him, and He answered him not, "neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets." In having recourse to this woman of Endor, Saul commits this heinous sin in the face of his own proscription, and in inexcusable disobedience to the command of God, only to hear again from Samuel the reason for his being rejected by God (1 Samuel 28:18). Samuel had already said to Saul, "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He hath also rejected thee from being king" (1 Samuel 15:23).

How necessary it is for us to accept God's estimate of what is obnoxious to Him and calls forth His unsparing judgment. The outstanding characteristic of the religious systems around is unbelief, which, in its essence, is descriptive of those who have not hearkened to the word of God. This is not a mere passive state, but a deliberate, wilful rejection of God, as having come under the power of him who is a greater rebel than man himself, "the ruler of the authority of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2). By him they are seduced to probe into things unknown and unseen through the agency of evil spirits. In this ordinance, or statute, God has, by the very severity of the judgment, recorded His utter detestation of that which is essentially evil and destructive to the souls of men.

Another solemn sentence, brought to our notice in Exodus 22:20, is "He that sacrificeth unto any god, save unto the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed." Is it not a solemn reflection that the nation whom God had sovereignly chosen out of all the nations of the earth, that were so richly

favoured and endowed, should so early in their history be guilty of the most flagrant idolatry? In Exodus 20:1-26 God had spoken these words, "I am Jehovah thy God, who have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make thyself any graven image . . . thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them" (Exodus 20:2-5). With these words graven in our thoughts, what a solemn scene is opened up before us in chapter 32, as we witness the complete contradiction of them, as though these words had never been written.

God tells Moses, in Exodus 32:1-35, to "go down! for thy people (not My people), which thou hast brought out of the land of Egypt, is acting corruptly . . . they have made themselves a molten calf, and have bowed down to it . . . and said, This is thy god, Israel, who has brought thee up out of the land of Egypt!" (Exodus 32:7-8). The Spirit of God confirms the guilt of the people in these words, "They made a calf in Horeb, and did homage to a molten image; and they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass. They forgot God their Saviour, who had done great things in Egypt" (Psalms 106:19-21). May we profit from the seasonable admonition, implicit in all that God has caused to be "written for our learning," for, "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man" (Proverbs 27:19).

We may not be guilty of bowing down to a god of our own devising, "like gold or silver or stone, the graven form of man's art and imagination," but there are other idols ever seeking to steal our hearts away from Him, of whom the apostle says, "yet to us there is one God, the Father, of whom all things, and we for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things" (1 Corinthians 8:4-6). The greatest and most subtle idol is self. How we need to be warned of this, since the apostle, speaking of the features of the last days, mentions as the first thing, "for men shall be lovers of self" (2 Timothy 3:2), and every human resource is being co-ordinated and applied to enable men to reach this unworthy end.

Paul, in writing to the saints in Colosse, warns against idolatry, and proposes the only effective remedy, "Mortify (or put to death) therefore your members which are upon the earth . . . and covetousness, which is idolatry" (Colossians 3:5). Covetousness, as another has said is "greedy, unsatisfied lust," the craving of a heart unsatisfied with its portion, and true of many in Paul's day, "whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (Php 3:19).

How precious it is to turn to Him who is our great Exemplar in this as in all things. How sweet is the savour of His ointments in Psalms 16:1-11, and how fragrant is His precious Name, an ointment poured forth so that the virgins love Him. Speaking as the dependent Man, He says, "Preserve me, O God: for I trust in Thee"; then, in referring to other gods, He declares, Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another . . . and I will not take up their names into my lips." Not only does He willingly comply with the law that prohibited all other gods, He would not even take their names upon His lips. As the true Levite, the dependent Man declares, "Jehovah is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup." Jehovah was His assigned portion, what rightly belonged to Him, and also His cup for present enjoyment. Eating and drinking indicate participation and enjoyment. Are we enjoying our portion as those whose cup is running over, enjoying the rich, unmeasured bounty of love's providing? To the dependent One, His portion and cup were one, and Jehovah was the measure of both. He had nothing besides, and He wanted nothing more. In the light of this may the words of the beloved Apostle John assume a deeper significance to our souls, "Children,

keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21). He also by the Spirit exhorts us, "Love not the world, nor the things in the world. If any one love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15-16).

Exodus 23:1-33; Exodus 24:1-18. The first verse of chapter 23 deserves careful consideration, since it makes the hearer of a report responsible to ensure that what he has heard is true before accepting it, the true rendering of the verse being, "Thou shalt not accept a false report." How necessary it is to give heed to such a solemn admonition. The words of the Lord Jesus, "Take heed what ye hear," though referring to an entirely different matter, are of the utmost relevance to what we are considering. James, in his Epistle, warns us of the unruliness of the tongue, using extremely strong terms to describe its unruly propensities and its defiling and destructive consequences. The heart actuated by "the wisdom that is from above," which is "pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated" (James 3:17), will take heed not only to what it hears, but also to how it hears, since "the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (verse 18). In Exodus 23:12-13 the sabbath is mentioned as a time of rest not only for the people, but also for the animals which served them, and that "the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger may be refreshed." The land was to enjoy its sabbaths as a constant token that it belonged to the Lord, so that not only man, but the land itself, the poor and the beasts of the field were to share God's rest. All were the objects of God's tender compassion. With the sabbath, there is also the mention of three feasts, which, in their typical meaning, are of the first importance to us. In Leviticus 23:1-44 the full range of Jehovah's feasts is brought before us, typical of the ways of God in blessing from the cross to the millennium, but in this chapter only three of the feasts, in addition to the sabbath, are mentioned. Firstly, there is the feast of unleavened bread, which is the Passover (see Exodus 12:8; Luke 22:1). Unleavened bread was a necessary accompaniment to the Passover. Then we have "the feast of harvest . . . and the feast of ingathering" (Exodus 23:16). On these three occasions, the Passover, Pentecost and the feast of tabernacles, all the males of Israel were to appear before God. As in Leviticus 23:1-44, so it is here, the sabbath is first mentioned as setting forth the consummation of all God's ways in blessing for all His redeemed, whether heavenly or earthly, when they shall share with Him His eternal rest. Where deceiver ne'er can enter, Sin-soiled feet have never trod;

Free — our peaceful feet may venture In the paradise of God.

How appropriate that the sabbath, with its prospect of eternal rest, should have precedence over the other feasts, and as indicating the divine order attaching to them. The feast of unleavened bread necessarily follows, which speaks of the setting aside of all that is of the flesh, that in which God can find no pleasure, whether it be the leaven of the Pharisees which is religious pretension, the leaven of the Sadducees which is intellectualism and infidelity, the old leaven which belongs to man after the flesh ended in the cross, or the leaven of malice and wickedness which is the fruit of the old nature (1 Corinthians 5:6-8).

We can only celebrate this feast with the "unleavened bread of sincerity and truth," and having Christ before us, as the true Passover, apart from whom there could be no "harvest," and without whom we should appear in God's presence "empty." we have much to offer in praise and thanksgiving.

Then comes "the feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours which thou hast sown in the field." In Leviticus 23:1-44, where these feasts are mentioned in greater detail, the "sheaf of firstfruits," which was waved before the Lord, is typical of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. He is the beginning of the true harvest. "Firstborn from among the dead," the beginning in resurrection of a new order of things which has sprung up from the "corn of wheat" that fell into the ground and died. It had been written, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy," and how glorious are the achievements resulting from the sufferings of the cross, and by the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost to form a heavenly company, who are all of one with Him, His joy and boast. It was "in view of the joy lying before Him, (He) endured the cross, having despised the shame," and now He "is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2). The feast of ingathering follows, which has in view the gathering in of the children of Israel, but which in its comprehensive application embraces the myriads of the redeemed of every age and dispensation. All for God has been established in resurrection, "the first-fruits, Christ; then those that are the Christ's at His coming" (1 Corinthians 15:23). This wonderful ingathering commenced at Pentecost by the descent of the Holy Spirit. A moral order is discernable in these feasts. As we enter into the truth of that which is set forth in the feast of unleavened bread and the feast of harvest, we are prepared to enter into the fulness of blessing which God has purposed for His people set forth in the feast of ingathering, with the inheritance in its vast extent "from the wilderness unto the river" (Exodus 23:31). Israel will have this inheritance in the mediatorial kingdom of the Lord Jesus, in a scene where righteousness reigns.

During the Lord's reign He will annul "all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He put all enemies under His feet." At the end He will give up the kingdom to Him who is God and Father, "that God may be all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:24-28). It is to this we are hastening, the full fruition, the perfect realisation of every thought of God. As lifted above our own feebleness of thought, may we, as endowed by the Spirit, with ever enlarging capacity seek to apprehend the fulness of God's thought for the blessing of men, founded on the redemptive work of Christ, and reaching its blessed consummation in the "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness" (2 Peter 3:13). Then too will be fulfilled the Scripture, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall tabernacle with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, their God" (Revelation 21:3). In Exodus 24:1-18 we have presented to us what is commonly spoken of as the "ratification of the covenant." In the chapters we have already considered there has been, in the most solemn manner, the unfolding of the terms, and their interpretation, on which God's relationship with His people could be maintained, according to the inflexible demands of righteousness and holiness. The first verse intimates the solemnity of the occasion, yet withal a ray of divine grace, worthy of the God of all grace, illumines that sombre scene. Moses was instructed to bring others with him, but Jehovah said, "let Moses alone come near Jehovah, but they shall not come near; neither shall the people go up with him." In these words we are again reminded of the character of the dispensation, one of distance, as distinctly emphasised in the words, "and worship afar off." This is in marked contrast to the spirit of the present dispensation in which we are exhorted, "Let us approach with a true heart, in full assurance of faith" (Hebrews 10:22). In choosing that Moses alone should draw near to Him, we see a singular act of God's grace in investing Moses with the high honour and dignity of mediator of the covenant. Grace alone conferred this dignity, and its significance and importance lie in the fact that Moses, in type, displays in shadowy outline the more substantial and positive glories of an

infinitely greater Mediator, even "Jesus, Mediator of a new covenant" (Hebrews 12:24; 1 Timothy 2:5). He is the "Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, One who in the power of His own shed blood "entered in once for all into the holy of holies, having found an eternal redemption . . . who by the eternal Spirit offered Himself spot-less to God . . . and for this reason He is Mediator of a new covenant" (Hebrews 9:12-15).

Having regard to the solemn incident mentioned in Leviticus 10:1-20, where Nadab and Abihu "took each of them his censer, and put fire in it, and put incense on it, and presented strange fire before Jehovah, which He had not commanded them," the solemn character of their offence is intensified when we observe that they were included among that favoured company who "saw the God of Israel." Yet in the exercise of their priestly functions they acted in complete disregard of that which was pleasurable to God, and thereby brought upon themselves the summary judgment of God.

It is of prime importance that we have our attention drawn to the judgment that fell upon the sons of Aaron, and that we should profit from its solemn admonition, since all around us today we see the increasing pre-vaience of the mind of man intruding with daring presumption into the holy things of God, ignorant or forgetful of the fact that he has to do with God who has declared, "I will be hallowed in them that come near me, and before all the people I will be glorified" (Leviticus 10:3). What is rendered to God must be in accordance with His desires, as that which is the fruit of the Spirit's work in our souls. When Moses came to the people and told them "all the words of Jehovah, and all the judgments," all the people replied "with one voice, and said, All the words that Jehovah has said will we do!" Moses then recorded all these words in a book, spoken of in Exodus 24:7 as "the book of the covenant," and referred to in Hebrews 9:19 as "the book itself." It was according to the terms recorded in this book that covenant relations were to be established and maintained.

How significant and precious in its typical teaching is the action of Moses in rising up early in the morning and building "an altar under the mountain, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel." It is remarkable that in Exodus 20:1-26, after God had given the ten commandments, He immediately speaks of the altar, and of burnt offerings and peace offerings: so it is in this chapter. As often reiterated, God's desire is to dwell with His people, but this could not be realised on the ground of the obedience of man after the flesh, but by the obedience of the true Mediator even unto death, and that the death of the cross; a death in which He glorified God and laid the righteous basis upon which will be fully realised the eternal gratification of the heart of God in blessing to men. In the "twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel," we are reminded of God's unwavering purpose to bless the people, not on the ground of their declared obedience, but wholly in virtue of the sacrificial work of Christ of which the altar typically speaks. In the mind of God the blessing of His people would be secured in all the value and sweet savour of the burnt offering, and it is worthy of note that, before the covenant was ratified, the people were identified with the altar and so brought on to that ground by the work of the Mediator.

How precious is the typical significance of these things as pointing forward to the work of Him who is the true Mediator, and who was Himself the true burnt offering. Through Christ's death God has been glorified as to all the breakdown under the first covenant, and His people have been identified with the work which has glorified Him, and also with the Person who has wrought this

great work. A new order is suggested in the youths of the children of Israel offering up burnt offerings, and sacrificing sacrifices of peace offerings of bullocks to Jehovah (Exodus 24:5). In this we have a new generation intimated, "the youths" in contrast to "the elders" of verse 1. By the sovereign work of God there will be a new generation of Israel with the law written in their hearts, instead of fathers who utterly failed under law. There will be sons in whose hearts the Spirit of grace has wrought, and who will be taught of God. Of these we read in Psalms 45:16, "Instead of thy fathers shall be thy sons," and this new generation is also spoken of in Psalms 22:31 and Psalms 110:3.

How precious too is all this in its application to the saints in the present dispensation of grace, who are "sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus," for "God sent forth His Son . . . that we might receive sonship." As another has said, "It is receiving the position of sonship as a gift. 'Receive' has an active force here. Jew and Gentile received it as a gift from another, even freely from God; for the Jew was in bondage under law: the Gentile has right to nothing." It is because we are sons that "God has sent out the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6). See also Romans 8:15; Romans 8:23, and Ephesians 1:5.

We are also children of God by divine generation, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the living and abiding word of God . . . But this is the word which in the glad tidings is preached to you" (1 Peter 1:23-25). Moreover, it is said of those so richly blessed that they are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by sanctification of the Spirit unto the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:2). The obedience spoken of here is in strong contrast to the legal obedience demanded under law. Those born of incorruptible seed are "children of obedience," being partakers of a divine nature which delights in obedience. Having the Spirit of sonship they are competent to obey as Christ obeyed. and by that same Spirit they are accepted before God in all the value of the sprinkling of the blood of that Lamb "foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world." The words just quoted from Peter's 1st Epistle are a direct allusion to Exodus 24:6-8, as are also the words of Hebrews 9:19-20, which in greater detail recall the action of Moses in sprinkling the blood as he was commanded. In Hebrews 9:1-28 we find an interesting and instructive addition to that which is recorded in Exodus, that the book also was sprinkled, as well as the altar and the people.

We might well ask, What does the sprinkling of blood in this case speak of? It is certainly not redemption, since we have already considered the types which set forth redemption in its two-fold aspect; first, by blood according to Exodus 12:1-51, which sheltered them from the judgment of God; secondly, by power, as witnessed by their triumphant passage through the Red Sea, whereby their enemies were destroyed and they were delivered forever from their power.

Israel now, at a distance from God, standing on the ground of their responsibility before God, having pledged themselves to unqualified obedience to the terms of the covenant, are made to realise their solemn position by the sealing of this covenant by blood. The sprinkling of blood here is not propitiation, but penalty, the blood signifying that death is the penal sanction of the law. By the sprinkling of blood, Israel bound themselves to keep the whole law in a covenant of death. Nor is it otherwise, in this day of grace, with those who in principle make the ground of law their rule of life, who are trusting to their good works as the condition of blessing. Though ignorant of this solemn fact, they are truly placing themselves under the curse of the law to which death is

attached as the penalty of disobedience. The witness of death is deeply imprinted on this chapter. The blood was sprinkled on the altar, speaking typically of that work by which God has been glorified. Christ died under the solemn curse of a broken law, thereby establishing the will of God in a path of unswerving obedience to that will which led only to the cross, where the authority of the law was maintained and every penalty of its infraction borne. The blood was also sprinkled on the people as speaking to their consciences, and ours, in type of that "sacrifice of nobler Name" by which Christ has become the "Mediator of a new covenant, so that, death having taken place for redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, the called might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance" (Hebrews 9:15). From Hebrews 9:19 we learn that the blood was also sprinkled on "the book." Would not this typically intimate that every claim of the first covenant has been righteously met, and that its righteous demands have been completely vindicated by the full penalty being borne? In that death there has also been the setting aside of the man who was unable to meet the righteous requirements of the law. The children of Israel were unable to see Christ as the end of all this typical teaching, but, as taught by grace, we see that this blessed One was in the mind of God from the very beginning. In Exodus 24:9-11 a most momentous spectacle is opened before us. Two of its features will serve to justify the truth of this assertion, "they saw the God of Israel" and "they saw God, and ate and drank." God distinctly declared in Exodus 33:20, "Thou canst not see My face; for Man shall not see Me, and live." Yet here, through special grace granted on the ground of that blood sprinkling that had just taken place, Moses and his companions, as representatives of the people, went up and ate and drank in the presence of the God of Israel. Although they were in the presence of the holy God of Israel, God did not place His hand in judgment on the nobles, who saw "under His feet as it were work of transparent sapphire, and as it were the form of heaven for clearness." All this was in accordance with the dispensation of law.

How surpassingly great is the glory of the grace displayed in the Person of Jesus, who was none other than Jehovah, the God of Israel, veiling the glory of Deity in a body specially prepared for Him, in which He passed through this world in all the attractive grace and moral excellence of perfect Manhood. As has been written, "In His humiliation His divine glory was maintained in the unsounded depths of His Person," and a Scripture says, "In Him all the fulness (of the Godhead) was pleased to dwell" (Colossians 1:19). In the Gospels we see the God of Israel in Jesus, allowing men to eat and drink in His presence; and we also see Him eating and drinking with His disciples, with Pharisees and with publicans and sinners! Peter, in Acts 10:40-41, also mentions the grace that allowed the disciples to eat and drink with Jesus, where he says,

"This (Man) God raised up the third day and gave Him to be openly seen, not of all the people, but of witnesses who were chosen before of God, us who have eaten and drunk with Him after He arose from among the dead." How surpassing too the grace that allowed that poor, penitent woman in the Pharisee's house to wash His blessed feet with tears, to wipe them with her hair, and to kiss and anoint them with the ointment she had brought. Immeasurable grace indeed! At the close of the chapter we find Moses in his place of mediator, called by God to "Come up to me," that he might receive from Him "the tables of stone, and the law, and the commandment that I have written, for their instruction." The solemnity of the occasion is marked by "the appearance of the glory of Jehovah" being "like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain before the eyes of the children of Israel." Moses was alone with God forty days and forty nights, and as mediator he

alone could approach God to receive from Him the "tables of stone," the "living oracles" of which Stephen spoke in Acts 7:1-60. The glory seen by the children of Israel was not the glory of God's grace, but the glory of holiness as befitting the age of law. In measureless grace it is given to us now to behold the glory of the grace that shines resplendent in the face of Jesus (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Exodus 25:1-16

It has been said that this is one of the most outstanding, if not the most outstanding, chapters of the five books of Moses, commonly spoken of as the Pentateuch. Even a cursory examination of the contents of the chapter would establish the truth of this assertion. Here we have a remarkable diversity of types, which, while appertaining to an earthly order of things, are profoundly significant in their being typical of that which is heavenly. As the writer of the Hebrews declares, they "serve the representation and shadow of heavenly things, according as Moses was oracularly told when about to make the tabernacle; for See, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern which has been shown to thee in the mountain" (Hebrews 8:5).

We must remember that types are not intended to teach truths, their purpose is to illustrate them. They are but the shadows and not the very image of that which they are used to typify. This is perfectly understandable when we realise that Christ is the great substance of these shadows, the full image of all that was partial. In none of these types can we find the full truth of Christ and His work, yet they are the means God has used to convey to our hearts and understandings the knowledge and enjoyment of those things which in their intrinsic character are infinite, and which find their full and perfect expression in the Christ of God, and in no other.

How remarkable it is to see that God Himself draws near with the proposal that His people make Him a suitable dwelling-place in which He might dwell in their midst on the ground of accomplished redemption. In so doing, God displays the infinite grace of His heart towards His people, which is the more accentuated when we remember that in their song of triumph, celebrating their complete deliverance from the power of their enemies, Israel spoke of preparing such a dwelling-place in these words, "He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation" (Exodus 15:2).

It was therefore gracious of God to draw near to Moses and instruct him as to how this desire of the people, which answered to the ever-present desire of His own heart, could be brought to pass, and in a way which would glorify Him. This latter thought is sustained by the alternative rendering of the clause "I will make Him an habitation," which reads, "I will glorify Him." These two thoughts are not inconsistent with each other, for God is glorified in His people making Him a dwelling-place. In Psalms 22:1-31 we find these remarkable words, "And Thou art holy, Thou that dwellest amid the praises of Israel," and also in Psalms 50:23, "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me."

How much is brought to light in this approach of God in grace to His people, bringing His people to Himself and establishing covenant relationships with them. None of this could have been possible, nor could this relationship have been enjoyed, had not God drawn near and revealed what He is to man. The truth of this is borne out in a very convincing manner by the order in which the various vessels are brought before us, according to the predetermined design of the Spirit, consistent with the measure and manner in which God was pleased to reveal Himself. In accordance with this the

writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews begins his letter by stating that "God having spoken in many parts and in many ways formerly to the fathers in the prophets, at the end of these days has spoken to us in (the Person of the) Son."

It is worthy of our consideration to observe that the various vessels first mentioned are those which, in their typical teaching, convey the precious thought that it is God who ever initiates these movements of grace in blessing to men. Here are these vessels, the ark, the golden table, the golden candlestick, the tabernacle with its curtains, the veil, the brazen altar and the court. These form the first division of the types, the common purpose of which is the display of God in Christ for the blessing of men.

Before considering the vessels in detail, however, let us note how God brings the people into communion with His own desires respecting the building of this tabernacle in which He was to dwell among them. The word to Moses is, "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me a heave-offering: of every one whose heart prompteth him, ye shall take my heave-offering." Then follows the description, both interesting and instructive, of the various articles required, ending with the memorable words, "And they shall make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them."

All this material was to be furnished as the fruit of promptings of heart. No quantity was specified, but so great was the response that it states in Exodus 36:6 that a special proclamation had to be made to restrain the people from giving. All is the work of God's grace, for, as being enriched by Him, we can offer that which is in accordance with His own thoughts and purposes, as David declares, "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer willingly after this manner, for all is of Thee, and of that which is from Thy hand have we given Thee . . . Jehovah our God, all this store that we have prepared to build Thee a house to Thy holy Name, is of Thy hand, and is all Thine own" (1 Chronicles 29:14; 1 Chronicles 29:16).

God delights in the spontaneous response of the affections of His people, but such is His grace that what is offered, being the fruit of His Spirit's work in our souls, He reckons it to us as our own offering, and thereby clothes us with that fine linen which is "the righteousnesses (or righteous acts) of the saints." When the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife (the assembly) has made herself ready, the Spirit adds, "And it was given to her" (Revelation 19:8). This is wondrous grace on the part of God whose workmanship we are, "having been created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has before prepared that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). Grace works in order to produce these "good works," precious "fruit of the Spirit," the result of His indwelling and His gracious work in us, producing the "fruit of righteousness, which is by Jesus Christ, to God's glory and praise." In considering the materials which willing hearts had provided so abundantly in response to God's expressed desire, it is of great importance to keep the thought before us that the Holy Spirit has chosen each of these materials with care and precision to set forth in typical language the Person of Christ and the varied glories which are enshrined in His Person, the One in whom "all the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell." How appropriate therefore that the first vessel presented for our consideration should be the ark. No type in Scripture is more wonderful than the ark, each mention of which, throughout Scripture, has a descriptive form, none of which is without its own peculiar significance as setting forth some aspect of the glory of the Lord Jesus.

Exodus 25:22 refers to the ark as "the ark of the testimony." Comparing this description with others, it would seem that this aspect of the ark has special reference to the wilderness, which typifies the present scene through which every true child of God is passing, and in which we are set up in the power of the Spirit in testimony for God. In Christ Himself, the true ark, "the faithful and true Witness" when all else had failed, we see every element of testimony sustained in perfection in His matchless life, bringing forth much and abiding fruit for the Father's glory and pleasure. Only as we cherish Him in our affections as the great Witness bearer, "Him whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world," will our testimony be fruitful and abiding. Of Ephraim it will be said in a coming day, "From me is thy fruit found" (Hosea 14:8), Ephraim meaning "fruitfulness," a meaning so greatly belied throughout the many centuries that have passed.

It is worthy of note that the ark, after it had crossed over the Jordan, is never spoken of as "the ark of the testimony," and in Joshua 3:13 it is called "the ark of Jehovah, the Lord of all the earth." In this latter description do we not have Christ set forth as the One in whom all the rights of God are secured and maintained? Divine power was seen as completely victorious over all the strength of death and the power of the enemy as typified in Jordan, for "the Jordan is full over all its banks throughout the days of harvest" (Joshua 3:15). It was the far-reaching power of the "ark of Jehovah" that caused the waters of Jordan to stand up "in a heap very far," as is celebrated in Psalms 114:5, "What ailed thee . . . thou Jordan, that thou turnedst back?"

It was the same ark that compassed Jericho and brought down its walls, laying open to Israel the land of Canaan which God had given to them as an inheritance, but which could only be possessed by the overthrow of those nations who were ready to challenge their right to the lawful possession that God had given them. As is well known, this is a beautiful type of the truth brought before us in Ephesians 6:10-18. Canaan, for the true believer in Christ in this dispensation of grace, is "the heavenlies" mentioned in Ephesians 1:3, where it is written, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ." Then we learn from Ephesians 2:1-22 that God has "quickened us with the Christ," and "has made us sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus." In Ephesians 6:1-24 we are warned of those formidable enemies (typified in the nations of Canaan) who are ever ready to contest the present possession of our heavenly inheritance. Our struggle is not against flesh and blood as was the case with the children of Israel, "but against principalities, against authorities, against the universal lords of this darkness, against spiritual power of wickedness in the heavenlies," truly a formidable array of the power of evil against us. But the "Father of glory," the source of all the wealth of divine blessing to us, has made abundant provision for us to enable us to follow the Ark (Christ) into possession of our heavenly inheritance, which has been secured for us by the death, resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God, of Christ. The God who was known to Israel as Jehovah is now known to us as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and as the God and Father of those who are associated with Christ in the heavenlies, and in this place of grace and favour we are accepted "in the Beloved." The consideration of the materials used in the construction of the ark cannot fail to be of the deepest interest to every true child of God, since in its typical significance it speaks, on the one hand, of the manifestation of God in Christ, and on the other of God's throne and government in Israel. The first material mentioned is shittim or acacia-wood, a wood considered by reliable

authority to be imperishable or incorruptible. If this is so, it provides a most appropriate type of the true humanity of our blessed Lord, for His was a holy and incorruptible humanity as conceived by the Holy Spirit, as it is written, "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and power of the Highest overshadow thee, wherefore the holy thing also which shall be born shall be called Son of God" (Luke 1:35). A peculiar glory illumines the remarkable declaration of the Spirit in Psalms 40:6, quoted in Hebrews 10:5, "Wherefore coming into the world He says, Sacrifice and offering Thou willedst not; but Thou has prepared me a body." This holy, incorruptible vessel was suitable in every way for the setting forth of the glory of God in a Man, and for the supreme expression of the love of God to men. Everything inwardly and outwardly connected with Him, who was the Man of God's counsels, was pleasurable in the extreme to the heart of the Father as is witnessed in Matthew 3:16-17, where the opened heavens, the descending Spirit and the Father's voice all combine to express the deep and abiding pleasure of the Father in the Son of His love. The moral features that were displayed in all their perfection in the Lord Jesus, with all the official glories with which He had been invested, and in which He will be manifested in the coming day, could only be sustained by Him who walked this scene in all the grace and perfection of holy Manhood. Jesus was as a tree growing up in this world, "a tender sapling, and as a root out of dry ground." To men He had no form or lordliness, and no beauty that Israel should desire Him. Yet the Holy Spirit delights in this theme, tracing the lowly rod of the stem of Jesse, growing up before the Lord as a tender plant to the stately Branch in manifested beauty (Isaiah 11:1; Isaiah 53:2; Jeremiah 33:15; Zechariah 3:8; Zechariah 6:12; Luke 1:78). The shittim wood was then overlaid with gold, that which is a fitting symbol of that which is divine. While clearly distinguishable the one from the other, the wood and the gold are closely connected in setting forth the glory of Him in whose Person was displayed the union of two natures, a perfect Man, yet One "who is over all, God blessed for ever," and "God manifest in flesh." In John 1:14 there is the wonderful declaration, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we have contemplated His glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a Father), full of grace and truth."

Mr Wm. Kelly writes of this profound subject, not in the letter of cold orthodoxy, but with a warmth of expression commendable to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, "This becomes all the more remarkable because He deigned for the deepest purposes to become true man. This, however, trenched not on His deity, for incarnation means not Godhead swamped by humanity, but this taken into everlasting union with itself, each nature abiding in its own perfectness, not metamorphosed, but constituting together the one person of Christ." The "rings" and "staves" on the ark (as on the other vessels) were that it might "be borne with them." This is an important part of Levitical service, and is based upon what is priestly, according to the truth brought before us in the opening chapters of Numbers. Leviticus is necessarily the priests' book, in which we learn what suits God in the sanctuary, while Numbers is the book of the Levites, as bringing into testimony in this world that which we have learned in the sanctuary concerning the glories of Christ.

Every true believer in Christ is both priest and Levite. As priests we have access to God in whose presence the glories of Christ are displayed, and as Levites we carry through this world the precious testimony of these glories, glories that shine in the face of a Man who has passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God through whom we have been brought nigh to God. Having the wonderful knowledge of a glorified Christ we are manifested to be Christ's epistle, known and read

of all men (2 Corinthians 3:1-18), and as the Apostle Peter declares, we are privileged to "set forth the excellencies of Him who has called" us out of darkness to His marvellous light (1 Peter 2:9). With further reference to the rings and staves, it states explicitly in verse 15, "The staves shall be in the rings of the ark; they shall not come out from it," but in turning to 2 Chronicles 5:9 we find the words, "And they drew out the staves of the ark, that the ends of the staves were seen from the ark before the oracle; but they were not seen without," There is no discrepancy in this, but rather a beautiful example of the accuracy of typical language. In Numbers 4:1-49, where the various services of the Levites are mentioned, the sons of Kohath were given the distinct honour, yet solemn responsibility, of carrying the ark of the testimony and the other golden vessels, for of their service only it is said, "it is most holy." It is worthy of note, however, that it was Aaron and his sons, the priestly family, who had to prepare the vessels by covering them with their varied coverings before the Levites could engage in the service allotted to them. This strengthens the thought already expressed that it is only as engaged in priestly service, in worship, learning more and more of the glories and perfections of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, that we as true Levites can show forth these excellencies as we pass through this desert scene. In 2 Chronicles, however, we view things from a different standpoint. The wilderness journey is over, the people of God have been brought into their inheritance, king Solomon is on the throne of Israel, and the temple has been built "unto the Name of Jehovah, the God of Israel." How moving and memorable is the scene brought before us in 1 Kings 8:1-66 at the inauguration of the temple, as Solomon stands before the altar of Jehovah in the presence of the whole congregation of Israel and gives utterance to the remarkable prayer recorded for us by the Spirit. The display of glory on that great day was but the foreshadowing of the day of glory that is yet to come when the One, who is greater than Solomon, will establish His kingdom in righteousness, bringing joy and blessing not only to His earthly people, but to the world at large, and we, His heavenly people, shall be sharers with Him in His deep and abiding joy. Then will be fully realised the truth of the words of the Psalmist, "Arise, Jehovah, into Thy rest, Thou and the ark of Thy strength" (Psalms 132:1-18). The staves are no longer needed for carrying the ark, for the ark is at rest in the presence of the divine glory.

Exodus 25:17-30 In verse 17 the mercy-seat is mentioned, "And thou shalt make a mercy-seat of pure gold." The descriptive term used by the Spirit cannot fail to arrest the attention of those who "have tasted that the Lord is good," since it speaks of God coming out in the exercise of the "rights of mercy." It is the display of the righteousness of God in the way of mercy toward those who were utterly ruined by sin; and our state being beyond recovery or remedy, mercy alone can meet our need as founded on the work of redemption. How reassuring the words of the apostle, "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God has set forth a mercy-seat, through faith in His blood, for the showing forth of His righteousness, in respect of the passing by the sins that has taken place before, through the forbearance of God; for the showing forth of His righteousness in the present time, so that He should be just, and justify him that is of the faith of Jesus" (Romans 3:24-26). As the force of this remarkable statement bursts upon our feeble apprehension as also the greatness and glory of the Saviour and the magnitude of the work He has accomplished, our hearts rise in responsive praise to Him who so "loved us, and sent His Son a propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). This mighty work of redemption has shown God to be righteous in "passing by," not bringing into judgment the sins of Old Testament saints; and also God is shown to be righteous at the present time in justifying those whose faith is in Jesus as a Saviour.

There is no mention of the shittim wood in the construction of the mercy-seat; it was to be "of pure gold." This conveys to us the precious thought that it is God coming out to us according to what He is in Himself, according to His own essential fulness, but with thoughts of mercy toward His creatures who were in a state of enmity with and estrangement from Him.

Let us observe also where the mercy-seat was placed. "And thou shalt put the mercy-seat above on the ark (Exodus 25:21). The Ark, a precious type of Christ, as already noted, sustains the mercy-seat, and in virtue of His having accomplished the work of redemption, the blood of the sin-offering having been carried into the holiest of all and sprinkled once upon the mercy-seat and seven times before it (Leviticus 16:11-14), God speaks with the Mediator, and through Him to His people. "And there will I meet with thee, and will speak with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony" (Exodus 25:22). How perfectly accordant is this with Paul's words to Timothy, "For this is good and acceptable before our Saviour God, who desires that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. For God is one, and the mediator of God and men one, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, the testimony to be rendered in its own times" (1 Timothy 2:3-6). The mercy-seat was measured and supported by the Ark of the testimony. How all this speaks of the attitude and activities of a Saviour-God whose disposition of love to guilty men found its perfect and supreme expression in the gift of an only-begotten Son; "He . . . has not spared His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." How wonderful the testimony being rendered now concerning Him who came into the world not to do His own will but the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work. How the thought of the self-renunciation of the Lord Jesus is intensified in the following words, "Wherefore coming into the world He says, Sacrifice and offering Thou willedst not; but Thou hast prepared me a body . . . Then I said, Lo, I come (in the roll of the book it is written of me) to do; O God, thy will" (Hebrews 10:5-9). How perfect was the lowly grace in which He came, for in the acceptance of that body specially prepared Him, He accepted all the limitations which His perfect manhood imposed on Him, and voluntarily entered that path of obedience which His manhood entailed in view of accomplishing the will of God, "taking His place in the likeness of men; and having been found in figure as a man, humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross" (Php 2:5-8). In the intrinsic glory and dignity of His own Person, He was none other than the One "who is over all, God blessed for ever"; yet His self-abasement assumed a bondman's form, and as such, He, who knew only what it was to command, learned obedience by the things which He suffered. As another has written, "How base to take advantage of His grace to despise His glory! — to be so occupied with the humiliation to which He stooped to glorify God the Father and show us both God and man in His own person and ways, and, above all, to accomplish redemption — to be so filled, I may say, with the circumstances of shame into which He went down in love as to forget who He is in Himself that for us descended so low! No, He that was perfect man was very God, equally with the Father and the Holy Spirit. All things were made not only by Him but for Him."

How fittingly therefore does the mercy-seat, all of pure gold, rest upon the Ark of the testimony, made of shittim wood overlaid with pure gold. Observe, too, the peculiar designation of the Ark as "the ark of the testimony." How precious the testimony this blessed One, the Substance of all these shadows, has rendered concerning Himself as the Object of the Father's good pleasure, and of His purpose, in virtue of the blood-sprinkled mercy-seat, both on and before, to have sons

before Him fully conformed to the image of the Son of His love.

"All like Thee, for Thy glory like Thee, Lord, Object supreme of all, by all adored."

Moreover, Moses is instructed to "make two cherubim of gold; of beaten work shalt thou make them, at the two ends of the mercy-seat" (Exodus 25:18). From the various references to the cherubim throughout the word of God, it would seem that they are representative of God's power in creation and judicial government. As attendants upon that throne, which is characterised by righteousness and holiness, as the psalmist says, "Righteousness and judgment are the foundation of His throne" (Psalms 97:2), they exercise judicial power in the enforcement of what is morally suitable to all the attributes of God. The seraphim, on the other hand, appear to symbolise celestial beings which have to do with the holiness of God's nature, according to Isaiah 6:1-13 where one calls to the other saying, "Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory." The first mention of the cherubim (Genesis 3:1-24) relates to a very solemn moment in the history of mankind. There they are seen, as commanded of God, with the flame of the flashing sword guarding the way to the tree of life. Man, as fallen, could not be allowed to partake of the tree of life and so perpetuate his sinful history in this world. But how different the attitude of the cherubim in our chapter; they were to be made "out of the mercy-seat . . . And the cherubim shall stretch out their wings over it, covering over with their wings the mercy-seat, and their faces opposite to one another: toward the mercy-seat shall the faces of the cherubim be turned." How wonderful the design of the Spirit in noting the significant attitude of these guardians of God's throne. It seems to suggest that they were not to look out, as taking account of man's sinful condition, but inward and downward on the mercy-seat of "pure gold" on which had been sprinkled the blood of the sin-offering on the day of atonement. "And he (Aaron) shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle with his finger upon the front of the mercy-seat eastward; and before the mercy-seat shall he sprinkle of the blood seven times with his finger" (Leviticus 16:14).

Because of the infinite and abiding efficacy of the precious blood of Christ as typified in the sin-offering. God is a Saviour-God, with thoughts of forgiveness. justification, reconciliation and life for men, and not of judgment, giving to men this wonderful ministry of reconciliation, "how that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not reckoning to them their offences, and putting in us the word of that reconciliation." But why this surpassing grace and favour to men, so utterly undeserved and unasked for by men? — because "Him who knew not sin He (God) has made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:18-21). "His precious blood has spoken there before and on the throne." And still "the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel" speaks its own sweet message of pardon and peace, instead of vengeance as did Abel's.

What surpassing and eternal glory has been brought to God with regard to the momentous question of sin through the shedding of Christ's precious blood. He was God's unspotted and unblemished Lamb, "foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world." How great is the value God places upon the blood of Christ by which atonement has been affected, for it is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul, and without the shedding of blood there can be no remission of sins. In this present dispensation of grace, God, as a Saviour-God, is not taking account of men in their sinful condition as objects of judgment, but as objects of mercy with a view to the forgiveness of their sins and the cancellation of their guilt, on their acceptance of God's testimony concerning

the atoning value of that precious blood and of their need of its abiding efficacy. In taking account of the infinite value of the blood of Christ, God's disposition toward men is one of unqualified grace. Through the work of redemption God has been glorified as a Saviour-God and His righteousness displayed in the exercise of His rights of mercy toward men. How precious Christ ought to be to those who stand accepted before God in all the unchanging efficacy of the blood of Christ, "Jesus Christ the righteous; and He . . . the propitiation for our sins: but not for ours alone, but also for the whole world" (1 John 2:1-2). We have therefore "boldness for entering into the holy of holies by the blood of Jesus, the new and living way which He has dedicated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh" (Hebrews 10:19-20). What a wondrous change the blood sprinkled upon the mercy-seat has wrought; God is against sin, but for the sinner, and all His attributes, as typified in the cherubim, are acting in perfect harmony to the achievement of all His purposes in grace to men, for in the work of redemption "mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other." In Exodus 25:23-30 we have another vessel brought before us, the Table of Showbread. Supposing the tabernacle to have been erected, this vessel was placed, along with the candlestick of pure gold and the gold altar of incense, though the latter is not mentioned in our chapter, in the holy place; while the ark with the mercy-seat and the cherubim which we have already considered solely occupied the holy of holies, God's immediate dwelling-place. The number of loaves to be placed on the table is not mentioned in this chapter, since it would seem the purpose of the Spirit is to keep Christ prominently before us as variously typified in these different vessels. The table of showbread speaks of Christ as the One who alone can sustain before God that which is for His pleasure in accordance with and flowing from the truth of what is presented to us in the ark and the mercy-seat. This precious thought is sustained as we consider that the composition of the table was similar to the ark, thereby bringing Christ before us in His divine and human natures, combined in one Person. It is this which makes these types such an absorbing theme where Christ is everywhere presented as to the beauty and excellency of His person, or to some of His glories and perfections. In order to complete the typical teaching connected with the table of showbread, we must refer to Leviticus 24:5-9, where we are instructed as to the composition of the loaves or cakes and the manner in which they were placed upon the table. In considering the ingredients used, one is conscious of a notable omission, purposely designed of the Spirit, since this stands out in marked contrast to the two wave-loaves mentioned in Leviticus 23:17, which were baked with leaven. The reason is that the two wave-loaves are figurative of the Church or Assembly, and therefore leaven, which is invariably a figure of evil, is specifically mentioned; whereas the fine flour, which was the principal ingredient in the making of the twelve loaves, brings before us Christ, who was the true meat-offering, the holy, harmless, undefiled One, unique in His flawless, spotless purity as a Man, in-comparable to others as being without sin. The "fine flour" was the finest part of wheat flour (Exodus 29:2) specially chosen by the Spirit as being descriptive of the One in whom there was the perfect blending of every element that constituted the moral glory of Jesus as a man; there was no disproportionate element in Him, all was perfectly even in character and expression. The fine flour has been characterised by another in these words: "The meat-offering of God, taken from the fruit of the earth, was of the finest wheat; that which was pure, separate and lovely in human nature was in Jesus under all its sorrows, but in all its excellence, and excellent in its sorrows. There was no unevenness in Jesus, no predominant quality to produce the effect of giving Him a distinctive character." The twelve loaves, set in two rows with pure frankincense put upon each row, speak of Israel in its twelve

tribal capacity, set before God in all the precious fragrance of Christ and maintained there throughout all the dark night of their sore chastening at the hand of God, because of their unfaithfulness and unbelief, in accordance with these instructions: "Every sabbath day he (Aaron) shall arrange it before Jehovah continually, on the part of the children of Israel: it is an everlasting covenant." Thus do we see on this early page of the word of God an allusion to the divine principle declared in unequivocal language by the apostle in Romans 11:29, "For the gifts and the calling of God are not subject to repentance", or "never to be regretted." Other scriptures can be adduced in confirmation of God's unchanging purpose to bless His earthly people in accordance with the terms of the covenant He had made with Abraham. In Joshua 4:1-24 : despite the fact that two and a half tribes desired to remain on "this side of the Jordan toward the sun-rising", we are told that "when the whole nation had completely gone over the Jordan" Jehovah instructs Joshua to take twelve men, one out of every tribe, who were to take twelve stones from the river Jordan, where the priests' feet had stood firm, and "carry them over with you, and lay them down in the lodging place where ye shall lodge this night." Then Joshua himself "set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan . . . and they are there to this day." The apostle Paul in Acts 26:6-7, declares before Agrippa "And now I stand to be judged because of the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers, to which our whole twelve tribes serving incessantly day and night hope to arrive." So Paul can say in words which challenge all contradiction, "I say then, Has God cast away His people? Far be the thought . . . God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew" (Romans 11:1-2). God, in the exercise of His sovereignty, declares the unchangeableness of His purpose and pre-serves it from any semblance of afterthought. In the showbread, therefore, we see typified the nourishment God would provide for His earthly people in Christ, and them, as associated with Him, maintained in their administrative perfection in their supremacy over the other nations, to whom would flow the rich bounty of God through their instrumentality. "Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: In those days shall ten men take hold, out of all languages of the nations, shall even take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you" (Zechariah 8:23).

While the twelve loaves unmistakably refer to Israel, it is significant that the nation did not eat of the showbread; it was the food of the priests. "And it shall be Aaron's and his sons'; and they shall eat it in a holy place; for it is most holy unto him of Jehovah's offering by fire; it is an everlasting statute" (Leviticus 24:9). In this do we not have indicated the relevance of its application to every true believer in Christ of this present dispensation? Those belonging to Christ are all priests as typified in the expression "Aaron's and his sons'." An intermediary priestly class, constituted such by human ordination, and as it exists in the religious systems of the world today, finds no sanction or support in the word of God. Not only so, but Hebrews 10:28-29 is a very solemn and fearful warning given by the Spirit through the apostle, of the fatal consequences of reverting to the old order of worship, as though it were to be the pattern of our worship, instead of being in every way the contrast to it. To return, therefore, to the order of worship under the law is to reject the heavenly order for that which was but a pattern of the heavenly (Hebrews 9:23). As has been said, this marks the apostasy of worship; the religious profession around us has appointed a priesthood presumably in a place of nearness to God and its people at a distance. And is this not to trample underfoot the Son of God? — as though, after all He has suffered in accomplishing the will of God, His people were at as great a distance as ever and as though we needed the intervention of others in our approach to God, beside the all-efficacious ministrations of Him who is "minister of the holy

places and of the true tabernacle which the Lord has pitched, and not man" (Hebrews 8:2). To return to the old form, therefore, is characterised by the apostle as esteeming "the blood of the covenant whereby he has been sanctified common", having no holy character as that which would still keep us without instead of that which is our righteous and abiding title to enter into the holiest of all. It is also to insult "the Spirit of grace" who witnesses to us of the reality of this heavenly order of priesthood and indwells every true believer in Christ, and thus gives competency to worship God in accordance with His own nature. "God is a spirit, and they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). To the priests, therefore, the showbread belongs, and as we have seen repeatedly, the priests represent the people of God who are all priests (1 Peter 2:5, Revelation 1:6). The showbread is also spoken of as the presence-bread, and, as the food of the priests, speaks of Christ as the food of His people, no longer on earth, but as now glorified, and as minister of the heavenly Sanctuary. We enjoy communion with Him there as the food of our souls. We have seen that the table upon which the twelve loaves are set speaks of Christ, as does the ark; it is thus communion is maintained and in which we are identified with Him, for His place determines our place before God. How precious to enjoy this sweet communion with Jesus in the holy places, fragrant with His own perfections and excellencies, as typified in the frankincense.

"'Tis Jesus fills that holy place Where glory dwells, and Thy deep love In its own fulness (known through grace), Rests where He lives in heaven above."

Exodus 25:31-40 The next vessel brought before us by the Spirit of God for our wondering hearts to contemplate is the "lampstand of pure gold". It ought to produce a sense of wonder in our souls as we consider the rich grace of a Saviour-God displayed in this gradual unfolding of His manner of approach in saving grace to men, in the person of His only-begotten Son. These types and symbols are specially chosen by the Spirit for the purpose of bringing within the range of our feeble apprehension the knowledge of the movements in grace of a God whose great desire is to dwell "amid the praises" of His people in conditions answering in every respect to the holiness of His nature.

How the "ages of time" themselves, the various dispensations of which we speak, serve to enforce this precious thought of God's desire to dwell with men, for, in those various dispensations we can discern the progressive steps in which God was unfolding and developing that which was in His heart in the pursuance of the fulfilment of His predestined purpose; a purpose conceived in His own heart even "before the ages of time", until as in our day we stand as those "upon whom the ends of the ages are come", no longer standing in the twilight of types and symbols, but in the full noonday splendour of the revelation of God in the person of the Son. The Word, which had become flesh and graced this sinful, sin-stricken world with His holy and heavenly presence, after accomplishing the work the Father had given Him to do, was received up into glory.

"There we see Him crowned with glory, Glory in His unveiled face, And in peace and rest before Him, In that glory learn of grace". With these precious thoughts before us, let us now turn to consider the "lampstand of pure gold". A different vessel, yet symbolising the same blessed Person whose glories have engaged our hearts in the consideration of these other vessels. Each has borne witness to a particular aspect of the glory of the Person of the Lord Jesus, and thereby serving the intention of the Spirit in witnessing to the infinite and inexhaustible fulness of Christ, the Man of God's eternal counsels. As with the mercy-seat, the lampstand was to be made of pure

gold. Nothing that spoke of what was entirely human entered into its construction, all was divine. In its construction, the number seven, which speaks of perfection, is given a prominence which is not without significance. In form, it consisted of a central stem with six branches coming out of the sides of it, three out of one side and three out of the other. These, with the central stem, provide the seven supports for the seven lamps, the whole comprising a beautiful entity as indicated in Exodus 25:36, "Their knobs and their branches shall be of itself — all of one beaten work of pure gold". The number seven also figures prominently in the ornamentation of the lamp-stand to which Exodus 25:33-34 refer.

There is no mention of the oil which was necessary to sustain the light. As was the case with the table of showbread, no details were given of the twelve loaves which were to be placed on the table. Other scriptures were necessary for this. It would seem, therefore, that the leading thought in the mind of the Spirit is to bring before our souls the One who is the Substance of all these shadows, who is so peculiarly pleasurable to the heart of God, both as to the greatness of His person and also with regard to the work by which God has secured all that will be for His glory and pleasure. It may be that this thought is strengthened by the words of Exodus 25:37 "and they shall light the lamps thereof, that they may shine out before it". The word "light" means to cause to ascend, a word used habitually for the burnt-offering, that precious aspect of the death of Christ where all ascended to God as a sacrifice of supreme excellence, which was to Him a sweet "savour of rest", yet which was necessary for our acceptance: "And he shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him" (Leviticus 1:4).

Oil, however, is necessary if the lamp-stand is to fulfil the purpose for which it is intended. We are directed therefore to other scriptures where the oil is mentioned in various connections. This fact in itself ought to produce a spirit of enquiry in those desirous of learning, like the Bereans who were such as received the word with all readiness of mind, daily searching the scriptures to see if these things were so. Oil in scripture is the symbol used to denote the Person of the Holy Spirit as the power for testimony, and, this being so, the first mention of the oil in relation to the lampstand will yield much valuable instruction for our souls. It must be kept in mind, however, that the truth concerning the Person of the Holy Spirit, His active power so requisite in the spheres of testimony and worship, the dominant position He holds in relation to the "new creation", "where all things are of God", is of such magnitude that only brief references can be made to the typical teaching of the scriptures foreshadowing this absorbing theme. The first mention of the oil in Exodus 27:20 is of great significance to those who stand in relationship to God. In this verse the children of Israel were instructed to bring the "olive oil, pure, beaten, for the light, to light the lamp continually . . . it is an everlasting statute, for their generations, on the part of the children of Israel". Thus they were made to realise the essential part the oil had as a type of the Spirit according to the divine prescription among those vessels which set forth in a peculiarly precious way the manner in which God has approached men in the pursuance of the fulfilment of His eternal purpose to have sons before Him, fully conformed to the image of the "Son of his love", who will have the place of pre-eminence among them as "the firstborn among many brethren".

It will be seen, therefore, that the knowledge of the Holy Spirit and of His ways is of vital concern to those in whom the Spirit has wrought according to the truth set forth in John 3:1-36, where we have stated by the Lord Jesus Himself in clear and precise language, beyond all the disputations

and cavils of unregenerate men, the beginning of all God's ways with us in grace. In John 3:3 the Lord Jesus meets Nicodemus with these memorable words, their divine, sovereign and infallible authority still unimpaired and undiminished, "Except any one be born anew, he cannot see the Kingdom of God". The word "anew" instead of "again" conveys the proper thought, as indicating an entirely new source and beginning of life. As another has said, "It is not only 'again' but entirely afresh, as from a new source of life and point of departure". John, in his first epistle, crystallizes this wonderful truth in the remarkable expression, "born of God", and thereby brought into the family of God.

Again, the Lord Jesus, in seeking to enlighten Nicodemus concerning things he ought to have known, as pertaining to "earthly things", says in John 3:5, "Except anyone be born of water and of Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God". Here the water is introduced, a symbol used by the Spirit as that which purifies, that which cleanses. In this connection it speaks of the Word of God applied to the soul in power by the Spirit of God. Numerous scriptures could be adduced to sustain this thought, particularly in Ephesians 5:26, where the water is definitely identified with the Word in the expression, "the washing of water by the word". The Spirit Himself applies the word to the conscience, and by this sovereign operation of the Spirit, we are born anew. By this action we are convicted of sins, then faith, the gift of God by the Spirit (Ephesians 2:8-9), rests on the testimony which the Spirit renders (1 John 5:6) concerning the abiding value of that precious blood that cleanses from all sin, and on the ground of this sacrificial work of Christ, the Holy Spirit indwells every true believer in Christ, dwelling in us as the Spirit of truth (John 16:13) to be as power for our present enjoyment of all that has been made good to us by the water and the blood. The Spirit is not only the Source and Power of this new life, but brings us into a new order of existence altogether. It is an entirely new creation, according to the clear and unequivocal statement of the beloved apostle to the saints at Corinth, expressed in the following words, "So if any one be in Christ, there is a new creation; the old things have passed away; behold all things have become new: and all things are of the God who has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:17-18) — a new scene, compatible with the divine and heavenly origin of this new life, revelling in the blest affections of the Father and the Son, and in all those heavenly objects which the Spirit brings before it and in which it delights, and by which it grows and becomes exceedingly fruitful. As already stated, the Spirit is the power for the present realisation of these things and also for the exercise of faith on our part, as that by which there is the "substantiating (or assurance) of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). In John 16:1-33 the Lord Jesus, speaking of the coming of the Spirit as the Spirit of truth, whom He was to send from the Father, declares in very solemn words what the presence of the Spirit will mean to the world, and also in words of rich encouragement what it would mean to His own, as One who "shall glorify me, for He shall receive of mine and shall announce it to you. All things that the Father has are mine, on account of this I have said that He receives of mine and shall announce it to you" (verses 14, 15). It would seem that this is faintly foreshadowed in another reference to the golden candlestick in Numbers 8:1, "When thou lightest the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light over against the candlestick". When we consider that the Book of Numbers has to do with wilderness conditions, the words just quoted assume a very precious significance. They convey the wonderful thought that during the dark night of His absence from this world, as rejected by it, the Spirit, in His never-failing ministry of Christ, brings the glories of that blessed One before the vision of our faith, occupying us with Him as the risen and glorified One, seated at the right hand of God. This

thought is sustained by the words in the seventeenth chapter of this same Book. As the result of Korah's rebellion, God commands Moses to take twelve staves, "a staff for each father's house", with each one's name written upon his staff; special instructions being given that Aaron's name was to be written on the staff of Levi. All were to be laid up before the Lord where Moses met with Him. The Lord's choice of priest was to be indicated in a very remarkable way, "the man whom I shall choose, his staff shall bud forth". So in verse 8 we read, "And it came to pass, when on the morrow Moses went into the tent of the testimony, behold, the staff of Aaron for the house of Levi had budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and ripened almonds". Among those dead and barren staves, one only was marked by distinct evidence of life, that of Aaron's; and since all were dead, entirely devoid of any element of life, this remarkable display of life in full maturity speaks of life out of death — resurrection life. It will no doubt be remembered that in the ornamentation of the candlestick, almonds or almond flowers are mentioned. The almond tree is the first of all trees to bud after the winter season. This may well speak of the Lord Jesus as the first-fruits, "But now Christ is raised from among the dead, first-fruits of those fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20). The high priesthood of Christ is of an heavenly order in resurrection, constituted such "not according to law of fleshly commandment (as Aaron was) but according to power of indissoluble life" and "because of His continuing for ever, has the priesthood unchangeable" (Hebrews 7:15-24); none can or will succeed our great High Priest, Jesus, the Son of God, "for the law constitutes men high priests, having infirmity; but the word of the swearing of the oath which is after the law, a Son perfected for ever" (Hebrews 7:28).

It is Christ therefore in resurrection who is brought before us in the candlestick of pure gold. The resurrection number three is clearly stamped upon it, and the almond flowers, already referred to as part of the exquisite ornamentation of the candlestick, give added strength to the thought, since the word "almond" means "watchful" or "vigilant" and is used with this signification in Jeremiah 1:11-12, "And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree. And Jehovah said unto me, Thou hast well seen; for I am watchful over my word to perform it". If everything fails and comes to the dust of death as connected with man in the flesh, as all God's dealings with man have so indisputably proved, God has been watching over His word to perform what He has purposed for His own pleasure in the blessing of men, "according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself". All has been secured and made good in Christ risen from among the dead, the blessed "first-fruits" of that glorious harvest resulting from the "corn of wheat" falling into the ground, and in death bringing to an end the old order of man which God Himself could not remedy, and in resurrection establishing a new and heavenly order, all of one with Himself as deriving all from Him, "For both He that sanctifies and those sanctified are all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare Thy name to my brethren; in the midst of the assembly will I sing Thy praises" (Hebrews 2:11-12). In the opening verses of Leviticus 24:1-23 the thought of perpetuity is introduced and expressed in such terms as to show its perfect suitability in its application to the children of God of this dispensation. The children of Israel are commanded to bring "pure beaten olive oil for the light, to light the lamp continually". We see in Exodus 27:20-21 that this was brought to Aaron the high priest who in turn was to order it from the evening unto the morning, before the Lord continually; it was to be a statute for ever in their generations. Precious, yet solemn, thoughts are brought before us in this typical language, solemn thoughts because of the lamentable failure of the assembly, God's responsible light-bearer in this world of abysmal darkness (See Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22). The people of God were to furnish the oil

which would maintain the light. How blessed the privilege for the people of God who form the assembly of God in this present day of grace, for it is through whom and in whom the light of the Spirit is sustained, and it is as vessels formed and energised by the Spirit that the light, the precious ministry of Christ, is maintained in both the individual and the assembly. To Israel was committed the light of testimony in this world, as to Jehovah as the one only and true God. Partial though it was, it was nevertheless a wonderful light in the midst of prevailing idolatry. But Israel failed to maintain this testimony and has, for the time being, been set aside. And now, with the setting aside of Israel, God is working out in time what He had purposed in His heart, even before the ages of time commenced. The wonderful counsels of His love are being fulfilled in the formation of the assembly, composed of every true believer in Christ, an entirely new and heavenly and divine concept. This is the assembly of God, the vessel for the manifestation of Christ in this world. The apostle says to the Corinthians, "Ye are the epistle of Christ". They were set here as the expression of Christ to be known and read of all men. But this "epistle" has become sadly defaced and the image of Christ hardly decipherable because of our unfaithfulness to maintain the light according to the mind of God, and so calls for the service of the snuffers and snuff-trays or extinguishers, "and the snuffers thereof, and the snuff-trays thereof, of pure gold". It may seem strange at first that these lamps should be provided with snuffers and snuff-trays, but the explanation becomes simple when we remember that there, as elsewhere, the Spirit of God is seen as connected with the human instruments He is pleased to use, and that they — how often, be it to our shame — required constantly the service which this implies. This provision of such utensils shows that the lamp-stand and its lamps typify Christ as ministered by the Holy Spirit through human vessels. If it were Christ personally, it need not be said that such a provision were unnecessary, nor if the Spirit were viewed apart from the vessel in which He dwells as the power for testimony. But a priestly hand alone can use these "snuffers" aright, and so, Aaron, the high priest, is brought prominently before us in both of these scriptures, Exodus 27:20-21 and Leviticus 24:1-4, for to him was committed the ordering of the lamps upon the pure candle-stick before the Lord continually, a beautiful type of our great High Priest, Jesus, the Son of God, who by His priestly care and intercession removes that which would obstruct the light or dim its brightness, for every ray of divine light that shines out in this world, whether through the assembly or the individual, is the result of His priestly activity. We, too, when in a priestly state, can be used by the Spirit to apply the snuffers to each other in the removal of what has caused the light of testimony to grow dim. (See Galatians 6:1 and John 13:1-38). Trays also were provided where the obstructing element could be placed so that the holy garments of the priests would not be defiled. (See Matthew 18:15 and James 5:19-20).

Another point to be considered is that the olive oil for the light was to be "beaten", not pressed, but beaten as in a mortar, and the candlestick itself was to be made of "beaten" work. Would this not suggest that the priestly work and intercession of our great High Priest is grounded upon His atoning sacrifice, where He the Just One suffered for us the unjust that He might bring us to God? Truly He was bruised for our iniquities, and by His stripes we are healed. As already remarked, the oil which the people had to bring had to be "beaten", and since the people are concerned in this, as the vessels through which the Spirit acts, does it not suggest that the ministry of Christ, by the Spirit, is not sustained without constant exercise on our part? No doubt its primary application is to the apostles and then to the "gifts" given by the risen Lord to the assembly for the "perfecting of the saints", but it also applies to every child of God, as belonging to the priestly family, as seen in

type at the beginning of the Book of Numbers in relation to carrying the sacred vessels with their appropriate coverings through the wilderness. The Book of Numbers is the history of the wilderness, the type of our journey through the world to the rest that remaineth for the people of God. Numbers, being the book of the Levites, is necessarily preceded by Leviticus, which is the book of the priests, in which we learn what suits God in the sanctuary before we come out to practise it in the world. Both are types of believers, who, as priests, have access to God — how immense the privilege — where now His glory is for us displayed as it shines in the face of Jesus, and, as Levites, richly favoured, carry through the world the precious testimonies of that glory displayed to us. Peter speaks of this two-fold character of every true believer in Christ in these words, "But ye are a chosen race, a kingly priesthood . . . that ye might set forth the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness to His wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9). Paul, too, in writing to the beloved saints in Philippi, exhorts them to "do all things without murmurings and reasonings, that ye may be harmless and simple, irreproachable children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation, among whom ye appear as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life" (Php 2:14-16). Nor must we confine the shining forth of this glorious light, before which the legions of darkness shall flee away forever, to the saints of this present dispensation only, since it justly applies to God's earthly people, according to David's imperishable words, "And he shall be as the light of the morning, like the rising of the sun, a morning without clouds, when from the sunshine, after rain, the green grass springeth from the earth" (2 Samuel 23:4). How blessed, too, to contemplate this light as it shines, fadeless and cloudless, in that eternal rest of God, when God shall be all and in all.

"Yes! in that light unstained, Our stainless souls shall live, Our heart's deep longings more than gained, When God His rest shall give."

(This is the final article in this series. Beloved brother Shepherd departed to be with Christ on 21st April, 1981).

S. Friends of God.

Friends of God.

It is surely the fervent wish of every true child of God to be marked by the features and comportment that publicly manifest the friends of God. Some one might ask, But is a true child of God not a friend of God? One would unhesitatingly reply, Yes! In the counsels of God's sovereign grace and mercy every true believer is constituted such, and as being partaker of the divine nature he is endowed with those spiritual susceptibilities consistent with this blessed relationship. But I speak of what is characteristic of us in our public life, our responsible life here upon earth, rather than the place we occupy before God, graced in the Beloved One. Even in natural things "Rank imposes obligations;" how true this is of the Christian! What we are before God is to be wrought out livingly, in the power of the Spirit, in our ways and conduct before men. The life of Abraham, so fruitful in results for God, provides us with most interesting and deeply instructive material for our contemplation and imitation. This life of "the father of all them that believe" exemplifies in a most beautiful way the truth of the words, that the essential characteristic of the life of faith is strangership, but this founded upon citizenship elsewhere. Stephen, in his defence (Acts 7:1-60) before his accusers, declared that the God of glory appeared into Abraham, and it was this glory that threw into the shade all the glory of the world around. To us, the Father of glory has been made known in His blessed Son, the One who has given being to a whole system of divine glory; and a voice from the unseen calls us to the enjoyment of faith's portion even now. As beloved Mr Darby expresses it so beautifully:

What powerful, mighty Voice, so near, Calls me from earth apart —

Reaches with tones so still, so clear, From th'unseen world my heart?

Abraham desired no place in this world, but with his tent and his altar he waited for the city which has foundations, of which God is the Artificer and Constructor: his tent marking him out as a pilgrim and sojourner before men, his altar speaking of him as a worshipper before God. Our tent and altar must go together. If pilgrim ways and character are not maintained down here, we cannot expect to be in a priestly state to exercise priestly functions before God in the heavenly sanctuary. Moreover, Abraham pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west and Hai on the east (Genesis 12:8). Hai means "a heap of ruins," no doubt typifying the ruin of the old creation; and thus, between a judged world and Bethel, "The house of God," Abraham's tent is pitched in view of both; and there he builds an altar, and calls upon Jehovah's Name. Do these things not speak to us with powerful voice, beloved saints of God? We too stand between a doomed world and that scene of cloudless joy, where "God in His own Rest is fully known."

What is our attitude to this world? Do we take account of it in its true moral condition as lying in the wicked one? the whole system in all its ramifications entirely antagonistic to God and His Christ; its moral features, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Do we desire to settle down, or have a position, in a world, which, were it not for the restraining mercy of God, would

totter to irrevocable destruction; and this in spite of all man's boastful claims to progress and enlightenment? Let us take our stand for God, with uncompromising resolution, with unflinching courage; and as empowered by the Spirit of God, and fortified by the word of God. Thus shall we be proof against all the seductions and blandishments of a world at enmity with God. Let us give heed to those solemn words in the Epistle of James, "Know ye not that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore is minded to be the friend of the world is constituted enemy of God" (James 4:4). Let these solemn, searching, sifting words sink deeply into our inner consciousness, so that their serious implications for time and eternity may be rightly appraised by us. There are of course those legitimate things, to which we must give due attention, such as our homes, and our business, and things that touch the world in some form and degree; yet even these things ought to be held but lightly, as we lay hold, with purpose of heart, on those things which belong to that scene where "all things are of God," refusing all that would retard our progress, and militate against the realisation of being worthy of that title, which Abraham so richly merited — "FRIEND OF GOD" (James 2:23). A. Shepherd.

All below lies dark and shadowed,
Nothing there to claim my heart,
Save the lonely track of
sorrow, Where of old He walked apart.

S. Heb_6:19

Hebrews 6:19 A stranger launch'd upon this world's rude sea, My bark still wending to its port above, Wild winds detain her; but the spirit free Spans the wide waste to reach the ONE I love.

Whilst faith beholds thee, Lord, with strong desire, The' on the waters 'tis my call to roam, The waves obedient from my feet retire, Since thy blest accents bid me, Savior, come!

Anchor'd in Thee secure, thy light afar, Thou faithful beacon of my midnight way, Tracks the dark billows, till the Morning Star Wanes in the noon of yonder coming day.

A. S.

S. King and Priest upon His Throne.

King and Priest upon His Throne.

It is a matter for solemn and sober reflection that the world of which men are so proud is torn and riven by the terrifying and revolting happenings of a devastating and catastrophic war. Munitions of war, the product of man's genius, skill, and ingenuity, have rained death and destruction in merciless and pitiless fury upon defenceless men, women and children. According to the reckoning of men, the world has not yet reached the glorious climax of its achievements, it has not yet attained the apex of its culture and civilization. It is an age-long proverb that "Hope springs eternal in the human breast," and so men, their hearts filled with fear and perplexity, hope against hope that out of the welter, ruin, and convulsions of war, some commanding personality will arise to lead them through the glorious portals of some earthly Utopia; like the fabulous bird, Phoenix, which arose from its own ashes to begin life afresh. With a distinct sense of relief the child of God turns from all this fantasy of futile imaginings to the Word of God, which speaks with the infallibility of the Spirit of God, declaring with divine certitude and authority that His counsel will stand, and that He will do all His pleasure. As its pellucid light shines upon the momentous present events, we gather from its sacred pages that there never was a greater period in the history of this poor world than the day in which we live. The portents around us are of the gravest character: man's world is about to pass away, and the day of the LORD will then be ushered in. Man's day is the long period in which man has been allowed to exercise his own will without the public intervention of heaven. The day of the LORD is the coming kingdom of the Lord Jesus, which will be abruptly introduced by desolating judgments. He will smash to pieces the whole fabric of man's godless civilization, and upon the ruins thereof He will establish an order of things that will perfectly suit the eye and heart of God. The supremacy of God will be displayed in the securing for His glory and pleasure all that He has purposed for the blessing of this poor world. As Job exclaims, "I know that Thou canst do everything, and that Thou canst be hindered in no thought of Thine" (Job 42:2 N.Tr.). At the dawn of this world's history the supremacy of God is set forth in grand and majestic language, "In the beginning Elohim created the heavens and the earth." This word Elohim speaks of God as Supreme — it is Deity, God in the absolute! Creation speaks with eloquent voice of the supremacy of its Creator; "For from the world's creation the invisible things of Him are perceived, being apprehended by the mind through the things that are made, both His eternal power and divinity" (Romans 1:20 N.Tr.). But while creation thus speaks of its wonderful Creator, its distinctive glory lies in this, that it is the arena in which will be displayed the regal glories of that Blessed One Who shall sit as Priest upon His throne — God's King set upon Zion, the hill of His holiness; when, in the language of Psalms 2:1-12 He shall ask, and shall be given, the nations for an inheritance, and the ends of the earth for a possession. But the setting up of this kingdom, which is an everlasting kingdom, is conditional upon the subjugation of all His enemies, when He shall break them with a sceptre of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. He shall smite through kings in the day of His anger, and smite through the head over a great country (Psalms 110:5-6). Then, in the wake of the retreating storm of devouring judgment, will the Sun of

Righteousness arise with healing in His wings; to heal the deep wounds of earth, and to hush the groans and sighs of a travailing creation. Loud acclamations of praise and unrestrained joy will then fill the redeemed creation, manifesting that the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever (see Isaiah 32:17-18). It need hardly be remarked, beloved, that these things, relatively important in themselves, relate exclusively to earth.

What of the present? What are the resources of God for His people who are heavenly in origin and destiny? What provision has He made for those who shall reign over the earth with their Glorious Lord in the time of display but who for the present have part in the time of His patience? Let us turn to Psalms 110:1-7, where we find that all God's resources for us are invested in the Son of God, a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedec. This blessed portion of the Word of God gives us the official inauguration of Messiah, the Son of God, as Priest after the Melchizedec order. Now while the preceding and following verses are future, verse 4 indicates what is present and perpetual; "Thou art a Priest forever, after the order of Melchizedec." The references to verse 1 in the New Testament show His present session at God's right hand is consequent upon His rejection by the heads of the nation; but the earth rejected One is the heaven accepted One, exalted to the Throne of God, which is seen in Revelation as the Throne of God and of the Lamb; and there He sits until His enemies are made His footstool. From that place of supreme power upon God's throne He administers power, for that is one of His functions as Priest: He also ministers blessing to His people. In Genesis 14:1-24 Melchizedec blesses Abraham of the Most High God, and also blesses God who had delivered his enemies into his hands. Psalms 110:7 also bears upon this Priesthood, "He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall He lift up the head." He came into this world in lowliness and dependence, the Man of Sorrows, the Man of Gethsemane and Calvary, in all His dependence upon God drinking of the brook, even as Elijah did. In the days of His flesh He offered up both supplications and entreaties to Him who was able to save Him out of death, and He was heard because of His piety; and though He were Son, yet learned He obedience from the things that He suffered. Thus is He able to sympathise with and succour those who tread the desert path, for He not only exercises the functions of the Melchizedec Priesthood, but also those typified in the Aaronic, though the order of His Priesthood is that of Melchizedec. How eminently suited is this Priest for such a people! At one moment in our experience we tread the wilderness pathway, at the next we enter the heavenly Sanctuary with hands filled in worship to God the Father. We need both a Wilderness Priest and a Sanctuary Priest, and both are combined in Him, in the Son, perfected for evermore. This is the Priest who becomes us in our mixed condition. May I suggest, in a simple way, what the chief functions of the Aaronic Priesthood are. Firstly, atonement; secondly, intercession, with all its resultant succour and sympathy for a weak people. All is to be found in this blessed One who exercises all these priestly functions for us in a heavenly way. In Leviticus 9:22-24 we have presented to us in type this Melchizedec blessing, heavenly as well as earthly. After the sacrifices for sin for Aaron and for the people had been slain, the blood put upon the Altar, and the bodies burnt outside the camp, then the Burnt Offerings and Thank Offerings are slain, and their parts with the Meal Offering are laid in order on the Altar. At this point Aaron, before going into the Tabernacle with the blood, lifts up His hands and blesses the people. This is before the acceptance of the sacrifices is manifested openly but based upon it. Afterwards, Moses and Aaron both go into the Tent of Meeting, and coming out, the sacrifices having been accepted, both lift up their hands in blessing, then the glory of the LORD appears to all the people, and fire

went out before Him and consumed the burnt Offerings and the fat, which were upon the Altar. All then saw their acceptance in the acceptance of the sacrifices. The blessing of Aaron sets forth in figure that which our Melchizedec pronounces upon His people now, before the public manifestation of His accepted sacrifice. This blessing is to be known today. The Lord being raised from the dead, and Himself knowing the acceptance of His sacrifice, lifts up His hands in blessing (see Luke 24:50-53): He enters heaven in this very act. From thence He sends down the Holy Spirit, that we might know the acceptance of this great Sacrifice and enter into all the wealth of priestly blessing. On the other hand, the blessing of Moses (King in Jeshurun) and Aaron, when coming out from the Tabernacle sets forth that blessed One who shall sit as King and Priest upon His Throne, His people willing in the day of His power receiving blessing untold from His priestly hand. In closing, let me quote the words of another: — "Blessed Son of God, invested with a double Kingly glory, combined with all the holy halo that surrounds the Priest — what glories radiate from Thy Person there in heaven! All the attributes of God are seen to blend in Thee and constitute Thy glory. Thyself on high in peace upon the basis of Thy work in righteousness, Thou stoopest to the lowly! Thou supportest those who tread the desert path, relieving them of their burdens! Thou empowerest them to overcome their foes t Thou meetest the weary world conquerors with the bread of peace, the wine of joy! Thou blessest them with heavenly blessings from God! Thou leadest them into the Holy Places! Thou presentest the resultant praise to that same God, an acceptable gift from such hands in all the savour of Thine own glorious Person and work!" A .Shepherd.

S. Overcoming the World.

Overcoming the World. The child of God, as led of the Spirit, and as endowed so richly with the spiritual capacity to understand and appreciate the movements of divine persons, views with ever increasing wonder the sublime movements of the Holy Spirit the Spirit of Truth, as with scrupulous care He chooses the materials best suited to His high and holy purpose of bringing the glories of Christ and revealing them to our adoring hearts. "He (the Spirit of Truth) shall glorify me, for He shall receive of mine and shall announce it to you." As brought into the heavenly sanctuary, fragrant with all the perfections of Christ, we are privileged to contemplate the supreme and surpassing glories of this Blessed One, Who stands without peer in the whole universe of God: incomparably great! Sovereign among all, receiving tribute from all, and shedding the light of His own gracious Person upon all; across the pages of the inspired and infallible Word of the Living God, can be written of Him in words of unfading glory, "That He might have the first place in all things." One marvels at the manner in which God has revealed these heavenly things to us; couched in the most simple language that they might be intelligible to us, and even in the typology of Scripture this comes into evidence. In seeking to interpret the beautiful types of the Old Testament we must always apply this necessary safeguard, "Types are illustrative of truths, not expressive of them." The propriety of this will be seen when we consider how infinitely greater is the substance — Christ, of which they are but shadows. How immeasurably superior is the fulfilment — Christ — to that which is but the figure. How soft and subdued is the light that emanates from those types. It is not yet the noonday splendour of the full revelation of God the Father, as made known in the Son; it is still the starlight of types, symbols and shadows; but the eye of faith can penetrate these shadows and contemplate with ever increasing delight the glorious Substance of whom they speak.

We now address ourselves more particularly to the extremely fascinating type of the Lord Jesus set forth in Genesis 14:18-20. Here in typical language, God would demonstrate the rich provision He has made for us in His Son as set forth in the Melchizedek Priesthood, enabling us to avail ourselves, more intelligently, of our privileges, and thus answer more acceptably to the desires of His heart for us in these darkening days. It is a stringently typical scene which meets the eye, shorn of all extraneous matter unnecessary for the object in view, while that which is necessary to express the mind of God as to the complete and final character of the Kingly Priesthood of the Son is drawn in strong and convincing lines. The prominent thought before me is that of overcoming; the features of which are seen in such a high degree of emphasis and distinction in the deeply instructive life of Abraham, the friend of God. To be an overcomer, due regard must be given to where we live, to our environment. Is it not rather significant that the Spirit of God mentions in Genesis 13:12, that Abraham dwelt in the land of Canaan, and that Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain? Then again, in Genesis 14:12, as though to give point to what He had just recorded concerning the carrying away of Lot into captivity, the Spirit significantly adds, "For he dwelt in Sodom." One cannot dwell in Sodom without being affected by the vitiated atmosphere and polluting influences of a place whose inhabitants were wicked and great sinners before God. Poor

Lot, by his associations, was helpless in the presence of the world. He could not stand; he was involved in Sodom's troubles; he was not walking in the pilgrim and priestly path; hence he was brought into bondage.

Abraham, in marked contrast, dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which is in Hebron. Mamre means "fatness," or "vigour;" Hebron is "companionship," or "fellowship." These surely suggest that spiritual vitality and energy resulting from the strengthening and encouraging contact with those who have been called into the fellowship of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. This is further emphasised in the names of Abraham's allies, Mamre the Amorite, Eshcol, and Aner. Worthy confederates, surely, of Abraham the overcomer: Eshcol, "a cluster of grapes;" Aner, "a waterfall." Would not these names speak to us of that spiritual invigoration, joy, and freshness, resulting from being in the good of the Spirit's presence and the enjoyment of Christian fellowship?

Abraham's portion lay outside the whole field of conflict; he had no links with any of the world's confederacies. He was not taking sides with the four kings of the Babylonish empire, or with the five kings of the cities of the plain; he had no need to enter the conflict to defend himself; it was for the express purpose of delivering a brother who had come under the power of the world. This is a great matter beloved saints of God. Are we set for the deliverance of a brother who has succumbed to the blandishments of a patronising world? Are we exercised about the liberation of those who, to make the path easier, would effect a compromise with the world, or who would lower the standard of truth to placate or accommodate the religious world, with its vile caricature of Christ, and its heinous travesty of Christianity.

Lot is delivered by Abraham from the power of an enemy too strong for him, but in the light of subsequent events, he is not really free, for he goes back to Sodom; and were it not for the rich mercy of God he would have perished in the overthrow of those wicked cities of the plain. But Abraham is still the Hebrew, the passenger — one passing through, "As hireling fills his day;" and as he comes to the King's valley, he is met by this unique person, Melchizedek, King of righteousness, King of peace, who brings forth bread and wine for the support and refreshment of the overcomer. But the moment of victory, beloved brethren, is one of peculiar danger! Having overcome the world in its more hostile character, how easy it would be to be ensnared by its patronage, as typified in the king of Sodom. The King's valley is where we meet our true Melchizedek — in the low place, in the spirit of true humility, conscious of our need of the priestly ministrations of our great High Priest. My faith looks up to claim that touch divine, Which robs me of this fatal strength of mine, And leaves me resting wholly, Lord, on Thine.

Strengthened and refreshed by the bread and wine provided by Melchizedek, Abraham is now prepared to meet the king of Sodom, and to refuse any honour at his hand, lest he should say that he had made Abraham rich. This is the spirit and the path of the overcomer, beloved. What of the bread and wine provided by our true Melchizedek — the memorial of those sufferings by which alone we have been eternally enriched; and as those who have tasted it, surely it implies the refusal of a portion here. If Christ could not accept the kingdoms of this world at the hands of Satan, but only from His Father, no more can we accept enrichment at the hands of the world that gave Him but a cross. Do not temporize with the world in its seductive proposals — "that friendly outstretched hand of thine is stained with Jesus' blood." See how beautifully God comes in at the beginning of Genesis 15:1-21, as much as to say, You have refused a portion in this world, "I am

thy shield and exceeding great reward." With the wonderful light brought to us by the Holy Spirit, we can truly say "Thou art my portion, O Lord;" and again, as true Ephraimites, "What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard Him, and observed Him; I am like a green fir tree. From me is Thy fruit found . . . for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them" (Hosea 14:8-9).

A. Shepherd.

Everything Established in the Second Man.

Whatever has been ruined in the first man will be gloriously established in the Second Man. Adam fell and was ruined: Christ is the glory of God. The Law was broken: it shall presently be written on men's hearts. The priests fell: our Great High Priest can never fail. The Kingdom failed: His throne is for ever and ever. It will be a thousand times more glorious than what was lost — infinitely more so. And so with the church — He will have it for His bride, He will be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe in that day. J. N. Darby.

S. Practical Reflections from the Life of Abraham

Practical Reflections from the Life of Abraham.

Introduction The extremely colourful life of Abraham — the pattern man of faith — provides the Spirit of God with material eminently suitable for the enrichment of every child of God as they pass through the scene of their pilgrimage and strangership. The outstanding characteristic of this remarkable man, who is spoken of as the friend of God, is faith. Paul speaks of him as one who "found strength in faith" (Romans 4:20); and how the Spirit delights to draw our attention to the infinite variety of ways in which faith was exemplified in all its diversity of action and energy in him who heard and responded to the call of God. This call signified a new departure in God's ways with men, and was entirely sovereign in its choice and activity. When the call of God reached Abraham he was found among the worshippers of other gods on the other side of the Euphrates (Joshua 24:2). It is very remarkable that in Peleg's days (Genesis 10:25) men were possessing themselves more than ever of the earth, but in the call of God Abraham is called to a life of strangership on the earth, for the essential characteristic of the life of faith is strangership, but this founded upon citizenship elsewhere (Hebrews 11:13-16). Faith dwells in the unseen with the substance of things hoped for (Hebrews 11:1). The terms of this divine call is "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee." The new course proposed calls man to rise above all visible influences and simply to rest upon God and His all-sufficient Word. Man had fallen into flagrant independence of God; the call is now to depend entirely on Him. Observe the character of the call of Abraham: it was not stated that he should separate from moral pollution and idolatry, though doubtless there were debasing and revolting practices connected with the idolatry; he was to separate from the associations of nature and of the earth. The call of God is a matter of great import: God's voice from heaven reached the heart, and it awakes to the consciousness that it has to do with Him.

What powerful, mighty voice, so near, Calls me from earth apart.

Reaches with tones so still, so clear, From the unseen world my heart?

'Tis His. Yes, yes; no other sound Could move my heart like this; The voice of Him that earlier bound Through grace that heart to His. That wondrous voice has reached us from the other side of "death's dark raging flood," for it is evident to the youngest believer that Christ is not here; and as Christ becomes endeared to the heart we become more deeply conscious of this that He is not where we are. It is this that turns us to Him where He is; the Spirit bringing the glories of that blessed One before us, and leading us to the blessed place where His glories are displayed. As another has said, "The secret of power — power to enable us to be here in moral conformity to that heavenly call — is occupation with Him where He is, that we might be for Him where He was." The first truth given to a soul at peace with God is that Christ, the One to whom we owe every blessing and all our joy, has been rejected from the earth; that we are in the place where He is not, and as we turn to Him, we find that the Spirit of God leads us to Him in heaven. Then we learn, as in the parable of the prodigal son, that the place of our reception is the Father's house; and we are

associated with Him, who rejected upon earth, has been acclaimed in heaven as the worthy One.

How heartily did the beloved apostle Paul accept the place of Christ's rejection, exclaiming in tones of exultation, "Be it far from me to boast save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world." When our acceptance with God is known, our home and joys are in the Father's house. Hence in writing to the Colossians the apostle prays first "on account of the hope laid up for you in the heavens" (Colossians 1:5). I am emphasising these things, beloved brethren, to make it plain that every one in the peace of God and resting in His favour, rises in spirit to Christ where He is.

Set free from the man under the judgment of God, and belonging to the glorified Man in heaven, we can behold the glory of the Lord with unveiled face (2 Corinthians 3:18). The divine call is to the full enjoyment of the proper portion of faith, entirely outside the seen and temporal things: apart from that which the senses can take account of, that which is visible and material, for "the things that are seen are but for a time, but those that are not seen, eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18).

Only those instructed in the word of God can enjoy these things according to the mind of God. It is quite possible to be so zealously affected in a good matter that there might be the getting rid of worldly things while as yet the heavenly were but little known. Our one commanding thought should be that we do not belong to earth, but to heaven, and that all our joys and hopes are centred there. There is a difference between unearthliness and what is heavenly. Those who live an ascetic monastic life may claim to be unearthly; but are they because of this heavenly? One, writing of the revival of truth in the last century records, "Professions, prospects, position and even lawful callings were freely surrendered in order that there should be a heavenly calling." This heavenly position can never be attained practically by the rigorous application of legal restrictions, nor by scrupulous observance of forms of austerity far in excess of the commandments of the Mosaic law. Heavenly features are formed by the Spirit's gracious work in our souls, and by that alone! Apropos of this the following is a very apt illustration. "Drops of water sailing on the top of the ocean longed to join the white fleecy clouds that floated in the blue sky above them, and they called to the strong North Wind to help them. So it blew in all its raging fury, dashing them against the rocks in fine spray, and it looked for a time as though they would have their wish fulfilled, but time and time again they fell back into the sea. Then the sun came out in all its strength, and these little drops of water found themselves, without effort on their part, lifted up by the strong rays of the sun, until they joined the clouds above them." Let us hear again what the beloved writer of 2 Corinthians 3:18 says, "But we all, looking on the glory of the Lord, with unveiled face, are transformed according to the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit." It was the "God of glory" that appeared to Abraham, and it was this that threw the Babel world into the shade for him. The Lord of glory has appeared before the vision of faith: has the glory of that light blinded us to all that is around? In the pursuance of this profoundly instructive study of Abraham, the father of all those who believe, it is a matter of prime importance that we should have firmly established in our minds the heart-searching fact that divine principles are unalterable, and unaffected by dispensational changes. Throughout the Scriptures of truth, the observant reader may discern the progressive development of these principles in all dispensations, in all the varied manifestations of the ways of God with men. There is a very clear distinction between the ways of God before and after the flood, and it is a matter of great encouragement to see that God has never left Himself without witness. Since the fall there has always been the people of God and

the world of the ungodly, but there was no sovereign call of person, people or nation, by which they might have been regarded as a divinely constituted witness to the character and ways of God until the call of Abraham. The inhabitants of the earth were a fallen race, and the fallen nature of man displayed itself as being incurably opposed to the witness of God, so that we read, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth . . . and God repented that He had made man on the earth." In righteous judgment God overwhelmed men with the flood, so that none escaped save the little band that had taken refuge in the ark. The world that now exists is a new world, reserved for fire in the day of judgment. In this new world two great principles were established; rule put into man's hands in Noah, the setting up of government for the repression of evil; and separation from the world by the sovereign call of God as seen in Abraham. The first has been irretrievably corrupted — the cause is not far to seek; man has failed to acknowledge the source of all rule, the necessary condition, if rule is to have any real value or significance in the reckoning of the one who governs or those who are governed. But the one so greatly favoured of God in being set up as the head of this new world, failed in self-government, and as a result lost the respect of his own son. Then in Nimrod we see the usurpation of rule, man basely pretending to be the source of its power; for under Nimrod, Satan caused the principle of rule to flow from the will and violence of man, with its resultant condition of strife and violence. The authority entrusted of God and exercised in righteousness would have brought to men prosperity, peace and happiness. In writing these things, one is reminded of the scene in Exodus 4:1-31, where Moses is told to cast his rod on the ground, where, out of his hand it changes its character, becoming a serpent. The rod in the hand of Moses typifies divine authority in the hand of God's man, and shall we say, marked by the tenderness and care of Him Who holds the Shepherd's rod? The hand that wields the sceptre of the universe is guided by the heart of Him Who said, "I am the Good Shepherd." But at the moment the rod is not publicly in the hands of the true Moses: it is cast to the ground; so that as we look around us today we see that lawlessness is pronounced, and but for the restraint of God would prevail. Many are perplexed in contemplating the apparent triumph of evil, saying with one of old, "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with Thee, which frameth mischief by a law? They see Satan as Prince of this world boasting of universal empire, and hear him say, All that is given unto me and to whomsoever I will I give it. While all authority and power are in the hand of the Lord Jesus upon the throne of God, publicly before men the rod of authority is not in His hand, but is on the ground and diabolical. But observe the beautiful accuracy of the type, and the comfort prepared for us in it. The rod was cast out of Moses' hand; it did not slip out. God has not lost control; of His own will, and for His own wise purposes He has subjected man to the sway of Him whom the world has chosen for its prince. How sad and how solemn that the foundation on which the empire of Satan has been built is the rejection of the Deliverer. Yet "judgment shall return unto righteousness;" for in the coming day, the Lord Jesus shall take the serpent by the tail, and the authority that has been used to chastise men through Satan, will be in the hands of the Son of Man publicly for the blessing and prosperity of men. (See Revelation 12:10).

We see therefore Noah's abject failure when set up in government; His snare is the abundance of the new-blessed earth. In Babel we see the rebellion of man in full flower, only to come under the withering blast and measureless wrath of Him whose sovereign authority they had impiously and defiantly called in question. In the building of this city and tower, man sought to perpetuate his name, but God has decreed that only one Name shall live for ever, "His Name shall endure for ever; His Name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall bless them-selves in Him; all

nations shall call Him blessed Psalms 72:17. And just as the cherubim with the flaming sword guarded the way to the tree of life lest sinful man should eat and live for ever in sin, so God rained His unsparing judgment on that structure in which perpetuation of man's name was implicit. The foregoing remarks are an endeavour to delineate, as simply as possible, the moral characteristics of the world out of which Abraham was called. It is still the same world, dear reader, and if you are a true child of God, by faith in Christ Jesus, the words John writes in his epistle cannot fail to have deep significance for you, We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the wicked one." In the preceding verse, the apostle declares very searchingly, "We know that every one begotten of God, does not sin, but he that has been begotten of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him." You will observe that it does not say that God keeps him, but that he "keeps himself." It is similar to Peter's epistle, "Beloved, I exhort you as strangers and sojourners, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." We have not yet entered into our rest, we are still in a scene which calls forth the fullest exercise of faith, and in Abraham we see this beautifully exemplified — called to Canaan, his possession in hope alone. He dwells there, but in tabernacles, the bringing together of two things typically — the heavenly inheritance and its earthly consequence, "By faith he sojourned as a stranger in the land of promise as a foreign country (that is, not his own) having dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." Canaan is the new land beyond the flood, and as we all know speaks of heaven to us; but the earthly aspect is, all through the book of Genesis, the prominent one. We must wait for Joshua before we get a distinct type of the heavenly inheritance. Here, however, the tent and the altar are as yet the only possessions. I trust that as we track the footsteps of this remarkable man of faith, that we may learn valuable lessons deeply and effectively, from all the trials, difficulties and vicissitudes through which he passed as he sought a better country, even an heavenly.

Though thy way be long and dreary, Eagle strength He'll still renew:

Garments fresh and foot unwearied Tell how God hath brought thee through.

Let us now seek with purpose of heart to glean from this immense field of divine admonition and instruction, provided for us in the life of Abraham. Here the life of faith is strikingly exemplified, and like Ruth of old we can glean in the field of our true Boaz, the One in Whom there is strength; even as it was written "And ye shall also sometimes draw out for her some ears out of the handfuls, and leave them that she may glean. . . We can gather these handfuls let fall on purpose for us, so that our spiritual vitality might be maintained, and that practical conformity in our walk and conduct with the place we occupy in the counsels of God, and in divine love, might be abundantly realised. We need spiritual energy; we must be "strong in faith" to lay hold of the things that are really life (1 Timothy 6:19). This life of faith is in the power of resurrection, and in order that we may grasp what is involved and implied in it, we quote from the words of another, "In this life of faith we do not merely look for the principle of dependence on God, or of confidence in Him, though that may be the thought immediately suggested by such words. It signifies much more. It is a life of large and various energies: for according to God, or Scripture, faith is the principle in the soul which not only trusts and believes Him; it is also that which apprehends His way, acts in consort with His principles and purposes, receives His promises, enjoys His favours, does His bidding, looks for His kingdom, in His strength gains victories, and by His light walks in light; and thus it is ever, though variously, exhibiting a life according to Him, or formed in communion with Him." Do we not

find in the life of Abraham these attractive features of faith strongly marked for our observation

We must not assume however that this life was one of unbroken triumph; nor one in which Abraham, who was the friend of God, walked without deviation or deflection. God had said to him. "Walk before me, and be thou perfect;" but while there is much for us to admire and learn in our Patriarch, his life was not ever displaying with unflinching constancy that unequivocal and uncompromising refusal of the world's favours and patronage. No, dear reader, perfection in every feature of the life of faith in all its rich variety of positive expression was found alone in Him Who is "The Author and Completer of faith." He was the repository and the expression of faith in all its diversified activities. Abraham's life, so changeable, like that of the Psalmist, gave the Spirit the largest occasion to exercise his soul; and so in the life of the father of the faithful, where light and shadow alternate, we shall find much to cheer us, and much to admonish us. The movement in Abraham's family seems to originate with Terah, for we read, "Terah took Abram his son, and Lot, the son of Haran . . . and they went forth from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan, and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there." Terah (meaning "delay") perfectly justifies his name by his actions, ends his days in Haran, which place was called after the name of his dead son. Natural things hold him fast, though death be written on him, and memory but intensifies his loss. But his death also closes the sojourn of Abraham at Haran. The natural influence that was holding him back having now gone, Abraham rises in the power of the divine call, which had come to him, and to him alone in the first place; and by which he was separated from country, kindred, and father's house, to be blessed and made a blessing in the land to which God directed him as his inheritance in faith alone. Natural things no longer clog or hinder; so in the language of Scripture, "They went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came." Which of us does not know something of these compromises in any given relationship of life, which seem to promise much more than God can offer, and appear to exact so much less; but in which obedience to God is relegated to the background, and Haran ("parched place") is the dwelling place, and not Canaan, the land enriched with the munificence of God. How often does God use providential circumstances to lead us in the right direction: yet they may eventually become a hindrance to us. Providential circumstances and natural things can never bring us into the enjoyment of faith's proper portion, which lies outside the sphere of seen and tangible things. The call of God is from the visible and material things, so that the new creation scene, where all things are of God, may fill the vision of our faith: for the things that are seen are for a time, but those that are not seen, eternal."

It is very precious to note how Paul speaks of the Father of glory: suggesting that He is the One Who has given being to a whole system of glory, and in sovereign mercy is calling men not only to view it, but to dwell in it, to possess it, to exult in it; to rejoice in its immensity as the eye of faith scans its brightly coloured horizons, and marks the limitless bounds of this land of far distances, stretching far and away beyond the ken of mortal mind.

How beautiful, and instructive, it is for us to see the spirit with which Abraham entered upon this life of faith. What simplicity and earnestness marked him: "He went out, not knowing whither he went." He took God for his security and portion: as another has said, "It is in this that the Spirit of God rests, as characteristic of his approved faith; for by separation from the world, on the ground of implicit confidence in God, he lost everything, and got nothing but the word of God." But the human heart neither understands nor appreciates such conditions; it desires more clearly defined

and specifically detailed conditions. This race, beloved, "is not to the swift, nor its battle to the strong." In order to understand and enjoy faith's portion in the land, we must be shorn of every vestige of self-sufficiency, and rest implicitly on the word of God, and on that alone. As already remarked, the heart resents these conditions, but the renewed mind willingly approves them and justifies God in them. With reference to this unquestioning of the word of God, Elijah provides us with a very searching illustration. Under God's direction he had just delivered that momentous message to Ahab — a message of unsparing judgment — then he was again directed of God not now to a place of public testimony, but to one of retirement and solitude. "The word of the Lord came unto him saying, Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith . . ." and in that lonely retreat he had to sojourn many days; not however without a precious promise from the Lord God of Israel in reference to his needed provision — "I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there." Even when the brook dried up, that word, "I have commanded," was all that this mighty prophet required to keep him in perfect repose of spirit in the place of separation.

Sweet indeed is this simplicity of obedience: the necessary requisite surely of a true walk with God. This matter, so important in itself, will be brought before us very vividly, when we come to compare the walk of Lot with that of Abraham. There we shall find lessons of great importance, and which have a very vital bearing upon our comportment as we pass through a world in which we have no part or lot. With the light of that fair scene shining with imperishable splendour upon every step of the pilgrim pathway, we reach forward with ever-hastening steps to the inheritance that is before us; while, as having the Spirit, the divine Earnest, we taste its joys, its peace and its rest even now. The manna and the springing well Suffice for every need; And Eshcol's grapes the story tell Of where Thy path doth lead.

We have already remarked that it was only after the ties of nature were snapped by death that Abraham moved with unimpeded step on to the inheritance to which God had called him. How strong these natural ties can be, and their influences are invariably hostile to our attaining the full measure of what God desires for us. The activities and energies of nature ever tend to militate against the full realisation and practical power of the "calling of God." How tempted we are to take an easier path than that which alone is compatible with the "hope of His calling." What is required of us, in order to rise to the full height of God's thoughts for us is, singleness of eye, simplicity of obedience, and integrity of faith (see Ephesians 1:15-22). The beloved Apostle, ever sensitive to the difficulties with which the assembly would have to contend, in seeking to know the hope of God's calling, and the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, prays that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory would give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full-knowledge of Him, being enlightened in the eyes of their heart. With failure to apprehend the calling there would evidently be a lack of consistency in the practical life corresponding to the heavenly calling. Had Abraham more fully realised that the call of God was to Canaan, and that there lay his inheritance, the power of the truth regarding all involved in that call, would have been more than sufficient for him to meet and overcome the subtle influences and obstructions of nature. And is it not so with us? If we are led by the Spirit of God into the understanding of this wonderful truth regarding His calling, could we be guilty of such treachery as would seek a place, a standing, a portion in the world that refused our blessed Lord? He gave Himself for our sins, to deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father (Galatians 1:4).

In Revelation 2:12. John is told to write to the Angel of the assembly in Pergamos, "These things says He that has the sharp two-edged sword: and then comes these significant words, descriptive of a moral class, "I know where thou dwellest, where the throne of Satan is. . . Antipas my faithful witness who was slain among you, where Satan dwells." It is significant that the word Pergamos speaks of "marriage;" and despite the ferocious, bestial persecution of the church during the Smyrnian period, we find the church joined in unholy alliance with the world in the Pergamos period. How strange indeed to view the church at her ease in the presence of the "throne" and "dwelling" of Satan, the god of this world, and its prince. For the church to settle down, where Satan has both a throne and a dwelling, is to falsify her character as a witness for holiness and truth. As another has said of that day, "Christianity walked in golden slippers." How very different from the badgers skins, the essential repellent of every unwholesome influence. What is true of the church is, of course, applicable to us as individuals. But it is blessed to see that there were those of whom it could be said, "Thou holdest fast My Name, and hast not denied My faith." Wonderful commendation! In Abraham's history, death came in and severed the bond which bound him so strongly in Haran; so in our case, the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ proves an impassable barrier to those who realise that they have died with Christ. Our place in nature, and our standing in the world has been terminated before God. The cross is to us what the Red Sea was to the children of Israel — that which separates us forever from the land of death and judgment. But let us now return to find Abraham in the land to which God had called him. In verse 6 of chapter 12 we read, "And Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land." These names are very significant, and pregnant with divine instruction. Shechem means "shoulder," and Moreh, "Instructor;" and is it not when we bow the shoulder to bear that we find instruction? "Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest to your souls; for My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." And is it not true that he that wills to do God's will shall know of the doctrine? This indeed is the "virtue" in which is knowledge (2 Peter 1:5). Yes, dear friend, the oak of Moreh still grows at Shechem; and here too we find a dark shadow in the path of the man of faith — "The Canaanite was then in the land." A hostile people occupied the territory of promise, contesting the right of the true heirs to possess their heavenly inheritance. How forcibly does this speak to us of the influences of evil, the powers of darkness mentioned in Ephesians 6:12! The adversary seeks to hinder the saints of God from entering into spiritual possession of that which God has purposed for them in His love and grace.

How blessed it is for us to see how God met this new difficulty for Abraham: Jehovah appeared to him and said, "Unto thy seed will I give this land." Abram had moved in response to the first manifestation, and now he gets another to encourage him in the face of the enemy's power. And it is surely in the land that this divine confirmation regarding the possession of the inheritance is fully realised; and where power to possess ourselves of the inheritance is acquired. It is as Canaan-dwellers that the secrets of God's heart are opened to us, and where those blessed manifestations of the Lord Jesus Christ are assured to us. "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him" (John 14:21).

Then we read of Abram building his altar to Jehovah, Who had appeared unto him. He worshipped God according to his apprehension of Him Who had appeared to him, and in consonance with the

character of the communications made. How beautiful is the declaration of the Psalmist, "According to Thy Name, so is Thy praise in all the earth, O Lord." This not only states a most blessed truth, but also announces a principle; for in this dispensation of grace, the Father seeks worshippers to worship Him in spirit and in truth. Today, there is on earth, a company indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who are partakers of the divine nature, to whom the Son has revealed the Father, revealing to them His Name. Such are able by the Spirit to enter into these wonderful divine revelations, and to gratify, by their response, the Father's heart. Such indeed is the character of our altar. But to walk in practical conformity with this altar, we must pitch our tent, figurative of strangership here, between Bethel and Hai. The former means "God's House;" the latter a "Heap of ruins." Thus, between a judged world and the dwelling of God we pitch our tent; in view of both. And now Abraham is again tested; once again succumbing to the influences of nature. He finds a famine in the land, and goes down to Egypt, leaving the land of which

God had said, "Unto thy seed will I give this land." The life of faith implies, and necessitates trial: and had Abram been walking in the power and energy of faith, he would have been equal to this fresh test. Elijah proved equal to such a test as he sat by the brook Cherith, and was fed by the fowls of the air. Paul showed his superiority to circumstances when called into Macedonia by the Lord, where a prison awaited him, but where, with his companion, he sang praises to God. Abraham seeks refuge in another land, of which God made no mention in His call. But we must take account of this solemn fact: the secret failure had begun before the famine. Abraham, at the beginning, dwelt between Bethel and Hai; but it would seem that, when the famine came, he was moving towards the south

— "And Abram moved onward going toward the south country." This is the name given to the region of Canaan bordering on the desert. How significant and timely is the warning for us, never to leave the neighbourhood of Bethel. In leaving Bethel, Abraham departed from the place of blessing. There is no famine in God's house: there is "bread enough and to spare." If you find a shortage of spiritual food, look to it; you are moving in the wrong direction. It is sad to have to say of a saint of God, Why art thou, being the King's son, so lean from day to day." If we are nourished by spiritual food we shall not desire the world's food. This border land, in the south, is ever a dry land, and famine soon overtakes us if we are found there: and who, that has known what God's path is, but has not known the trial of a famine in this border land? And when we have known such, how Egypt tempts! How the seduction of the world causes the giving up of the path of separation! Are there not many of us who have made this temporary incursion into Egypt in time of testing? But we all know the price to be paid for Egypt's succour. Abrams fall has been too often repeated, and it is the repetition of this on a large scale that has been a contributory factor in the sad failure of the whole dispensation.

Following upon our remarks regarding Abraham's capitulation to the seductions of Egypt, let us now consider some of the sad and inescapable consequences of such a retrograde step. One of the effects of going down to Egypt is that we become afraid to own our spiritual relationships: the very shadow of Egypt, before his arrival there, made Abraham afraid to own the relationship in which he and Sarai stood to each other; and this by a carefully prepared arrangement. In all this, as so faithfully depicted for us by the Spirit in Genesis 12:1-20, we can surely discern how low the torch of faith was burning, and how the waves of a strong and exultant faith (which would have carried him in triumph over every obstacle) were now receding into the dark vortex of unbelief.

Abraham, outstanding man of faith that he was, like us all, was affected by natural things. Perfection, in all its lofty elevation and refinement of expression, is found in One, and in Him alone; in Him Who is "the originator and completer of faith." Let us not forget however that if nature rules us, it will also expose us. We see in all this that Abraham is thinking only of himself; he is not endeavouring to protect Sarai, but rather is prepared to sacrifice her to save himself. Where was the jealous care that Sarai should remain true to her relationship, and to the faithful confession of it? Here is a saint of God seeking his own things because he has come under the shadow of Egypt. You will find that if you descend to the level of the world; if you get on terms with the men of the world; your lips will become soiled with the language of the world, and you will be ashamed to confess your true relationship to Christ. One sad result of this denial of relationship was that Sarai got into the house of Pharaoh. What a difference from being in the house of God! The way to get the world's admiration is to deny your relationship to Christ. How different the desires of the beloved Apostle who, jealous over the Corinthians with a godly jealousy, declared "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you a chaste virgin to Christ."

It is said of Pharaoh that "he treated Abram well." This is just what happened to the church when she was unfaithful to Christ! Deny your relationship to Christ, and you shall have the patronage of the world. But the lie practised by Abraham reaps a bitter harvest. His deception is great; his exposure is greater still, and Pharaoh's rebuke puts him to shame. As another has said, "He has to 'do his first works', to retrace his steps, and regain his standing — sorrowful works at all times. He has to leave 'by-path meadow' for the King's highway again, betaking himself back from Egypt to the place between Ai and Bethel, where he had raised up his altar at the first." With what deep joy of heart do we read the words, "And there Abram called on the Name of Jehovah." And now the history of Lot is made to yield admonition and instruction of a most salutary character to those desirous of living in practical conformity to their heavenly calling. We do well to give earnest heed to the story of Lot as it unfolds for us in all its sad features in this precious book, where every word is used with divine precision and intent. The moral import of these happenings, which men regard as mere historical events, is exceedingly valuable and important in these days, when the truth of our heavenly calling having been revealed to us, manifests that there are many Lots. The word Lot means "covering," and under a covering he is always found. Though with Abram outwardly, he is not at heart what Abram is, a pilgrim and stranger; nor with the men of Sodom is he a Sodomite. Though in Sodom, he is a saint of God, even as the Epistle of Peter states, that God "saved righteous Lot, distressed with the abandoned conversation of the godless (for the righteous man through seeing and hearing, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul day after day with their lawless works)." But he is a saint untrue to his saintship; his is indeed a downward path; his history is one of persistent decline, no cheering ray of recovery or restoration to relieve the ever darkening path of one whose life ends as it began — under a covering. Falling under deep personal reproach, his name and memory are forever stained with shame and infamy

Dear reader, listen for a moment to what the word of God has to say: "For as many things as have been written before have been written for our instruction, that through endurance, and through encouragement of the Scriptures, we might have hope." How emphatic the warning and admonition to remember Lot; how near two roads may be at the beginning, yet at the end how far apart. May all who read these words be preserved from treading this by-path, and being thus warned of the dangers which beset the feet of the unwary, seek to walk in "the path of the just,

which is as the dawning light that shineth brighter and brighter unto the perfect day." But it may be well to enquire if the causes of Lot's downfall are not traceable to earlier circumstances. Can it not be seen in nature presuming to walk in a path which alone can be trodden in the power and energy of a living faith. In Genesis 11:1-32 we read, "And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his son's son . . . to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there." Here we find nature taking in hand to follow a divine call, which it had never understood, nor heard for itself. The heart of Lot had not been touched by the greatness of the One Who had called Abram, nor yet by the greatness and power of the call of the God of glory. The highways to that city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God, were not in the hearts of Terah and Lot, as were the highways to the dwelling-place of God in the hearts of those of whom the Psalmist speaks in Psalms 84:1-12, "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house; they will be constantly praising Thee. Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee — in whose hearts are the highways." With Terah there is a settling down, short altogether of the point for which they started; content to dwell in a scene upon which death has laid its blighting and disfiguring hand. Are these not the moral elements amid which many a Lot is nurtured? Does not Terah's character shine out in him, when, having undertaken to walk with Abraham, he beholds "the well-watered plain of Jordan," and when "he lingered" in the doomed city from which, in mercy, the angels delivered him. But there is another beginning after this, for "Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came." Not nature now, but the man of faith leads, and they no longer stop short of the object before them — "into the land of Canaan they came." But Lot merely follows Abram as he had followed Terah. Abram walks with God: Lot only walks with Abram. Another has said, "How easy even for a believer to walk where another's bolder faith leads and makes the way practicable, without exercise of conscience or reality of faith as to the way itself! How many such there are, practically but followers of the Lord's host, adherents of a cause for which they have no thought of being martyrs, nearly balanced between what they know as truth and a world which has never been seen by them in the light of it. For such, as with Lot, a time of sifting comes, and like dead leaves they drop off from the stem that holds them." Egypt had acted thus for Lot. The fact that the coveted plain of Jordan seems to him as "the land of Egypt," shows how powerfully that land attracted him. It also seems that Abram's failure, in going down to Egypt, had loosened the moral hold he had hitherto retained upon his nephew.

Still true to the weakness of his character, it is not Lot, but Abram who proposes separation, after it was made perfectly plain that they could no longer walk happily together. In this connection, it is solemn to note that Scripture records "the Canaanite and the Perizzite were then dwelling in the land," as though to draw attention to the seriousness of strife in the presence of such unfriendly eyes and ears. There are enemies looking on, and noting with ill-concealed satisfaction the strife and contention which is all too prevalent among the saints of God. Contention is generally connected with something that pertains to us in this world, something upon which the heart is set, but the possession of which will not contribute to spiritual advancement, but rather the reverse. "A bondman of the Lord ought not to contend, but be gentle towards all, apt to teach: forbearing; in meekness setting right those who oppose" (2 Timothy 2:24). How beautifully do we see this exemplified in the case of Abram now before us; he was entirely apart from the spirit of strife: "Let there be no strife . . . for we are brethren." He meets the spirit of strife with the spirit of surrender: there was no insistence on his part to any rights of his. How he endears himself to our hearts as he

risers in moral greatness by this act of renunciation and surrender! "Let your yieldingness be known of all men, the Lord is near" (Php 4:5). In all this Abram manifests his restoration of soul: but this is tinged with sorrow as we reflect that many a believer, who has gone down to Egypt, and has been recovered himself, has been the means of leading another there; and who has never known the joy of recovery.

Lot, regarding the plain of Jordan with the natural eye, fails to discern the true character of the inhabitants of the cities of the plain. There he dwells in his tent at first; soon to find a more permanent dwelling-place in Sodom itself, toward which from the first he gravitates. At a later date, the children of Israel were similarly affected when they said, "We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt for nothing; the cucumbers, the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic, and now our soul is dried up; there is nothing at all but the manna before our eyes." They however forgot a matter of profound importance — the cruel bondage, the bitter servitude with which they were made to serve under the cruel lash of their task-masters.

Now Abram dwells in the land of Canaan, and God bids him walk through it as his own; and so we find him dwelling in Mamre (vigour), which is in Hebron (companionship communion). And is it not as we are in the full enjoyment of our heavenly portion that we are maintained in spiritual vigour, and in the full spiritual gain of communion with each other? May we only know and live in the portion of Abram here, without interruption or distraction.

Rise my soul! Thy God directs thee;

Stranger hands no more impede:

Pass thou on; His hand protects thee —

Strength that has the captive freed.

Art thou wean'd from Egypt's pleasures?

God in secret thee shall keep:

There unfold His hidden treasures, There His love's exhaustless deep. In Genesis 14:1-24, which is now before us for our prayerful and attentive consideration, we find the man of faith as the one who can overcome the world: a feature in which Abraham stands out in marked contrast to Lot. Following the movements of Abraham in this chapter, we are impressed with the complete restoration which had been effected in the experience of the man of faith; he was not only delivered out of Egypt, but brought back "unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning . . . unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first" (13:3-4). Complete restoration can only be reached on the principle that "the point of departure is the place of recovery." Nothing can satisfy the heart of God, with regard to restoration of a true child of God, who has declined in his spiritual condition and lost the sense of communion, but his being entirely restored, through grace, to his former character and measure of communion. Listen to what God says, through His inspired penman, the prophet Isaiah: "If thou wilt return, O Israel, return unto Me." It is very significant that when God is recounting to His earthly people the wonderful way in which He had led them forth from the land of bondage, He says, "I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself;" and it was to Himself they were to return, if they desired full restoration to the enjoyment of their earthly blessings. When the leper was brought back, it was to "the door of the

tabernacle of the congregation;" when the prodigal returned, he was given a place at the table with his Father; and consequent upon Peter's restoration, he can press home upon Israel their terrible guilt, saying, "Ye denied the Holy One, and the Just." Who is this that so speaks? Is this the one to whom his Lord had said, "Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice?" Yes, none other! but in the full liberty of a restoration, indicated in the words of Him Who was denied, "when once thou art restored, confirm thy brethren." It can surely be deduced from the instances cited, that all God's gracious dealings with us in seasons of spiritual decline and lack of moral stability is in view of complete restoration to full and unbroken communion, and in the light of this, are we not reminded of that exhortation in the epistle to the Galatians, "Brethren, if even a man be taken in some fault, ye who are spiritual restore such an one, in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." May we ever seek to act in the spirit of grace, on the line of true restoration.

We now turn to this most instructive and exercising chapter to see in Abraham one who not only overcomes the world in its hostile character, but also in its patronising character. How sharp and decisive is the contrast between Abraham, the overcomer, and Lot, who is always being overcome by one influence after another. I am not aware of one incident in his tragic history in which he appears as an overcomer. Egypt had a large and prominent place in his heart; and then the "well-watered plain" because it was like Egypt; then Sodom, and then Zoar; he had always some influence in his heart which was not of God. Lot, ever true to his name, never showed his true colours as a saint; and the consequence of this is to drift into association with the world, and thereby lose the joy of the Lord's approval, and the power to be an overcomer. In view of overcoming, much depends on where we live. We know where Abraham dwelt, and in verse 12 the Spirit very significantly says of Lot, "For he dwelt in Sodom." Equally significant is the word concerning Abraham the Hebrew, "And he dwelt by the Oaks of Mamre the Amorite, the brother of Eschol, and the brother of Aner; and these were Abraham's allies." The portion of the man of faith was outside the whole field of conflict. Lot, on the other hand, is already in Sodom, which results in his being carried captive in the captivity of Sodom.

Hebron means "company," suggesting fellowship: Mature is "vigour;" Eschol is "cluster of grapes," and Aner means "waterfall." Do these names not speak to us of that spiritual vigour, and of that joy and freshness resulting from being in the presence of the Spirit, and of fellowship with saints. Surely the fact that the Spirit has mentioned these names specifically is sufficient warrant for the child of God to interpret them, not according to human expediency, but in perfect suitability with the whole tenor of Scripture. Abraham had no sympathy with the king of Sodom; his whole reason for engaging in battle was the deliverance of one who had fallen under the power of the world. So Abraham brings back Lot; the deliverance of the other captives being incidental. How good it is, beloved brethren, to have power to rescue one for whom Christ died; but this power is only with those who are on the line of Abraham. Do we not see this spirit greatly developed in the beloved Apostle Paul, not only in regard to individuals, but also in relation to whole assemblies? He speaks to those in Colosse of the great conflict he had for them; he saw them in danger of coming under the rudiments of the world, and he marshals all his divinely given powers for their deliverance. There were many assemblies in the province of Galatia, and the Apostle saw them in grave danger of coming under the influence of another gospel. It was a deliberate attempt on the part of troublers among them to pervert the glad tidings of the Christ, and to bring them into bondage to

the law, and thus to prevent them standing in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free. As has been noted, this mighty man of God with irresistible divine energy brings all his accoutrements of war to bear upon the assailants of the truth to their discomfiture, and the eventual deliverance of the saints. But the moment of victory is a moment of specific danger to the saint, as Abraham is made to realise. Having returned victorious from the smiting of the kings, he is met by the king of Sodom with honours and gifts; but the one who had overcome the world in its hostile power is proof against all the seductive blandishments of a patronizing world. We have all to beware of the seductive proposals of an alien world. The ministrations of Melchisedec, king of Salem, in the valley of Shaveh — the King's valley — had fortified Abraham, so that he was able to meet and overcome the alluring favours of the king of Sodom. And it is only as we remain in the King's valley, the low place, that we experience the priestly support of our true Melchisedec, the One Who says, "I am meek and lowly in heart." The spirit of meekness, lowliness and gentleness; the consciousness that all has been done by divine support; that is the spirit of the King's valley; and there it is we meet the King of peace, the King of righteousness, Whose refreshment and blessing make us superior to all that this world would confer upon us. This Melchisedec, who meets Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, is a truly remarkable personage; spoken of as the priest of the Most High God — an unmistakable reference to that glorious day of Christ's manifested supremacy when, as true Melchisedec, He shall sit as Priest and King upon His throne. How wonderfully apposite in this connection, when Christ shall be manifested as King of righteousness and King of peace, are the words of Isaiah, "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever: and my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places." This stringently typical scene, in which we have the first presentation of the royalty and priesthood of Christ, is explained to us in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The words are remarkable for the way in which they bring out and insist on the perfection and accuracy of Scripture, in what it omits as well as in what it inserts. "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life." are words which have been thought to show that this mysterious person was none other than Christ Himself; but the words immediately following disproves this, "made like unto the Son of God." Another has said, "Melchisedec was in his characteristics assimilated to the Son of God:" He is our High Priest, not reckoned among the transient generations of an earthly priesthood, but subsisting in the power of an endless life.

If we really taste the blessedness of these heavenly thing, the world has nothing by which it can attract us: no, not even to a shoe-latchet. For us, This world is a wilderness wide, We have nothing to seek or to choose. May we crave to have hearts satisfied with Christ, to such an extent, that we may have "nothing to seek or to choose" save that which would deepen in our souls the sense of abiding satisfaction that is to be found in Him, and Him alone.

How very remarkable is the opening of the 15th chapter of Genesis, consequent upon Abram's victory over the kings, and his refusal of the "goods" and patronage of the King of Sodom. So many Christians speak of their loss of present things in the path of faith, not being occupied with the spiritual enrichment and measureless eternal benefits that any little sacrifice for Christ brings. The beloved Apostle Paul puts these things in true perspective in the 3rd of Philipians when he says, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for Whom I have

suffered the loss of all things, and count them to be filth that I may have Christ for my gain." All was relinquished that he might have Christ for his gain. And were all these things surrendered in a spirit of passive resignation, or in a spirit of irresponsible abandonment as though he were a victim of some deep, uncontrollable emotion? No! this was the calculated decision of one whose innermost soul had been deeply moved by that heavenly light which shone upon him on that memorable journey to Damascus, and by hearing the heavenly voice of that glorified Man. The thoughts of his heart are found in the words:

"I have seen the face of Jesus, Tell me naught of aught beside, I have heard the voice of Jesus, And my soul is satisfied!" So in the case of our Patriarch; we find that his gain is beyond all human reckoning, "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." The Lord will not suffer His servant to be a loser by rejecting the offer of the world. Surely it was unspeakably greater, and infinitely better to find himself protected by Jehovah as his shield, than to hide behind the patronage of the world in order to enjoy a more congenial path; and better far to find enjoyment and satisfaction in the knowledge of Jehovah as his exceeding great reward than to have the transient, ephemeral pleasures which the goods" of Sodom would minister to the heart. How forcibly do these precious realities come home to us, who stand in the noon-tide light of the revelation of the Father in the Person of the Son, in Whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, the worthy object to fill and satisfy every heart. In this chapter we have a new beginning; the inner life and experiences of Abram rather than the external view of his path and circumstances are brought out by the Spirit of God. Abram is presented to us now as righteous by faith, a condition fundamental to all spiritual relationships, and all right experiences. This was surely not the first time that Abram believed God; yet it is here, when God says, "So shall thy seed be," that God is pleased to declare publicly his righteousness. In the 3rd chapter of Romans we have an extremely soul-stirring presentation of the doctrine of the righteousness of God. In the 1st chapter Paul declares "For I am not ashamed of the glad tidings; for it is God's power to salvation . . . for righteousness of God is revealed therein on the principle of faith to faith." Beloved Mr Darby has said regarding "Righteousness of God;"

"The absence of the article ('the') may arrest the mind here, and in some other places in this part of the epistle. It is likely to do so, because the righteousness of God is now a known doctrine, not so when the Apostle taught. The righteousness of God was a wholly new thought. The gospel, or glad tidings, was the power of God to salvation, because righteousness of God (that kind of righteousness) was revealed, not righteousness required of man." In the light of this profound doctrine how wonderful it is to read in Romans 4:1-25. "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." Referring to the word "as" Mr Darby remarks, "I am not quite satisfied with 'as,' but it is the nearest approach to the sense in English. 'For,' I object to; because then faith is made of positive worth, having the value of righteousness, whereas the sense is that he was holden for righteous in virtue of faith. 'For' does not go far enough as righteousness; too far as a positive value of faith. Faith might be reckoned for righteousness, and yet the righteousness come short of what was required; whereas if it be reckoned as righteousness, then the full value of righteousness as such is seen; the man was held to have righteousness."

I have dwelt at length on this extremely instructive and emancipating portion of the Word of God because it is of the first importance that we should have an intelligent apprehension of this great truth; but after this lengthy digression let us now return to the consideration of the two assurances

God gave to Abram, and to the two questions these assurances inspired in the heart of the man of faith. These assurances are, "Fear not Abram, I am thy shield and exceeding great reward," and "I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it;" words which, in their application to us may surely read, "God the Father is our portion," and "Heaven is the place where we enjoy our portion." To the first assurance Abram replies, "Lord God, what wilt Thou give me, seeing I go childless?" and to the second, "Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" Does not this questioning, on the part of Abram, strike strangely on the ear in the presence of those absolute assurances which the Lord had given him? Supposing Abram's faith to be at the ebb on this occasion, how blessed it is to see that if we cannot rise to God's thoughts, God can come down and carry out His sovereign will. Here, God assures Abram that his own son would be his heir, then He brings him forth and says, "Look now toward the heavens, and number the stars, if thou be able to number them. And he said to him, So shall thy seed be!" The many seeds and the One are here; and the many to be reached by means of the One.

Abram's "One seed" is familiar to us all. Through and in Isaac we read Christ. "He does not say, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed; which is Christ" (Galatians 3:16). In the symbol of the starry heavens we have in type the seed innumerable as the stars — the heavenly seed of faith; and here we see Abram as "great father," head of the family of faith. How greatly indebted we are to the beloved Apostle for telling us that all who are on the principle of faith are "blessed with believing Abraham." The innumerable seed who have been secured in and for Christ will inherit the promises.

Let us now consider Abram's second question. God had said to him, "I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it;" and Abram says, "Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall possess it." How beautifully God brings Christ before us in His answer, "Take me a heifer of three years old, and a she-goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtle dove, and a young pigeon." The first two females are types of fruitfulness; the heifer of the patient Workman; the she-goat, the victim for our sins. The ram is descriptive of energy; and afterwards it becomes the animal of consecration. The birds speak of One from heaven, Whom love made a Man of sorrows (the turtle-dove), and a Man of faith on earth (the rock-pigeon). These, the five-fold type, expressed in One perfect Man, Abram divided in the midst, and laid each piece one against the other, but the birds he did not divide; and Abram drove the fowls of the air away when they came down upon the carcasses. Faith's vigilance in guarding the sacrifice from profanation by Satanic agency is manifested in Abram until "the sun was going down, and deep sleep passed upon Abram, and he slept." The vigilance of faith is over, and darkness succeeds the light, but this only tends to bring out the supreme value of the sacrifice which sustains faith.

Under the symbol of the smoking furnace and the burning lamp, God is seen as the Refiner of His people, passing them through the crucible of affliction, and pledging Himself to fulfil His promise of the inheritance (see Jeremiah 34:18). God pledges Himself to give the discipline needed in faith's failure, and the light for His own while passing through the darkness of this world towards their inheritance. In conclusion I quote the words of another: "How complete and beautiful is this then as the answer to Abram's second question, if with his eye upon himself, he asks, "How shall I know that I shall inherit it?" He is answered by the revelation of the infinite value of all that puts a holy God and a righteous One in both characters upon his side; underpinning faith in all its frailty

and securing holiness as fully as it secures the inheritance itself. . . . Ours is indeed a wider and a wondrous inheritance. But so ours is a sacrifice of infinite value, and which alone gave value to these symbols themselves. How precious to see God's eye resting in delight upon that which for Him had such significance, ages before its import could be revealed! How responsible we are whom grace has favoured with so great a revelation!" On further consideration Genesis 16:1-16 acquires a distinct measure of importance which is not readily discernible to the superficial reader. This is due in no small degree to those gleams of divine light projected in typical language into the sphere of doctrine relating to law and grace as set forth in Galatians. Furthermore, the truth announced in this chapter can only become intelligible to us as we view it in the greater and fuller light of the New Testament doctrine, and in this instance, as already mentioned, particularly in the Epistle to the Galatians, where the truth of law and grace is authentically defined and authoritatively established, and where the Spirit of God refutes the false doctrine of those whom it repudiates in no uncertain terms. It is in this spirit we must interpret Sarai's attitude to Hagar, where it is said, "And Sarai oppressed her: and she fled from her face."

Hagar, as the bondwoman, is typical of the legal system, which is "Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which is now, for she is in bondage with her children" (Galatians 4:25). What is of the world, what is legal and genders to bondage, all partakes of one character, and as such cannot be tolerated in the presence of Sarai, the freewoman, who is typical of the heavenly Jerusalem: "But the Jerusalem above is free, which is our mother." To continue the language, Paul, in writing to the Galatians, declares with a deep sense of urgency, "Cast out the maid servant and her son; for the son of the maid servant shall not inherit with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not maid servant's children, but children of the freewoman" (Galatians 4:30-31). Paul will have none of Hagar, the bondwoman. The foregoing remarks, while anticipating much that has to be mentioned, are explanatory of the apostle's attitude regarding that which is a grievous perversion of the glorious truths of Christianity, and in this, as in all other things, we would do well to be his imitators. Does it not appear at the beginning of chapter 16 that Abram had failed to benefit from the great lessons of the previous chapters? Otherwise it would be right to conclude that he would have been preserved from the course he takes here to secure what was bound up in God's infallible promise to him. Apart from the fulfilment of the promise regarding the coming of Isaac, the true seed in whom the promise reposed, nothing of all that lay in the heart of God, relative to these wonderful purposes, could have their fulfilment: "In Isaac, shall a seed be called to thee" (Genesis 21:12). Another consideration, very solemnizing to the saint who is truly exercised concerning the path of separation from the world presents itself to us in this chapter. What takes place here is but the fruit of Abram's brief sojourn in Egypt, for the Egyptian maid servant becomes a snare to him. In the previous chapter, God had shown to Abram that the true seed would be a heavenly seed, and that He would secure the inheritance and bring the seed into it on the ground of the death of Christ, which involved the complete setting aside of man; and in this way God had shown that all had been secured to Abram by indefeasible promise, on the ground of sacrifice. Abram fails in the test as to how far the light of these things had been made good in his soul.

How solemn is Abram's defection here, as in the energy of nature he seeks to bring in the seed which had been unalterably secured by the immutable promise of a God that cannot lie; yet this was the one who, at the moment the promise was given, "hesitated not at the promise of God, but

found strength in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what He had promised, He is able also to do; wherefore also it was reckoned to him as righteousness" (Romans 4:20-22). But the true seed cannot be brought in on the principle of law. Hagar, whose name means "flight" suggests an order of things which must disappear as not ministering in any way to the pleasure of God: "He takes away the first, that He may establish the second." For if that annulled (was introduced) with glory, much rather that which abides subsists in glory." It is rather remarkable that the turning aside of the Galatians is what we have presented to us in divine figure in Genesis 16:1-16. It is an attempt to secure heirs for the favour and pleasure of God in an entirely fleshly way; in a worldly and legal way. The principle can be seen all around us today. It is the line of Hagar; a way in which the grace of God is ignored, and faith is not in exercise. How all this is contrary to the mind and will and purposes of God, Whose will is to have heirs in the liberty of heavenly grace as those who are the true children of the Jerusalem above, children of the Freewoman. The principle of which Hagar is a type supposes that the flesh can bring pleasure to God. It is significant that Abram should move in this line; and how striking the resemblance seen figuratively in Abram and what marked the Galatians morally. They were true believers; they had the Spirit; yet they were taking up law and circumcision to make a fair show in the flesh, which caused the beloved Apostle to speak to them in language and terms which betray his great concern for them: "Have ye received the Spirit on the principle of works of law, or of the report of faith? Are ye so senseless? having begun in the Spirit, are ye going to be made perfect in flesh" (Galatians 3:2-3). The history of the children of Israel is extremely illustrative of the innate propensity of the human heart to gravitate towards legality with its resultant state of bondage. All God's ways with them in Egypt and the early days of the wilderness were intended to teach them that the grace of God was the one and only means of blessing. At the Red Sea, and in the early experiences of the wilderness, the manifestation of divine power on their behalf was the expression of His grace towards them: all their murmurings were met in purest grace, and were not accompanied by governmental chastening in any way. One would have thought that all they experienced at the hands of their covenant-keeping God would have bound their hearts for-ever to His grace, but no; how readily they turn from this to take up responsibility in the flesh, fatally pledging themselves to keep the law — that which was God's righteous requirement of man — only to find that all God had borne with in grace now invoked the penal sanctions of a broken law. This chapter under consideration shows us in figure the coming in of the law, the bringing in of what is of the flesh, that which gives man in the flesh status before men, but which ends in bondage. The pride of man despises grace, and this is seen in Hagar's attitude to Sarai. When we come under the influence of Jerusalem above, we make everything of God and Christ, we magnify the grace of God, rejoicing in the complete displacement of self and in the new place given to us in grace with Christ on the risen side of death. The whole system of heavenly grace is filled with Christ, the true Isaac, the Son of God.

Hagar can only bring forth what the angel describes as a "wild ass of a man:" the adoption of the legal line leads to biting and devouring one another, as the Apostle charges against the Galatians. The spirit of grace was lacking, the works of the flesh were greatly in evidence, and all this was the result of the will and pride of man being allowed. Hagar despised Sarai: the pride of the flesh despises the influence of grace; "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these things are opposed one to the other" (Galatians 5:17). It is only as we come under the power of the teaching of grace, applied by the Spirit of God, that the formative influences of the

heavenly Jerusalem are made good in our souls. Walking in the Spirit we shall in no way fulfil the flesh's lust, but shall display the fruits of the Spirit, against which there is no law. The influences of grace are brought to bear upon us by new covenant ministry, that which is the outcome of the love of God, supremely displayed in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

How necessary is it therefore that the bondwoman and her son should be cast out; the spirit of grace cannot tolerate what is legal, and what gives man a standing in the flesh. But though Hagar is cast out, she and her son become the objects of divine care in the grace of God. It is like the elder brother who would not come in to the feast: he had the same proud spirit as Ishmael; yet the father went out and entreated him. What a striking picture of the nation of Israel: all the testings of the wilderness only provided the complete justification of God's pronouncements as to their moral condition — a disobedient and opposing people — "a wild ass of a man," unsubdued. Like Ishmael, whose hand was against every man, and every man's hand against him, the Apostle says of Israel, "They please not God, and are contrary to all men." Yet, as having come from Abram, they are beloved for the fathers' sake. In this connection, how blessed to learn that God heard Hagar's cry, and provided for her refreshment the well Beer-lahai-roi, "Well of the living who was seen." God not only sees me, but has revealed Himself in grace that I may see Him.

God has ever been the God of all grace, and what God is, is always the line of blessing for man. This is so now, when the heavenly seed are being gathered together, and it will be so in the day when He will gather the earthly seed to inherit their wonderful inheritance. Israel shall then come under the sweet subduing power of heavenly grace; the unsubdued heart of stone, that made them like Ishmael, will become a heart of flesh. They will then acknowledge Christ, Whom they despised, as the true Seed — the true Isaac. When our hearts this place accord Him, When as Isaac He has come, Cast the bondsman out and ruleth As the Lord upon His throne;

Then our hearts bow down before Him, This world's glory waxeth dim, Every hindrance then must vanish, All be subject unto Him.

Genesis 17:1-27 appears as the rising of the sun after the darkness. God declares Himself to be the Almighty God, Who works all in His own almighty power. The incidents mentioned in the previous chapter tell their own sad tale of how greatly the man of faith was at variance with the mind of God respecting the manner in which all that God had promised was to be accomplished. Abram's movements were unmistakable indications of how grievous was his departure from the line on which God would bring in the seed of promise. He had to learn that all connected with the flesh must be set aside.

God now declares Himself as "El Shaddai," the God of power, the all-sufficient One, and the effect of this fresh revelation is immediate and significant — Abram fell on his face. He did not fall on his face when God appeared to him in Genesis 15:1-21; he stood, conscious of being in the light with Jehovah, without a shade of reserve. But now, prostrate at His feet, in silence and amazement, he finds that the God with Whom he has to do is the unchanging One; His love is the same, whether in rebuke or comfort. In this lowly place we see the lofty pretensions of man brought low, the resources of nature exposed in all their impotency, the energies of the flesh subdued and the will of man broken. Truly the light is good and pleasant to our eyes as faith apprehends the far-reaching implications of this divine title, which assures that all counseled by God for His pleasure will be carried through triumphantly.

Hitherto Abram had known God as a mighty God, but now he was to walk in dependence before Him as the Almighty. How greatly does the idea of power in ourselves limit the apprehension of the fact that "all power belongeth unto God." The great lesson of this chapter is that God can and must do everything if there is to be a true seed to inherit His promises. "The gracious work must all be Thine, begun and ended in Thy power." It is this vain expectation of something from nature, the flesh or law, which has resulted in great enfeeblement amongst the saints of God. What a wonderful day has dawned upon our souls when we can truly say, "All that we are we owe to Thee, Thou God of grace alone." In Genesis 24:1-67. Abraham says "The God before Whom I have walked;" but Jacob can only say "The God before Whom my fathers walked," and "The God Who fed me." Abraham and Isaac walked before God, but Jacob could only speak of God's care for him being too busy scheming to accomplish the divine end in his own way. He had to learn, after God's disciplinary ways with him, because of his tortuous ways, that the whole work must be of God.

We might paraphrase this sublime declaration: — Just walk before Me in the sense that My eye is constantly upon you for blessing, and in the sense of what My power can and will do, and all will be well. There can be little doubt that if we walked in the practical enjoyment of these things, the conditions of perfection would be present, and we would be content that the flesh, and all expectation from it, should be cut off. "For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and boast in Christ Jesus, and do not trust in flesh."

You will have noticed that at least ten times God says, in this chapter, "I will;" strangely contrasting with the "thou shalt" repeated in the law. It is extremely beautiful to note how God engages Himself to work out all He has set His heart upon. He says, "I will set my covenant between Me and thee;" thus establishing a definite bond between Himself and Abram in view of accomplishing His purpose. Consequent upon the establishment of this covenant, God gives him a new name, exercising His divine prerogative in this ennoblement of Abram. The name Abram signifies "great, or high, father;" setting forth what he was personally as head of the family of faith: but Abraham directs our attention to the greatness of the family of which he is the head, for it means "father of a multitude;" not only of individuals, but of nations. In giving this name God is indicating the vast results of the principle of faith and of promise. There is nothing so fruitful as the faith principle, it is "exceedingly fruitful," being the only principle that brings forth anything for God, because it counts on His power alone.

We now come to a most interesting part of this chapter: Abraham and all the males of his house are to be circumcised, which is a figure of the setting aside of the flesh. If God pledges Himself to bless His people and to be everything to them, He will not tolerate any confidence in the flesh on their part. In Romans 2:28 we are told "He is not a Jew who is one outwardly, neither that circumcision which is outward in flesh." This Scripture conveys to our minds beyond any doubt that true circumcision is an inward thing, a divine work "of the heart" and "in spirit." In Romans 4:11 we learn that Abraham "received the sign of circumcision as seal of the righteousness of faith which he had being in uncircumcision." The Spirit of God affirms in a most convincing way that the principle of Abraham's justification is faith, not works. How consistent and effective is the testimony of Scripture that no flesh shall glory in God's presence. It is very remarkable to find this very principle in the Old Testament (Jeremiah 9:23-24): "Let not the wise glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty glory in his might; let not the rich glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth

glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am Jehovah, who exercise loving-kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth, for in these things I delight." See also 1 Corinthians 1:27-31.

It is blessed to see therefore that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. But when was it reckoned to him? In circumcision or uncircumcision? The answer sweeps aside every vestige of fleshly presumption by which the religious Jew sought to make his position unassailable. But his own father Abraham was uncircumcised when he possessed the faith by which he was justified. Abraham therefore appears as the father of circumcision (the one in whom began that separation to God implied in it) to those who walked in the steps of that faith which he had while yet uncircumcised. To the child of God in this dispensation of grace, the Spirit as the seal of the righteousness of faith comes in as divine power, which alone is effectual for the practical setting aside of the flesh, and keeping it in the place of death. God intends that we should realise that adequate power has been made available by the presence of the Spirit, so that we may refuse the flesh and all its workings, and thus be manifested as His people. As another has said. "As having the Spirit, our capability is equal to our responsibility."

Let us turn now to Colossians 2:9. Circumcision stands here in relation to Christ. When we see that the fulness of the Godhead is in Christ, and that we are filled full in Him, surely we would gladly relinquish anything that would contribute in any way to the distinction of the flesh, and like the beloved Apostle "count all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord." In the presence of such a wealth of divine realities is it conceivable that we should require or desire anything outside of Christ? When we enter into the practical enjoyment of these surpassingly excellent things, we are prepared to accept what was done when He died — circumcision, the cutting off of the flesh absolutely in His death.

Then in Php 3:1-21, to which we have already referred, we find the true meaning of circumcision. If any man could have trusted in flesh, Paul could; but he gladly refused all in which man could glory: for, forgetting the things that were behind, he pressed on towards the mark for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus. It is very helpful to see both in Genesis 17:1-27 and Php 3:1-21 how circumcision comes in in connection with the inheritance. Paul had his eye on the inheritance in a risen and glorified Christ, which enabled him to accept the cutting off of every hope and glory belonging to man in the flesh. In the end of this chapter we see the solemn end of those who refused the truth of circumcision in relation to the cross (vers. 18, 19).

Sarai's name too is changed to Sarah, meaning "Princess." She is a figure of Israel as the vessel of promise; dead, according to the flesh, by God's power she becomes the princess to give birth to the seed of promise. Abraham intercedes for Ishmael, but it is God's will to give Isaac the first place. Isaac means laughter: how faith rejoices in discerning the wondrous results of God acting entirely from Himself and for His glory, in bringing in the true Isaac in resurrection power, the One in Whom the covenant would be established, and the inheritance secured. But Ishmael, type of stubborn and rebellious Israel is remembered in goodness by their covenant keeping God. Yet how sad to see that, while they claimed the privilege of the covenant, they never realised what was involved in the sign of the covenant: they always had confidence in the flesh. God had to tell them that they were uncircumcised in heart and ears. As we consider the amazing character of the scene depicted in the opening verses of Genesis 18:1-33, we are confronted with the inescapable

conviction that the truth of circumcision, presented in the previous chapter, must be learned and accepted before the elevating privilege here delineated can be enjoyed. It is truly an amazing scene which is opened up before us here, in which God not only appears to Abraham, but openly associates Himself with him in circumstances designed to convey the impression of how great is His pleasure in doing so. When God, the Almighty God, is known as the One who effects everything for His pleasure, and faith has learned to rejoice in the bringing in of the true Isaac as the Seed of promise, with the consequent displacement of all that is on the line of nature and the flesh, when circumcision is accepted and its truth experienced in a practical way, conditions are present in which the inestimable privilege of communion with heavenly Visitants can be enjoyed. John 14:18 gives us to expect this, "I will not leave you orphans, I am coming to you." Should not the desire to know this experimentally provoke in us a jealous care for moral suitability for communion with the Father and the Son? "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him" (John 14:21). In further considering the chapter before us, there is a suggestive contrast with the next chapter in which Lot is brought before us for the last time. The foundation of the contrast is seen in the respective positions occupied by Abraham and Lot; one sits at the door of his tent at Mamre, the other is found in the gate of Sodom; one is still the persistent pilgrim, cherishing the promises and looking for the city of which God is the Builder; the other, untrue to the pilgrim character, coveting a prominent place in a world ripening for judgment. It is remarkable that elsewhere in Scripture Lot is referred to as a "righteous man" (2 Peter 2:8), while in Genesis he is regarded as having settled down amidst the pollutions of a sinful world. The contrast is a beautiful instance of the style of Scripture. Although he was righteous before God, his unfaithful walk required that God should deal with him in government. God had called Himself the God of Abraham, but could not call Himself the God of Lot. How searching and solemn for each one of us is this! How is it with us? Is God confessing or denying us? We cannot dispose of this question by saying, I am a Christian. It is on this ground that the question assumes its serious aspect. In the narrative then, God makes Himself strange to Lot, and it is a matter of note that when God saved Lot from the holocaust of judgment that swept in all its devouring fury over the doomed cities, we are told, "And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in the midst of which Lot dwelt." God's dealings with Lot at this time were in keeping with the discipline his soul required, but the need for these disciplinary dealings being past, He can look back on that history, and select the elements of good which His eye only could discern; that which He noted all through, and which He placed to Lot's account, He makes mention of in His own good time. Such is our God! such is His holiness, such is His grace.

How blessed to see on the other hand the pilgrim ways of Abraham ministering to God's pleasure, and to read of the unstinted commendation written for our instruction, "By faith he sojourned as a stranger in the land of promise as a foreign country, having dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob . . . wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God; for He has prepared for them a city" (Hebrews 11:1-40). In the light of these things therefore it would be right to say that the tent at Mamre and the gate of Sodom are characteristic and contrasted things. As another has said, "Faith looking for a city which hath foundations, is content to scratch the earth with a tent pole merely." Such is the consistent life of Abraham, with few deviations, the pattern man of faith. As he sits in his tent door, under the cool, refreshing and spreading shade of the great oak at Mamre,

three illustrious visitants from heaven come to him for the specific purpose of announcing the coming of the true seed — Isaac. Once again the heart is refreshed in beholding how the man of faith is equal to this great occasion. Though appearing as men, the practical eye and heart of Abraham discerned the true character of One of the three visitors, so that he says, "Lord if now I have found favour in Thy sight, pass not away, I pray Thee, from Thy servant."

How disarming is the approach of the three strangers there is no distance there is intimacy; three men come, two of them angels, the other, Him before Whom the angels veil their faces; but they come as men, and keep this place. This is all the more striking because these same "men" appear in Sodom explicitly as angels. While the scene before us is capable of various interpretations, the one which endears itself to the heart is that which fore-shadows the coining of Immanuel, God with us, not as a mere Visitant, but as tabernacling in flesh.

"See within the manger God, on earth a Stranger! As a Babe in swaddling bands the world's Creator lies. By the great neglected, Unto scorn subjected, Though the angels haste to feast on Him their holy eyes." (J. Boyd) The faith displayed by Abraham in the reception of his visitors manifests itself in an engaging manner by the way he prepares to entertain them. There is no attempt to dismiss them as conscious of his own unworthiness, such as we find in the case of Job and Peter. In beautiful confidence of faith he meets the One who has come as man, and to whom he extends as man a human welcome. Can we not see in all this a faint analogy with the home at Bethany? It is blessed to see the readiness with which Abraham's hospitality was received on the part of his distinguished visitors: all is met with unhesitating acceptance: "He stood by them under the tree, and they did eat." How much there is in all this for the blessing and enrichment of our souls. We too can enjoy in the simplicity of faith communion with the blessed Lord in what speaks of Himself. These "three measures of meal" and the "calf tender and good" speak of none other than Christ Himself. Occupation with Christ is still the essential prerequisite for communion with Him.

There is an engaging simplicity and intimacy attaching to all this, introducing us into a sphere of divine truth where we enjoy communion with Divine Persons in all the intimacy of spiritual affection, as is suggested in John's Epistle, for, having spoken of that eternal life which was with the Father, he says, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye may have fellowship with us:" then he adds, "and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." If then our souls lack fellowship — if we are not in the full enjoyment of communion — would it not be of the first importance to ask ourselves if lack of occupation with Christ is not the prime cause of this unhappy state of things. The lack of this creates a void into which crowd those spiritually enervating influences of the world — the cares of this life, the pleasures of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, all combine to deprive the child of God of the desire to feed on this heavenly food, which is Christ, Himself.

All this finds its reflex in the children of Israel, who despised the manna, God's gracious, all-sufficient provision for the wilderness. With obduracy of heart they said, "Who will give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt for nothing, the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic; and now our soul is dried up: there is nothing at all but the manna before our eyes." But what does the Psalmist say of this manna that fell upon the dew by night? "Though he had commanded the clouds from above, and had opened the doors of

the heavens. And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them the corn of the heavens: Man did eat the bread of the mighty." Let us beware, beloved reader, lest we too should be guilty in the minutest degree of despising Christ, the true Manna, as the food of our souls, for, let us not forget, this was the first point of departure with the children of Israel: they turned from the manna.

How blessed to perceive that Abraham's tent is provided with that by which he can suitably entertain a heavenly guest. The "three measures of meal" is actually the "fine flour" of the meat offering spoken of in Leviticus, which speaks of the perfect Manhood of Christ, who is the Bread of God, and the food for His people. The calf, young and fresh, reminds us of Him who was the true and perfect Workman for God, who, in resistless energy, gave His shoulders to the yoke to carry out the will of God.

Now we have the wonderful announcement of the promise concerning the birth of Isaac, the son that was to gladden the heart of Abraham. We know of whom Isaac speaks, even Him of whom the prophet writes, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given;" One who came to dwell. Is not this the thought that lays hold of Paul's heart so powerfully in Ephesians 3:14-19?

We come now to the solemn disclosure of the doom of Sodom; and it is to the "Friend of God" that this communication is given. And the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? for I know him that he will command his household and his children after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." How sweet the encouragement in maintaining in one's household the authority, rapidly being given up in these days, from God and for God. And how beautiful is the intimacy with which Abraham intercedes with God for the doomed city, over which the dark clouds of divine wrath were already lowering; and how patiently God answers the man of faith when he says "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" How sure and stable is faith's resting place, as the blighting winds of infidelity and agnosticism blow with increasing fury, in knowing that peace which passeth all understanding, a peace that has been righteously established on an enduring foundation. Yes! the Judge of all the earth will do right, though, for the present, man's proud will may appear to be in the ascendancy.

There can be little doubt that, in comparing the 18th chapter of Genesis with the 19th chapter, the Spirit of God has chosen words to emphasise the contrastive features of the circumstances and environment in which Abraham and Lot are found: every circumstance which would accentuate the contrast is designedly noted. For instance, we are told in Genesis 18:1-33 that Jehovah appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the tent door in the heat of the day. Some one might remark that to dwell in a tent in a hot, eastern country was commonplace, and therefore a circumstance too trivial to be regarded in any spiritual sense. But to so regard this circumstance is to over-simplify it, and to ignore the rich spiritual instruction and admonition the Spirit intends it should yield to us; for when we turn to the 11th of Hebrews, where we have a record of the diversity of faith's expression in the great cloud of witnesses, we are expressly told in the 9th verse, "By faith he (Abraham) sojourned as a stranger in the land of promise as a foreign country, having dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Hebrews 11:9. Is this not a wonderful connection in which to find the simple statement, "Having dwelt in tents?" How

timeously does it speak to us of the thought of pilgrimage and strangership in this world, in view of citizenship in heaven. And what is the full measure and character of this pilgrimage and strangership! Nothing less than that is encompassed in that touching declaration of the beloved Son to the Father, "They are not of the world, as I am not of the world." How solemn the consideration dear saint of God that, it is possible, despite this precious pronouncement from the lips of the Divine Son, we may be morally like those of Pergamos, to whom, it is said, "I know where thou dwellest, where the throne of Satan is;" like Lot, "Sitting in the gate of Sodom," the place of authority in the world — not merely settling down in the world, but administering its affairs. In human assessment, he had "got on in the world." At first, he had "pitched his tent toward Sodom;" but when we come to Genesis 19:1-38 his tent is no longer mentioned, it is his house: he had given up his pilgrim character, and had settled down in the world.

These are solemn considerations for the child of God! Are we to walk in uncompromising fidelity and devotion in the footsteps of that "Ever homeless stranger," in this world, enjoying as our present portion the sweet foretaste of that moment of surpassing excellence when, "With Thee in garments white, Lord Jesus we shall walk?" or are we to covet and solicit the favour of a world where the blessed Son of Man had not where to lay His head?

Let us consider some more of these distinctly contrastive features. Two angels come to Sodom — not men as was the case with Abraham here is distance, not an atmosphere in which communion can be known and enjoyed. Evening too has fallen: how different from the heat of the day, the sun "shining in its strength." But here the purple and golden banners of the evening sky are furled away, and gloom settles down upon the whole scene; a gloom soon to be intensified by the dark menacing clouds of divine wrath, which will only be relieved by the light of that awful conflagration of divine judgment that will consume the cities of the plain and their inhabitants. The angels come at night as though not to be seen; and while Lot's hospitality was ready and spontaneous, there was not the readiness of acceptance on the part of the two angels as there was in the three men who willingly accepted of Abraham's hospitality. In the 18th chapter we are told that when Abraham lifted up his eyes he saw three men standing near him. The true rendering of this word is "stationed themselves," and conveys the meaning of a desire to remain there in circumstances wholly congenial to them. Is not this in marked contrast to the behaviour of the two angels who, to the urgent pleadings of Lot replied, "Nay; but we will abide in the street all night?" Are we exercised, according to the Spirit of God, to be found morally suitable for the present enjoyment of communion with God? The choice is ours: are we to be found in the way of Abraham, or in the way of Lot?

"Be not to me my God, as One that turned aside To tarry for a night, and trod His onward path. Abide With me as light divine, that brings into my breast Those gladdening scenes e'en now as mine, soon my eternal rest."

Lot's importunate entreaties, however, prevail with the angelic messengers who, as we learn further on, have been sent in the providential ways of God for Lot's preservation in the eventual overthrow of the guilty cities. What Lot sets before the angels displays a refined sense of discernment, which is all the more touching as we consider the environment in which this was eaten. "And he made them a repast, and baked unleavened cakes, and they ate." Here was one who vexed his righteous soul from day to day with the lawless works of ungodly men; himself apart

from the corruption around, who could provide that which in every way was suited to his heavenly guests, but who had no power to maintain what was pleasing to God, because of unholy and defiling associations. How immeasurable was the distance between Abraham and Lot, who, though they started off together, reached a very different goal. How truly do the Scriptures say, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." In such unholy surroundings it is impossible to enjoy communion with those whose presence can only prove to be a perpetual reproach and rebuke to one who has in his ways renounced the path of faith. Unlike Abraham, he is not master of his circumstances, but they of him.

How solemn the ribald intrusion of these ungodly men of Sodom as Lot entertains his heavenly guests; and despite his earnest entreaties and dishonourable overtures to these wicked men, the good he seeks is spurned, and judgment falls on those with whom he had chosen to associate himself. How solemn and searching is all this in a day when heaven is regarded as a sheltered haven to be safely reached at the end of life's journey, and not as the present dwelling-place of the saint of God; and when saints — for whom Christ gave Himself, to deliver them from this present evil world — count it no shame to be citizens of this world, to be yoked in every possible way, commercially, politically, socially, and even ecclesiastically, with unbelievers. The Word of God insists that one's personal state is reflected in the associations voluntarily assumed. Not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers" is the condition God gives on which He can be a Father to us; and to be purged from vessels of dishonour fits one to "be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and pre-pared to every good work" (2 Corinthians 6:17-18 :2 Timothy 2:21). Those who seek to obey these Scriptures must be prepared to have every charge of narrow-mindedness and legality levelled against them by those who would seek to establish that strange amalgam of friendship with the world and friendship with God, spite of the solemn declaration of God's Word, "Whoever therefore is minded to be the friend of the world is constituted enemy of God." Despite such plainness of speech on God's part, evangelical leaders identify themselves publicly with modernists, and whole companies of professed Christians gather together in hearty fellowship with those who are regardless of the Lord's glory. How solemn indeed that many, who would protest strongly of their allegiance to Christ, can nevertheless be so easily content to leave Him aside on any utilitarian plea by which they may have fellowship with His rejectors. As has already been remarked, communion was impossible for Lot in Sodom. How is it possible to say to the world "I will walk with you," and stretch out the other hand to God saying "Walk with me?" How little with most of us is Christ the abiding occupation and enjoyment of our souls, and when we would thus enjoy communion with Christ, how many are the unwelcome intrusions to mar its enjoyment — just as unwelcome as the men of Sodom were to Lot: but the responsibility for which he could not evade — nor can we! Let us not forget that Abraham, the man of faith, had no such intrusions.

If Lot had not a calf "tender and good" to entertain his heavenly guests, as Abraham had, he had the "unleavened bread" with which the Apostle Paul bids us keep our passover feast, that which speaks of "sincerity and truth." How then may we interpret this in relation to Lot, whose ways and associations were so far removed from these? Is not the solemn answer found on the first occasion the feast was observed? where we read, "And the people took their dough before it was leavened . . . for it was not leavened, because they were thrust out of Egypt" (Exodus 12:34-39). Does not this show that their obedience to the divine command was the fruit of their being forced

out of Egypt, and therefore the result of stern necessity? And in tracing the church's history, do we not see many points of resemblance as to the circumstances in which the feast has thus been kept? Has it not been often the world's hostility that has forced the church into the place of separation from it? (See also Psalms 119:67; Psalms 119:71). With Lot there is no recovery, and in him we see the complete prostration of faith: his life ends in shame and dishonour, as he sows the seeds of a terrible harvest by bringing into being two nations, Moab and Ammon, who proved themselves to be the determined and implacable enemies of the people of God. May all these solemn realities speak with divine admonition and timely warning to our souls, as we remember that as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." In Genesis 20:1-18; Genesis 21:1-34, which we are now to consider, we are introduced to a people who, because of their fierce and unrelenting opposition to God's earthly people, figure very prominently in the after-history of the children of Israel, and who, throughout the times of Samson, Eli, Samuel and Saul, hold the chief place among the implacable enemies, whom God uses to scourge His erring people. David defeats and subjugates them, but they rise again in the times of his degenerate successors, still marked with the same relentless, ruthless and insatiable spirit of antagonism, despite the many unmistakable indications of divine intervention on behalf of His wayward and wilful people. The Philistines, for such is their name, were not Canaanites, although sons of Ham.

It is not only a matter of interest, but of great spiritual instruction, to refer to Genesis 10:1-32, where we find the origin of those nations whose histories are so intimately and vitally interwoven with that of the people of God. Many of the nations, who were afterwards great adversaries of Israel, sprang from Ham, who was under the curse. We find many familiar names there, such as Babylon, Nineveh, Egypt, the Canaanites and the Philistines, and all these were the inveterate enemies of Israel; all belong to the family under the curse. But it is particularly with the Philistines that we have to do at this juncture in the history of Abraham, and it is a notable fact that these were always found in the land of Canaan, in a part of the country adjoining Egypt, with which they had the most unhindered and unobstructed communication. The spiritual interpretation of these historical facts brings home to the exercised soul that morally, the world, through which we wend our pilgrim way to Canaan's rest, is marked by the same spirit of opposition and antagonism as Abraham encountered in his day. These Philistines therefore, spiritually interpreted, are natural men in heavenly things, and their typical importance must correspond to their place in an inspired history of "things" which "happened unto them for types" or "ensamples," and their general history and character throw great light on truths of great moral import.

We have seen in Genesis 18:1-33; Genesis 19:1-38 the significant contrast between the privilege of faith enjoyed by the truly circumcised that is one who accepts death upon all that is of nature and the flesh — and the loss suffered by unbelief, even when found in a righteous person who has not accepted circumcision, who walks in practice after the flesh. Lot was providentially cared for in the faithfulness of God, but faith's privilege was not his. In Genesis 20:1-18; Genesis 21:1-34 we have another contrast. We see the believer walking in such a way that he comes under the rebuke of the world (20); then we see him walking so that the world has to acknowledge that God is with him in all that he does (Genesis 21:22). In the former chapter, the same weakness and failure betray themselves in Abraham as were evidenced in chapter 12, where he denies his true relationship with Sarah; but the denial here assumes a much more serious form. This is generally the case when unbelief is left unjudged. When faith is at a low ebb, how easy it is to succumb to

importunities, and to indulge in the shameful subterfuges of unbelief. The sharp knives of Gilgal can alone deal adequately with the morbid out-growths of the flesh in whatever form it may seek to express itself. The working of unbelief in Genesis 12:1-20 was in connection with Abraham giving up the heavenly position, leaving Bethel and going down to Egypt; in chapter 20, it was after the promise that Sarah would be the mother of Isaac, with whom God's covenant would be established, and who would inherit all the promises that God had pledged Himself to fulfil. The special testimony in chapter 12 was of the inheritance; in chapter 20 it was concerning the heir. Is it not a very solemn reflection, dear reader, that the special testimony of the moment was the focal point against which all the efforts of the enemy were directed with unabated tenacity. If Abraham had been in the practical faith of the promise which had been divinely confirmed to him, he would have realised how essential it was to maintain the true relationship in which he stood to Sarah; it was the essential thing in relation to the testimony of God at that moment. As another has said, "The top shoot goes first."

Unbelief, weakness or fear always leads to the giving up of the choicest thing; and so Abraham fails at Gerar as long before he had failed in Egypt. These Philistines too are but Egyptians, though in Canaan; even as the world, though come into the church, is still the world. Sarah, as typifying the covenant of grace, belongs still, as always, to the man of faith; but how often has he failed to assert uncompromisingly this absolutely exclusive claim! It is a solemn warning for every true-hearted child of God, that one so privileged — one who enjoyed such nearness to God — should so grievously depart from faith, as to his public testimony. But has each one of us not to own with deep shame and sorrow of heart, as we review our own history in the light of Abraham's sad failures, that these are but faithful portrayals of our own failures by the way. Have we not known what it was to speak and walk inconsistently with the path of faith, even after having tasted the joy of heavenly things. The unfriendly eyes of the world would not always have detected in our walk and ways that we were in the dignity and blessedness of our calling and privilege. It is sad indeed to see how the thoughts of nature can come in and practically set aside the thoughts of faith.

Abraham was afraid, the fear of man had been a snare to him; "they will kill me," he exclaimed. But the root of this sad defection is laid bare in verse 13, where we read, "God caused me to wander from my father's house." Is this Abraham's estimate of that sovereign call of the God of glory, that reached him when he was worshipping other gods? What a low and natural conception of that wondrous call from the unseen. The call, the inheritance and the privileges of a heavenly man were all lost sight of for a moment in "God caused me to wander from my father's house." Is this the thought or the confession of faith? But is Abraham alone in this? How often do we find words on our lips that do not rise above the level of natural men? In the storm, the disciples cried out in great distress, "We perish." In the wilderness they said, "Whence should we have so many loaves to satisfy so great a crowd?" When the Lord warned them against the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, they said, it is "because we have taken no bread;" and again, when He told His disciples that He had meat to eat that they knew not of, they said, "Has any one brought Him anything to eat?" Peter did seem to rise to thoughts of faith when he confessed Jesus to be "the Christ, the Son of the living God;" but almost immediately he displays how far removed he was in spirit from His divine Master in relation to the path of suffering that lay before Him, as he exclaims, "This shall in no wise be unto Thee." This all shows how quickly the thoughts of faith can be

departed from; and when this occurs, there is sure to be the denial of the relationships in which we stand spiritually.

It is good to see how God's controlling hand is over the principal actors in this scene, acting in perfect consistency with His nature and attributes, as the One Who can snatch victory out of defeat, and lay signal honour upon His failing servant by saying to Abimelech, "he is a prophet and will pray for thee, that thou mayest live." God always loves to honour His people. Think of how wonderfully this is brought out in Job 42:1-17, where God says, "My servant Job shall pray for you, for him will I accept; lest I deal with you after your folly, for you have not spoken of Me rightly like My servant Job." It was necessary for Abraham however, that he should come under the rebuke of the world. In spite of the world's hatred to Christ and those who seek to be true to Him, it expects a standard of behaviour eminently greater and more elevated than its own, even though it regards such conduct with critical and disapproving eyes.

Sarah was the vessel of promise for the bringing in of Isaac — typically, Christ — and because of this the enemy was behind all the weakness and fear of Abraham and also the actions of Abimelech to defeat this purpose. How solemn is the admonition contained in all this for our souls. Depend upon it, if we seek to effect a compromise with the world, it will entail the denial of our relationship with Christ, and the moral inability to present Him in testimony to those whose capricious friendship we have bought at such a price. The Galatians provide us with a very instructive illustration of what has been asserted: they were taking ground as having "fallen from grace," which involved the denial of their divine relationships.

How humbling too the rebuke Abimelech administers to Sarah! She ought to have been veiled, as Abraham's wife; then Abimelech would not have seen her. Twice in the fourth chapter of the Song of Songs the veil is mentioned. "Thine eyes are doves behind thy veil;" "As a piece of pomegranate are thy temples, behind thy veil" (vv. 1, 3). All the varied beauties that mark the saints of God are for the eye of Christ alone. The moment anything is done to attract the eye of man, the true character and comeliness of the spiritual life are gone. When Rebecca saw Isaac she veiled herself; a very precious indication that she was to be for Isaac exclusively. The church ought to have been always veiled — to have kept herself exclusively for Christ, instead of displaying herself before the world that has refused and rejected her Lord.

Unmoved from His purpose of wisdom and love, despite the failure and unfaithfulness of Abraham, God fulfils the promise He had made. A son is given to gladden Abraham's life: Isaac is born; a type surely of a greater, in whom all the promises find completion. The "great feast" which Abraham provides signifies that wondrous day in the history of the soul when Christ is acknowledged as the only One to have the place of unchallenged supremacy. This has been called the "coronation day;" setting forth in figure "Christ's day," when He shall be supreme and without a rival. But there is one discordant voice heard amid the rejoicings of the great feast — Ishmael mocks! When Isaac is given his rightful place, the true character of Ishmael is exposed. And it is the bringing in of the true Isaac, and according Him the place of undisputed pre-eminence, that exposes all that man is after the flesh and arouses the deep enmity of his heart. If we insist that man after the flesh must go, and that Christ alone must have the place of pre-eminence, we shall find that Ishmael is still a mocker. The flesh in us cannot endure the thought of being set aside; but it must go! The bondman and her son must be cast out; and this

having been accomplished, we see Abraham in moral superiority in the place where his weakness had been so apparent, so that Abimelech has to own that God is with him. This is the result of Isaac getting his rightful place.

We then find that Abimelech's servants had violently taken away a well of water which Abraham had dug. (It is worthy of note that the hostility of the Philistines towards Abraham and Isaac is manifested in relation to their wells). As already noted, the Philistines represent those who are professedly on divine ground, but who have not faith. Their undeviating purpose is to deprive the saints of these sources of spiritual refreshment. Unlike a pool or a cistern, a well is fed and kept in freshness by a living spring, and is a store of refreshment from which we can draw at all times. The ministry of Christ by the Spirit is necessary to maintain us in spiritual freshness and vigour; the Spirit Himself being the source of the never-failing spring. If we wish to have unhindered enjoyment of the well, we must see to it that we honour Christ alone, and do not give Ishmael, the man after the flesh, any place. The seven ewe lambs might suggest the spirit of yieldingness and of grace towards those who have been hostile. "Let your gentleness be known of all men; the Lord is near" ((Php 4:5). The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle towards all. The presence of God with Abraham, and the grace displayed by Him, result in Abraham's title to the well being established. May we cherish more and more the source and means of divine refreshment, which the Father Himself has provided for us; and in the spirit of grace seek to make good our claim to the wells in the presence of those who would deprive us of them. In Genesis 22:1-24 we have the historical account of that which is so beautifully and touchingly epitomised by the Spirit of God in the Epistle to the Hebrews. "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up His only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure ' (Hebrews 11:17-19). It might be helpful, at this point, to note with reference to that remark-able expression ". . . he that had received the promises," that despite the fact that Abraham was asked to offer up Isaac, the one in whom all the promises reposed, he had so found that inward strength in faith as to lay hold upon the One Who had made these wonderful promises, and which he had taken up and appropriated, although in the present circumstances it seemed as though they had been given to be capriciously revoked.

It may seem strange, at first thought, that God should put to the proof a faith He held in such precious regard; but this was Abraham's justification by works before men; God demonstrating before others that which he had long before seen and borne witness of. This is what James refers to, "What is the profit, my brethren, if any one say he have faith, but have not works? can faith save him? . . . Show me thy faith without works, and I from my works will show thee my faith . . . Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and that by works faith was perfected" (James 2:18-22). In all this, the spiritual mind, instructed and taught of the Spirit by the Word, sees yet another indisputable and convincing proof of the plenary inspiration of the Holy Scriptures; whereas the hyper-critical disputant, his mind evilly disposed by agnostic prejudices, sees nothing but irrelevant contradictions. The child of God discerns with ever growing wonderment and delight how each inspired pen-man, as borne along by the Spirit of God, adds to the harmonious completeness of the Word of God, which is indivisible in character and divine in origin; so that in the doctrine of

justification by works, as set forth in the Epistle of James, he sees how this forms an integral and complementary part of the emancipating doctrine of justification by faith, as so strenuously affirmed by the Apostle Paul in the Epistle to the Romans.

Paul gives us the inward principle, James, the outward development of that principle; but there must be the inward principle before there can be the outward acting. Abraham was justified when he believed God, and was accounted righteous in virtue of his faith this was his secret standing before God. But he was also justified when he offered up Isaac: this was before men, and in this way the reality of his faith in God was demonstrably witnessed to by God, so that the trial of Abraham's faith, which is more precious than of gold that perisheth, and which was sustained to a triumphant conclusion, stands forth in the most honoured position. The trial of faith, at the hand of God Himself, invariably results in great enrichment of soul, as we acquire an enhanced sense of the measureless resources which are available for us.

How these great men of faith, Abraham, Paul, Peter and others exemplify in a pre-eminent degree the truth of these words, "Ye have . . . seen the end of the Lord: that the Lord is full of tender compassion and pitiful" (James 5:11).

How touching, though rebuking to us, the unquestioning, unhesitating obedience exhibited by Abraham in the carrying out of God's command. There is no emotional outburst, no plaintive entreaties; nature is entirely silent and subservient to the will of Him Who has demanded so great a sacrifice. All is measured with divine intent and precision, and in language calculated to impress Abraham with the magnitude of his sacrifice. "And He said, Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, Isaac, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and there offer him up for a burnt-offering on one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." But faith sees in all that took place between Abraham and Isaac the movements of another Father and Son, and in these carefully measured ingredients of sorrow which filled Abraham's cup to the brim, can we not discern the shadowy outline of a sacrifice transcendentally greater than this by far? Yes, it is the Father laying bare the deep and changeless love of a heart that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all.

"Take now thy son, thine only son," God says to Abraham, and how significant is this in the light of that profound Scripture, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Such is the manner and the measure of the love He has manifested to us in the gift of His only begotten Son, the Son Whom He loved. To some, this is too human a term to use, and profess to do Him honour in denying that this is His divine Name. They own Him Son of God as "that holy thing," born of the virgin Mary; they own Him too as "God over all blessed for ever," but His eternal Sonship they do not own. As another has said, "Had the Father no bosom before Christ was born on earth?" If there was no Son then, there was no Father. "He that denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father." And if such be the case, what of all the blessed consequences which imply and necessitate the existence of this eternal relationship; "The Father has sent the Son as Saviour of the world;" and "God gave His only begotten Son." This expression is in contrast to His title "First-begotten;" "First-born among many brethren." The former as decisively excludes others from sharing with Him, as the latter just as definitely includes others. And when "The Word became flesh and tabernacled amongst us," the glory of Deity, seen in the tabernacle of His manhood, was

"the glory as of an only-begotten with a Father, full of grace and truth." Again, if only God could reveal God, it is "The only-begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father" Who hath declared Him. This Blessed One, whom no one knows but the Father, was the nursling of His love, daily His delight in a past eternity. "The Father only that blest Name of Son can comprehend." How John, whose peculiar theme is the manifestation of God in the Word made flesh, loves to bring before us the surpassing glory of Him Who is the only-begotten." The Jews, the unrelenting persecutors of the Son of God, understood that in claiming God to be His Father, the Lord Jesus made Himself equal with God (John 5:18). How very solemn, in spite of the clearest testimony of these and many other Scriptures, certain men, in our own day, have had the temerity to say that the Sonship of our blessed Lord constitutes Him inferior to the Father. Our safety, in considering the truth relative to Divine Persons, lies in adhering unshakably to the sublime pronouncements of the Word of God. When the waves of infidelity lap with all their subtle, insidious, and disintegrating power, or dash themselves in all their destructive and unrestrained fury, we are safe only as we take our stand on "the impregnable rock of holy Scripture;" for in this infallible source of divine communication, the revelation of the Father and the Son is the very essence of Christianity. In considering the offering up of Isaac, how significantly do these precious words fall upon our ears, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all" (Romans 8:32). It is the loved object of a father's heart that is to be delivered up in this most touching and affecting scene. Think of what Isaac was to Abraham; his son; his only one; his loved one, whose name conjures up the deep joy which his birth occasioned in the heart of the aged patriarch. And in all this we have a faint foreshadowing of what lay in the heart of the blessed God. Who can tell what it was to God to give up His blessed Son to death? a death which was the full manifestation of the love of God. How precious are these Scriptures that reveal to us the deep, intense affection that existed between the Father and the Son; how spontaneous the reciprocation of affection! "On this account the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again," and "But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father has commanded me, this I do" (John 10:17; John 14:31). The Lord Jesus was that perfect "burnt offering" in which was expressed the sweet savour of perfect affections devoted to God in death. Truly His death was "an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour" (Ephesians 5:2). All the offerings mentioned in Genesis partook of the character of the burnt-offering, and in this chapter we are presented with another aspect in the development of the truth concerning this particular offering. It has been suggested that in Abel's offering we have the thought of excellence; then in Noah's the thought of cleanness — moral purity: but what we have here is a beautiful and touching picture of the affections involved in it. How precious is this aspect of the death of Christ, inasmuch as it was entirely for the pleasure of God.

Think of how the Son cherished the thoughts of the Father concerning those who were to be His companions in glory, consequent upon His work of redemption; and who, in order to bring these precious thoughts into effect offered Himself in all the fragrance of affection "which no suffering stayed," by which He provided a holy and divine basis on which all the purposes of eternal love could be brought to fruition.

How the Father cherished these affections which were expressed in so supreme and profound a measure in death. We are so prone to consider only what the Lord Jesus took away in His death; but how supremely great is that which His death secured for the pleasure of the Father. Christ has

also displayed, in the offering of Himself, the affections of sonship in Manhood; and the fruit of that offering will be that the "many sons," whom He is bringing to glory in triumph, will respond to God eternally in all the strength of these affections proper to sonship. In Isaac's submission to the will of his father we see obedience in its perfection and beauty. He was not the child often pictured to us; he was in the full vigour of early manhood; yet how perfect and absolute is his submission, and it is this which gives emphasis to the touching words twice repeated, "they went both of them together." The Father had sent the Son to accomplish His will, and the Son had come to do it; and in the Gospel of John we read, "I am not alone, but I and the Father Who has sent me" (John 8:16); the Father and the Son are going on together. Again, the Son said, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work" (John 5:17), and "He that hath sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, because I do always the things that are pleasing to him" (John 8:29). These and many more Scriptures can be adduced as supporting the peculiar suitability of these words to the Father and the Son. Indeed, the whole of John's Gospel can be read in the light of these words, "They went both of them together."

Throughout the trial of Abraham's faith, we must not lose sight of the fact that the faith of resurrection cheered his heart; ". . . counting that God was able to raise (Isaac) even from among the dead, whence also he received him in a figure" (Hebrews 11:19). The promises of God were assured in him of whom He had said, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." If therefore God called for him to be offered up, the resurrection power of God must restore him from the very flames of the altar; and indeed he was restored, for Abraham received him from the dead as "in a figure." This figure of resurrection must be borne in mind, for it is to Christ in resurrection that the events following typically refer.

There appears to have been no suggestion previously of the action of resurrection power: it is an entirely new feature brought in in connection with this type. Abraham had said, "I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." Yes, Isaac would "come again." It could not be otherwise to Abraham's faith, considering who Isaac was, for, as has already been stated, all the promises of God and their accomplishment were wrapped up in him. And how certain it is of the true Isaac that He would "come again," for the "pains of death" must be loosed, "Neither wilt Thou allow Thy Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt make known to me the path of life" (Psalms 16:10-11). The power of resurrection was inherent in Him, ". . . marked out Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by resurrection of the dead" (Romans 1:4). He was "The Resurrection and the Life." And so Isaac is spared; the ram caught in a thicket by his horns is his substitute; a beautiful type surely of Him who, in all the energy of divine love, offered Himself in devoted and unswerving obedience for the carrying out of the Father's will, even unto death. It has been truly said that Christ was held by the strength of His love for the accomplishing of all that precious work that was needful for the glory of God and for the gratification of the Father's heart, so that the many sons might be brought to glory. The voice of God stayed the hand of Abraham and pre-served the life of Isaac, but there was no voice from heaven to stay the rod of divine judgment that fell in all its crushing power upon the blessed head of our sinless Substitute. No alleviating power or influence was allowed to enfeeble the sense of divine wrath that pressed in upon His holy soul. He could say, "I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold." This, however, was more in accordance with the character of the sin-offering, where the Holy One of God was "made sin for us, that we might become the

righteousness of God in Him." On the cross He bore our sins, and as made sin was forsaken of God, and endured the fire of divine wrath against sin. As the sin-offering, God took up the question of sin with Him according to His holiness, and in this connection the fire of necessity takes the character of wrath. But as the burnt-offering, the character in which He is set forth typically in this chapter, the fire brings out all the sweet savour and acceptable fragrance of the spotless Victim. Under the most intense searching and testing, even as suffering in the outside place, even when forsaken of God, having reached the culmination of His measureless sufferings, suffering all that was due to the righteousness and holiness of God, even then the searching action of the fire only brought into more distinctive relief the superlative and surpassing excellence of the sinners' Surety. The intense searching and testing of the fire as applied to Christ, the Beloved Son, only disclosed His inward devotion and perfection.

How beautifully the chapter ends with the introduction of Rebecca — beautiful type of the church as brought to Christ, risen and glorified in heaven. It is a risen and glorified Christ who secures the bride. The true Isaac has been offered up, and now another divine Person is brought typically into view — the Holy Spirit. With in-creasing wonder we contemplate the movements of the Spirit of God, Who makes every circumstance subserve the end for which He came into the world; sent of the Father for the express purpose of securing a bride for the Son of His love; and this is the work which is going on in the present dispensation, and will go on, in spite of all the evil machinations of the enemy to avert it, until in the glorious and triumphant consummation of the ways of God, the bride, with bridal affections for her absent lover, will say in unison with the Spirit, "Come, Lord Jesus."

Lord Jesus come! The Man of sorrows once, The Man of patience waiting now — The Man of joy, for ever, Thou, Come, Saviour, come!

Yes, the "Man of joy," the true Isaac — he will laugh. In Genesis 23:1-20 we have the intimation of the death of Sarah, the vessel of promise. Sarah's death typifies the passing, for the time, of Israel and the promises in relation to the earth, so as to make way for the heavenly blessings and relationships according to the wondrous purposes of the Father concerning the Son and all that He has counseled for Him. The Son has gone through death, and taken up a heavenly position, in consequence of which the Bride is being formed here upon earth, united by indissoluble links of undying affection to her heavenly Bridegroom — nourished and cherished by Him as members of His body — "we are of His flesh, and of His bones;" for it was from the side of the last Adam, so to speak, when He lay in the deep sleep of death, that the church is being built.

How blessed it is to consider that all our relationships with the Father and the Son have been established on the risen side of death, beyond any and every possibility of failure or breakdown — eternal, unchangeable, inviolate and enduring. What fact is more wonderful than this there is a risen Man in the glory of God? How blessed it is to behold the risen Son of God as He is presented to us in John 20:1-31, announcing to Mary the establishment of that wonderful relationship with the Father, "I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God."

Mary had been led by the unerring instinct of affection to the place where the body of her beloved Lord had been laid, but her night of weeping was dispelled by the radiant beams of that glorious resurrection morning as she heard the voice of Him, Who had emerged triumphant from death's dark domain, announcing to her the establishment of a relationship surpassingly great in character

and extent, and founded on His resurrection. He had laid down His life and taken it again, as He had said in John 10:17; but He had taken it upon new and heavenly conditions, suited to that place of surpassing glory and excellence He was so soon to occupy at the Father's right hand.

Mary imagined that He had come back, like Lazarus, on the old footing; but she had to learn that, as risen from the dead, all her links with Him now must be of a heavenly character. This Blessed One, in spite of that perfect life, which was ever marked by every moral beauty and perfection, was not restored to continue life in this world; but, thrice blessed it is to consider, He is still Man though in the glory; resurrection for Him did not involve discarding the Manhood He had assumed in incarnation. No element of corruption lurked in the holy body prepared for Him, even as had been written of old, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hades, neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt make known to me the path of life." But even in the contemplation of these astounding truths, let us not be limited in our apprehension, or in our conception of them, for this glorious One was not only raised from the dead, but was set down by God at His own right hand in the heavenly places. There, He is far above all the great spiritual heavenly beings, and the fame of His Name transcends that of all the great of earth or heaven, either of the present age or of the great age that is yet to come. This glorified Man is not only above them all, but is far above them. He is Head and Chief over every one of them, and further, He is Head to His body, the church, "the fulness of Him Who fills all in all."

How excellent the thought that, in the risen and exalted Man, Christ Jesus, we see the pledge and beginning of those Bright and blessed scenes, Where sin can never come, Whose sight our longing spirit weans From earth where yet we roam. In spirit we are there already, associated with our true Isaac who, as the last Adam, has breathed into us His own Spirit; and we await that wonderful moment when the saints as a mighty army shall stand forth in glory, our bodies of humiliation transformed "into conformity to His body of glory, according to the working of the power which He has even to subdue all things to Himself." In continuance of the thought concerning the offering up of Isaac as typifying the offering up of the Son of the Father's love, we would do well to remind ourselves that types are essentially illustrative in character and not totally expressive of the truths they are intended to convey. The importance of this cannot be too greatly emphasised when dealing with that which the Spirit brings before us in this 24th Chapter of Genesis. Here, in stringently typical language, the counsels of the Father for the securing of a suited companion for His Son are unfolded. The true Isaac has been offered as a burnt-offering, and on the ground of this every thought of the Father's heart can be brought into effect. Nothing will be lacking that will gratify His own heart and that of the Son of His love.

We have the death of Sarah, the vessel of promise, in Chapter 23; Sarah gives place to Rebekah, the mother to the bride. Sarah bespeaks the covenant of grace in connection with the people "of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came" (Romans 9:5). Sarah's death typifies the passing, for the present, of Israel and the promises connected with the earth, so that a new order of things might be brought in, characterized by heavenly blessings and relationships. Isaac is typically the heavenly One, Who went into death to lay the basis on which every thought of the Father might be fully realised.

Here, Isaac remains in Canaan, as Christ in heaven, and the Spirit of God, having all the fulness of the divine treasury "under His hand," comes down as the un-named servant. Thorough

devotedness to the father's will and to the interests of the son marked the servant's course; he is thus truly representative of One Who does not speak from Himself, or seek His own glory, even as we read, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me" (John 15:26). See also John 16:13-14. In contemplating the prominent features of this exceedingly interesting and instructive narrative, one is brought to the conclusion that to give this chapter an exclusively Gospel application would be to falsify the purpose for which it was written. The servant is sent by Abraham to find a bride in every way suited to Isaac. In the first place, the bride must be suitable in origin; none of the daughters of the Canaanites could be a worthy or suited companion for Isaac, even as Abraham directed his servant, "I will make thee swear by Jehovah, the God of the heavens and the God of the earth, that thou take not a wife for my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am dwelling; but thou shalt go to my land, and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac."

Rebekah is of Isaac's kindred, she is portrayed as perfectly suitable to be his bride; she does not represent the call of sinners by the Gospel but rather the call of saints to a special place of relationship with Christ on high, though, as to the present, still found in wilderness conditions. This is a dispensation unique in the world's history, a dateless period of time, singularly precious to the heart of God the Father, a period marked by the movements of the Godhead, gathering together "the children of God that were scattered abroad" (John 11:52). All in whom the mighty work of the Spirit of God has been effected, from Pentecost until the Lord comes for His own, these are kindred to Christ and constitute "His fair and ransomed bride." Whom does the Lord own as His kindred in Matthew? "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father, Who is in heaven." In Mark, it is "Whosoever shall do the will of God;" and in Luke, "Those who hear the word of God, and do it." This makes it very plain who are His kindred.

John, in his Gospel and in the Revelation makes very marked reference to the Bride. At the beginning of the Gospel he speaks of John Baptist as one who had recognised that the Son of God was the Bridegroom, and that He alone was entitled to have the bride. Then at the close of the Revelation, the bride is seen responding as the "Bride-groom of her heart" speaks of Himself so touchingly in the words "I Jesus." In unison with the Spirit, Who has been her faithful and unailing Companion throughout her long pilgrimage, she exclaims with earnest expectation, "Come!" Do we not see from such Scriptures that the Spirit of God is graciously forming in the saints the bridal character and affections that are suitable to Christ? The servant goes out to find a bride suitable for Isaac; He does not find an unsuitable one and make her suitable. The bride of Christ of which Rebekah is a figure is a meet companion for Christ as a result of the work of divine generation, which makes her kindred to Him. (It is necessary to state here that we cannot make the bride individual, though individuals partake of the divine nature, and as such form part of the bride.) This unknown servant, figurative of the Holy Spirit, finds Rebekah by the well of water — a constant figure of truth as a living reality for the soul — and in consistency with this, and as acting in the spirit of grace, she goes far beyond the request of the servant, ministering to him and his camels the needed refreshment with a lavish hand in which there was no element of restraint. It was this that conveyed to the servant that Rebekah was the one suitable to be the bride of Isaac, and worthy to be adorned with the ring and bracelets. And so, as the fruit of divine working, there are those found with the moral features which are eminently suited to Christ.

There would have been no "treasure hid in the field," and no "pearl of great price," if there had not been the sowing, and the preparation of the heart by the Father for the reception of the good seed. Resulting from this divine work there has been brought to light a generation upon which those spiritual ornaments (suggested by the silver, gold and clothing) rest with becoming propriety. Coming under the precious ministry of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, the saints of God have entirely new conceptions of the deep, unchanging and measureless love of the Father, and the love of the Son for the bride of His heart. The Lord Jesus, as the true Isaac, has invested those who compose the bride with those precious ornaments which are descriptive of Himself and expressive of His love for her. He becomes their excellency and ornament the hidden man of their hearts is adorned with the characteristics and moral features of Christ.

It was not until the proposal of the servant had been made and accepted that his reserve vanished, and he brought out all the wealth with which he had been entrusted for the bride. How richly have we been endowed with all the wealth of the Father's love, and in its lavish bestowal we discern the greatness of His thoughts for us. The "jewels of silver" suggest the treasures connected with God's grace in redemption through which He has secured a bride for the Son of His love. The death of Christ is the price God has paid to set us in all the sweet and abiding savour of His love before His face; and it is with unspeakable joy that we rest in all this wealth of blessing and divine favour, which alone is the adequate answer to the atoning and wondrous death of His beloved Son. The "Jewels of gold" suggest the treasures concerning the glory and righteousness of God, all connected with the revelation of Himself so that the saints might be filled even to all the fulness of God" (Ephesians 3:19). How blessed it is to see the Lord Jesus in John 14:1-31 — 16 setting forth the divine enrichment of His disciples, and of those who would believe on Him through their word, as a consequence of His going to the Father. The Spirit has come, as we also see in these chapters, to unfold these heavenly treasures to those who have been associated with Christ on the risen side of death, to tell them of all that He has secured for them through His death, resurrection and glory.

Then the "raiment" speaks of how the saints are clothed with the features of the heavenly Christ. How the Spirit delights to tell out the glories of Christ, and to speak of the wealth and blessedness in which He can grace the saints! Do we desire to be found here manifesting the beauty and grace of that heavenly One our every relationship down here characterized by that meekness and lowliness and gentleness that were ever seen in Him? Do we desire that all our movements might carry with them the sweet savour of Christ? In this connection it is very instructive to compare what is said of ornaments in Isaiah 3:1-26; Isaiah 4:1-6 In the former chapter, all the ornaments of the daughters of Zion are to be taken away, and all would be ruin and corruption; but in Chapter 4, the Christ is spoken of as "a sprout of Jehovah for beauty and glory, and the fruit of the earth for excellency and for ornament for those that are escaped of Israel."

Another point worthy of note is the readiness with which Rebekah responded to the desire of the servant to return to his master. The servant said "Do not hinder me, seeing Jehovah has prospered my way;" and to the question "Wilt thou go with this man?" Rebekah replies without restraint or hesitation, "I will go." How touching this is as we consider that in verse 5 the servant had been concerned regarding the willingness of the woman to return with him. Already her thoughts were with the one to whom she was to be betrothed; these beautiful words of Psalms 45:1-17 were true of her, "Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house, so shall the king

greatly desire thy beauty."

How attractive is this simplicity of faith on the part of Rebekah; she believes the report concerning the one she had not seen; the precious things she received being the earnest of what awaited her. Is this eagerness, this willingness, to meet our heavenly Bridegroom ever with us? Has the thought of seeing Him as He is, and of being like Him, so stimulated our affections that we press on with renewed ardour and quickened footsteps for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus?

We have no details of the journey, but at the end Isaac comes to meet her, "And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac . . . she said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant said, It is my master; therefore she took a veil, and covered herself." She was to be exclusively for him. And at the end of our pilgrim journey, now so near, when the cry, "Behold the Bridegroom" has already gone forth, shall there not be with those to whom the Spirit has spoken anything that answers to this beautiful action of Rebekah's? Our heavenly Bridegroom is He Whose glory Isaiah saw, and before whom the seraphim cover themselves; and the nearness of the place to which we have been called, and the intimacy enjoyed, will only produce deeper and more self-effacing reverence.

It is a point of great interest that Rebekah was brought to Sarah's tent, and speaks of the present compensation that Christ has in having the assembly. He has lost Israel, the vessel of promise, figuratively set forth in the death of Sarah, but how great is His compensation as possessing the bride. And it is blessed to consider that nothing that was represented in Sarah is lost; all is cherished and maintained in the assembly. How blessed to view the bride as the expression of the Father's love to the Son, since she is the object which the Father's love has secured for Him.

It would doubtless be right to consider the close of Genesis 24:1-67 as concluding historically the life of Abraham, the friend of God, the man of faith. There are certain actions and incidents, however, brought before us in the chapter following which, separately and in combination, serve as a fitting epilogue to this fruitful and instructive life that we have been privileged to consider in the clear and unsullied light of that infallible and uncompromising arbiter of all that claims to be truth — the Scripture of truth. In the beginning of Genesis 25:1-34 we read, "Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac" (Genesis 25:5), and "God blessed his son Isaac" (Genesis 25:11). These are very simple statements, but in their typical application how very important they are, and how far-reaching in their spiritual significance, suggesting as they do that all blessing and every promise is made good in Him, Who is the true Isaac — the One Who is now out of death, and Who awaits the accomplishment of the Spirit's mission, the formation of the bride, in accordance with the Father's counsels.

We see in type in the death of Abraham that the promises give place to the One in Whom they are made good, even as the Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 1:20, "For whatever promises of God there are, in Him is the yea, and in Him the amen, for glory to God by us." In this connection it stands in relation to what Paul and Silas and Timothy had preached among the Corinthians. Was the Son of God, Whom they preached, One in Whom there existed conflicting elements — yea, and nay? Was He the Author of a conditional and uncertain blessing? Far be the thought! All was affirmed and assured with divine certitude in Him; He is the certainty of every divine promise, both as to its announcement and fulfilment.

There is not only in the Son of God the substantiation of every positive blessing; there is also the full and perfect revelation of God; and this is brought before us in Isaac dwelling at Beer-lahai-roi, the well of the living One Who reveals Himself. How immense, how infinite, how great indeed are the blessings that flow from this stupendous fact, that God has revealed Himself in grace. "No one has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John 1:18). "And confessedly the mystery of piety is great, God has been manifested in flesh. . ." (1 Timothy 3:16). Yes, He is the living One Who reveals. The interpretation given by the Authorised Version, "Thou God seest me," conveys a most solemn truth, but surely it is a much greater thought for me to see God in Christ. It is not only that He sees me, but that I see Him revealed in perfect grace. "Isaac had just returned from Beer-lahai-roi" when he met Rebecca. This is the true and proper environment for the saint of God; standing in the noon-tide splendour of the revelation of God in Christ, and feeding where the new nature develops and becomes exceedingly fruitful.

Another incident to be noted in this chapter is the death of Ishmael "in the presence of all his brethren" (Genesis 25:18). It would appear that Ishmael and his brethren set forth Israel after the flesh; and it is not without significance that twelve princes are mentioned here. Ishmael had been rejected, and cast out; now he passes from the scene, where Isaac and Israel have their place according to the promise of God. And so it will be in the coming day: Israel after the flesh, as under the old covenant, will pass away, and instead Israel under the new covenant will remain to enter into all that God has promised. What a moment it will be for Israel when they discover that as in the flesh, and as under law, they are under death; and in deep contrition of heart they are constrained to cry out in their great distress to Him Who will assuredly open their eyes to see the well. Then will they be brought to know God as "The Living One. Who reveals Himself." To the observant reader it will be evident that a new history opens with Genesis 25:19, even that of Isaac; a history richly patterned with exercises relative to the promises of God, which are most instructive; for we all pass, in measure, through similar exercises. At every step God would have His people shut up to Himself for the exercise of faith, illustrating the truth of Hebrews 11:6, "For he that draws near to God, must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them who seek Him out." Rebecca, like Sarah, is barren, and is therefore the subject of divine intervention; and the result of God intervening is the occasion of another exercise in which the sovereignty of God is disclosed. Rebecca has to learn that the two peoples represented in her two children are quite distinct; the one according to the priority and strength of nature, the other according to the choice of God. Moreover, she has to learn to set aside every natural thought, and to acknowledge the pre-eminently greater claim of God's choice.

It is very interesting and instructive to note the exercises of Eve, Sarah and Rebecca, three women who occupy a prominent place in the Book of Genesis. The exercises of Eve were with Cain and Abel; those of Sarah were connected with Isaac and Ishmael, while Rebecca's exercises were in relation to Jacob and Esau. It has been suggested that in relation to Cain and Abel the lesson to be learnt is that a divine seed is "not of blood." Eve thought that she had obtained the promised "seed," who would bruise the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15), when Cain was born, for she said, "I have acquired a man with Jehovah," but she had to learn that sinful parents could only beget sinful children, and that on the line of nature there was nothing for God. It would appear that Eve had learned this lesson, for when her second son was born, she called him Abel, meaning

vanity. We have to learn that as born into this world, everything under the sun is marked by vanity. In connection with Ishmael and Isaac, we are taught that the divine seed is not "of the will of the flesh." What was of the flesh must needs be cast out as being unacceptable to God; the divine seed is secured on the line of promise, and on the principle of faith. In relation to Esau and Jacob we learn that the seed is not "of the will of man." Rebecca learned that divine sovereignty must have its way, that the will of man can have no place. Unquestionably, the will of man would prefer Esau to Jacob; from the natural view-point Esau would be, indeed has been, considered the better and the nobler of the two; but when God is working, the will and thoughts of man must give place to His unerring sovereignty. Divine sovereignty excludes all that originates with man, and man hates this, and challenges it. Well did the Apostle say, "O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" (Romans 9:20). God had told Rebecca that the elder would serve the younger, and we find from her subsequent history that her affections were guided and controlled by God's sovereign choice.

God is not influenced by the natural character and qualities of man. This is also seen in 1 Corinthians 1:1-31, where we read, "For consider your calling, brethren, that there are not many wise after the flesh, not many powerful, not many high-born. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world, that He may put to shame the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world, that He may put to shame the strong things; and the ignoble things of the world, and the despised, has God chosen, and things that are not, that He may annul the things that are; so that no flesh should boast before God" (vv. 26-29). Do you think that Christians are the kind of people that men would have chosen to be ennobled, elevated, and placed in the most exalted position? Hannah has spoken of this in her prayer, where she said, "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust; from the dung-hill He lifteth up the needy, to set him among nobles; and He maketh them inherit a throne of glory" (1 Samuel 2:8). The man with the Esau qualities and characteristics takes precedence in the world; and there may be many qualities that we can admire; but God is not influenced by these things; for what "is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" (Luke 16:15).

How restful to our spirits when we are brought to see the unassailable workings of the sovereignty of God, which has been spoken of by another as that "which purposes and acts just because God purposes and wills to act and to appoint, and for no other reason whatever." In the light of God's sovereignty, how shallow and futile do all the busy movements of men appear, as they strive with "might and main" to reach the paradise which they have forever forfeited.

It is very beautiful to see the effect produced in the Apostle Paul as he contemplates the amazing and wide-spread operations of divine sovereignty; how rich the outpouring of his heart to this God Who is rich in mercy:

O depth of riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable His judgments, and untraceable His ways! . . . For of Him, and through Him, and for Him are all things; to Him be glory for ever. Amen" (Romans 11:33-36).

A. Shepherd.

S. Simple Reflections on Paul's Letter to the Galatians.

Simple Reflections on Paul's Letter to the Galatians.

Galatians 1:1-24.

It is at once interesting and instructive to remark that secular historians, in their racial analysis of the various nations, have described the Galatians as a quick, warm, impulsive, and exceedingly changeable race; and the character ascribed to them by the beloved apostle, in the body of his letter, seems to bear out the truth of this description. The pliable disposition of these saints offered the enemies of the glad tidings of God and of Christianity extremely fertile soil, in which would flourish the seeds of those wicked heresies of evil men, which, in their essence, were destructive of the heavenly character of Christianity, and subversive of the grand, sublime truths of the glad tidings. How necessary it is to exercise constant and unrelaxing vigilance, lest the enemy within — that which is of nature and of the flesh — at the instigation of the arch-enemy, opens wide the gates so that he can take possession of the stronghold. Only as we take our stand behind the mighty bulwarks of divine truth, those towering ramparts of divine revelation, can we hope to withstand the onslaughts of ever relentless foes and put them to flight by the sword of the Spirit.

One of the keystones of Christianity is "The righteousness of God," which is developed doctrinally in Paul's letter to the saints at Rome. Through the persistent efforts of false, Judaizing teachers, the warm-hearted, but fickle saints of the region of Galatia were in grave danger of departing from the glad tidings of God's grace, and were in great measure alienated from the great apostle. The recovery to them of the truth developed in Romans is the great point in the Epistle to the Galatians; both epistles treating of the same precious subject — the way of a sinner's justification before God. But there is a marked difference between the two epistles: in Romans, the apostle brings out what the gospel really is, "The power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; . . . for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith "; but in the letter to the Galatians he has to do with those who had received the grace of God, and were attempting to add to it the works of the law, thereby nullifying the wonderful gospel made known to them by the apostle.

Here was a deliberate and systematic attempt on the part of the enemy to bring about an admixture of Christianity and Judaism to the detriment of the former, so as to obscure its heavenly character, and pervert the precious truths of the gospel. With so much at stake, should we be surprised at the severity of tone adopted by the apostle in his scathing denunciation of those who sought to overthrow the true character of Christianity? So keen was the discernment of this devoted servant of the Lord, so sensitive to anything that would besmirch the true greatness and glory of Christ, that he detected in those Judaizing philosophers the pernicious and reprobate machinations of the enemy himself. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the divine authority of the apostle was ever linked with the heavenly character of Christianity. The enemy attempted to set aside the peculiar administration and authority of Paul, and to mix Judaism with Christianity, so as to neutralize Christianity's heavenly character. These two systems can never coalesce, save to

the ruin of souls; and although both agree in setting before men a very high standard of conduct, they are otherwise diametrically opposed. Judaism is the religion of man in the flesh, which supposes him capable of keeping the law; a supposition that received its death-blow in the cross. The beloved apostle shows that the glad tidings he preached to them were unique in source and power. With great joy and thankfulness the Galatian saints had received these glad tidings which they now seemed to be surrendering, little realising what they were doing. In adding the law to the gospel they were surrendering the truth of the gospel. A sense of urgency and deep emotion can be detected throughout the whole epistle; the apostle writing with his characteristic earnestness, but with a sharpness that was not usual. No one is saluted in the letter, and he starts immediately with his theme, wishing them indeed, grace and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ. He stands, as he says, in doubt of them; having to travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in them. Their doctrinal wandering he treats more seriously than the moral evil of Corinth, which men naturally think of a far worse character. Another has said. "Without the gospel morality cannot maintain itself, and in the doctrine of Christ is the root of all morality."

Paul begins by declaring the unique ministry committed to him; insisting upon the special character of his apostleship; affirming in solemn and unequivocal terms his entire independence of man in it, declaring that his commission was received not from men, nor through men, but "Through Jesus Christ, and God the Father." Unlike the twelve, he received his commission from the risen Christ direct from heaven, after Jesus had finished His work; a commission to which he refers in Acts 20:1-38 "That I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus." He saw the Lord in glory, and it was the glorified Christ who sent him. Note too how the apostle valued the fellowship of the brethren in the gospel, associating them with him, as having their sympathy and concurrence in what he states here; and as showing that the Galatians were in danger of departing from the faith held by all the brethren with Paul.

Now we come to the core of the matter, "Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." What has law to do with those for whom Jesus gave Himself to deliver them out of this present evil age? This "age" is marked by implacable opposition to God, and is led by Satan, the god of this age. For believers to have recourse to law is to go back into the world, out of which to deliver them, Christ gave Himself. This is of immense practical importance, for it is the Father's will for us.

How deep and real the emotion of this devoted servant of the Lord, as out of a full heart he expresses his wonderment that they were so quickly changing from Him, who had called them in Christ's grace, unto a different gospel, "which is not another." How arduous were the labours of the apostle, how sore his trials, how intense and perilous his combats in seeking to maintain, and preserve in its purity, the truth of the gospel. By the Holy Spirit he saw the truth of God imperilled, where others could see no harm; peril, not from without, but rising up in the very bosom of the assembly. (Acts 15:1-41 may well be called the Christian's Magna Carta). And now from this custodian of divine truth comes these solemn words, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed;" and to show that this was no ill-considered outburst, spoken rashly, he reiterates these solemn words. Beloved brethren, have we this appreciation of the gospel? What is our assessment of its inherent greatness as being the truth of God? Such faithfulness will not call forth the plaudits of men; but may we be preserved from the desire to conciliate men in these things.

"For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." The apostle then goes on to show how he had learned the gospel: he neither received it from men, nor was he taught it, but by revelation of Jesus Christ. This revelation had transformed him from a persecutor and injurious person into an ardent, faithful, uncompromising witness for Christ. He now speaks of the circumstances of his wonderful conversion, of the good pleasure of God who set him apart, even from his mother's womb, and called him by His grace. He knew all about this Judaism the Galatians were embracing, for did he not say that as touching the law he was a Pharisee; as to zeal, persecuting the church; as to the righteousness which is in the law, he was found blameless? But God had something far better for him: He revealed His Son in him; not merely to Him, but in him. The call of God was accompanied by an inward revelation of the Son of God to his soul; and from henceforth this was the abiding power and reality that enabled him to count all things loss for Christ.

How touching is the close of this first chapter; "He which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed; and they glorified God in me" What an amazing transformation the sight of Jesus in the glory of God had wrought! In misguided zeal he once thought he ought to do many things contrary to the Name of Jesus; but now he can say, "For me to live is Christ! Little wonder that the dear saints, in that day, glorified God in him.

Galatians 2:1-21. The Spirit's elaborate vindication of Paul's apostolate is truly remarkable, as is also its distinctness from that of the twelve, who, as Paul says "were apostles before me." Here we also have the Spirit's refutation of the specious fallacy of apostolic succession, so dear to the human heart. The one who held with unwavering tenacity to the traditions of men, whose fanatical zeal for Judaism was unmatched among his contemporaries, was lifted completely out of that environment, set free from the restrictive and binding influences of legalism, so that he might proclaim the divine and heavenly character of Christianity. With such a commission entrusted to him from the Lord Himself how entirely irrelevant to confer with flesh and blood concerning these heavenly communications.

Having therefore received this revelation he went off into Arabia, into the desert, to return from the same school as Moses, who was raised up of God to lead His people out of the land of bondage. How significant that Paul too was raised up of God to lead His people out of a bondage greater far than Egypt's, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God — wherewith Christ makes us free.

After fourteen years had elapsed, Paul goes up to Jerusalem accompanied by Barnabas and Titus, the occasion of this visit coinciding with the raising at Antioch of questions which affected the character of the Gospel preached among the Gentiles; the history of this we have in Acts 15:1-41. Paul and Barnabas, as we find there, went with the full concurrence of the brethren at Antioch to have this momentous issue, which was causing considerable distress and agitation among the assemblies, settled and put beyond dispute. "It seemed good to us . . . to send chosen men unto you, with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have given up their lives for the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ." But let it again be remarked that, in going up to Jerusalem, he did not do so as yielding to the solicitation of others, but by express revelation from God. The time was now opportune for such a visit to Jerusalem. Had Paul gone at the time of his conversion it might have been argued that he went to receive authority from those who were apostles before him. Because he went under direct divine sanction, Paul had divinely given confidence at Jerusalem.

The time had in fact arrived when, if there was not to be an open breach, there must be the manifestation of unity among the recognised leaders at Jerusalem, the very stronghold of Judaism, and those who preached the Gospel given by the Lord to Paul. And so this devoted, courageous herald of Christianity placed before them the Gospel that he preached, first of all "privately to those who were of reputation," lest the outbreak of legalism, which was carrying the multitude, should work disaster among those who had been gathered out from among the Gentiles. This was no superficial matter; the opposition was strong, determined and formidable; there must be no yielding to the enemy, who was behind it all, in the slightest degree. Titus was with him, a Greek in fullest Christian fellowship and without being circumcised. This was not a chance circumstance; he was there under divine guidance to furnish convincing proof that nothing must be added to faith in Christ Jesus in order to salvation. The apostle resisted the circumcision of Titus, yet allowed the circumcision of Timothy (Acts 16:1-3). "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision has any force, nor uncircumcision; but the moment an attempt is made to enforce it, unyielding resistance must be made, lest the liberty of the Gospel be infringed or conscience towards God be wounded. For the sake of avoiding needless offence to the Jews Paul circumcised Timothy, but to preserve the liberty of the Gospel he sternly resisted the efforts of false brethren to have Titus circumcised. The apostle makes special mention of false brethren who had been brought in unawares, and who were seeking to bring into bondage Christ's free men. Christianity, in fact, at Jerusalem, was so little more than a Jewish sect, that one can readily understand how open would be the door for men of such a class to flock into; but the apostle withstands them, not giving place, as he says, "for an hour." It might seem a small matter to others, that for which he was contending, but with him it involved the whole truth of the Gospel. How gratifying to see the measure of agreement reached between those dear servants of the Lord, men who rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name. The right hand of fellowship is given to Paul and Barnabas by James, Peter and John, when they perceived the grace given to Paul. How regrettable to find Paul having to withstand Peter, because he was to be condemned. The element of Judaism was deeply ingrained in Peter and the others who had been eating with the Gentiles in unrestricted Christian liberty until certain came from James, when they withdrew in fear of those who opposed the truth of Christianity. The power of God to resist this opposition was with Paul, and Paul alone. And so he reasons with them in strong contrastive language concerning Christianity and Judaism, demonstrating, as another has said that, "the passing, transient glory of Judaism is but as tinsel compared with the supine and perennial glory of Christianity." They had professed to give up the one for the other. They had believed in Christ to be justified by faith: it was the faith of Christ that justified them, not the deeds of the law: "because on the principle of works of law no flesh shall be justified." How solemn the language of the apostle here: "Now if in seeking to be justified in Christ we also have been found sinners, then is Christ minister of sin." We shudder at the thought dear brethren; yet what are we doing if we build again the very things we have thrown down? we are constituting ourselves transgressors! The apostle now turns from "we" to "I" as he does in Romans 7:1-25. In the death of that blessed One, who had died under the solemn curse of a broken law, he had died; and in that death he had died to law, to the intent that he might live unto God. "I am crucified with Christ;" Saul, the Pharisee, with all his religious accomplishments as well as with all his sins, has come to an end judicially in the cross of Christ, and a new man is risen up in his stead. "Not, I, but Christ liveth in me;" a life communicated from the risen Jesus, a life that death cannot touch. As this life has its source in heaven, its tendencies

are to things in heaven. It is spiritual life in contrast to natural life, and so the apostle adds, "The life which I now live in the flesh;" it is lived in the flesh now, in a poor, groaning, earthly tabernacle; but it will not always be so; we await our house from heaven, a body perfectly suited to its heavenly environment. "I live by the faith of the Son of God." Soon we shall be manifested with Christ in glory, but meantime, before we see Him as He is, we live by the faith of the Son of God. He is "the object bright and fair, to fill and satisfy the heart." With what feelings of unspeakable joy and delight do we utter these precious words "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." By so reasoning the beloved apostle did not set aside or disregard the grace of God, "for if righteousness is by law, then Christ has died for nothing;" but praise God this is not so; for it is only by that one act of accomplished righteousness we have been set in a "state of accomplished subsisting righteousness before God (J.N.D.). Christ is indeed the end (or object) of the law for righteousness to every one that believes.

Galatians 3:1-29. The controversial character of the apostle's letter has no doubt been noted by the careful reader. It manifests a conflict from which there is no discharge, where the divine ground must be held in the face of formidable and determined opposition. Galatians is in character a controversy! It is a buttress to the grand foundation truths presented in Romans, yet carries further the truth of Christian position. In Romans we are dead to sin and dead to the law; in Galatians we have one crucified to the world and in the light of new creation. New creation is not unfolded in Romans, though doubtless implied in the later chapters; but in Galatians this great truth is stated in that most expressive and comprehensive utterance, "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but new creation." Earlier we had a history of the apostle's own ministry, in which he reiterates that he received his ministry from the Lord directly, owing nothing to those who were apostles before him; nor will he allow anything inconsistent with it, not even in Peter, so that the doctrine which was now to be unfolded should be established on a sure and infallible foundation. In this chapter we come to the doctrinal part of the epistle. From verses 1-13 the inspired writer contrasts law and faith as entirely opposite principles, and demonstrates in a masterly and convincing manner the utter impossibility of obtaining blessing on the principle of works of law: on that principle there is nothing but a curse. From verse 14 to the end of the chapter the contrast is between law and promise; "showing their entire distinctness, not only in date and circumstances, but also in principle, character and purpose." This is a portion of special interest and instruction as showing the peculiar fascination of the law for true believers. It was as though the law had set its eyes on them, like the snake on its victims, so that they were powerless to get away from it. One form of the corruption of the Glad Tidings of the grace of God is the reducing it to a system of ordinances. This tendency displayed itself very prominently in the Galatian assemblies, and the correction of this forms the subject of this part of the epistle. So grave was the departure that the apostle is moved to exclaim with feelings of deep emotion, "O senseless Galatians, who has bewitched you?" How great was their folly in turning to the law for righteousness after having known the grace of the gospel. It seemed as if a bewitching power was drawing them away from divine grace. In which the doctrine of the Cross of Christ had been conspicuously presented to them; desiring to add their own supposed righteousness to the justification procured on the principle of faith; or having recourse to a system of ordinances to make up for their defect in righteousness. In both cases it is the fascination of law preventing them from looking to the Lord Jesus Christ in whom alone righteousness can be found. Observe how strong is the expression. "before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified

among you." The publicity and prominence which the apostle gave to the doctrine of the cross was that of a proclamation set forth by authority in the most frequented part of the city. The doctrine of the cross strikes at the deeply imbedded roots of all man's pretensions to wisdom, righteousness and strength: and it is this that still makes this doctrine offensive to them: but how acceptable it is to those who know that through the cross, God was "making an end of sin, and bringing in everlasting righteousness."

Then the apostle asks, Did you receive the Spirit by keeping the law or by believing the testimony of the finished work of Christ? The Spirit is God's seal on those who believe the gospel, who have come under the efficacy of Jesus' blood; a work to which the flesh can add nothing. God had given them His Spirit that all might be wrought in the Spirit and not in the flesh. Moreover they had been sufferers: was it because of their attempts to keep the law, or because of their confession of Christ? How easy the answer to such questions.

Paul now turns their attention to Abraham, the pattern man of faith, "the father of them that believe;" whose history is given in great detail in the Scriptures as God's portrait of a believer. The features of faith in the believer now are the same as were manifest in Abraham for "They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham;" and they therefore share the divine blessing, "So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful (or believing) Abraham." The beloved apostle in the pursuance of his emancipating doctrine pens one of the most solemn passages in the word of God, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." The curse of the law rests on every one under it, for none have kept it, even as we read, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all the things which are written in the book of the law to do them." God's righteous requirements of man are set forth in the law; and whosoever contravened one point was guilty of all, and came under the law's penal sanction. Law knows nothing of mercy, and must take its course. With what reverential feelings does the heart contemplate this fact of immense import, that Christ magnified the law and made it honourable; and nowhere was this so richly exemplified as when on the cross He died under the solemn curse of a broken law. "Christ has redeemed us out of the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, Cursed is every one hanged upon a tree.)" This has opened the way for the outflow of God's rich grace to sinners of the Gentiles: He is not now demanding righteousness from men, but setting forth Christ in the gospel, "a propitiatory through faith in His blood."

If a man makes a will, bequeathing certain things absolutely, no one would allow an executor to alter this in the slightest degree or impose conditions of any kind. God's covenant with Abraham was one of unconditional promise, which God Himself undertook to carry out. "For if the inheritance be on the principle of law, it is no longer on the principle of promise, but God gave it in grace to Abraham by promise." The question very naturally rises, "Why then the law?" It was added for the sake of transgressions; that is to make manifest to man the character of sin, which God knew to be in man; and to demonstrate that if man had not a faithful Promiser, One who had the ability to fulfil all He had promised, he could not attain to blessing. The law was added till the seed should come to whom the promise was made. In this way the law, instead of invalidating or superseding, only served to confirm the way of promise made known to Abraham, as the only means of obtaining blessing for man. The law was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator: there were two parties to the law, hence the mediator, Moses standing between God and the people. "Now a mediator is not of one, but God is one," for now there are not two parties; it is not a

people undertaking to answer the requirements of God, but God making known His grace in the death and resurrection of His Son. Yes, indeed, God is one, and there can be no failure. Is the law then against the promises of God? By no means! Righteousness and life are inseparably linked together both in the law and in the gospel. The law said, "This do and thou shalt live;" but it could not give righteousness nor life. Such was the condition of man that the holy, just and good law could only bring condemnation and death to him. It was neither a minister of righteousness nor a minister of life to the sinner. The fault was not in the law, but in man.

Now the apostle changes the figure: he had been referring to the law as a jailor, holding men in bondage and captivity: now he refers to it as a schoolmaster or confidential servant of the house, who kept his watchful eye on the young members of the household. Under him they had no more liberty than the servants, and it was so until they reached manhood's estate. This place the law had until Christ came. What a change when the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost, the witness of a glorified Christ and of the acceptance of the blood of His cross; bringing the saints into the liberty of sons. They were now grown up: they had reached maturity and man's estate, and could enter into the enjoyment of their rich inheritance.

Now the believer in Christ is regarded by God as having died with Christ, as having been buried with Christ, as raised up with Christ, and to have put on Christ. Surely if we have put on Christ we neither need works or service to commend us to God. We stand before Him arrayed in all the beauty of Christ, Christ our righteousness before the face of God. All the differences and distinctions that existed in the human family are lost in Christ Jesus; difference of nation, Jew and Gentile; difference of social condition, bond and free difference of sex, male and female; "all one in Christ Jesus." How comforting for sinners of the Gentiles, like ourselves, to know that through believing in Christ, the true seed, it is said of us "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Galatians 4:1-31.

Continuing our brief study of this epistle we come to the chapter in which is contrasted the legal condition of the saints under the dispensation of law with that of the saints brought into the sweet liberty of grace, where Christ the Son makes us free indeed. How this blessed truth of adoption stands out in strong relief against the dark background of the law with all its legalizing propensities. The law brought distance; but here is nearness of a most intimate and endearing character. Under law there was a yoke of bondage, of which Peter could say, "which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear;" a bondage characterising the children of law, the seed according to the flesh. How great the contrast with the portion of those who are children of the free woman.

Having mentioned heirs "according to promise," the apostle proceeds to contrast that condition with that of the heirs under law. The heir under law is like a child under guardians; though in title he possesses all the estate, he cannot act even on his own property without the permission of the guardians. How elucidating the conclusions of Paul in giving this to illustrate the condition of the heirs under law. The elements of the world — their much vaunted ritual and ordinances — all that was so gratifying to the flesh, kept the Old Testament heirs in a state of pupilage and bondage until God's due time came for sending forth His Son, the promised seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15). To Him the eye of faith had ever been directed, from the moment of the fall; but He came under law "to redeem them that were under the law."

"The fulness of the time" is a remarkable expression. All God's dealings with man, prior to this wonderful event, were of a probationary character; which served to show how incurably evil man was, and how great his need for divine intervention with a redemption in which he could stand before God. Redemption was ever in God's mind for man's blessing: and here we are brought to that auspicious moment when God sent forth His Son. How the heart lingers over these precious words, charmed by the kindness and pity of our Saviour God (Titus 3:4). As come under the law He magnified it by His unswerving and implicit obedience: yea, He magnified the law in a more profound degree by bearing its solemn curse, and thus redeeming from under it the heirs, that they might come into the place, proper to them as sons, which they could not do so long as they were under the law. The apostle then contrasts the state of the Gentile believer, standing in the full liberty of the Glad Tidings, with that of the saint of old under the law; pointing out the folly of the Gentile putting himself under law, from which the godly Jew required to be redeemed by the work of Christ on the cross. They were sons, not servants — heirs who had attained maturity, and who had liberty of access unto the Father with all confidence. How striking Paul's argument: how clear his distinctions: "that we might receive the adoption of sons" (5: 5), and "because ye are sons" (5: 6). The Spirit of adoption or sonship was not the portion of the saints of old; it is the blessed fruit of accomplished redemption, for which even the disciples of the Lord had to wait till after His ascension (Acts 1:4-8). How sad to reflect that, because of a low state of soul, we may not realise the blessedness and power of having the Spirit of sonship that enables us to cry "Abba, Father." The Father's Name Thou hast declared, The Father's love with Thee is shared.

How the vigilant eye of the beloved apostle discerned the elements of retrogression in the conduct of the Galatian saints. Things which others might have passed as harmless and of no moment, the faithful servant of the Lord detects as deflection from the truth that would bring devastating results. With loving appeal he writes to them, "But now after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God." What an appeal! to turn from their knowledge of God to His knowledge of them. At best our knowledge of God is very imperfect, but He has taken us up in the perfect knowledge of all that we were and all that we would be, and has justified us freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. How sad to see those who have been so richly blessed and favoured of God turning again to the weak and beggarly elements of the world. These things of Judaism were all right in their time and place as shadows of the good things to come, but how weak and beggarly in the presence of the blessed Son of God, in whom the shadows found their substance. Alas, men still think that God is to be served by men's hands as though He needed something. They know Him not in His blessed character as Giver, and so do not come to Him to receive. How distressing to see those who once enjoyed the truth of the Gospel bowed down under a system of ordinances, observing days and months and years; thus obscuring for themselves the one great object that God would bring before them, even His own blessed Son, in the glory of His humiliation and in the greatness of His exaltation.

Again, as at the beginning, the apostle argues from his own case, "I am as ye are:" I take no ground of superiority over you because I was an Israelite, "as touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." No, I come down from my legal standing, and take the same ground as a poor sinner of the Gentiles. Peter, too, takes the same ground: "We (Jews) believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved even as they (the Gentiles)." There is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. It is not for the Gentile however

to take Jewish ground, but for the Jew to take Christian ground where there is "no difference." The physical infirmity of the beloved apostle had not deterred their reception of the Glad Tidings: yea, it had only served to evoke their deep affection for him, to the extent that, if it had been possible, they would have plucked out their own eyes to give to him. They had received him as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. But now the cold, chilling, blighting wind of legality had blasted the tender shoots of grace, and the apostle stands in doubt of them. The only antidote to legality is to have Christ formed in us. This is the work of the Spirit of truth who, disengaging the mind from the law, engages us with Christ who is the end (or object) of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth.

Paul then shows how that the principle of the law disturbed the family of Abraham, and how that there was no rest until the legal element was cast out. The failure of the believer comes through lack of simple reliance on God. Abraham and Sarah became impatient and thought to get by their own wisdom and strength the blessing that God had promised. Hagar is given to Abraham by Sarah in the attempt to procure the divine blessing by fleshly means, which immediately results in Sarah being despised by Hagar. The Pharisees, monumental in their legality and so proud of their righteousness, despised Him by whom came grace and truth. The inspired writer proceeds to demonstrate in allegorical language the unbridgeable gulf between these two principles, law and grace — the two covenants; the one from Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, Hagar: the other, Jerusalem above, our Mother, which is free. We are come to Mount Zion, and to the heavenly Jerusalem; and as there we have the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

Contemplating all the blessedness of what is connected with the true Isaac, the apostle breaks forth in praise, using the words of the prophet of salvation, Isaiah, "Rejoice, thou barren (Sarah, not Hagar) that barest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband." How blessedly does this follow immediately on the details of Christ's suffering for us, in the previous chapter of the prophet. Laughter, joy is connected with Isaac the son of Sarah, not with the son of Hagar. "Now we brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise:" born of the Spirit, children of God, born of incorruptible seed, of the word of God, by the word of truth. The bondwoman and her son must go, for Isaac and Ishmael cannot go on peaceably together. In the day that Isaac was weaned, Ishmael mocks; he regards Isaac as insignificant and despicable; no doubt mocking too at the old age of Sarah as compared with the vigour and comeliness of Hagar. There is nothing man more instinctively dislikes than grace. The oft-repeated story of religious persecution is but the story of Isaac and Ishmael here pointed out by the apostle; and this mocking of Isaac is characteristic of the day in which we live. But let us rejoice in this that we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free; privileged to stand in the liberty wherewith Christ makes us free. Free from the entangling yoke of bondage we can rejoice in the Lord always: like Paul. "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." "Rejoice in the Lord O ye righteous; for praise is comely for the upright."

Galatians 5:1-26. The recovery of the truth taught in the Epistle to the Romans is the great point in this letter to the Galatians. Here we have the religion of man and the religion of the Spirit contrasted — the bondage of souls under the law with the liberty of saints under Christ and grace. The hopelessness of attaining righteousness or blessing under law is amply demonstrated. In this chapter the flesh and the Spirit are strongly contrasted, as are also the moral fruits produced by those under the sway of these respective principles. The first verse of this chapter marks the close

of the exhortation begun in the previous chapter. It is into the liberty of sons that Christ has brought us, and although we wait for the full blessedness belonging to sonship when we shall be manifested with Christ the Son in glory, yet even now it is in wondrous liberty we have access with confidence into the presence of God the Father. Instead of having a yoke of bondage imposed on us by those who would tempt God (Acts 15:1-41), we have the Spirit of sonship, whereby we cry Abba, Father. What marvellous liberty is this wherewith Christ has made us free: it is the liberty of the truth (John 8:32). What liberty to be delivered from the vain attempt to find some ground of confidence in ourselves towards God: what liberty to see in Christ, our righteousness before God — "Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness" (1 Corinthians 1:30). How trenchant the call therefore, Stand fast in the liberty of Christ — freedom from all condemnation, freedom of nearness to God, freedom of holiness, freedom of service. Bring in law and all this freedom is gone, and in its place a heavy yoke is placed upon us. The stern language of the apostle is very arresting: any dependence on legal righteousness, moral or ceremonial, renders Christ profitless unto us. It is extremely misleading to say, "I know that I can do nothing by myself," for this only puts Christ in the place of a helper, and the thousands who are relying on Christ as a helper for righteousness will never find the salvation of God. The ten lepers were alike helped by Christ, but only one had faith to throw himself at Jesus' feet; and he alone received the words, "Thy faith hath made thee whole." The nine were content to remain as Jews in Judaism, and knew not the blessedness of giving glory to God at the feet of Jesus. Many thousands bear the name of Christ, but what profit is He to them? If you are looking only partly to Christ and partly to yourself "Christ shall profit you nothing." Christ was everything to Paul: once he had profited in the Jews' religion above many," but he had given up every natural and acquired advantage for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord, and could well instruct others regarding the profit to be found in Christ.

Well might Paul reiterate the testimony, "He that is circumcised is debtor to do the whole law." The holy majesty of the law, the rich grace of the Gospel, and the glory of Christ, alike forbid the vain and senseless attempt to make our own partial obedience, together with Christ, the ground of our salvation. To do so is to virtually disown the work of Christ as Gods means of justifying the sinner, and to think lightly of the sacrifice of the Christ of God. Those who think themselves justified by their own efforts in any way are fallen from grace. It is a very solemn and grievous thing for a Christian to fall into sin, but for such an one there is the rich and effectual provision of God; "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins." But to fall from grace is to reassert confidence in the flesh, and to displace Christ, with all the injurious consequences, not the least of which is the abandoning of the truth of the Gospel as to present justification before God by faith in Christ. There is also the surrendering of the true Christian hope, by making the attainment of righteousness the hope, instead of making present righteousness, through faith, the sure warrant for expecting glory. "We," says the apostle in the name of all believers, "wait" (not for righteousness, but for) "the hope of righteousness by faith" — the hope to which righteousness is entitled. If we tamper with the truth of present acceptance in the Beloved we undermine the blessed hope for which, through the Spirit, we are entitled to wait, even glory. With unflinching and unwavering insistence it has been stated that all distinctions in the flesh are of no account where there is faith in Christ. Circumcision, the badge in the flesh of God's earthly people, availeth no more than uncircumcision. Faith alone is needed, a faith that is wrought in the heart by the Spirit of God, and that works by love. The law could give

neither life nor righteousness; it might command love to God and man, but it had no power to produce what it enacted; but faith worketh by love to God and to man.

Now the apostle speaks of his confidence in them through the Lord, knowing that the truth set forth would find a response in the hearts of those who had been quickened by the grace of God, even if for the moment that truth had been overlaid by legalism. How much in these days of great leavening do we need to be reminded earnestly and constantly "to continue in the grace of God" (Acts 13:43). But the inspired writer is unsparing in his condemnation of those who were troubling the saints of God. The apostles, in their united testimony, in their one memorable council recorded in the Acts, declared, "Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law." So here, the apostle speaks of the legal teacher as "he that troubleth you."

Paul then goes on to show how liberty according to the Spirit would express itself. Liberty according to man is every man doing that which is right in his own eyes, the free expression of his own will, every restraint removed that would fetter his unbridled self-will, a liberty that results in lawlessness. But we are called to quite another kind of liberty, not for the activity of the flesh, but in which we can serve one another according to the will of God. "His service perfect freedom is." The Gospel brings a law of love — love with its constraining power, not the restraining power of a law which gendereth to bondage.

How important it is to have God's thoughts with respect to the Spirit as contrasted with the flesh. The judgment of God has been passed on the flesh in the cross of Christ, where God made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." In consequence of this, life in the Spirit flows forth from the risen and glorified Jesus. The new man is a new order of man, coming forth after death and judgment have passed on the old man. It is therefore according to the new order of man that we should walk. The Spirit makes us alive to new thoughts, desires, affections and interests; "If therefore ye have been raised with the Christ, seek the things which are above, where the Christ is sitting at the right hand of God." Our thoughts are to be on Christ in heaven, and down here we are to walk in the Spirit. Beloved J.N.D. says that "walk" refers to the general manner of life: the Spirit is to be the characteristic of the life and walk, the instrument and power of every activity.

Verses 17 and 18 bring before us a great truth, namely that the Spirit and the flesh are contrary one to the other. There is hardly a Christian who has not attempted in practice to contradict this assertion; but the flesh, even in the believer, is unchangeably the same. The flesh is enmity against God, is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. It is the presence of the Spirit in us which enables us to know the evil of the flesh. The Spirit and the flesh are ever opposed to each other. Here we impinge very decidedly on the doctrine of the 7th of Romans: — "For I know that in me, that is in my flesh, good does not dwell, for to will is there with me. . . I find then the law upon me who wills to practise what is right, that with me evil is there." There is that which is born of the flesh and that which is born of the Spirit. But true Christians have come under the leadership of the Spirit, and as such are not under the law. The verses which follow (Galatians 5:19-21) give us a very dark catalogue of the works of the flesh, which are manifest. There are other workings of the flesh which are not open and palpable, which can only be discerned by those who are spiritual. There is the mind of the flesh (Colossians 2:18); and the flesh in its religious aspect, in which Paul

could have no confidence (Php 3:3-4). But even in the manifest works of the flesh, while some are morally offensive to us, others are not so; but they are all offensive to God "for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" (Luke 16:15). In this epistle, whilst the beloved apostle presents us with a rich exposition of the grace of God, he deals unsparingly with the flesh, its lusts, its affections, and its works. How happy the contrast to the works of the flesh is the fruit of the Spirit. This precious fruit is produced by the Spirit as we abide in Christ. "In Me is thy fruit found;" and again, The branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me. . . . He that abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit" (John 15:4-5). Compared with the dark catalogue of the works of the flesh, the fruit of the Spirit is a cluster of beautiful variety, fragrant with the perfections of Christ. Let us repeat the words of the apostle, "Against such there is no law! How searching is the closing exhortation! "If we live by the Spirit, let us walk also by the Spirit. Let us not become vain-glorious, provoking one another, envying one another." If we were ever walking in the Spirit, we should be "unknown, yet well-known;" passing as pilgrims and strangers through the world, without joining in its restless interests. The words of the Lord would then assume a deeper significance for us, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

Galatians 6:1-18.

We now come to the closing chapter of this wonderful epistle of emancipation. The heavenly character of Christianity has been convincingly demonstrated: the perverters of the Glad Tidings of the glory of the blessed God, the devotees of Judaism with all its ritualistic and legalising influences, stand dishonoured and confounded in the presence of a light that shines from heaven itself. At this juncture it would no doubt be helpful to go back a little over the ground we have covered. To sum up Galatians 5:1-26, the Spirit is shown to be the power for sanctification. It is by the Spirit that holiness is produced. The apostle does not allow the law, either as a means of righteousness or sanctification. As justification is by faith in the blood of Jesus, so also sanctification, or holiness, is from the new nature in the energy of the Spirit of God. In all this, the apostle will not, under any pretext whatever, allow the law any standing. The law is not allowed any part in the Christian economy; it is an element of the world, and as such has gone in the cross of Christ. That wondrous cross has swept away all that belongs to this world; every vestige has gone for God and for faith. The beloved apostle, in his own inimitable way, takes up the elements one by one, and demonstrates that the Christian is delivered from them by the death of Christ. We are God's workmanship; we have received the divine nature; and it is unthinkable that anything of the old economy can have part in this.

Viewing ourselves as still in the body, we have the two principles within us, but the old is not allowed; only the new is recognised. In Galatians 2:20, Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ;" and in Galatians 5:24, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." In this latter portion the truth is applied to every Christian but it is another thing for the individual Christian to apply it to himself: to know the power of the truth experimentally in the experience of the soul from day to day. The practical application of the death of Christ is of immense importance, and it may help us to consider some Scriptures where it is brought before us. First let us consider Colossians 3:3. "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Here the truth is stated positively from God's standpoint. We have died in regard to the old order of things, and we have a hidden, divine life with Christ above. How appropriate then the exhortation, "Seek the things which

are above." In Romans 6:11 we have the exhortation, "So also ye, reckon yourselves, dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus." God accounts us to be dead with Christ; we are therefore to reckon ourselves dead (see verses 2 and 8). Faith always acts with God, as we also see in the Scripture, "We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." In the power of the new life, by faith in Christ Jesus, we see ourselves as dead in His death, but as living in His life for His pleasure. If we turn now to 2 Corinthians 4:10 we shall find how Paul applied this truth to himself. "Always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body." Paul was in practice holding himself as dead to everything here, passing in an experimental way through the sufferings and afflictions that kept him in truth altogether apart from things here, God helping him in this, even as he says, "We who live are always delivered unto death on account of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh." Who delivered him unto death? God did! In what way? Read verses 8 and 9; "Every way afflicted, but not straitened," and so on. Why was the apostle allowed to pass through persecution, to be cast down, perplexed and troubled? It was because he desired to bear about in his body the putting to death of Jesus; and God says I will help you to do it. It was like the breaking of the pitchers of Gideon's three hundred men; it let the light shine out. Beloved saints of God, let us take account of this in days of adversity and distress. This is the way God helps us to reckon ourselves dead to all that is around, so that we might live unto Him. It is evident that the death and the life go together. I have dwelt at length on this particular line of truth, convinced of the necessity of knowing these things as power in our lives, so that we can stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

We shall now address ourselves briefly to the chapter before us. At the close of Galatians 5:1-26, the apostle warns the saints of what necessarily results from the cultivation of the legal spirit, vainglory, provoking one another, and envy. In the beginning of Galatians 6:1-18 we have another kind of spirit, the spirit of grace, "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." This is what we need to do, not to glory over each other, but to help each other; ever seeking the profit and advancement of our brethren. In appealing to those who are spiritual, the apostle does not desire us to be testing ourselves to discover our degree of spirituality. The spiritual man lives too near to God to think anything of himself; and the spirit of meekness is the antithesis of the spirit of fancied spirituality. Those who are spiritual know that the restoration of the erring one is bound up with the glory of God. It was said of the Pharisees that they bound upon men's shoulders, burdens grievous to be borne; but they would not touch them themselves with one of their little fingers. This was the spirit that was creeping in among the Galatians; the direct result of turning to the law as a rule of life.

Since they had a fondness for law, the Galatians are directed to a law of a different character; "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." In effect, the apostle says, If you will have law, here is a law for you; but it is the law of Christ, who was, and is, the great burden bearer: Who not only bore our sicknesses and carried our sorrows, but also bore the mighty burden of our sins in His own body on the tree. Now we have what might be called a Christian paradox. As fulfilling the law of Christ, we are to restore the fallen and bear the burdens one of another but in connection with work, every man shall bear his own burden. The apostle was no

doubt referring to those who were seeking to destroy the foundations that he had laid; and for this they would have to give account to God. The day of appraisal is coming, when every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour. It is salutary to remember that grace never interferes with the exercise of God's government, nor modifies its application.

God's government is brought before us in Galatians 6:7. It requires spiritual discernment to place grace and government in their true and proper setting. Grace makes me a child, and government will chasten me with a rod if I am naughty. The principle, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," is divine and irrevocable. Our own experience; the experiences of such as Abraham, Lot, David, and the children of Israel, are all examples that confirm the inevitable reaping of what has been sown. How encouraging, in this matter of sowing, are the words which follow, "Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." The harvest has not yet come; we have need of patience; let us then be patient in our sowing to the Spirit, knowing that from the Spirit we shall reap life everlasting; and all the good done in the sowing time will reap its full reward. Let us not forget the white stone with the new name, which no man knoweth but he that receives it. We are sparse sowers enough, but the word reminds us that "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully" (2 Corinthians 9:6). Then let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith. The saints of God must have a special place in our affections, which is surely in keeping with the word that God is the "preserver of all men, specially of those that believe."

One discerns throughout this epistle the intensity of feeling, and the earnestness of Paul's desire for the saints to whom he is writing; and the fact that he writes the epistle with his own hand is the crowning proof of his deep concern for them. How solemn and affecting are the words, "But far be it from me to boast save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world." That wondrous cross in all its majestic greatness stood as an impassible barrier between the apostle and all that constituted the world out of which he had been delivered by the death of Christ upon the cross. Christ was entirely outside of this world's system: He was the Head of a new creation, where circumcision or uncircumcision availed nothing. These belonged to the world, not to the new creation. Here was a new rule, a rule which made a man a pilgrim and a stranger on the earth: the rule of belonging to that scene where the glory of Christ shall be displayed. For the things of the new creation he suffered, in faithfulness to Christ, bearing in his body through sufferings, afflictions and trials, the brands of the Lord Jesus, his beloved Master.

A. Shepherd.

S. The Everlasting Priesthood.

The Everlasting Priesthood.

Hebrews 7:1-28.

Across the pages of this wonderful Epistle can be written, as with the finger of divine truth, "That HE might have the first place in all things." As another has expressed it: "The transient glory of Judaism is but as tinsel compared with the surpassing and perennial glory of Christianity;" and this as presented in a living, glorified Man — Jesus, the Son of God. In His blessed Person every ray of divine glory is gathered up: every attribute and every glory of God shines in His face, graciously tempered to our feeble sight so that we can discern and contemplate them adoringly. Like the facets of some beautiful gem, each having its own peculiar lustre, but all combining to display the deep beauty of the whole stone. The contrastive features in this Epistle are indicated with extreme refinement, as contrasting between what was of divine appointment in an earthly position, and that which is supremely greater as being heavenly. The disparity in the degree of contrast is so great as to be immeasurable: Prophets, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Levi, Abraham, amongst persons; and the Sanctuary, Veil; Censer, Mercy-seat, and Sacrifices amongst things, pay homage to Jesus, and then stand aside that "Jesus only" might occupy and fill our vision. In this 7th chapter of Hebrews, the heavenly and eternal priesthood of the Son of God is contrasted with the Levitical priesthood. It is evident that the chapter before us, which sets forth the order and character of the priesthood of the Son of God, is a resumption of the subject which was broken off at the 10th verse of chapter 5. All that comes in between is a parenthesis, in which the writer, on account of the Hebrews' indifference and slowness of heart, seeks to awaken their consciences in solemn measured tones, desiring for them the maturity which would enable them to receive what he was about to disclose concerning this heavenly order of priesthood. The chapter opens with a reference to the incident in the life of Abraham, recorded in Genesis 14:1-24. There we have the first mention of Melchisedec, priest of the Most High God, and this in connection with Abraham as here turns victorious from the slaughter of the kings. (Abram the Hebrew, a true son of Eber, the pilgrim, one who was passing through, lived in direct contrast to Lot, who had settled down in the world — in Sodom, let it be remarked, of which God could say, "The cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and . . . their sin is very grievous." Lot, who had settled down in Sodom was thus exposed to all the attacks of the enemy, who attacked that wicked place; and when the King of Elam carried its inhabitants into captivity, Lot was captive too. The only safeguard against being held captive by the world, beloved, is to maintain pilgrim isolation from it. Abraham, who had not settled down in the world, was the instrument in God's hand for the liberation of Lot: just as the spiritual amongst God's people are sometimes enabled to set at liberty those ensnared and led captive by the world.) When Abram returns from the conflict, it is to enjoy the ministrations which come so lavishly from the priestly hands of Melchisedec, partaking of the bread to stay and the wine to cheer the heart of the true pilgrim. With meaningful intent does the Spirit interpret the names of this remarkable personage, who is assimilated to the Son of God. Not only are the names interpreted to give their true meaning, but the order in which they occur is given with precision. He

is first of all "King of Righteousness" — his individual name, then also "King of Salem" — his official place. There is no mention of his ancestors or of his successors, and this in a book where men's ancestry is traced back to Adam, and their succession carefully recorded. In considering the Levitical priesthood, certain, in the Book of Ezra, claimed priestly descent, but when their genealogy could not be found, they were, as defiled, put away from the priesthood. So, for an Israelite, genealogy was essential! But the very opposite is said of Melchisedec, "Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually:" The Spirit of God declares that he is like the Son of God in these respects. As to His eternal relationship to God there is no question of His genealogy, He is the Only One, God's only-begotten Son in eternity. And in a very unique and in a very blessed sense, He is God's only Son, even in time. If He brings many sons to glory, it is as being in association with Him, and not in any sense as being in succession to Him. Here then the blessed Lord is typified by this Melchisedec, the Abiding One, One who comes on the scene without ancestry; who, when He leaves the earth leaves no successor, but passes into the presence of God, where "He abideth a Priest forever!

How worthy is this blessed One of those kingly titles King of Righteousness and King of Peace. Was it not at the cross that He acquired the full right to this title of King of Righteousness, where He met the whole question of God's righteousness; where mercy and truth met together, and righteousness and peace kissed each other? And what is the result of that work of righteousness — peace! And the effect of righteousness is quietness and assurance forever!

"Christ of God, our souls confess Thee King and sovereign even now!

We pass on now to that which compares Him with all other priests. The writer tells us to dwell upon the greatness of this man, to whom even the patriarch Abraham, the head of the Hebrew race, gave the tenth of the spoil. The giving of the tenth was the acknowledgment of superiority, for tithes are given to a superior. Levi, as yet unborn (and thus the whole Aaronic priesthood) in Abraham representatively, gave tithes to Melchisedec. How infinitely greater and superior is this heavenly Priest compared with the earthly order of priests, who have paid homage to Him and acknowledged His superiority. He is indeed a glorious Person, whose order of priesthood has superseded and set aside the Aaronic order of priesthood, a priesthood which did not bring in perfection in relation to the conscience. If this order of priesthood could have perfected the conscience, there would have been no need for another order of priesthood. But another Priest has arisen, one who pertaineth to a different tribe, of which no one has been occupied with the service of the altar: and with the change of priesthood, there is of necessity a change of law. Under the Levitical priesthood the people received the law, and the Scripture tells us that by the law is the knowledge of sin. The law was given that the offence — not sin — might abound. Every movement of man's will was shown to be positive transgression. But with the change of priesthood there has been a change in the principle of God's dealing with men. What light this sheds on such a Scripture as that in Romans, "Ye are not under law, but under grace." No more distance, but brought near to God; and sustained by the priestly support of this Great High Priest, who belonged to another tribe, even that of Judah — praise.

He dwells in the midst of His people's praises, and leads the praises of His own to the Father. Truly He is the Priest of praise. His priesthood is also after the power of an endless life. No carnal

commandment made Him priest. His priesthood is not connected with that which vanishes away; and it is as Son He is Priest; His eternal existence as the Son of God bearing witness to the greatness of His priesthood. His order of priesthood was confirmed and established by the oath of God: the oath which emphasises the unchanging character of what God declares. When God established Aaron as priest, He did not swear that he should have an abiding priesthood. It was a temporary institution, being weak and unprofitable it could not abide: but this heavenly order of priesthood, established by a divine oath, which continues eternally, is the priesthood of the Son of God in the power of an endless life. There were many priests under the old order; they were not allowed to continue, for death came in; but here is One who abides a Priest forever; One upon whom death has no claim; yea, rather is He the Destroyer of death. This is the Priest who becomes us — so pre-eminently suited, and qualified, for the office that He fills. "Able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

Weary pilgrim, in the midst of many trials and difficulties, it may be with "sorrows surging round," look up and see that Great Priest who graces the Throne of Grace, and from whom flows all the succour and sympathy that is necessary for the pilgrim path. Live constantly in the sense of His priestly grace, strength, and affection, and let these precious words re-echo in your heart from day to day, "He abideth a priest forever!"

A. Shepherd. The Authority of Scripture.

"The Bible, the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants." We want more than this; we want to be, in all things, absolutely governed by the authority of Scripture — not by our fellow mortals interpretation of Scripture, but by Scripture itself. We want to have the conscience in a condition to yield, at all times, a true response to the teachings of the divine word.

C. H. Mackintosh.

What Trial Accomplishes.

Trial cannot of itself confer grace; but, under God's hand, it can break the will, and detect bidden and unsuspected evils: so that the new life is more fully and largely developed. God has a larger place in the heart, there is more intelligence in His ways, more lowly dependence, more consciousness that the world is nothing, more distrust of flesh and self. The saint is more emptied of self and filled with the Lord. What is eternal and true, because divine, has a much larger place in the soul; what is false is detected and set aside. There is more ripeness in our relationship with God. We dwell more in the eternal scenes into which He has brought our souls. We can look back then, and see the love which has brought us through it all, and bless God with dependent thanksgiving for every trial. Such only purge away the dross, and confirm us in brighter, fuller, clearer hope, and increasing our knowledge of God, and self being proportionately destroyed.

J. N. Darby.

S. The Heavenly Calling.

The Heavenly Calling. The heavenly calling has been before the mind of God from the beginning, the man of the earth, in every age, from the fall of Adam bringing only grief and sorrow to the heart of God; the children of God being sufferers and strangers here. Of old it had been disclosed "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God" (Hebrews 4:9); and from this same epistle we learn that this rest is in heaven (Hebrews 6:20); a blessed rest indeed for the tried, suffering, weary saints of God. When we turn to the 11th chapter of Hebrews, where faith is displayed in all its diversity of action and energy, as seen in the lives of that illustrious "cloud of witnesses," it is recorded of Abraham, "By faith he sojourned as a stranger in the land of promise, as in a foreign country, having dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise" (Hebrews 11:9). Was his strangership referred to because he had left Ur of the Chaldees? nay, verily! Abraham was a stranger because he had not yet reached the heavenly inheritance. Nothing could cure or close his strangership but possession of the inheritance to which God had called him. "All these died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them from afar off and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and sojourners on the earth . . . they seek their country . . . that is, a heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God; for he has prepared for them a city." Well might the Spirit of God say of such, "of whom the world was not worthy."

Moses and Enoch, too, of patriarchal days are witnesses to this heavenly calling: "Enoch walked with God; and he was not; for God took him" (Genesis 5:24); and Moses, who was not allowed to enter the earthly inheritance, got the Pisgah of God. Elijah among the prophets did not see death, but was translated to heaven as Enoch was. And so the elect of God of the ages we have considered have their part in heaven, in the heavenly country and in the city God prepared for them. But their part is to be distinguished from the part of the saints of this dispensation, from the church which is the body and the Bride of Christ, in the Epistle to the Galatians the Old Testament saints are shown to be heirs, and here in Hebrews to be soon perfected in heaven; but they have no place with those of whom the hymn writer says:

Thou gav'st us, in eternal love, To Him to bring us home to Thee.

These are the men that the Father has given Him out of the world.

If our place of privilege and of blessing is so great, the responsibilities attaching to it are correspondingly great. How do we measure up to this? How miserably we have failed in walking consistently with our heavenly calling and in the light of the heavenly inheritance. The condition of the saints of God today attests only too convincingly to the disruptive and disintegrating agencies that have combined to bring about such a deplorable condition of things. Had the heavenly calling been held in constant remembrance, in all its pristine lustre and perennial freshness, these disruptive elements would have had no place whatever. Another has said, "Declension begins with the surrender of the calling." These are searching words beloved! Those who are more matured in the things of God all agree that a saint always surrenders the highest truth which he has received

when he declines. In this he acts in direct contrast with the man of the world who will, as a rule, sacrifice everything so that he can retain that upon which he has specially set his heart. Yes, it is very sad and solemn, that in every time, declension begins with the surrender of the calling, the glory of the position. The calling is God's, and so the energy of Satan is directed against it, in order to contravene the will of God. The calling gives character to the present testimony, and hence if any one can be diverted from it, the enemy has gained the day. The glory of the Christian calling is that we are associated with the glorified Man in heaven, and every defection, since the day of its inauguration until now, begins with the surrender of the calling. In the light of these things how necessary it is to "have ." A partial Gospel will result in the allowance and sanction of that which beclouds the glory of the heavenly calling, such as earthly prosperity and the things of the world. I believe that the great characteristic of the revival of the truth at the beginning of the nineteenth century was that ours is a heavenly calling. Many joyfully parted with their goods knowing in themselves that in heaven they had "a better and an enduring substance" (Hebrews 10:34). The one commanding thought was that they did not belong to earth, but to heaven; and all their hopes and joys centred in heaven. Professions, prospects, position, and even lawful callings were gladly surrendered, so that there should be a heavenly testimony. Do not say that this is carrying things to extremes. Was it not for this purpose that the blessed Lord gave Himself? "Who gave Himself for our sins, so that He should deliver us out of the present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father; to whom be glory to the ages of ages" (Galatians 1:4-5). By the same mighty work on the cross we are justified; we are brought to joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, "through whom now we have received the reconciliation" (Romans 5:11). Then our old man being crucified with Him, we reckon ourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus; by death we are freed from the man of sin and shame, the man under the judgment of God, and we now belong to the glorified Man in heaven. "He died for all, that they who live should no longer live to themselves, but to him who died for them and has been raised" (2 Corinthians 5:15). As being in Christ there is a new creation; the old things have passed away, all things have become new, and all things are of God; and the blessed One who is the centre of all these things is the object for the undivided attention and affection of our hearts. A great day has dawned upon our souls when we realise that the One whom the Father has set at His own right hand is none other than the Head of the body; my Head. How differently human things and thoughts appear as we contemplate Him thus.

Let us ever seek therefore the things which are above, where Christ sitteth; the things with which the Spirit of God would engage our hearts, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him, the deep things of God. Here we find the things prepared for us in the eternal counsels of His love, revealed now that we may enjoy them. But these things can only be enjoyed in the sphere to which they belong; and so the Spirit would bring us in spirit into those heavenly scenes as the only proper environment, where the new nature develops, expands, and becomes fruitful in us. One of the greatest anomalies in this world is the presence of the saints of God in it; they belong to heaven; and it ought to be our constant exercise that while absent from the place which is truly our home, we should display in heavenly ways and demeanour that we belong morally to that scene "prepared for us by Christ our Head." There are the things of the flesh in which those after the flesh enjoy themselves; but there are the things of the Spirit, the scene and elements for the engagement and enjoyment of those who are after the Spirit; otherwise we should be like fish out of water; that is with a new life, having different affections, tastes, desires, and capacities, and no

sphere of things suited to them. In closing I quote the words of beloved J. A. Trench, "The heavens, with Christ there as the intimate link that connects with all that is there, are the present revealed scene of our home, relationships, objects, hopes, joys, interests, and pursuits, that thus a heavenly people may be formed practically as such by what is heavenly on earth — showing out nothing but what is heavenly." May we so know the Lord's love to us that the least of heavenly things may be incomparably greater than all the things of this scene.

A. Shepherd.

S. Thoughts on the Offerings.

Thoughts on the Offerings. At the close of Luke's Gospel we have the Lord Jesus setting the seal of His divine approbation on the Old Testament Scriptures, when He said to His disciples, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory." Having thus admonished His disciples, He began "at Moses and all the prophets," and "expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:25-27). In verse 44 of the same chapter the Lord Jesus with His divine authority shows that all the Old Testament is inspired, where He says, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me." The offerings, which we are about to consider, are found written in the law of Moses . . . concerning Me;" and they set forth in language chosen by the Spirit of God the superlative greatness of the Person of Christ, the matchless perfection of His life, and the stupendous import of His death, Godward and manward. In the four Gospels we have a four-fold presentation of Christ; in Matthew He is "Son of David, the Son of Abraham;" in Mark He is seen "in the form of a Servant;" in Luke He is found "in fashion as a Man;" while in John we behold "His glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a father . . . the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father." If the Person of Christ is brought out in this four-fold way in the Gospels, the work of Christ is brought out in its distinct and varied aspects in the typical language of the book of Leviticus.

Out of the five offerings of Leviticus 1:1-17; Leviticus 2:1-16; Leviticus 3:1-17; Leviticus 4:1-35; Leviticus 5:1-19; Leviticus 6:1-30, while one (the meat offering) very clearly presents the character of the perfect matchless life of the Lord Jesus, the four others, clearly identified in their distinct application by the out-poured blood, present His atoning work in all its varied glories and perfections. How sweet and wonderful it is to contemplate these precious things in their detail, in the transforming light of the Word of God, and to find the pages of the Old Testament corresponding to each other with pleasing exactitude as type to antitype, these wonderful offerings of Leviticus being but the picture of the living reality that is found in the Gospels. The Christ of God, in all the superlative excellence and greatness of His Person and work, is mirrored in the Old Testament Scriptures, for, is He not the centre of all divine revelation, and the glorious object and theme of all Scripture? Let us seek therefore to explore this rich field of divine wealth, which is ever ready to yield its exhaustless treasures to the searchings of the earnest seeker, assured indeed that there is "much increase in the tillage of the poor."

It is remarkable that our apprehension of these sacrifices, and their adaptation to our need, stands in reverse order to the manner of their institution. The burnt offering is the first presented, and the highest in character of all the sacrifices, but as sinners we first know Christ as the trespass offering, "delivered for our offences." Led on by the Holy Spirit into the fuller knowledge of Christ and His work, we travel upwards till we stand as worshippers around the altar of burnt offering, and wonderingly worship and adore as the ascending flame, laden with divinely-prepared perfume, goes up to Jehovah for the satisfaction and rest of His heart. The sacrifice in which God finds His

eternal delight is also that which provides the answer to our need as sinners and our communion as saints. Atonement was effected by the burnt offering and by the sin offering, but not by the meat or peace offerings. In the burnt offering we see the sacrifice of Christ in its deep and matchless perfection, His voluntary surrender of Himself even unto death in the carrying out of the will of God, and also God's delight in and acceptance of the sacrifice. The burnt offering was to fulfil what had been written of Him, "Lo, I come . . .to do Thy will, O God" (Hebrews 10:7). It is that aspect of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus which directly and exclusively has reference to God. Atonement in the sin offering was to secure forgiveness for the sinner; atonement in the burnt offering is for our acceptance.

Let us not forget that the supreme and impelling motive which actuated the blessed Lord in coming into this world was to accomplish the will of God, and to glorify Him, even in death. It was when He took our sins upon Him, and was made sin, that God was glorified in relation to sin. Anticipating this, the Lord Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him" (John 13:31). Do we not find in John's Gospel the Spirit of God bringing before us the burnt offering character of the work of Christ? There we have opening before us the deepest and fullest glories of the Son of God, as well as the highest character of His work. In John 14:31 we have the love and obedience that ever marked the Lord Jesus down here in His relationship with His Father, "But that the world may know that I love the Father: and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence." He, the doer of the Father's will, and the object of the Father's delight, goes forth to consummate in death His perfect obedience. He had authority to lay down His life, and authority to take it again, and could say, "And He that sent Me is with Me: the Father hath not left Me alone; for I do always those things that please Him" (John 8:29).

It is very instructive to note that different animals could be offered in approach to God. A bullock without blemish, a sheep or goat without blemish, or turtle doves or young pigeons, could be offered. These are presented in a descending scale of values, suggesting varying apprehensions that we might have of the death of Christ. The ground of our acceptance however does not depend on the measure of our apprehension, but solely on the unqualified acceptance of the wondrous sacrifice of Christ by God, Who alone can fully appreciate the infinite value of Christ's death.

Whether a bullock, a sheep or goat was offered, it is specifically stated that it must be a male without blemish, as indicating the matchless dignity and unblemished character of Him they set forth typically. The offering of doves or young pigeons bespeaks the poverty, feebleness, and perhaps even faulty apprehension of Christ's death, for we read that the priest "shall pluck away his crop with his feathers, and cast it beside the altar on the east part, by the place of the ashes." The rejection of the crop and feathers suggests that a worshipper might mix up unworthy and unacceptable thoughts of Christ's death with what is worthy and acceptable. How different in the case of the bullock and the sheep; all was burned on the altar. The birds were to be cleft in two, but not divided; suggesting that while the offerer had some little apprehension of Christ's death, he was not able to enter into the precious details of that wondrous sacrifice. Yet how blessed it is to see the delight that God finds even in the feeblest apprehension of His beloved Son and His sacrificial work: and how richly His grace shines forth in the words which are used in the case of the fowls as in that of the bullock and the sheep, "It is a burnt sacrifice (an ascending offering), an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour (savour of rest) unto Jehovah."

There is no room here for the erroneous idea that the death of Christ was only that of a martyr, for the Spirit of God is very careful to maintain, in each offering, the sacrificial character of that death, by giving specific instructions regarding the blood.

How blessed also to consider how the unblemished animal was treated! It was killed, flayed and cut in pieces. The parts enumerated, the head, the fat, the inwards and the legs, denoting the intelligence, will, motives and walk of the blessed One in thus offering Himself wholly, and in intelligently surrendering Himself in death for the glory of God. All were laid upon the altar, and subjected to the fire — the searching judgment of God. What the offering was ceremonially, as washed in water, the Lord Jesus was intrinsically. The fire of divine judgment searched Him inwardly and outwardly; the motives and springs as well as the walk and ways, and in result all went up to God as a sweet savour.

Through sovereign grace we are identified with the One Who so perfectly glorified God in death, for it is written, "And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him." We are accepted before God in all the abiding and unchanging value of Christ's Person and work.

God's eternal delight in Jesus as the burnt offering is beautifully told out in the words, "The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out" (Leviticus 6:13). The Meat Offering. This gift offering, which in the law, was restricted to bloodless offerings, derives its impressiveness from the simplicity of the terms used by the Holy Spirit in portraying the distinctive glories of Jesus as Man presenting to God an unblemished life with all its grace and moral perfectness — the matchless life of Him Who is holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners. It is not only a sweet savour offering, but "most holy of Jehovah's offerings by fire" (Leviticus 2:3), and it was based upon and its value declared by what God found in the burnt-offering, and as setting forth the holy humanity of the Lord Jesus. In the meat-offering Jesus is presented to God as the Second Man, a true and perfect Man, yet essentially in contrast with other men and with the world by which He was surrounded, and in which He was in result a Man of sorrows. Across His pathway, marked by every moral perfection, lay the dark shadow of man's unceasing and unrelenting hatred and enmity, the quality of which was accentuated by the glory of that divine and heavenly light which was accompanied by the Father's voice expressing His unqualified delight in the Man of His good pleasure.

It is very blessed to see the close relation of the burnt-offering and the meat-offering to each other as intimated in the expression frequently used, "The burnt-offering and its meat-offering," which is never, and could never, be reversed, since the death of Christ is that alone by which the immeasurable distance between God and man has been removed, and in virtue of which we have "boldness for entering into the (holy of) holies by the blood of Jesus" (Hebrews 10:19). We marvel at the prescience of the Spirit of God in providing this necessary safeguard against the erroneous ideas of ungodly men that the blameless life of the Son of God is that by which righteousness is vicariously reckoned to them. Such deceive themselves by the fond yet ensnaring delusion that Jesus kept the law for them during His life, and so the righteousness of His life is reckoned to those who believe; but there is not a shred of support in the Word of God for such satanically inspired theorizings of men.

Scripture does assure us that Christ Jesus has been made to us from God, "righteousness, and holiness, and redemption" (1 Corinthians 1:30); and that "Him who knew not sin He has made sin for us that we might become God's righteousness in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21), but this is in resurrection consequent upon His death. No, we must not reverse the order of precedence — "the burnt-offering and its meat-offering;" beyond all question and objection the meat-offering is supplemental to the burnt-offering, and this not because of any element of inferiority attaching to the latter offering, which indeed speaks of the perfections of the Manhood of Christ, but because our approach to God is not through the perfect life of Christ, but through His death. Other Scriptures, such as Numbers 15:1-12, show that the meat-offering was normally offered with sacrifices of blood, not independently.

It is essential that the momentous truths respecting the holy life and the sacrificial death of the blessed Lord should be held with divine power in all their peculiar and distinctive teaching in our souls, lest we fall an easy prey to the specious doctrines so prevalent among men, which endeavour to set aside the "offence of the cross," and to rob the cross of its true character and glory.

Another has written of this offering, "This meat-offering of God, taken from the fruit of the earth, was the finest wheat; that which was pure, separate and lovely in human nature was in Jesus under all its sorrows, but in all its excellence and excellent in its sorrows. There was no unevenness in Jesus, no predominant quality to produce the effect of giving Him a distinctive character. He was, though despised and rejected of men, the perfection of human nature. The sensibilities, firmness, decision (though this attached itself also to the principle of obedience), elevation and calm meekness, which belong to human nature, all found their perfect place in Him. In a Paul, I find energy and zeal; in a Peter, ardent affection; in a John, tender sensibilities and abstraction of thought united to a desire to vindicate what he loved, which scarce knew limit. But the quality we have observed in Peter predominates and characterizes him. In a Paul, blessed servant though he was, he did not repent, though he had repented — in him in whom God was mighty towards the circumcision, we find the fear of man break through the faithfulness of his zeal. John who would have vindicated Jesus in his zeal, knew not what manner of spirit he was of, and would have forbidden the glory of God, if a man walked not with them. Such were Paul, and Peter, and John."

"But in Jesus, even as Man, there was none of this unevenness. There was nothing salient in His character, because all was in perfect subjection to God in His humanity, and had its place, and did exactly its service, and then disappeared. God was glorified in it, and all was in harmony. When meekness became Him, He was meek; when indignation, who could stand before His overwhelming and withering rebuke? Tender to the chief of sinners in the time of His grace; unmoved by the heartless superiority of a cold Pharisee (curious to judge who He was); when the time of judgment is come no tears of those who wept for Him moved Him to other words than, "Weep for yourselves and your children," — words of deep compassion, but of deep subjection to the due judgment of God — Such was Christ in human nature"

(J. N. Darby. Synopsis Vol. I., pp. 151-153).

Let us now consider the accompaniments to the meat-offering, which we cannot doubt are used with the divine intent of throwing into more blessed relief the surpassing glories of the Man, Christ

Jesus, the One Who graced this defiled scene with His own blessed presence, displaying in that matchless, blameless life which He lived in a world that witnessed to God's dishonour and Satan's apparent triumph, all that God was for man, and all that man ought to have been for God. On the fine flour oil was poured, expressing in a very precious way the anointing of the Lord Jesus with the Holy Spirit, even as we read in Acts 10:38, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power — for God was with Him." His anointing declared His perfection and the Father's delight in Him. Frankincense also was to be put on the fine flour, speaking to us of Christ's moral graces and excellencies. In that wondrous pathway of Jesus, in all His words, His ways, His actions, and in all the lovely traits exhibited in His path trodden for the glory of God, there was ever that exquisite fragrance ascending to delight the heart of the Father. A handful of flour with all the frankincense was burnt upon the altar for a "memorial" — a beautiful word, used by the Spirit to indicate God's constant remembrance of a life lived entirely to Him, fragrant with His praise, and which He alone could appreciate. What remained of the offering was the portion of the priest — the worshipper. The whole of the matchless life of the Lord Jesus, from the manger to the baptismal waters of Jordan, was covered by the Father's "well pleased." It could not be otherwise, for from His conception by the Holy Spirit, He was the true meat-offering, "fine flour mingled with oil" (Leviticus 2:4). There were three distinct forms in which this offering was prepared. It might be "baken in the oven," or "in a pan," or "in the frying pan." The increasing severity of the tests to which the personal devotedness of the Lord Jesus would be subjected seems to be indicated in these different modes of preparation. The first might cover the thirty years of His private life — these were not open sufferings, so to speak, as suffering violence. Baken in the oven suggests trial in the heated atmosphere of a world estranged from God, and at enmity with Him, where the unrestrained will and passions of men were seen on every hand. Another has said, "In this world of sin and misery Christ necessarily suffered — suffered also because of righteousness, and because of His love. Morally, this feeling of sorrow is the necessary consequence of possessing a moral nature totally opposed to everything that is in this world." The second form might apply to the three and a half years of the Lord's ministry, for the pan seems to speak of open suffering. The third form of testing, "in the frying pan," or "cauldron," might have reference to that last awful trial in which the personal devotedness of that Blessed One was tested to the full — the dreadful hour of the power of darkness, and the judgment of the cross. The cauldron combined the action of the fire and the water, the water speaking of Christ being directed in all His ways, even in His hour of greatest trial, by the word of God. (See Matthew 26:53-54; John 19:28). His unwavering devotedness to His Father's will enabled Him to pass through every trial, the greatest of which was when He suffered at the hand of a righteous and holy God, on the cross, as the sinners' substitute.

Fine flour mingled with oil would speak of "That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called Son of God" (Luke 1:35). Leaven and honey are both forbidden to be put into any offering made by fire to Jehovah, the former invariably speaking of evil, as in "The leaven of malice and wickedness," producing the ferment of the lust of the flesh, and the revolt of the human will from God. With regard to the prohibition of leaven, there is a notable exception, in Leviticus 23:17, where the wave loaves set forth the church at Pentecost, sanctified and presented to God. Because these loaves set forth those in whom there was sin, a sin-offering was offered with them.

Honey speaks of the sweetness of nature, and of human affections which, though not evil in themselves, have no part in the worship of God. Salt symbolizes that which opposes corruption, and is therefore the opposite of leaven. On no account was salt to be lacking in any offering; it was "the salt of the covenant of thy God," a God Who is of holier eye than to behold iniquity, and who can only be satisfied with what is holy. In "the oblation of thy first-fruits," it is the same Blessed One Who is brought before us. The first-fruits represent the new harvest, the revival of the buried seed, and fruitfulness out of death. The "green ears of corn roasted in fire" recall the Lord's solemn words to the women that followed Him, "If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry." He alone was the green tree, full of the sap and vigour of true spiritual life: all other men lay under the desolating power of death. He was also the green ears that were "full," complete and perfect, even unto death. As these glories of "Christ, once humbled here," pass in vision before our souls, may it result in a sincere upsurge of affection toward the blessed Son of God. The Peace Offering.

We can readily understand and appreciate the appropriate place which this offering occupies, in the divine record, in relation to the burnt offering and the meat offering, which we have already considered. The heart discerns, in some feeble measure, the infinite care, the faultless precision and the purposeful intention of the Holy Spirit, not merely in the choice of materials with which to set forth the matchless and unrivalled glories of the Person of the Christ, and the character and the magnitude of the work He has accomplished, but also in respect of the progressive order in which they are presented in the Scriptures of truth. The essential character of the peace offering is communion, and the true child of God would do well to ponder its meaning and implications, for it derives its character from the sacrifice of Christ as accepted by God: from the burnt offering and the meat offering in which God has found perfect delight. Of the Lord Jesus, the apostle Peter says. "To whom coming, a living stone, cast away indeed as worthless by men, but with God chosen, precious . . . Behold, I lay in Zion a corner stone, elect, precious." How beautifully he adds, "To you therefore who believe is the preciousness." Well does the hymn writer exclaim, "And to know the blessed secret of His preciousness to Thee." Through the death of Christ we have the privilege of communion with God, with Christ and with each other. What immense and exalted privilege!

God claimed for Himself exclusively "The food of the offering," which was all the fat and the inward parts. How beautifully this speaks of the excellency, energy of will, the feelings, motives and affections of that Blessed One, which none but God could rightly or fully appreciate. All were tested by fire, and the action of the fire on the fat would bring out its supreme excellence. Everything in Jesus was divinely tested, and the trial only brought out His deep perfections; the more intensive the trial the greater the manifestation of the excellencies that were His. All went up to God as a sweet savour of rest; yea, more, God fed upon it, finding rest and delight in every movement of the heart and will of His beloved Son. In connection with this offering God claimed, as a perpetual statute, the fat and the blood; that which spoke of the will and the life of the Lord Jesus.

It is not without significance that a male or female could be offered. In Scripture, the male signifies position and the female state. Our communion with God has been secured through the death of Christ giving us a new place and a new state before Him: "We have also access by faith into this favour in which we stand," and we are "Sprinkled as to our hearts from a wicked conscience, and

washed as to our body with pure water." The peace offering has been taken by many as typifying the work of Christ making peace with God, but it is rather a praise or thanksgiving offering; in the French it is a "Sacrifice of prosperity." It is unquestionably a communion sacrifice, and thanksgiving and praise naturally flow from communion. This is confirmed in Leviticus 7:12 by the expression, "If he offer it for a thanksgiving." In chapter 3 we have what the offering is for God; it is reserved for the law of the offering to reveal the part of the priest and the offerer.

How blessed it is to note the repetition of the details in relation to each sacrificial animal; indicating that God never wearies of speaking of His beloved Son. Nothing was left to the imagination of man; all was carefully, minutely and divinely prescribed, so that God's people had only to obey. In the seventh chapter we are told what was to be done with the various parts of the sacrifice: the fat, Jehovah's portion, was burned as incense, on the altar of burnt offering; the breast, which speaks of the devoted love of Christ, was fed upon by Aaron and his sons, who are typically Christ and His saints as the priestly family. We have been brought into a relationship where we can feast upon the love of Christ which passes knowledge; where each one can say, "The Son of God loved me, and gave Himself for me," and where together we can say, "Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it."

It was a love, divine in its source, mighty in its power, measureless in extent, quenchless in its character, eternal in its duration, that brought Him from the profound solitudes of an eternity that is past, into this world where man regards God as someone austere, Reaping where He had not sown, and gathering where He had not strawed. Into such a world, characterized by estrangement from God, and in a state of enmity towards Him, came the Son of the Father's bosom to lay bare the heart of God. Is it not when we come together to partake of the Lord's Supper that we taste in a peculiar way the depth and sweetness of Christ's love? It is as those who love the Lord that we are brought together, drawn by the cords of His love; the bread and the cup speaking simply and yet so affectingly of the blessed Lord giving Himself in love to carry out the will of God. One has said, "In the Lord's supper, man is nothing, but Christ and His love is everything;" and another has touchingly remarked, "We have nothing to do in this retreat, but to sit down and enjoy what the Lord is." In the assembly we are on the distinct footing of being part of Christ's company, associated with Him in resurrection. The breast was waved as a wave offering before the Lord, and in the assembly, as gathered around the Lord at His supper, we have the privilege of presenting to the Father the precious features of the Lord's love made known in death.

We are associated with the risen Christ, being suited to His company, for "Both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." How beautiful, therefore, in the light of this, are the words, "And the breast shall be Aaron's and his sons." With Christ we can enter into the deep joy that comes from feeding upon His love made known in His death for us. When we come together, and function as priests before God (1 Peter 2:5), we not only feed upon the breast, but also upon the right shoulder, upon the mighty strength of Him who went down into the depths of death, and ascended far above all heavens that He might fill all things. He is the true Benjamin, the One in whom there is strength, the Son of God's right hand: "Let Thy hand be upon the Man of Thy right hand, upon the Son of Man whom thou madest strong for Thyself" (Psalms 80:17).

Christ the Son of God was strong to resolve in His death the great and momentous question of sin, and to effect the conciliation of mercy and truth, righteousness and peace, in accordance with the requirements of God's holiness; and He was strong to take His great power to reign, consequent upon the overthrow and subjugation of every enemy: "Arise, Jehovah, into Thy rest, Thou and the ark of Thy strength" (Psalms 132:8). When he comes forth to reign His sceptre will be a sceptre of righteousness, as indicating the character of His reign, and there shall be no evil occurrent.

After the wave-breast and the right shoulder had been given to those for whom God had reserved them, the rest of the sacrifice was to be eaten on the day, or the day after, it was offered; whatever remained on the third day was to be burned with fire. Communion cannot be prolonged beyond the measure of spiritual power, and any endeavour to keep up a semblance of communion by fleshly effort is "An abomination" in the sight of God (Leviticus 7:18). The peace offering presents a truly wonderful picture of God, Christ and the saints together feeding, delighting together in the Lord Jesus and in His love, in His Person and His work. May the language of another be the sincere prayer of every heart: "Precious Saviour, Thou joy of our hearts, Thou infinitely Blessed One, maintain our communion uninterrupted until we see Thee face to face." The Sin Offering. The accustomed phrase "And Jehovah spake unto Moses," with which the Holy Spirit marks the fresh revelation of Leviticus 4:1-35, will no doubt arrest the attention of the devoted reader of Scripture. While we have three distinct offerings in the previous chapters, they all belong to the same revelation, and they are all similar in character, since they are all declared to be a sweet savour to God, which the sin offering and the trespass offering are not. This notable distinction furnishes us with another convincing illustration of the infinite care and faultless precision of the Holy Spirit in His choice of words, for every expression of sin is infinitely abhorrent to the nature of a holy God. By its very nature the sin offering could not be regarded as a sweet savour offering, for in it God's holiness is expressed in unmitigated wrath against sin. God has no delight in judgment; it is His "strange work"; but His righteousness demands judgment on sin.

It is also significant that different words are used with regard to the burning of the sacrifices, words which in themselves distinguish between what was sweet savour and what typified or implied the wrath of God. The word relating to the former means to burn as incense, while the other signifies consuming to ashes. Let it, however, be remembered that even in those sacrifices which represented Jesus made sin for us, and thus only on the cross, He never was more dear to His God and Father, for the blood was sprinkled before God, and in certain cases put upon the horns of the golden altar; while all the fat which speaks of His excellence, was burnt as a sweet savour to God upon the altar.

God alone can rightly value and appreciate that "Sacrifice of richer blood" than those that were offered under the legal covenant, and which were but faint shadows of Him who is the glorious substance. May our thoughts be so controlled and governed by the Word of God as we consider these wonderful types, that we shall glean from the minute details given by the Spirit of God His own divine thoughts of the perfection of the work of the Lord Jesus. The various sin offerings being identified with that which was in itself abhorrent to God, were not burnt on the altar. Those for the anointed priest, or for the sin of ignorance of the whole assembly of Israel were wholly consumed "outside the camp," like the sin offering of the Day of Atonement. The flesh of other sin offerings was eaten by the males of the priestly family (see Leviticus 7:6-7) in the holy place.

It is well for us to recognise the character of sins for which God made provision in the sin offering, as the divine command to Moses is, "Speak unto the children of Israel saying, if a soul shall sin through ignorance or inadvertance against any of the commandments of Jehovah, in things that ought not to be done, and do any of them..." The sacrifice was for unintentional sins, committed through unwatchfulness and lack of proper exercise in the fear of God. There was no provision made for sins of deliberate intent which manifested the high-handed assertion of man's will in defiance of God's commandments. Of wilful sin, it is written, "But the soul that doeth ought presumptuously . . . that soul shall be cut off from among his people, because he hath despised the word of Jehovah, and hath broken His commandment, that soul shall be utterly cut off: his iniquity shall be upon him" (Numbers 15:30-31).

There were many cases in which the soul was compelled to look outside the sacrificial forms, and to say like David, "Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it; Thou delightest not in burnt offering"; and "Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, Thou God of my salvation; and my tongue shall sing aloud of Thy righteousness" (Psalms 51:16; Psalms 51:14). Faith laid hold for salvation upon that to which these typical offerings pointed, but which they themselves were unable to effect. No ignorance, however, avails to lessen the need for or alter the character of atonement. Sin is sin no less because we are too ignorant or indifferent to recognise it as such, and God must bring us to recognise His standard; He cannot come down to ours; and for the least sin, the wages of sin is death — the atoning victim dies. It is upon the penalty of sin that this offering insists more strongly than any other, as its name unmistakably implies. If the burnt offering speaks of the perfect obedience of Jesus, even unto death, in which we are accepted; and the peace offering gives us the ground of sweet communion that we enjoy with God consequent on the work of redemption; the sin offering declares the judgment of God which the sin-bearer must remove by coming under it.

It is rather remarkable that while we have three grades of burnt offerings, and three — though not quite so precise and distinct — of peace offerings, the sin offering has no less than seven forms. This is all the more remarkable when we consider that the voluntary element so conspicuous in the offerings of the earlier chapters is entirely lacking in the sin offering. The former offerings were an expression of the devotion of the worshipper, apart from any commandment, and according to his means. It was not so with the sin offering and the trespass offering; these were the inescapable claim of God upon the sinner, which could neither be diminished nor added to.

How precious it is to note the various grades connected with this offering, seven in all, the complete provision which God has made to meet every need of the sinner. All is perfectly apportioned in strict relation to the status of the offender, and how the heart is moved with a sense of the great mercy of God, as in the descending scale of apportionment we take account of the large concessions God makes, so that even the most impoverished can meet His righteous demands. The various grades in the burnt offering express the different measures of apprehension found among the people of God in respect of the infinitely great and precious sacrifice of Christ. If there are measures of apprehension, there are also degrees of sin, and these latter are indicated in the different sin offerings. The gravity of sin must be measured in a two-fold way; first, with regard to the dignity of the offended One; secondly, with regard to the relative position of the offender.

We have therefore, first, the sin of the anointed priest (Leviticus 4:3-12); secondly, the sin of the whole congregation (Leviticus 4:13-21); thirdly, a ruler's sin (Leviticus 4:22-26); fourthly, the sin of one of the people of the land (Leviticus 4:27-35). If the priest, who represented the people before Jehovah, or if the whole congregation sinned, the blood, which was the witness of death, was sprinkled seven times before Jehovah, and was put upon the horns of the golden altar. God's claims were perfectly met in the blood sprinkled seven times before Him, and the worship and communion of the redeemed congregation restored by the blood on the horns of the altar. When a prince, or ruler, or one of the people of the land transgressed, the worship of the host of Jehovah was not interrupted, and in such a case the blood was put upon the horns of the brazen altar. That the consequences of the sins of the anointed priest and of the whole congregation were most serious is not only seen in the place of the application of the blood, but also in the burning of the body of the victim outside the camp.

It may be remarked that so thoroughly is this aspect of the death of Jesus identified with the sin of man, that in the original tongue, the word for "sin" and "sin offering" is the same. In the light of this, does not that wonderful verse in Romans 8:1-39 assume a more significant aspect? "God, having sent His own Son, in likeness of flesh of sin, and for sin (or as a sin offering) has condemned sin in the flesh."

All these sacrifices, and the solemn and momentous teachings based thereon, speak with increasingly solemn voice to us, and read us deeply impressive lessons; and as we look more closely at some of the more outstanding features, may the Holy Spirit engrave these lessons upon our hearts.

"The priest that is anointed" is the first case considered. As has already been shown, the consequences of the sin of one near to Jehovah in priestly office are much greater than those of one not so highly favoured. But as having Christ before us in all the perfection of His work as the true sin offering, it would not be true to assert that the greater sins require a greater offering. No greater offering could be offered than that of the Blessed One who, by the Eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God. This offering of infinite and eternal value avails for the sins of all who trust in Him, no matter how near or how far off they may have been in privilege to God, or whether they are five hundred pence or fifty pence debtors.

It is very sad when one who enjoys priestly relationships with God sins "according to the trespass of the people." How grave is the defection that brings into evidence the workings of the flesh in some form or other, which not only brings personal consequences, but which causes the assembly of God to suffer. Nor is it without significance that in connection with the priest it does not speak — as in the cases of the assembly, the prince and the people — of his sin becoming known. Would not this suggest in regard to the three cases mentioned that there would be an interval of time between the sin and its becoming known to them? The omission in the case of the priest suggests that he would at once have the conscious, instinctive knowledge that he had sinned against the commandments of Jehovah. From this we can readily discern that in those who are habitually near to God there is a holy sensitiveness that at once detects anything that is displeasing to God in the life and service, and which immediately turns the heart to God in self-judgment and confession. Is it not in this way that we can estimate how far we have advanced in our apprehension of the holiness of God? by our sensitive reaction to what is contrary to it. How we ought to covet the

development of the spiritual sensibilities whereby we should detect instinctively the merest deflection from that which is pleasing to God. With many of us, when there have been actions or words or feelings which are distinctively of the flesh, some time may elapse before there is any true movement towards self-judgment. Does this not indicate that nearness has not been known or preserved? Otherwise the distance that sin produces would have been more quickly and keenly felt. If we are not habitually near to God, we may go on for a long time with what is of the flesh without detecting it, and it may take a sharp word of warning from that Word which is "Living and operative, and sharper than any two-edged sword," to awaken us to the reality of our state, or it may even necessitate a season of humbling discipline to arouse us from the stupefying effects of the activity of the flesh.

Sin is never quiescent, and by its innate virulence it saps our spiritual vitality until we reach such a state of powerlessness as to be unable to resist its onslaughts: but God, in His faithful love, would by His Word, and also in His disciplinary ways with us, open our eyes to see that "The way of transgressors is hard." With what conviction can the beloved Psalmist say, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Thy Word." Our true liberty lies in judging what is of the flesh inwardly, so that although it is fully discerned by us, and we are humbled in discerning it, there is no outward manifestation of it by which occasion would be given for "The way of truth to be evil spoken of." How comforting then to reflect that the very moment there is the consciousness of having sinned, the divine provision is seen to be at hand.

Such indeed is the wondrous grace of Him who is the God of all grace — Christ is at once introduced as the true sin offering. Let us therefore turn to God at once when there has been a movement of the flesh, and avail ourselves of the rich and effectual provision which God has set forth in Christ as the sin offering. That deep and holy self-judgment that God desires is not brought about by undue occupation with the sin committed, but by apprehending Christ in relation to it, and by taking up with God what it has cost Him to deal with it and put it away. The enemy would seek to keep sin before us, and darken our spirits with it, and in this way hinder us from turning to God to learn the all-sufficiency of Christ in relation to it. It will be seen therefore that from God's side restoration is not necessarily a lengthy process, nor need it be from ours if there is that sensitiveness to what is so abhorrent and so dishonouring to God.

How blessed it is to realise that "if any one sin, we have a patron with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." J. N. Darby helpfully remarks, "The word Patron is the same word translated Comforter in John 14:1-31, etc. Christ manages all our affairs for us above, the Holy Spirit below. There is no word satisfactory to embrace both passages in English. I use Patron in the sense rather of the Roman patron who maintained the interests of his client in every way. So Christ on high: the Spirit here for saints." The advocacy of our blessed Lord produces in the soul of the one who has offended those healthful exercises which result in complete restoration to that place of communion with the Father which had been lost by reason of sin. In the light of this, how touching and how deeply significant are the words of the blessed Lord to Peter, "I have prayed for thee." The sin offering, in each case, is brought to the entrance of the tent of meeting, or to the place of the burnt offering. While it is not necessary or desirable to speak indiscriminately of our wrong-doing, there must be perfect transparency and willingness to acknowledge our sin. There can be no attempt to cover things up; there must be the full realization, and complete acknowledgment, of the enormity of our guilt. How readily we can do this if we have a true apprehension of Christ as the sin offering.

As we place, so to speak, our hand upon the head of the sin offering, thereby signifying complete identification with it, the thought presents itself to the heart and conscience, that in Christ the offering is greater far than the sin. The priest then brought the blood into the tent of meeting and sprinkled it "before Jehovah, before the veil of the Sanctuary," not once, or twice, but seven times, thereby indicating that God would have the offender in the sense of the perfection of the efficacy of the blood of Christ that removes the stain of sin before Him, and from the conscience. The blood is then put on the horns of the altar of fragrant incense. Would not this intimate how the offerer is restored to full liberty of communion and confidence in prayer?

All the blood of the bullock being poured out at the bottom of the altar of burnt offering seems to provide the basis, as it were, for the offering of the fat, which speaks of Christ in all His excellence. While Christ is viewed as the sin offering, His blood shed fully vindicating every righteous claim of the altar, yet His value could not be limited to the removal of sin, for in the offering of the fat, all of which was burnt on the altar, we see the infinite satisfaction and good pleasure of God in the excellence of Him who offered Himself to secure His glory. In the burning of the whole bullock outside the camp, we see typically the complete consumption in holy judgment of what was so offensive to God; and the ashes speak of judgment eternally exhausted.

Having dealt in detail with the sin offering of the anointed priest, it will suffice to mark some of the outstanding features connected with the other offerings mentioned in the chapter, since the same wonderful Sacrifice is more than sufficient to meet every demand, no matter how exacting those demands may be. The sin of "The whole assembly" is a very serious matter since, like the sin of the anointed priest, it interferes with the service of God. The thing may be "hid from the eyes of the congregation," but it is not hid from the eyes of Him before whom everything is "open and naked."

All around us today we see unmistakable evidences of the sin of "The whole assembly," and this is brought before us in a very marked way in Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22. The assembly has left its first love, and has ceased to be in subjection to Jesus as Lord. It does not hold Christ as Head, nor does it own in a practical way the blessed reality of the presence of the Holy Spirit. What we see around us is an established order affiliated to the world, which is of man and not of God. The Lord has called upon the assembly to repent, and gives space for repentance (see Revelation 2:5; Revelation 2:16; Revelation 2:21-22; Revelation 3:3; Revelation 3:19), and grace has provided the sin offering. Alas! Alas! The professing church is found in Laodicea with Christ outside its door. A prince or ruler was one who cared for God's order among His people. It was more serious for such to sin than for "one of the people of the land." So it is today; failure in one who leads among the saints of God, or who professes to be a leader, is viewed by God very seriously. The restoration of such calls for a more mature and intelligent apprehension of Christ as the sin offering as the means of forgiveness and restoration, and for deeper self-judgment, since the measure of self-judgment is the measure of our apprehension of Christ as the sin offering. So the prince who has sinned brings a "male" offering. The blood being put on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and the fat burnt on the altar, links the sin offering with the burnt offering. How precious the thought that in passing through the deep exercise of self-judgment with God in regard to our sin, we are brought into the blessed realization of what Christ is to God as the true burnt offering. It would not be in keeping with God's movements towards us in grace to leave us merely with the negative thought of being relieved of our sin; He would also give us the precious sense of the sweet odour of Christ as the burnt offering.

Little need be added regarding the sin of "one of the people of the land," save to note that the offerer brings a female goat or sheep, thereby indicating a weaker apprehension of Christ than the prince. Let it not be thought, however, that this infers his sin is more easily atoned for, or that anything less than the full value of the death of Christ could atone for it. In all that has passed before us in these pages the dominant thought has surely been how Christ and His death is apprehended by the faith and affections of the saints of God, and in this we cannot go beyond our measure. How blessed to find in the all-sufficiency of Christ the perfect and absolute answer to every need, whether as sinners or as saints. It was sovereign mercy that met us in all our deep need as sinners; it is divine mercy that sustains us in all the trying and difficult circumstances of the pilgrim pathway as we "await the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." To understand the book of Leviticus, it is essential to understand that access to God in His dwelling place, the tabernacle, is in view. The burnt offering was for the acceptance of the offerer before God. Even the sin offering, as brought before us here, is to meet the errors and failures of those who had been brought to God through redemption. Israel had been sheltered from divine judgment by the blood of the paschal lamb, and the sin offering of the Day of Atonement secured their relations with God. In Leviticus 5:1-6 we have three specific cases, which in principle appear to cover every kind of failure in the practical ways of God's people. The first is failure in respect of witness; the second is failure as to the maintenance of separation; and the third is failure regarding sobriety or self-control. The first instance of guilt concerns one who, forgetting that there is a "time to be silent," forgets also that there is a "time to speak," and has failed to divulge that which he was responsible to make known. It is not unknown among the people of God that those who could have borne witness have maintained a reprehensible silence so as to shelter an evildoer. This is a serious matter, especially in relation to the things of God, for it is said of such, "If he do not give information, then he shall bear his iniquity." The Blessed Lord is in this matter, as in all others, the great Exemplar. When before the High Priest, He heard the voice of adjuration, and witnessed a good confession (Matthew 26:63). It is not merely a great privilege, it is our bounden duty to be confessors of the truth, witnesses to Christ in every sphere and in every circumstance. Alas! how often we fail to speak well and worthily of Him who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate (1 Timothy 6:13). We shrink from the reproach attaching to His precious Name. The words of the hymn-writer come with a definite challenge to each of us, "Jesus, and shall it ever be, a mortal man ashamed of Thee?" What an example the apostles give us in Acts 5:41, "They therefore went their way from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to be dishonoured for the Name."

It will no doubt be readily acknowledged that the character and energy of our testimony will only be in proportion to the measure in which we have apprehended the truth concerning the Person of Christ; as the beloved apostle could say in 1 John 1:3, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us." Our witness is to be of what we have seen or known in Jesus. He is the great subject-matter of all divine testimony; He is the inexhaustible source from which it flows, and the peerless object to which it is directed.

Let us not discount the value, nor the importance of our testimony for the Lord Jesus. It may not partake of the character of what was seen in the great apostle — strong, positive, robust, and unyielding. Natural timidity and a reserved disposition, such as were in Timothy, may mark us, but even these will not hinder a valiant testimony to Christ, for "God hath, not given us the spirit of

fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7). In Leviticus 5:2-3 we have another instance of failure; failure to maintain a walk in separation from defilement. The word of God speaks with no uncertain voice as to the true character of the world through which the children of God pass as pilgrims and strangers. God's word tells us that "The whole world lies in the wicked one"; and exhorts us, "Love not the world, nor the things of the world. If any one love the world, the love of the Father is not in him; because all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 John 5:19; 1 John 2:15-16). The world's system, in all its ramifications, is inherently and implacably hostile and antagonistic to God and His Christ. Do not temporise, dear saint of God, with its alluring approaches, do not parley with its plausible and seductive sophistries. Men have christianised the world, substituting other names to make its contours less offensive, but in spite of all his purposive and well-intentioned activities, that friendly outstretched hand of the world is still darkly stained with the blood of the Son of God.

How necessary, therefore, it is for us to maintain that inflexible and uncompromising separation from such a world, not in the spirit of legality which results in a state of austere monasticism, but in the all-conquering, overcoming power of the Spirit by which we shall be able to say with the beloved apostle, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me. and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14). On this subject, the late J. N. Darby wrote, "Whatever Christ's present relation to the world is, that is the Christian's too — the place which the Lord is in above, and the place that He is not in below, defines our place. Whence is all this? Will it surprise anyone to hear that Satan is the god of this world . . . the manager of this stupendous system? His is the energy, his the presiding genius; he is its prince. When Jesus was on earth the devil came and offered Him all the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them; for, said he, that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it, if thou therefore wilt worship me all shall be thine. Here we have the curtain lifted, and the real object of all human religious worship exposed. Scripture describes him as "full of wisdom, perfect in beauty" arraying himself "like an angel of light." Who can wonder if unthinking men, yea, and the more thinking ones, are deceived and deluded."

Privilege and position always carry with them weighty responsibility; and so the child of God, heavenly in character and origin, finding himself in a world where defilement is so easily contracted, realizes that it is incumbent upon him to keep himself unspotted from the world. How sweet therefore to us the word of the Blessed Lord as He pours out His heart to the Father concerning His own, "They are not of the world as I am not of the world. I do not demand that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them out of evil" (John 17:14-15).

Many kinds and degrees of uncleanness are presented in figure in the touching of the things mentioned in these verses. In a world of forfeited life, the defilement of death lies heavily on the whole sphere where he who wields the power of death holds sway. We cannot be on terms of intimacy and friendship with those who belong to this world, or make companions of them, and walk with them, without being rendered unclean. The unclean creatures of verse 2 would perhaps typify that which is outside of ourselves — associations with unbelievers, as referred to in 2 Corinthians 6:1-18; while the uncleanness of man in verse 3 would perhaps suggest what we have in 2 Corinthians 7:1, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves

from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Surely the Spirit of God places these promises before us as providing the necessary stimulus to practical personal purity. Can anything be more obnoxious than the pretension of separation from the world along with indifference to true holiness? Of the saints collectively the apostle Paul writes, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" and of us individually he writes, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?" In the light of these solemn Scriptures it is surely our clear and habitual duty to cleanse ourselves from every kind of pollution. In verse 4 of our chapter we have the third form of sin specified, "talking rashly with the lips, to do evil or to do good, in everything that a man shall say rashly with an oath." If it was to do evil, one ought never to have said it; if it was to do good, one ought not to say it without doing it. The more rash a man is in his speech, the more likely he is to strengthen what he says by an oath. Peter was guilty of great rashness when confronted with his association with Jesus the Galilean. He denied with an oath, "I do not know the man"; and at the third challenge he began to curse and swear. A man whose words and ways are formed in subjection to the Spirit and word of God does not speak rashly with his lips, he heeds the word, "But let your word be Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" (Matthew 5:37). How often does the unsubdued state of the heart expose itself in the rashness of the lips. Indeed, James says, "If anyone offend not in word, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body too."

If one has sinned therefore in any of the ways referred to, the moment comes "when he knoweth it." The probe of conviction, employed so skillfully by the Searcher of all hearts, reaches the conscience through the word. A cloud comes over the joy which comes through communion; our spiritual strength is enfeebled; our faith sensibly weakened, and there is the surrender of liberty in the service of the Lord, in prayer and in fellowship with the saints.

One who is upright cannot remain long in this state of defilement, and so turns to God in confession, and learns afresh the abiding value of the work of Christ regarding our sins. This secures the restoration of the offender to the joy of his acceptance, and to the joys of communion.

There are differences in capacity in the saints of God, and He has graciously made provision for this. The one considered in verses 7-10 is feebler in his exercises and in his apprehension of the work of Christ, but he receives the needed forgiveness though he can only bring "two turtle doves or two young pigeons."

There is even a feebler apprehension in him who brings "the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour." He has no true perception that his sin necessitated the death of Christ; he fails to measure it in its true gravity, and does not realise that sin is such a heinous thing in God's sight that death alone is the measure of its condemnation. Yet he has the sense that he has done wrong, and with this the sense of the perfectness of Christ and that only through Him can he be restored to communion with God.

Whatever our apprehension of the death of Christ, how blessed it is to realise that our acceptance and forgiveness rest, not on our apprehension, but on the intrinsic value of Christ's sacrifice as known to God alone. The Trespass Offering.

Leviticus 5:14-19; Leviticus 6:1-7.

While there is a strong correlation between the sin and trespass offerings, the distinguishable features belonging to each are sufficiently outstanding to permit of the following distinctions being made. Trespass refers to acts done against God or man, and to the root from which these acts proceed. No doubt it has been noticed, when considering the sin offering, that specific acts are not enumerated, since the primary object to which our thoughts are directed is the condemnation of that which is totally abhorrent to the holiness of God, and in the light of which man is shown to be a sinner; but with the trespass offering specific offences are recorded, and man is regarded as a transgressor.

Without question, all transgression is sin, but all sin does not necessarily partake of the character of trespass. It can be confidently affirmed therefore that in the sin offerings the condemnation of sin is the main point to be considered, whereas in the trespass offering the confession of sin is necessary. In the sin offering the victim and the offerer are identified, the laying on of hands on the head of the victim being the suited expression of this; but this was never done in cases of trespass, although confession, full and ample, was required.

It cannot be too often asserted that sin is not measured by conscience or by the knowledge of what is evil, but exclusively by the holiness of God; so that, as we saw in Leviticus 4:1-35, sins of ignorance were neither ignored nor lightly passed over, but were provided for in the most solemn manner possible. The mention of sins of ignorance or inadvertence is not made in the spirit of indulgence, for the child of God having the word of God and being indwelt by the Spirit of God should not be guilty of negligence. In the trespass offerings to meet offences done against the Lord, whether known or unknown, the blood of a victim alone could suffice; and added to this the offender had to make ample amends for the harm done. In cases of trespass against one's neighbour, adequate restitution had to be made for the wrong done; not only had the principal to be restored, but a fifth part added. Even when human claims were met, forgiveness and atonement could only be obtained through the death of another, "for without the shedding of blood is no remission."

How blessed it is to see all that is signified in the trespass-offering divinely met in Christ's sacrifice, who restored that which He took not away, and who brought glory to God in doing so. In this brief review of the contrasting aspects of these offerings it would appear that in the sin offering the offence is regarded in relation to God and His dwelling place, hence self-judgment and confession are needed. But there is another aspect, equally important, in which sin is viewed as an offence against God's government; and it is in this connection that restitution has to be considered.

We read in Leviticus 5:15, "If a soul commit a trespass, and sin through ignorance, in the holy things of Jehovah." It is very evident that such an one has failed to render what was due to God, and is therefore guilty of an offence. What was true of God's earthly people is alas also often true of saints in these days; we fail to render to God what is His due.

It is very blessed to note that it is not left to the capricious judgment of men to determine the measure of trespass inflicted. Christ, as typified by Moses, is the only One competent to estimate the degree of unfaithfulness in accordance with divine requirements. When Christ brings this before the soul, one who is intelligent in God's mind would be concerned to make good the deficiency, and even go beyond it.

Following this there is the presentation of the divine standard, the shekel of the sanctuary, by which the trespass is measured. It ought to occasion great concern to see how holy things are trifled with and made the plaything of the mind of man; God's rights of redemption are ignored, and the holiness of his sanctuary defiled in many ways. May we be found therefore acting with reference to these holy things in intelligent concert with Him who rightly estimates everything in accordance with that invariable standard, "the shekel of the sanctuary." In Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22 we see the Lord Jesus estimating the church's failure according to the divine standard.

Another marked difference between the sin offering and the trespass offering is that in the former the offering is according to the capacity of the offerer, the one who has sinned, but in the latter all is according to the valuation of Moses — typical of Christ. How suitable it is that in every case the offering is a ram; speaking of Christ who, in the selflessness of a love in which every-thing was subordinated to the will of God even unto death, displayed in complete consecration to that will a steadfastness of purpose which resisted every attempt to deflect Him from the path of unquestioning obedience upon which He had entered for the glory of God. A ram indicates maturity and energy, and suggests, in accordance with divine evaluation, a definite and distinct apprehension of Christ as affording in His death that adequate covering of the sin which has been committed in the "holy things." In keeping with this, the measure and character of self-judgment must be in perfect correspondence with the divine estimate of our sin which can only be met by the "ram of the trespass offering." In Leviticus 5:17-19 we have one who does not even know that he has sinned, "Yet is he guilty, and shall bear his iniquity . . . he has certainly trespassed against Jehovah." One should always realise the possibility of having sinned without knowing it. What carefulness and sensitiveness this would produce in the path of one who desires to walk with God, even as Paul could say, "I am conscious of nothing in myself; but I am not justified by this; but He that examines me is the Lord" (1 Corinthians 4:4). We may not know that we have trespassed, but the One who measures all by the inflexible standard of the shekel of the sanctuary knows. The words of the Psalmist, in this connection, come home with much-needed reproof and admonition to each one of us, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

It is truly remarkable to see the spirit that actuated Job; how concerned he was lest his sons should have offended in word or in deed to provoke the displeasure of God; and with divinely given intelligence he provided sacrifices to meet God's claims. Nor was this a fitful exercise, for it is recorded, "This did Job continually."

We shall no doubt have the Lord's valuation at the judgment-seat, but is it not desirable to have it beforehand? The trespass offering is available now, and those healthful exercises connected with this offering would lead to an increased appreciation of Christ, and an enlarged apprehension of the value which God places upon Christ's offering of Himself as being more than sufficient to meet every trespass occasioned by our failure to walk in subjection to the will of God. As already stated, the trespass offering involves restitution. Grace comes in to enable one to make full reparation. It is not only that atonement is made, but what is due to God or one's neighbour is fully rendered with a fifth part added. Nor is it only being forgiven, and going on with God as forgiven, but the failure is made good, so that the one whose rights had been infringed is better off than before. If we have injured a brother in any way, having said anything untrue about him, or the like, and have

really brought the trespass offering according to the Lord's valuation, we shall restore in full. The Lord will enable us to take a low place in the acknowledgment of the fault, and the injured will rejoice in the display of grace. The opening verses of Leviticus 6:1-30 are concerned with "If any one sin and act unfaithfully against Jehovah, and lie to his neighbour as to an entrusted thing or a deposit." As children of God, being partakers of the divine nature, and as having the Spirit of God indwelling us, we can take account of each other as vessels in which there has been deposited precious heavenly treasure. This divine grace, given according to the measure of the gift of Christ, we must regard as a "good deposit entrusted," and we must see that this priceless treasure suffers no diminution or damage in our hands, but that it is held faithfully for the Lord and His saints.

All that the Lord has given to us we hold on trust, and we are under obligation to use it to full advantage for the good of all His own. The beloved apostle Paul was deeply conscious of having things entrusted to him, and how exercised he was that he should not be guilty in regard to them, as we can see in such Scriptures as Romans 1:14-15; 1 Corinthians 9:16-23; 1 Timothy 1:11. Like the apostle, each saint in his measure, is to be faithful in regard to what the Lord has entrusted to him.

"Earthen vessels, marred, unsightly, Bearing wealth no thought can know;

Heavenly treasure, gleaming brightly, Christ revealed in saints below." The Law of the Burnt Offering. In Leviticus 6:1-30 and Leviticus 7:1-38 we come, in our consideration of the offerings, to a very important and instructive portion of the Word of God. The oft repeated phrase "Aaron and his sons" brings into prominence the thought of the priestly family to which every child of God, without exception, belongs: and it is connected specially with "the law of the offerings," which indicates the principle on which the service of God relating to the offerings must be carried on.

Before considering the detail of this attractive and absorbing subject, let us view the divine order in which these offerings are brought before us here by the Spirit of God. (1) The Burnt Offering, of which the central thought is "it shall not go out." There is constantly before God the voluntary and absolute surrender of Christ in which He delights, the unhesitating obedience and devotedness of the Son to the Father. The fragrance of that one offering, unchanged in character and its fulness unimpaired, ever ascends to God.

(2) The Meat Offering, of which a memorial, with all the frankincense, was claimed for God; Aaron, his sons, and all the males among his children eating what remained. (3) The Sin Offering, which is constantly referred to as "most holy." (4) The Trespass Offering, all the fat of which was burned on the altar to the Lord, the flesh being eaten by the priests in a holy place. (5) The Peace Offering, which in the earlier chapter came after the meat offering and before the sin offering, here comes last. Jehovah, Aaron and his sons, the offerer and his friends, feast and joy together. Joint communion is generally last to be apprehended when considering the meaning of the sacrifices. The type with which we are now engaged has manifestly to do with those who are now God's "holy priesthood" (1 Peter 2:5), a precious thought which cannot fail to arouse and hold the attention of every redeemed heart. We find in this type the application of the sacrifice of Christ as bringing the saints into all the unspeakable blessedness of fullest communion with God. Our place before God as priests is brought before us in the consecration of the priesthood, in chapter 8.

How very significant is the statement "the burnt offering shall be on the hearth on the altar all night unto the morning." For the saint of God this is the night period, the time of Christ's absence. Our adorable Saviour and Lord, whose claims we own, has been disowned by this world over which a usurper exerts his baneful power; but amidst the darkness the saints in fidelity to their absent Lord are privileged to witness for Him. The professing church is in irretrievable ruin, the object of disrepute and dishonour in the eyes of a hostile world, the refuge of every God-dishonouring religious faction that takes the name of Christ though shorn of every vestige of divine approval, and which in a coming day will have the unqualified repudiation of Him whose witness it claims to be. How dark indeed is the night as the moral darkness settles down with ever increasing intensity upon this deluded world.

Those who are patiently waiting for the dawning of that wondrous day which knows no decline will be cheered with the words "it shall never go out," knowing that they tell us that the value and the sweet savour of the great sacrifice of Christ is as fresh before God as the day on which it was offered. Despite our waywardness, our wilfulness and our unfaithfulness, our acceptance before God remains unimpaired because of the abiding efficacy of the work of Him "who by the eternal Spirit offered Himself spotless to God." And when we reach the glorious consummation of all God's ways in grace, where God shall be all in all, the fragrance of that offering shall still pervade the sublime scene where God eternally smells that sweet savour of rest.

Christ's offering of Himself was a "whole burnt offering," in which all that He was in complete devotedness to the will of God in the place of sacrifice was found to be infinitely perfect and fragrant to the heart of the Blessed God.

It was the priests' business to keep the fire burning, "all night unto the morning," and the fragrance of Christ is ever kept in remembrance in the praises of the saints. Fervent affections in which the preciousness and perfections of Christ are maintained and cherished in the hearts of the saints by the Holy Spirit rise in glad songs of praise to the Father. Neither natural activity, no matter how intelligently directed, nor fleshly ardour, can have any part in these responsive movements of the heart and spirit. In the oil for the Candlestick (Exodus 27:20) there is a beautiful type of the Spirit maintaining the light of Christ in refreshing ministry to His own during the night of His absence; and can we not see in the "continual fire" the Spirit as the power in which we present Christ in all the fragrance of His Person in our praises to God the Father; as we sometimes sing:

"His deep perfections gladly sing
And tell them forth to Thee."

It is a most inspiring thought that the Father should in the Son be seeking worshippers from among men. How wonderful to find the Son of God in Samaria ministering to the woman at the well the precious things of heaven, pouring into the heart of a weary sinner in copious measure those streams of heavenly grace which find their source in the heart of the Father Himself. Here we find the branches running over the wall in blessing to those who were "sinners of the Gentiles." The worship the Son sought for the Father was "in spirit and in truth." In spirit is according to what God is essentially; and in truth in accordance with that full revelation of Himself in the Son. What a blessed place is this where we can so worship God! As another has said, "Here is the true Beulah land for the saint, where the birds sing ever, and the heart goes forth in perpetual melody. God delights to have us remind Him — though He can never forget it — of the work of the Son of His love: how sweet our occupation!" As we read of the work of the priest in relation to "the ashes" do

we not learn that God would have us brought into practical conformity with that which calls forth the worship of our hearts. The linen garments indicate that we should be characterised by practical righteousness, and in taking up the ashes we should live in conformity to the death of Christ. How fittingly does the passionate utterance of Ruth rest upon the lips of those who have been brought into God's favour through Christ's death: "Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried."

We have a similar thought in Acts 8:1-40, where Philip had spoken to the Ethiopian eunuch about Jesus, whose life was taken from the earth. The response of the eunuch was, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" As though he would say, "I want to accept the place of death with Him whose life was taken from the earth." It is only righteous that we should accept death here, and we can only act in the current of God's thoughts when we do so. Paul makes this the basis of his appeal in his epistle to the Colossians, "If ye be dead with Christ" (Colossians 2:20); and again in 2 Timothy 2:11, "If we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him."

Having taken our place before God as having died with Christ, we "put on other garments." Do not the other garments suggest the character we bear as walking before men in conformity with the death of Christ? We go forth "without the camp unto a clean place." We must leave everything here that has a name, or a place, or a religious sanction upon earth, to bear the reproach of One who has no place here, save in the hearts of those who love Him, even as exhorted in Hebrews 13:12-14, "Therefore let us go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." The Law of the Meat Offering. In the pursuance of the wonderful theme of these richly expressive types, which are descriptive of Him who is the glorious substance of these shadows, we are deeply conscious that without the sustaining power of the Spirit the heart would be overwhelmed with such a presentation of the excellencies and perfections of Christ. And nowhere is the truth of this more greatly emphasised than in the Meat Offering. In Leviticus 1:1-17 we have what relates to the offering itself, but in the law we have the relation of the priests, "Aaron and his sons," to the offering.

Every child of God is a priest, and God would have all His children aware of the holiness which becomes His house at all times, and realising the necessity for unrelaxed vigilance with respect to our comportment before men, lest we should allow anything inconsistent with priestly ways and behaviour. As priests we should ever be marked with the holy concern consistent with handling the holy things of God.

We come in Leviticus 6:14 to the law of the meat offering or oblation, which means "gift offering," or "food offering," which the sons of Aaron offered "before the LORD, before the altar." What an accept-able offering to bring to God! that which speaks of Christ as the food of His people. And how wonderful that we should be able to feed on Him who is thus acceptable to God, Christ in all the perfections of His Manhood, the One conceived by the Spirit, and the anointed Man for God's pleasure in this world. In John 6:51-57 we feed upon Christ as the Bread of God, the Living Bread. Under law the privilege of feeding on the sacrifices was sometimes restricted, but it is the privilege of all believers in Christ to feed upon the provision that God has made for us in Christ. We feed upon Christ not only for the maintenance of the life that God has given us, but also for its development. Let us consider some of the ways in which we may feed on Christ. When the feast of the Passover was instituted, God commanded the children of Israel to take a lamb and kill it and sprinkle its blood upon the door-posts and the lintel of the houses in which they were to eat the

flesh of the lamb "roast with fire," saying, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." They were to eat it with bitter herbs and with girded loins, with shoes on their feet and a staff in their hands. How touchingly this speaks of our own deliverance from a bondage greater far than that out of which the children of Israel were delivered, even from the bondage of sin.

Awakened by the Spirit of God to a sense of our perilous position, and alarmed at the thought of impending judgment, how eagerly we fed upon the spotless Lamb that had passed through the fire of God's holy judgment, borne for us upon the tree. It was indeed with bitter herbs we ate the Lamb, as we realised it was our sins that brought Him to that solemn hour in which He was alone. The second time we read of Israel keeping the Passover was in the wilderness, and it is as pilgrims and strangers awaiting our absent, yet soon-returning, Lord that we feed upon Him. Again, in the land, Israel kept the Passover. Over the Jordan it was not only a memorial of deliverance, but of accomplished redemption. So with the believer now: we have a position corresponding to being "in the land," for not only have we been quickened together with Christ, but are already raised up together, and made to sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:6).

Another character in which the Lord Jesus is presented as food for His people is as the Manna, and the fulfilment of this type is seen in the passage to which we have already referred in John 6:1-71. Manna was food for the wilderness, and presents to us Christ, a humbled Christ in this world. This singularly attractive type brings before us the matchless, heavenly grace which marked Him in His lowly path of pleasure for His God and Father, exhibiting His obedience, meekness, gentleness, dependence, the love of righteousness, the hatred of lawlessness, and every other feature of perfection.

All these traits of beauty came down from heaven in the wondrous Person of "the Son of Man who is in heaven," and were displayed in a life of lowly grace here upon earth, and now provided for us as food — the true Manna. Another has said, "For instance something may make me impatient during the day; well, then Christ is my patience, and thus He is the Manna to sustain me in patience. He is the source of grace, not merely the example which I am to copy." A third character in which the Lord Jesus is food for our souls is as the Old Corn of the land (Joshua 5:11). In verses 10-12 of this chapter we have the three kinds of food mentioned of which we have spoken, the Passover, the Manna and the Old Corn (or Stored Corn) of the land. The Old Corn speaks to us of the Glorified Christ: He is the true food of the heavenly land that strengthens us for the conflict against principalities and authorities (Ephesians 6:12), who would contest our right to the possession of the inheritance God has given to us in Christ.

Coming back to the Law of the Meat Offering our attention is drawn to the portion of the priests. In feeding upon the Meat Offering we are not then contemplating what is found in the other offerings, atonement and acceptance, but are engaged pre-eminently with the perfections and matchless beauty of Christ in Manhood that were so delightful to the Father. As occupied with Jesus in this way we enter in sweet communion into the enjoyment of the Father's thoughts concerning His Son, and under the Spirit's guidance the heart wells up and overflows in praise and worship.

"His deep perfections gladly sing And tell them forth to Thee." In the presentation of the gift before Jehovah we have indicated the privilege of our coming before God to present Christ in His perfections, the heart delighting in the display in Him of every feature of Manhood before the

Father's eye. A new kind of humanity has come in the Person of Jesus, perfect in every detail, and suitable to be anointed by the Holy Spirit. No flaw of mortality lurked in His blessed Person, and even in the grave his flesh saw no corruption. How touchingly the Father has expressed His unqualified delight in the Man of His good pleasure; how fittingly therefore in the type before us that God has the first portion as the priest takes or heaves his handful of fine flour of the oblation and of the oil, and all the frankincense, for Jehovah. The remainder was for Aaron and his sons to eat. There was no feeding on the Burnt Offering: all went up to Jehovah on the altar. We can in varying measures appreciate what this offering means, but it is not ours to feed upon; it speaks of what Christ was to God His Father in the giving of Himself upon the cross. But how wonderful that we can feed upon Christ as the True Meat Offering! It is as feeding upon Him in this way that the moral sensibilities and characteristics which are descriptive of Christ are formed in us.

It was to be eaten in a holy place, unleavened, "in the court of the tabernacle of the congregation they shall eat it." Does not this indicate that it is only as we are withdrawn in spirit from the sphere of human thoughts and activities that we can feed on Christ? In the tabernacle the priest was surrounded with God's interests, and it is as engaged with what belongs to God that we feed on Christ.

Feeding on the Manna we receive the grace that enables us to meet all the trials and temptations of the wilderness, but the oblation is the suited provision to sustain those who stand in relation to the testimony of God in this world, and to strengthen us in the worship of God. Feeding on Christ as the oblation will give us spiritual vitality for our exercises in communion with the Lord. The oblation was to be unleavened. The insidious, fermenting motions of the flesh could not be tolerated by Jehovah. As most holy, it calls for a consistent walk in the Spirit, and for continual self-judgment; for true sanctification in occupation with Christ.

Then we read "It shall be a statute for ever in your generations concerning the offerings of the LORD made by fire: every one that toucheth them shall be holy" (Leviticus 5:18). Feeding on Christ produces moral separation from the world and sin and the flesh. What then are we nourishing our affections on? Is it Christ or the worthless, enervating things of the world? In Leviticus 6:20 another offering is mentioned, which was to be presented by the priest on the day of his anointing; it was not a voluntary offering, it was obligatory. Half was to be offered in the morning, the other half at night, indicating that the day was to commence and finish with thoughts of Christ. The normal oblation was either mingled with oil or anointed with oil; this offering was to be saturated with oil, a more intensive thought. As Mr Darby has said, "The Son of God in power, who, in the midst of sin walked by the Spirit in divine and absolute holiness (resurrection being the illustrious and victorious proof of who He was, walking in this character). That is to say, resurrection is a public manifestation of that power by which He walked in absolute holiness during His life. . . . Here it was no question of promise, but of power, of Him who could enter into conflict with the death in which man lay, and overcome it completely; and that in connection with the holiness which bore testimony during His life to the power of that spirit by which He walked, and in which He guarded Himself from being touched by sin." Is this the Blessed One with whom we begin the day? as the Psalmist said, "When I awake, I am still with Thee." And can we, after the busy day is over, present to God in all the freshness of sustained communion our appreciation of that wondrous Person in correspondence with the measure in which we began the day? A day which begins and ends thus will be filled with the fragrance of that which is peculiarly for the

Father's delight, for this offering "shall be wholly burnt: it shall not be eaten" (Leviticus 6:23).

"The baked pieces of the meat offering" (Leviticus 6:21) might suggest that spiritual discernment by which every part and detail of Christ's wondrous life can be discovered by those who find Him truly to be "all things and in all." The Law of the Sin Offering and of the Trespass Offering Leviticus 6:24-30; Leviticus 7:1-10.

It is solemn to reflect that no matter what relationship God has been pleased to establish with men, holiness can never be dispensed with. We have this emphasized in the song of Moses: "Who is like unto Thee Jehovah among the gods? Who is like unto Thee, glorifying Thyself in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? Thou by Thy mercy hast led forth the people Thou hast redeemed; Thou hast guided them by Thy strength unto the abode of Thy holiness" (Exodus 15:11-13). We would do well to consider that these are the choice and elevated expressions of a people who stood only in a place of external relationship to God, who moved still in the twilight of types and shadows, for God was but partially revealed; yet holiness was essential in all their dealings with a God who is of holier eyes than to behold iniquity. To us therefore, who stand in an immeasurably nearer and more intimate relationship to God these wonderful expressions are pregnant with divine meaning and instruction. How forcibly the truth of this is brought home to us in Peter's first epistle, "But as He who has called you is holy, be ye also holy in all (your) conversation; because it is written. Be ye holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15-16). As another has said, "The word used here in relation to God speaks of Him as holy, knowing good and evil perfectly, and absolutely willing good and no evil. When applied to men, it designates them as separated, set apart to God from evil and from common use." These brief remarks will serve as a fitting preface in our consideration of the law of the sin offering. In no other offering is holiness so insisted upon as in this; four times within the narrow compass of a few verses the Spirit of God states of the sin and trespass offerings (there is one law for them) "It is most holy." Let not the simplicity of this phrase take away from its deep, searching significance and solemn import. How easy it is for us, when our loins are not sufficiently braced with the girdle of truth, to be carelessly tolerant of that which ought to be unsparingly judged and confessed before God. Let us be watchful, lest we are snared by the sentimental philosophies and moralizings of men who declare that to "Err is human, to forgive divine"; with little or no thought of how abhorrent our "erring" is in the sight of God, and are entirely ignorant of the holiness without which "no man shall see the Lord."

There are men of the world who naturally favour the beautiful and more attractive things of life, recoiling with marked distaste from what is gross and offensive; but this is not holiness; their abhorrence has no reference to God whatever; and all sin is against God. In deep penitence the Psalmist confessed, "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned, and done what is evil in Thy sight: that Thou mayest be justified when Thou speakest, be clear when Thou judgest. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (Psalms 51:4; Psalms 51:17). Of precious significance are the words, "At the place where the burnt offering is slaughtered shall the sin offering be slaughtered before Jehovah." The sin offering is necessary where there has been the allowance of that which has been condemned in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ — sin in whatever aspect or measure. We are to take up this solemn matter according to the mind of God, in the sense of the deep perfections and excellence of that there is no breaking, but there is the intense application of the word in its searching and discriminating

power, as suggested by the scouring. There is also the rinsing, suggesting the sanctifying and purifying virtue, so that moral suitability might be maintained.

Regarding the trespass offering we read, "As the sin offering, so is the trespass offering; there shall be one law for them." The priests who made atonement with the sin or trespass offering, received the offering for his service, suggesting the gain for our souls in taking up this priestly exercise. The priest who presented any man's burnt offering, received its skin, so that he might be shod and adorned with the beauty of the offering that gave such pleasure to Jehovah. The offering priest also received "all the meat offering that is baked in the oven, and all that is dressed in the frying pan, and in the pan." There is always great personal gain in having to do with the things of God; how profound is the enrichment of soul in ministering to the pleasure of God of that which savours peculiarly of Christ. The one so engaged feeds with unspeakable delight upon that blessed One as the food of his soul, nourished inwardly as he finds in Him the all-absorbing object for his heart. The Law of the Peace Offering.

Leviticus 7:11-38.

How powerful is the divine constraint laid upon us, as we consider these precious types, to walk in the practical reflection of all that has been portrayed of an offering of superlatively greater worth, and which in all its sacrificial aspects has ministered unspeakable delight and satisfaction to the heart of God. We can discern in the offerings something of the order and purpose with which the Spirit presents the truth, which in all its fulness and perfection is seen in Christ; and it is so presented that the devoted and exercised heart should be furnished with powerful inducements to bring its practical ways and behaviour into correspondence with all that is set forth in Christ. This divine order can also be observed in Paul's writings to the various assemblies: first, there is the comprehensive unfoldings of the truth, which is then used as the basis for an affectionate and earnest appeal to the saints, so that they might be marked characteristically as those coming under the formative power of the truth. When we consider "the law of the sacrifice of peace-offering," we are impressed with the indication of spiritual exercises relating to our practical ways, and to our fellowship with each other — a fruitful and profitable field for our tillage, surely. If these spiritual exercises are entered into intelligently, according to the mind of God, we shall be able to maintain and enjoy the communion to which God has called us. Submission to the Word and Spirit of God will give us the necessary spiritual state in which alone we can enjoy together Christian fellowship. In considering the shameful disorder and confusion that existed in the assembly at Corinth, it is not difficult to perceive that it resulted from their low moral state. As we look around us today, and note with deep sorrow of heart the desolations the adversary has made among the saints of God, we would venture the question, has the solemn warning come too late, or has it fallen upon ears grown dull of hearing? "He that thinketh he standeth take heed, lest he fall." It is not therefore without significance that in the law of the offerings, the peace offering comes after the sin and trespass offerings.

Since the law of the peace offering brings before us the enjoyment of the spiritual blessing and profit that we have together in communion, does it not show the propriety of bringing in the sin offering first, as relieving us of any tendency to self-occupation because of our state, and the trespass offering, as having to do with any infringement of the rights of God or trespass against the saints. What this fellowship involves for us is brought out in 1 Corinthians 10:1-33, where all true

believers are spoken of as partakers of the Lord's Table.

It is only as we are true to the fellowship of Christ's death that we can really enter into the sweetness and joy of the Lord's Supper, the truth of which is brought out in 1 Corinthians 11:1-34. This fellowship with its divine provision for us is in marked contrast to all that is in the idolatrous world around. If we seek the pleasures of this world, we cannot properly enter into the enjoyment of the fellowship of the Lord's Table. The first feature mentioned in respect of the law of the peace offering is that of thanksgiving: "If he present it for a thanksgiving." How fittingly does thanksgiving and praise rest upon the lips of every child of God as he contemplates the wonderful place of divine favour in which he stands, as one who can give "thanks to the Father, who has made us fit for sharing the portion of the saints in light" (Colossians 1:12); and as he feasts upon the blessed Son of God, the true peace offering, who is the object of the Father's heart. With the "sacrifice of thanksgiving" is offered "unleavened cakes mingled with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and fine flour saturated with oil, cakes mingled with oil." There is not only the thought of the death of Christ, and all that has come to us as a result of that death, but there is also an enhanced conception of the Kind of Man it was who died for us: One who knew no sin, who walked through this scene in the grace and power of the Holy Spirit; marked out the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by resurrection of the dead. In our fellowship together we are to display those precious features of Christ, which are the fruits of the Spirit, "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness," etc. If these are not expressed, our coming together may degenerate into mere sociability, such as the men of the world seek after. How blessed it is therefore for us to walk in all the grace and power of the Holy Spirit, whose gracious work it is to form us in the features of Christ.

There is the recognition of what we are in ourselves in verse 13, where we read of "his offering of leavened bread." Though rejoicing in the wonderful place that sovereign mercy has accorded us as members of the one body, united to the Risen Head in glory, yet are we ever conscious that we are in a mixed condition, with the flesh still in us; even as it is written, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves" (1 John 1:8). The constant realization of this would engender that spirit of self-judgment and self-distrust, which is essential for the development of the spirit of lowliness that is so attractive in our relations with each other.

Then "the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offering of thanksgiving shall be eaten the same day that it is presented" (Leviticus 7:15). Our communion with each other must not be separated from that which is the basis of it — Christ as the True Peace Offering. Only by observing this will our communion be maintained in its true character. Moreover, our communion with each other must spring from communion with God; a daily communion, which expresses our appreciation of the blessed Son of God. In the case of "a vow" or "a voluntary offering" the flesh could be eaten the next day. Do we not learn from this of the greater spiritual energy and devotion manifested in these special sacrifices? The vow implies a deeper work of the Spirit in the soul, which results from sustained communion with the Father and the Son. The voluntary offering is the expression of the pleasure that belongs to a devoted heart that has found its joy in the Person of Jesus.

Pointed emphasis is laid on the necessity for cleanness on the part of those who have part in divine communion. In the Book of Leviticus, discernment of, and discrimination between, what is clean and unclean is not left to the capricious judgment of men; but is stated in clear, precise and

unequivocal language by the Spirit of God. So also must we, in this dispensation of immeasurably greater light, refuse with uncompromising decision any-thing and everything that falls short of the divine standard of holiness set forth in God's word. There was unsparing judgment for those who, in Israel, compromised God's holiness with their uncleanness upon them. The fat and the blood of the offerings were for Jehovah: they could not be eaten. Christ's unique excellence, as the One who said, "I delight to do Thy will, O God," could only be rightly appreciated by the Father. God alone could measure the immense issues involved in the unreserved acceptance of His will, which included all the suffering and shame of the cross. In the light of these solemn considerations, how appropriately does the Spirit refer to the fat as "the food of the offering." It is Jehovah's exclusive portion; that which He alone can appreciate. As another has said, "We can contemplate what is not given us to appropriate." The blood also is reserved for God as being wholly for His pleasure, and chapter 17 tells us why, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Leviticus 17:11). On the night of His betrayal, the Lord spoke of "The cup of the New Covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you" (Luke 22:20). How richly is the truth of atonement, embracing substitution and propitiation, brought before us in the types, and in their fulfilment in the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the closing section of this chapter it is clearly stated that the offerer shall with his own hands bring Jehovah's offering by fire, "the fat with the breast shall he bring" (Leviticus 7:30). God would have us hold in a very personal way what Christ is for Himself, in all His excellence and affections. In Ephesians 3:19, where the Apostle prays that we might know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, do we not see the "fat with the breast" in his hands? The priest waved the breast before it was eaten by "Aaron and his sons." The waving would speak of our apprehension and enjoyment of the love of Christ, in correspondence with the delight that God has in it. None of the priestly sons are excluded from the enjoyment of "the love of Christ"; it was the portion of all to feed upon the breast. But the right shoulder was the portion of the priest that offered the blood and the fat of the peace offering. As presenting Christ to God in communion, we can feed upon Him who, in His walk down here, was ever for the will and pleasure of God, and in this way would we acquire the strength to walk "even as He walked" (1 John 2:6).

Only as we are formed by these things, which are brought before us by the Spirit in these extremely instructive types, can our fellowship with each other be maintained in its true Christian character and in the spiritual energy that will preserve it from deterioration and diminution.

Association With Christ

We come now to consider Leviticus 8:1-36, a chapter of profound interest and instruction for every true believer in Christ, and a fitting climax to all the precious truth concerning the various offerings and the laws respecting them. From the very commencement of God's dealings with the children of Israel priesthood was in view, even as we read, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself; now therefore if ye will obey my voice . . . ye shall be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." From 1 Peter 2:9 we learn that God's purpose, as set forth in this Scripture, is fulfilled in the saints of the present dispensation. The remarkable expression, "Take Aaron and his sons with him," draws our attention to the precious truth that our title to priesthood is derived from our relationship with Christ, even as that of Aaron's sons was because of their relationship with him. Aaron was called of God to the high honour of

priesthood, and as such was a type of Him to whom God said. "Thou art My Son." and "Thou art a Priest." How the heart delights to linger over the Spirit's utterances concerning Christ as Priest, the One who is a "merciful and faithful High Priest in things relating to God"; and "who has passed through the heavens"; a "High Priest of good things to come" (Hebrews 2:17 : Hebrews 4:14; Hebrews 9:11).

Although the priesthood of believers is not expressly mentioned in Hebrews, it is implied in our drawing nigh to God, and in our having boldness for entering into the holy of holies, as also in the offering of the sacrifice of praise. We can see from 1 Peter 2:5-9 that all believers are now priests, and from Hebrews 10:19 that all alike have liberty of access into God's presence.

Aaron is therefore a type of Christ when viewed alone; but when he is mentioned in company with his sons, he with them is a type of the assembly as the priestly family; but, be it carefully noted, the assembly in association with Christ. What distinction this gives to the words, "Take Aaron and his sons with him!" It is not sons of Adam, but sons of Aaron. The saints are not here viewed in their natural condition, but in association with Christ as being the subjects of God's workmanship and grace, and as knowing our relationship with Christ in divine affection.

God's command for the consecration of the priests is given in Exodus 28:1-43; Exodus 29:1-46; but Leviticus 8:1-36 describes how Moses, who was faithful in all His house, carried out the divine command. The first action in the work of consecration was the washing of the priests with water at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. Aaron, considered by himself, bathed with water, typified Him who, in His own Person was ever spotless and undefiled, Aaron, in association with his sons, presents to us the Christian company that has been cleansed by the washing of water by the Word, and made morally competent by the Spirit of God to minister in the holiest of all. Reference to this cleansing is found in Hebrews 10:22, "our bodies washed with pure water." Only those in whose hearts God's mighty work of grace has been effected can be regarded as priests according to the thought of God. How grievous the perversion of the thoughts and intentions of God by presumptuous and lawless men who have arrogated to themselves the right of priesthood, unrecognised and unsanctified by the Word of God. In the next action, Aaron is separated from his sons; he is robed and anointed alone. As a figure of Christ he is anointed without blood, for that Holy One, "Who knew no sin," and "Did no sin," being absolutely holy needed not the application of the blood. At the Jordan, He was anointed by the Spirit of God in virtue of His own intrinsic holiness, the designation of Holy Spirit speaking of perfect correspondence with the One upon whom He had rested. Of the garments for glory and beauty the ephod was pre-eminently the priestly garment. The gold, emblem of divine righteousness and glory, signifies the character of Him who exercises before God the priestly office; One who is spoken of as "Jesus Christ, the Righteous"; and who is priest because He is Son. The blue sets forth His heavenly Manhood; the purple and the scarlet, His glories as Son of Man and Son of David. His spotless, flawless purity is indicated in the fine twined linen, for He is the "Holy, harmless, and undefiled, separate from sinners." The materials considered reveal the unique character of Christ's priesthood. His royal glories are portrayed as well as His divine nature and heavenly character. He will indeed yet be a priest upon His throne, displaying the glories of His kingdom as King of righteousness and King of peace.

Two girdles are mentioned here; one was on the vest, but the other, to which our attention is particularly drawn, is described as "the girdle of the ephod." The word for girdle here is only used for this peculiar girdle of the ephod, and it means "of skilful workmanship," indicating the unique perfection of the service of Christ as our Great High Priest. There is no service like His, who ever lives before the face of God to make intercession for us. The girdle is throughout Scripture the emblem of service. How beautifully is this seen in the Lord, where he says, "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh, shall find watching; verily I say unto you that He shall gird Himself, and make them sit down to meat and will come forth and serve them" (Luke 12:37). This perfect Servant ever delighted to do His Father's will when in this world, and remains a Servant in His place of exaltation and glory, carrying on unremittingly His work of unwearied intercession on our behalf, securing for us those never-failing ministrations of divine mercy to meet us in our weakness, and grace for sustainment in the midst of many and varied temptations.

Each name of the children of Israel was on a separate stone on the breastplate: on the two onyx stones, which were on the shoulders of the priest, there were six names on each. The names on the onyx stones were "according to their birth," but on the breastplate of judgment they were for "the twelve tribes," speaking of the people of God as set here according to the sovereignty of God in relation to the truth committed to us. The people of God are borne on the heart of Christ according to the manner in which God has been pleased to set us here in testimony. It is a very precious and strengthening thought that not only are we borne upon the shoulders of Christ's strength, but we also have a place in His heart and affections before God continually.

Christ bears us up on the shoulders of His everlasting strength, which can never fail, for "No one shall seize them out of my hand"; and he presents us as the objects of His everlasting love — changeless in its character, measureless in its extent, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" He has bound us upon His shoulders, as supporting us with His own omnipotent strength, and He has fastened us upon His heart with His own deathless and unfathomable love. Who can doubt therefore the prevailing efficacy of His priestly intercession on our behalf based as it is on His sacrificial work? As another has said, "He presents us as that which He has on His heart, to God. He cannot be before Him without doing so; and whatever claim the desire of Christ's heart has to draw out the favour of God, operates in drawing out the favour on us. The light and favour of the sanctuary — God as dwelling there — cannot shine out on Him without shining on us, and that as an object presented by Him for it." These are soul stirring words; but how far have our souls entered into them practically.

Then we have the Urim and the Thummim, placed in the breastplate of judgment, and meaning "lights and perfections." In Nehemiah's day there were matters which could not be settled until a priest stood up with Urim and Thummim. In the Lord Jesus we have such a Priest; One in whom is all the mind of God, in whom all light and perfections are found. In the bells and pomegranates, which were on the hem of the robe of the ephod, we have presented to us the fruits and testimony of the Spirit. How blessed was the sounding of the golden bells on the day of Pentecost as the Spirit bore testimony through the apostles of the "going in" of the Lord Jesus, when He ascended up on high; and how rich and abundant the fruits accruing from that testimony. Can we not say that on the day of Pentecost, as is written in Psalms 133:1-3, the anointing oil ran down to the hem of His garment, where were the golden bells and pomegranates in orderly alteration?

Graven on the plate of gold were the words "Holiness unto the Lord," so that the priest might bear "the iniquity of the holy things." How precious is the truth suggested in this typical language, for in this we have God's provision for all the defilement and imperfections of our service and worship during our sojourn in this scene. Everything presented to God must bear the stamp of holiness, for He can only accept that which is in perfect suitability to His own nature. Despite the fact that we have been cleansed and brought into relationship with Him, and having title to approach, left to ourselves our offerings would be wholly unacceptable. But this need has been fully met, for our Great High Priest bears the iniquity of our holy things, and blessed be God, He is "Holiness to the Lord," so that our worship as presented through Him is acceptable in every way to God.

How rich is the consolation in knowing that we have such an High Priest over the House of God! As these rich and varied glories and excellencies of Jesus, the Son of God, the Great Priest, pass before the vision of our souls in ever-deepening concentrations of grace and beauty, how suited is the language of the hymn to express our own thoughts and feelings:

Each thought of Thee doth constant yield Unchanging, fresh delight.

Offering Strange Fire

It is clearly discernible to the diligent and careful reader of Scripture that in the oft-repeated phrase "Aaron and his sons," the Spirit of God is indicating in typical language those who are truly born of God, and are kindred to Christ. The apostle Peter speaks of such as constituting "a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5). The ignoring of this truth has resulted in the formation of exclusive priestly casts in some of the great systems in Christendom, which have arrogated to themselves a travesty of priestly functions, unsanctioned by and unknown to the Word of God.

If we desire to understand and enjoy the wonderful place of association that God has given us in amazing grace with the Son of His love, this precious truth of the priesthood of all believers must be maintained in its unalloyed purity, free from the adulterations of human philosophy. Our place in the priestly family, in nearness to God, involves dissociation from all that is contrary to His mind and will. Our associations are of vital importance to the highest interests of Christ in this world, so that it behoves us not to link His Name with anything that would dishonour it. At the beginning of Leviticus 10:1-20 we are brought face to face with grievous failure on the part of Aaron's two elder sons, and this is used by the Holy Spirit, as in many other instances, to instruct us as to that which is unsuitable in the worship of God, and which calls forth His displeasure and condign judgment. Because of our nearness to God it is necessary for us to remember that "our God is a consuming fire," and to heed the exhortation of the apostle Peter, "But as He who has called you is holy, be ye also holy in all your manner of life."

"And the sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, took each of them his censer, and put fire in it, and put incense on it, and presented strange fire before Jehovah, which He had not commanded them." So reads the divine record of an act of man's presumptive will, which met with the righteous judgment of God, summarily executed. The sin of Nadab and Abihu is not said to be in doing what God had forbidden, but in doing what He had not commanded. It was a case of the will of man obtruding itself upon the holy things of God, independent of divine instructions; the will of man dictating in spiritual things, a sin now thought little of, and which has become regularised in the

religious systems of this world. All around us today we see countless instances of ungodly men offering "strange fire before God which He has not commanded them;" but the day of judgment will assuredly overtake the religious system of men, when Babylon the great, which has been a constant reproach and dishonour to the Name of Christ will be overthrown, never to rise again.

Strange fire indicates what is of the world or of the flesh. It would appear that Nadab and Abihu went outside for their strange fire; and this is the secret of all the failure in that which has professed to be a public witness for God. Is it not significant that in Leviticus 8:33, it expressly states, "And ye shall not go out from the entrance of the tent of meeting seven days, until the day when the days of your consecration are at an end"? This has direct reference to Leviticus 8:35 : "And ye shall abide at the entrance of the tent of meeting day and night seven days and keep the charge of Jehovah."

How solemn, yet how blessed, is the thought of "keeping the charge" day and night during the whole period of our consecration, for our whole lifetime in this world. The Lord has entrusted His saints with that heavenly deposit of divine truth, which constitutes our testimony for Him here; that which is contained in the Holy Scriptures, all made known in the Son of God, all connected with Him in heaven, the formation of the assembly by the Spirit in one body, and as God's habitation by the Spirit. We have the privilege of "going in" with Christ, into the presence of the Father; but also the privilege of holding fast His word in the place of testimony. In bringing the two thoughts together, the keeping of the charge at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and the offering of the fragrant incense, have we not clearly indicated that nothing but the fragrance of Christ is acceptable to God in worship, and that everything offered apart from Christ is "strange fire" and utterly unacceptable? The action of the fire brought out the essential fragrance of the incense; and the fire used for this purpose was taken from the brazen altar (Leviticus 16:12-13). It must be God's fire, taken from the altar of burnt offering, with all the sweet savour of Christ's death. Whether on the altar of burnt offering, or on the golden censer, the fire, which speaks of the holiness of God in its searching and judicial character, served only to bring out all the sweet, fragrant perfume that was in Christ.

Aaron, on the day of atonement, entered into the holiest to sprinkle the blood upon and before the mercy-seat, and he was covered by the overshadowing cloud of incense. So our blessed Lord entered into the heavenly sanctuary, having obtained eternal redemption, the fragrance of His deep perfections filling the heavenly place. The essence of all true worship lies in communion with God in regard to all that Christ is and all that He has done, and in the contemplation of all the precious and eternal results flowing from that stupendous work of redemption. Neither our thoughts nor our feelings have any place here, only what delights the heart of God, of Christ Himself, who could say, "I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have completed the work which Thou gavest me that I should do it." True worship is alone by the Spirit, even as we read, "We are the circumcision who worship by the Spirit of God."

How sad it is to consider the foreign elements that man has introduced from without, those adulterants which have completely falsified the true character and spirit of worship, and this because the Word and Spirit of God have been set aside in favour of the wisdom of a world that knows not God. Let us be certain of this, that no matter in how pious a garb the philosophy of men may be presented, they will be found to be basically opposed to the divine and heavenly order

which God has established. Only those indwelt by the Spirit of God can apprehend that which is pleasing to God.

Still, we can rejoice that God, in His faithfulness, has preserved a remnant within the rack and ruin of the public testimony, characterized by the brightest features of the original, the fruit of His own grace. Undue occupation with man's failure would dishearten, so that it is good to realise that God will not be frustrated by human failure in giving effect to all that He has purposed with regard to maintaining a testimony, though it be in weakness, for His own glory, and the glory of Christ. And so in Leviticus 8:6-7 we are encouraged to maintain that which is for God. To bewail the burning is a right and proper exercise with those who desire to act in intelligence and sympathetic concert with the mind and ways of God in regard to the grievous failure of the witness for God in this world; but it is only as we are in spirit superior to all that would affect us naturally that there can be the continuance of priestly dignity in our approach to God as worshippers. There is the tendency to exclaim, "all is over, the ruin is complete and beyond remedy." But this is not the language of faith, nor of the remnant of the true children of God, for "the foundation of God standeth sure. . . And, Let every one that nameth the Name of the Lord depart from iniquity" (2 Timothy 2:19). In Leviticus 8:9-11 we have a statute which is of permanent importance, "Thou shalt not drink wine nor strong drink, thou and thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tent of meeting." The probability is strong that Nadab and Abihu were acting under the influence of stimulants when they offered "strange fire." Natural emotions and natural fervour have no part in divine worship, which is only by the Spirit of God. The effects of wine simulate those produced by the Spirit (Acts 2:13-15). Religious excitement, produced by music, art, eloquence and other stimulants for the flesh, have each contributed to the presentation of "strange fire" in the worship of God. In spite of the failure there are still "sons" to eat of the priestly food, and there is something left for them to eat (Leviticus 8:12). We can eat of the true meat offering, the One in whom there was no failure or possibility of it. There was nothing that savoured of natural exhilaration or excitement in Him: we can feed on Him "beside the altar," as realising that this holy food will strengthen us for our priestly service before God.

Then "the breast of the wave-offering and the shoulder of the heave-offering shall ye eat in a clean place." Here we have the thought of fellowship, shared by all in the priestly family, daughters as well as sons. The weaker vessels are not debarred from enjoying sweet fellowship in the enjoyment of the love of Christ, or of appropriating His grace for strength for walking here for Him. The oblation was to be eaten in "a holy place," for it pertained to priestly function; the parts of the peace offering in "a clean place," referring to the purity of our associations, which must be free from anything dishonouring to God.

Spite of the public breakdown we can come before God with our hands filled (Leviticus 8:15), a company of consecrated priests, presenting Christ in His love and strength to God. Shall we not avail ourselves of these adequate and never-failing divine resources, and so ensure that there will be the strengthening of the things that remain for God's pleasure?

Now we come to another important matter which deals with failure among the people of God: the goat of the sin offering should have been eaten by the sons of Aaron that were left, but instead it had been burnt. This had to do with "the iniquity of the assembly," and it was a great and solemn matter in the eyes of Moses. It is easier to burn the sin offering than to eat it, since the eating

requires a moral state not always possessed. We may have righteous indignation against evil, and deal with it in a harsh and judicial way; but God would have us deal with it as if it were our own. In the attitude of Moses to Aaron we have another remarkable touch of grace. Conscious of being under the discipline of God in relation to what had happened to his sons, Aaron was not free to take up before God the sins of Israel. It was not indifference, but the burden of the failure of his own house, and Aaron owned his weakness and inability, pleading also what was appropriate in the sight of God in the circumstances. In the solemn pleading of Aaron there was spiritual judgment as to what was acceptable to Jehovah in a time of failure. On hearing these things, "Moses was content."

Aaron had to do with one who was faithful in all God's House as a ministering servant: we have to do with Him who is Son over God's House. May we be given grace to own how becoming it is for us to eat the sin offering, but confessing how little spiritual ability we have to take up this solemn and much-needed exercise.

A. Shepherd.

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