

SERMONS OF J MUCKLE

by J. Muckle

Muckle's addresses on divine provision through the parable of the Good Samaritan, illustrating Christ's ministry to sinners in their spiritual ruin and His provision of healing, comfort, and sustenance.

16 Chapters

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Divine Provision.

God Our Refuge

God with Men.

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Keeping Rank.

Notes of an address on 2 Peter 1:1-11.

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The Apostle Paul's Warning.

The Assembly in Time and Eternity.

The Calling of God.

The House of God.

S. Divine Provision.

Divine Provision.

Notes of an Address. In Luke's Gospel the blessed Lord is brought before us as "The Man, Christ Jesus," manifesting in this world the wonderful grace of God. He came freighted with blessing for men; to take upon Himself the discharging of all their liabilities; to take away their sins, and remove the distance in which the sinner stood in relation to a righteous and holy God. Something of this comes out beautifully in the parable of Luke 10:1-42, where we see a man on the way from Jerusalem, the place of blessing, to Jericho the city of the curse. What a picture of the poor sinner in all his ruin and wretchedness is here! Falling among thieves, he is stripped of his raiment, wounded and left half-dead. Such was our condition, morally, when the Lord saw us: stripped of our innocency, wounded in sin, and with the sentence of death upon us. It was to help us in such a state that the Lord, the Good Samaritan, left the glories of Godhead and came into Manhood. He came to where we were, to minister His heavenly grace; to bind up our wounds, to pour in the oil and wine, to set us on His own beast, and take us to the inn. What a rich provision for our need! Divine comfort reaching down to our misery, divine joy reaching the heart with the gift of the Holy Spirit; the support of Christ's own strength made ours, and His own loving provision assured until He comes for us.

Christ has not only rescued us from the place of degradation and distance from God, but He is conducting us, in His own power, through this defiled and defiling world. He has taken us in hand completely, supplying every need for today, and if He tarry, every need for the morrow as well. What comfort for the heart it is to know that He knows every part of the journey, every circumstance of the way, and that He has undertaken every responsibility in relation to the journey. As entering into the meaning of this, can we not say with the Apostle Paul, "But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus?" (Php 4:19). But we are not left down here without responsibilities and exercises, while waiting for the Lord to come and take us to be for ever with Himself. We are to be for His pleasure and glory the little while that remains before His coming. To this end He has given to us His word: and in Mary, brought before us from Luke 10:39 of our chapter, we have one availing herself of the divine provision so needful for us in this world. She sits at Jesus' feet as a learner, hearing His word. It is only in communion with Him that we can really know His mind, and receive the grace to carry out His will. The next time we read of Mary is in John 11:1-57, where again she is at the feet of Jesus, but as a mourner, receiving His sympathy and consolation. Yet again we find her at Jesus' feet, in John 12:1-50 : this time as a worshipper. May we each one know the blessedness of sitting at the feet of Jesus With the hearing the word of the Lord Jesus there is also to be prayer; and in Luke 11:1 the disciples desire Jesus to teach them to pray. We shall be kept fresh in our spirits, and be enabled to do the will of God, if there is the desire for divine teaching regarding the word and prayer. Every effort of the enemy is put forth to divert us from prayer; and how often we allow ourselves to be hindered from prayer and to be otherwise engaged when secluded for prayer. The Lord spent whole nights in prayer and communion with His God and Father. Faithful men have long since called attention

to this, that declension of soul begins so often with neglect of private prayer, and this is followed with the giving up of attendance at the public prayer meeting. It is not a matter of saying prayers, but of being before the Lord in the spirit of dependence and pouring out our hearts to Him in all kinds of prayer; and seeking too the blessedness of true and deep communion with the Father and the Son. So many know what it is to approach God regarding their own interests, yet are little conscious of the joy of being occupied in communion with the interests of God in this world, or with the counsels of divine grace that centre in the Son.

Passing down to Luke 11:33-36 we learn that the saints of God are light-bearers in the world. On the same line, Paul, in Php 2:15, speaks of the children of God appearing as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation. This will surely result from our sitting at the feet of Jesus to hear His word, and from learning of Him how to pray. To shine as lights in this world is a wondrous privilege. It is not a question of preaching or engaging in some special sphere of service for the Lord, blessed as these may be: but of manifesting the heavenly traits of the Man out of heaven. Only as we take character from Christ can we truly represent what He is to this world. When the eye is single, Christ is before the heart: and then it is we are in the state to express aright what He is. So often our motives are mixed: there are the desires to please Christ, and to set Him forth: but along with this there is self-seeking and self-gratification.

Another aspect of our life is found in Luke 12:1-59. We are left down here to seek the Father's kingdom, not to be full of anxious care about our needs. So often the children of God forget that their Father loves them, and knows their every need far better than they do themselves. He takes care of the birds, clothes the flowers and even the grass; so that we need never have an anxiety regarding food, drink or clothing. Moreover, it is the good pleasure of the Father to give us the kingdom; and if this knowledge enters into the hearts of the "little flock," their anxious care will disappear. In Luke 14:1-35 we have God's great supper spread, and the invitation sent out to those bidden to come for all things were now ready. But all began to excuse themselves from accepting the divine invitation. Yet God's house shall be filled: and even now the Glad Tidings are going forth, inviting men to come to the feast that God has made in the riches of His grace. We may not all be evangelists, but we can tell needy sinners of the goodness of God in preparing such a feast for the blessing of men. Timothy may not have been an evangelist, yet he was exhorted by Paul to do the work of an evangelist. The work of God's grace still goes on, spite of the growing indifference around us; and it is our privilege to have fellowship with the Gospel in these last days. There are those gifted for public preaching; but a great deal of God's work in the Gospel is carried out in individual contact with men: and in this we can all have our part. Moreover, apart from speaking, we can testify to God's grace by living for Christ in the world; like Paul, who said, "I live by the faith of the Son of God." At this great supper that God has spread, it is our blessed privilege and joy to celebrate with Him His wonderful grace.

Luke 15:1-32 shows us the deep love and compassion of the heart of the Father. As we sometimes sing: The Father's house, the Father's heart, All that the Son is given Made ours — the objects of His love, And He, our joy in heaven. The recollection of the Father's goodness brings the erring son to repentance; and coming back he is reconciled and clothed with the garment of salvation, with the best robe, the righteousness of God. Inside the house, graced with the dignity and liberty of sonship, the erstwhile prodigal feeds on Christ, the fatted calf; feeding and delighting his heart in communion with his Father. Such is the blessedness of the portion that God has given

to us in His wonderful grace and love.

We began in Luke 10:1-42 with a man on the wrong road, wounded and nearly dead; but Christ took him up and has taken us up, and will care for us until He returns to take us to His Father's house. Meanwhile He teaches us His word and teaches us to pray; brings us to the feast that God has spread puts the best robe on us, and gives us to know the deep joys of the presence of God. May we know increasingly the blessedness of such divine goodness towards us.

J. Muckle. In Christ's Hand. No one can pluck us out of Christ's hand; but why say this if there were not real danger and keeping of us in it? The wolf "catcheth" (same word as pluck) the sheep and scattereth them, but cannot catch them out of Christ's hand, but here our responsibility comes in, our dependence on Him, our leaving ourselves to His infallible care; and one as precious as the other is necessary.

J. N. Darby.

S. God Our Refuge

"God Our Refuge."

Psalms 46:1-11. In this beautiful Psalm we are reminded that, amidst all the storms of life, God is the refuge of His people: a deeply important truth to which all believers would assent as a doctrine, though, too often we may fail to avail ourselves of our "refuge" in meeting the difficulties and dangers of the everyday life. The Psalm opens with the statement that "God is our refuge." Again, in the course of the Psalm it is stated that "The God of Jacob is our refuge." Finally it closes by repeating, for the third time, that God "is our refuge." Clearly, then, this is the great truth that is pressed in this Psalm. Men of the world, in seeking a refuge from dangers and difficulties, wholly rely on natural and human plans. Believers, while not despising providential means, have in God an unailing resource. Are we surrounded by dangers

"God is our refuge." Are we utterly weak in the presence of every opposing enemy? God is our "strength." Do we need help at every moment and in all our troubles? "God . . . is a very present help in trouble." In Psalms 46:1 we have, then, the great theme of the Psalm — the confidence of faith that finds in God an unailing resource, in all the trials we may have to face as we journey through this world. In the remainder of the Psalm we learn the blessed results of this quiet confidence in God:

Firstly, it enables the believer to rise above the fear of the violence and corruption of this present world (Psalms 46:2-3).

Secondly, this faith leads the believer to walk in the light of the world to come (Psalms 46:4-5).

Thirdly, while still in a world in which the nations rage, and kingdoms are moved, faith realises that God is "with us" (Psalms 46:6-7).

Fourthly, faith assures us that God, in His own time and way, will deal with all the evil of the world (Psalms 46:8).

Fifthly, faith sees that God, having dealt in righteousness with the evil, will bring peace to the world. "He maketh wars to cease" (Psalms 46:9).

Sixthly, in this confidence, faith can wait in calmness for God to act, knowing that God is God, and in due time will be exalted among the nations (Psalms 46:10).

Seventhly, in the light of these great truths, faith is established in the confidence that, during the waiting time, God is "with us," and "our refuge" (Psalms 46:11).

(1) The conditions of the present world (Psalms 46:2-3). The believer realising that in God he has a "refuge," and needed "strength," and "help," can face all the violence and corruption that is raging through the world with the consequent turmoil and confusion. "The earth," as a symbol, speaks of an ordered and civilised condition. Such conditions may be removed and all ordered government become thoroughly disorganised. The mountains symbolise that which is imposing

and apparently firmly established in the earth. Great empires of the world that have endured for centuries appear to be unassailable; but again and again we see in history, even as God has foretold, that these empires have fallen and been lost in the sea of nations. The Lord can speak of the Roman Empire as a mountain "cast into the sea" (Matthew 21:21). In Scripture the "troubled sea" is often used to set forth the wicked who stir up evil and cannot rest (Isaiah 57:20-21). The "waters" are used to set forth "peoples, and multitudes, and nations" (Revelation 17:15). The roaring and troubling of the waters surely speak of the masses in a state of revolution that overthrows all authority.

If such was the condition of the world in the Psalmist's day, how much more does it set forth the violence and corruption that mark the world of our day, as we approach the end of the age. The godly man, looking at the prevailing conditions of the world, sees the utter failure of all civilisation and the breakdown of the government of the world that has been committed to the Gentiles. He sees imposing empires of this world overturned and lost amidst the masses, that rise up in revolution, so that all authority is shaken and men's hearts are failing them for fear (Luke 21:26). But if the hearts of men are filled with fear, believers, in the confidence that God is their refuge, can say, "Therefore will not we fear."

(2) The world to come (Psalms 46:4-5). Not only does faith overcome the present world, but it walks in the light of the world to come with all its peace and blessing. Faith looks beyond "the waters" of this world that "roar" and make "trouble," and it sees the river of God, and streams of refreshing that "make glad." It looks beyond the imposing cities of men and sees "the city of God." The Psalmist looked for the establishment of Zion — the earthly city — from which blessing will flow to the nations. Abraham, in his day, "looked for the city" whose "builder and maker is God." In our day, believers can say, we "are come unto mount Zion; and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." Under present conditions we see the great cities of this world assaulted and desolated by ruthless violence and corruption. Looking on to the heavenly Jerusalem we see the city into which there shall in no wise enter "anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination; or maketh a lie," and no enemy will ever scale its wall "great and high" (Revelation 21:12; Revelation 21:27). Moreover, the Psalmist, speaking of the earthly Zion, reminds us that "God is in the midst of her." So of the heavenly city, we read "the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it," and again, we learn that "the glory of God did lighten it and the Lamb is the lamp thereof" (Revelation 21:23). Moreover, if the cities and empires of this world are breaking up and falling into ruin, of the city of God we read, "she shall not be moved." We see that the cities of men have no righteous foundation, and are therefore marked by change and decay. But, like Abraham, we look for the city "which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." What God has founded will never be moved. No power of the enemy will assault it; no evil of man will pass through its gates; no night will ever dim its light; no shadow of death will bring any change; no curse will lead to decay. The "pure river of water of life" will for ever "make glad the city of God."

Furthermore, we have not long to wait for this city to be brought into display, for we read, "God shall help her, and that right early." The better and more beautiful translation is, "God shall help her at the dawning of the morning." Looking at the world around, we see moral darkness increasing, and the clouds of the coming storm of judgment are gathering. But the increasing "works of darkness" only assure the believer that "the night is far spent, and the day is at hand" (Romans 13:12). The dawn of the morning — the "morning without clouds" — is very near, for it is

but "a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." For the Christian the day of glory will dawn by the coming of Christ as "the bright and morning star" (Revelation 22:16): for the world the blessing will come when Christ, as "the Sun of righteousness" will "arise with healing in His wings." Then, indeed, the clouds will be dispelled, for when the day breaks "the shadows will flee away," and the sufferings of God's earthly people will be healed (Malachi 4:2).

(3) God with us (Psalms 46:6-7). As in the days of the Psalmist, so, with yet greater intensity, in these closing days, the nations rage and the kingdoms of this world are moved. When men "rage" they act in a way that is contrary to the dictates of nature and common sense. Moved by Satan, the prince of this world, men act without reason, even as when the demons entered into a herd of swine they acted in a way entirely opposed to the natural instincts of an animal, by rushing violently to their destruction. Led by Satan, the nations today, without reason, rage against one another to their common destruction, and all the kingdoms of the earth are moved. Nevertheless, God has but to speak the word and all the raging of man will cease. Even so the disciples found when, at the word of the Lord "a great tempest" was changed into "a great calm" (Matthew 8:24-26). At the cross the nations raged and the people imagined a vain thing, only to find that God will speak unto them in His wrath and vex them in His sore displeasure (Psalms 2:1-5).

Nevertheless, whatever storms may rage amongst the nations, the LORD of hosts is "with" His people, and therefore, they can say, "the God of Jacob is our refuge." The God Who is "in the midst" of the city to which we belong (Psalms 46:5) is "with" His people on their way to the city. When Jacob was a homeless stranger, God could say to him "I am with thee, and will keep thee . . . I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of" (Genesis 28:15). The God that was with Jacob — a man of faith, in spite of many failures — has also said to believers today, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." If He is with us, He is "our refuge," and the believer can boldly say, "the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Hebrews 13:5-6).

(4) The righteous judgment of the LORD (Psalms 46:8). If the LORD is with His people, He is against the wicked, and will bring them to desolation when He deals in righteous judgment with the nations. Then will be fulfilled the solemn words of the prophet, "The indignation of the LORD is upon all the nations, and His fury upon all their armies: He hath utterly destroyed them, He hath delivered them to the slaughter" (Isaiah 34:2).

(5) The peace of the world (Psalms 46:9). The righteous judgment of God will lead to universal peace amongst men, for, as the prophet can say, "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever" (Isaiah 32:17). Men talk of a new order, by which they hope to end war and bring about a universal peace. But the peace of which men dream ignores both the holiness of God and the wickedness of men. It is a peace without righteousness. All the efforts of men will be in vain, for it is the LORD Who "maketh wars to cease," and His peace will be universal, for wars will "cease unto the end of the earth." Then, indeed will the Scripture be fulfilled, that tells us, "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2:4).

(6) The patience of faith (Psalms 46:10). Knowing that God is our refuge in the midst of the raging of the nations, and that He, Himself, is about to rebuke the nations and make wars to cease, the believer is called to "Be still." The knowledge that Christ is sitting in the place of power, at God's

right hand, waiting until all His enemies are put under His feet, will go far to enable the believer to sit "still" in a world of turmoil, while waiting for the intervention of God at the coming of the Lord. Resting upon the Lord's words, "Behold, I come quickly," the believer will keep the word of His patience, and thus "Be still" (Psalms 110:1; Revelation 3:10-11). Nevertheless, to "Be still" is a very great test for faith. The flesh is restless, and the energy of nature would ever be active. But where there is no duty to perform, our place is to be "Be still," and in patience wait for God to act in His own time and way, for His own glory and exaltation. "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord" (James 5:7-8). How often the restless activity of the flesh springs from the desire to exalt self. Man is ever active in seeking his own glory and exaltation. The believer is called to "Be still" that God may be exalted.

(7) God our refuge (Psalms 46:11). Having grace to "be still" we shall find, in our practical experience that God "is with us," and "our refuge." In the spirit of these verses, the prophet Isaiah can say, "We have waited for Thee: be Thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble" (Isaiah 33:2). If the Lord is "with us" in this world of conflict, it is that we may be with Him in the coming glory, for this is the desire of His heart according to His own words, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with Me where I am." (John 17:24).

How blessed then for the believer to enter into the good of this Psalm, and live in the calm assurance that, 1. God is our refuge in every storm;

2. God is our strength in all our weakness;

3. God is our help in every trouble;

4. God will deal in judgment with all the evil;

5. God will bring peace to the ends of the earth;

6. God will be exalted in the earth;

7. God is "with us" as we pass on to the glory through a world of strife, and is "our refuge." The storm may roar without me. My heart may low be laid, But God is round about me, And can I be dismayed?

H. Smith.

S. God with Men.

God with Men.

Genesis 1:1-3; John 1:1-3; John 1:14; Revelation 21:1-4.

Revised notes of an address by J. M.

God has made known to us that He desires to dwell with men; this He has purposed, and He will surely bring it to pass for His eternal pleasure. The first verse in Genesis speaks of a beginning which has God's purpose in view, the beginning of the creation. Something that had not existed before was created and formed to be the platform on which God would make known His thoughts before the creatures of His hand. The second verse does not speak of the creation as it came from the fingers of God; something had evidently occurred to bring in the chaos and darkness; but the Spirit of God moved on the face of the deep, telling of God's activity in view of the accomplishing of His will. Light is brought in by the word of God, and step by step we learn how God wrought to form the earth for man's habitation. But God had much in view in thus forming the earth that could not be revealed in the beginning of Genesis, although we can now read a great deal of God's thoughts there in the light of the great revelations of the New Testament. This was the scene in which God would be fully revealed in the Person of the Son, in Whom all His purposes of love and grace for the blessing of the creature are centred.

What we have just alluded to is brought before us in relation to another beginning, spoken of in the first chapter of John's Gospel. It is a beginning that conducts our thoughts into eternity, where the WORD was. Here we read of the eternal existence of the Son of God as the eternal Word, distinct in His Personality as the Son, being Himself God and withal distinct in His Person in eternity. Then we read of the Word becoming flesh, and dwelling among men full of grace and truth. He is the One Who brought the creation into being, for without Him was not anything made that was made; yet the eternal Word became Man to manifest the grace and love of God, and to bring to light all the thoughts of the Father's heart.

Although in John's Gospel the Lord Jesus is presented as a Divine Person on earth, it is as a Divine Person in manhood; and in seven, chapters of this Gospel He is spoken of as Son of Man. In Luke's Gospel He is presented as the Man, Christ Jesus; born into the world as a babe, growing up under the eye of God and yet before men, and saying at twelve years of age, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business." Men said, "Is not this Joseph's son;" yet before He was born, at His baptism, and at different times throughout this Gospel, it is clearly portrayed that He is Son of God. In Matthews Gospel He is born king, and His kingship shines through the different scenes in which He is presented; but it is in John 11:1-57 that we read of Jesus saying, "Come unto Me — I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." No earthly potentate could utter such words. Such contrasts bring out the beautiful character of Jesus as King, yet as the meek and lowly One, the most approachable and accessible Person that was ever on earth. Mark's Gospel brings Him before the soul as the perfect Servant of God, according to

Isaiah's prophecy. He is the One Who fulfils the type of old, the true Hebrew servant, Who said "I love my Master, my wife, and my children, I will not go out free" (Exodus 21:5). He went to the doorpost to have His ear bored — He died on the cross to express His great love: and He shall remain a servant for ever. It bows the heart before Him when we consider the place of service He has taken towards His own. But in this Gospel, which speaks so sweetly of His service, the opening words are, "Beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God:" and in the second last verse of the Gospel we read that "The Lord . . . was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God." This is the One Who shall be the object of every redeemed soul for all eternity. When we come to Revelation 21:3 we have it stated that God shall dwell with men. This was God's thought from the beginning, and now we read the time of its accomplishment. When Israel crossed the Red Sea, they sang in the song of Moses, "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established" (Exodus 15:17).

Here is a type of what was in the mind of God, but Revelation 21:1-27 gives the glorious fulfilment and consummation for His eternal pleasure and the blessing of men. None could have planned this but God alone: blessed be His Holy Name. In the desert God will teach thee What the God that thou hast found, Patient, gracious, powerful, holy, All His grace shall there abound.

S. God's Armour for His Saints.

God's Armour for His Saints.

Ephesians 6:10-19.

It is of the utmost importance for the saints of God to be equipped and protected with the armour He has provided for them, if they would engage in the conflict of good and evil according to the will of God. This was never more necessary than at the present time, close to the end of the church's history on earth, when Satan is using every effort to wipe out the testimony committed to the people of God. The enemy thought he had finished God's testimony when he moved men to crucify the Son of God, but he soon found that the testimony of God was continued through the saints and servants of the Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Those who have God's testimony in this world are the saints that Christ loves, and this also makes them the object of Satan's malice and enmity. During the past centuries many of the saints have passed through untold sufferings in faithfulness to the Name of the Lord Jesus, but now in these lands the wily foe has adopted different means in his opposition to Christ and those He loves. The roaring lion has transformed himself into an angel of light, and his endeavours are aimed at beguiling the people of God, so that they might be unfaithful to Christ. He entices them with worldly advantages through which they can gratify the flesh, and in this way their affections are drawn away from Christ. It is undeniable that the world has got into the church, and that the church is in the world.

Amidst all the departure of these last days God's resources for His saints are undiminished, and His armour is available for us. We have three outstanding Scriptures that bring before us this divine armour, the first in Romans 13:12, where we read, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." We are passing through a world of darkness which is under the authority of Satan, and where men have not the knowledge of God. To protect us in such a world we need the true knowledge of God in our hearts. His "word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalms 119:105). The powers of darkness are repelled by the light of the armour that God has provided for us in His word, if that word is livingly operative in our souls. In 2 Corinthians 6:7, the Apostle Paul in speaking of how he and Timothy commended themselves as God's ministers, he mentions among many things, "the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left." No matter what the circumstances may be, nothing could ever excuse the servant of the Lord, or any saint of God, for acting unrighteously. Anything unrighteous would falsify the testimony of the righteous God Whom we serve, and bring that glorious testimony into disrepute before the world. Therefore at all times, and in all circumstances, righteousness must mark God's servant.

"The whole armour of God" is brought before us in Ephesians 6:1-24. It is given to the saints of this dispensation to protect them in conflict with the powers of darkness as they seek to stand firm for God in this evil day. God has richly blessed His saints with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly

places in Christ, and Satan would fain hinder them from entering into this wonderful portion. We have been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, and marked out for sonship, according to the good pleasure of God's will. The mystery of God's will has been made known to us, and according to His eternal purpose we have received an inheritance. At present we have access to the Father, and belong to the household of God. The church has been united to Christ as His body, and soon will be presented to Him as His bride. "The mystery," which unfolds to us the great secret of the ages, has been revealed in all its parts, and God desires that we should enter into this in its breadth, and length, and depth, and height.

Knowing Satan's malice and inveterate opposition to all that is of God, is it any wonder that he is set against those who have been so highly favoured with such amazing revelations, and who have been blessed with such wonderful blessings? The saints have become the objects of his assaults, and especially when they endeavour to hold fast the great truths connected with the counsels and purpose of God. The enemy presents many things to attract the minds and hearts of the saints, and will try to mar their testimony to Christ, but God has given to us His panoply to enable us to prevail in the conflict.

It is essential for us to realise that we have no strength of our own for such a conflict, for the arm of flesh cannot match principalities, powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places. To meet such foes we must be "Strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." The wiles of the devil can only be met by divine armour; we could never stand without it. Nor can we do without it even for a moment; not until we have left this world behind is the "evil day" over for us. The first part of the armour is the girdle of truth; truth in the inward parts, the state formed in us through the Word of God learned in communion with Christ. When addressing the Father, the Lord Jesus prayed for His own, "Sanctify them by the truth: Thy word is truth" (John 17:17). It is as the truth enters into the soul by the word that the moral state is produced that sets us apart for God in this world, and that gives us power to resist all that is not according to truth. The breastplate of righteousness protects the seat of the affections. Anything unrighteous in the life of the Christian will give him a bad conscience, and the enemy will not be slow to take advantage of it. We cannot have communion with God if the conscience is bad. No one could successfully stand against evil with a defiled conscience: how different it is when conscience does not reproach, and when the heart rests in the enjoyment of divine love, and Christ dwells there by faith. Our feet are to be shod with the peace that is proclaimed in the Gospel. How very inconsistent for anyone who speaks of the Gospel of peace to be marked by traits that bring unrest and disquiet among the saints of God. Those who cause division and strife have not their feet shod with peace. Such are not able to stand against the wiles of the devil. This does not mean that we should seek peace at any price, but that we should be marked by peace even when in conflict for the truth. One contending for the truth could not take up the sword in fleshly conflict, or strike a single blow with the arm of flesh; for our weapons are not carnal, but spiritual.

We need the shield of faith when the enemy suggests that God is not interested in us, or would present to the heart the least doubt regarding His unfailing care. Whatever the circumstances in which we are found, the shield of faith brings God in for our help and protection. There may be the need for "The trial of your faith," but those who have passed through such trials, and have proved the reality of God's help in them, can use the shield of faith in the conflict of the "evil day," "to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." For the head we have "The helmet of salvation," and this

protects all our thoughts and mind. Salvation has come to us from God through grace, and not a doubt regarding this enters into the thoughts of those who have the helmet of salvation. If we had any doubts about our salvation how could we meet our wily adversary? If we are engaged with the truth brought out in chapter 2 of this epistle, we shall have taken the helmet of salvation. There we learn that we have been quickened with Christ, and even now sit in the heavenly places "That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." To wield the sword of the Spirit we must be acquainted with the word of God, and the word becomes the sword of the Spirit when it is used under the guidance and control of the Holy Spirit. How important then to feed upon the word of God, so that it becomes in us the engrafted word; and how essential that we should ever live in communion with the Lord, so that the Holy Spirit can use the word by which we have been formed after Christ. The last part of the armour is prayer, and this "Prayer and supplication in the Spirit." We must ever remain in the attitude of dependence and confidence in God, being guided in all our prayers and supplications by the Holy Spirit, even as Jude exhorts, "Praying in the Holy Ghost" (Jude 1:20). Our ever watchful foe will seek to keep us from prayer, but we are to be "watching thereunto with all perseverance." Many things come in to keep us from prayer, there is therefore the great need to be watchful lest our time becomes absorbed with present things.

Prayer is not to be confined to our own part in the conflict, or to the things that immediately engage us, but we have to think of all saints. The apostle Paul had a very special place in the conflict of good and evil, being set for the defence of the Gospel, and being "an ambassador bound with a chain" because he was minister of "the mystery of the Gospel." Desiring to continue with this precious ministry. Paul sought the prayers of the saints, well knowing that the enemy would fain silence the announcing of this wonderful truth. In these last days, when the truth of the mystery is so little known among the saints of God should there not be the constant prayer to God that this precious truth might be announced with boldness in the power of the Spirit?

J. Muckle.

S. God's Centre of Universal Blessing

God's Centre of Universal Blessing

(John 12:1-50).

Although the Son of God has been refused His rightful place by the world, the Father has given all things into His hand, and it is His good pleasure to make Him the centre of every circle in the vast universe of bliss: and our hearts rejoice in the Father's good pleasure regarding His beloved Son. When the Son was here, the Father was drawing men to Him, and this great work still goes on; but it is as lifted up that all is drawn to the Son of Man, God's centre of the universe. From John 12:1-50, where we read of the Lord Jesus thus we learn who are drawn to the divine centre, and how they are drawn. The Lord was on His way to the cross to die: only a few days remained until the passover feast at Jerusalem, and Martha, Mary, and Lazarus made Him a supper. This family had known the Lord Jesus; each one was loved by Him, and His love had captivated each of their hearts. But death had entered their circle, and it was through death that they had learned the blessed Lord in a way they had not known Him before. His love had been deeply realised in His sympathy with them in their sorrow, for "Jesus wept;" but His divine power had been felt and known in the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead. He had truly manifested Himself to be the Son of God with power, the Resurrection and the Life.

Here then we find a favoured circle, drawn to the Son of God, as knowing His love and His power. Martha's response to Him is in devoted service, not the service now that is occupied with itself, but which in true affection is lavished upon its object. Martha had formerly believed Him to be "The Christ, the Son of God which should come into the world," but now she knows Him to be the One who has power over death. How blessed indeed for Martha, or for any saint of God to be engaged in service, divine service, which has the Son of God Himself for its only object.

Lazarus is privileged to sit down at the table with Jesus, in sweet and favoured communion with Him who raises and quickens the dead. Does not this beautiful incident teach us that the Son of God acts in mighty power that He might bring us into the circle where our souls can delight in communion with Him? Later on, He tells Peter that His washing of the disciples feet had in view their having part with Him. Our communion with the Lord in the Father's house will be for endless delight and joy, but part with Him now in His own things before the Father is what the Lord would have every saint enjoy.

If Martha is engaged in serving the Lord, and Lazarus is enjoying communion with Him, Mary is occupied in worship; her heart filled with the glory of Christ's Person. The pure nard is of great price, telling that Mary values Him beyond, the most precious thing down here: the Son of God has His true place in her heart, and none other but Himself fills her vision and her thoughts. It is therefore no wonder that the whole company benefits from Mary's precious act: the whole house is filled with the odour of the ointment. No doubt this first circle gives us a little picture of the Christian company, which is even now privileged to serve the Lord, to commune with Him, and to worship

Him, as knowing Him in His glory as Son of God. But in verse 12 we see another circle: a great crowd that comes to the feast; and having heard that Jesus is coming into Jerusalem, they took palm branches, and went out to meet Him, and cried, "Hosanna, blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel." Is not this a picture of the coming day when Israel will rejoice in celebrating the return of the Lord Jesus as their King? When He first came, He was refused as the Messiah, but Isaiah 25:9 clearly shows that He will yet be received: "And it shall be said in that day, Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is Jehovah, we have waited for Him; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." In answer to their Hosannas, the Lord shows Himself to be their promised King, according to the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9, for "when He had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt." But the prophecy was not fully fulfilled then: it awaits the glorious day, of which we have spoken. In but a few days Israel cried "Away with Him;" and the solemn judgment merited by them has since fallen upon the guilty nation. Nevertheless, all the prophecies of old, which speak of Israel's blessing under the hand of their King, shall find an actual and blessed answer, when the Lord returns to take the kingdom, and bring in peace, prosperity, and joy to His ancient people.

If Zechariah 9:9 foretells Israel's blessing under their King, the following verse gives Him a wider domain: "And He shall speak peace unto the nations; and His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth." It is no wonder then that the Greeks desire to see Jesus, for the picture of Zechariah 9:1-17 could not be complete without the Gentiles. How refreshing to the soul to look on to the day when the Nations are blessed, "A great crowd, which no one could number, out of every nation and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing . . . before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palm branches in their hands" (Revelation 7:9). If Israel have the palm branches in John 12:1-50, the Gentiles have them in Revelation 7:1-17. These are blessed as having "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." When Andrew and Philip come to tell Jesus of the desire of the Greeks, He speaks of Himself as Son of Man, saying, "The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified." It is as Son of Man that the Lord Jesus will take up the reins of universal government, and bring blessing to the Nations. But before the Christian company can be associated with Him, He must die, for their association with Him is on the risen side of death. Before poor Israel can be blessed, the blood of the New Covenant must be shed. Before the Gentiles can wash their robes and make them white, the blood of the Lamb must be poured out. Death therefore comes before the Lord: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, it abides alone; but if it die, it bears much fruit" So that we see that all is accomplished through His death and resurrection. The thought of the cross brought trouble to the soul of Jesus, but He would not say, "Father, save me from this hour;" His word to the Father was "Father, glorify Thy Name." What a blessed answer came from the Father, "I both have glorified and will glorify it again!" The Father's Name had been glorified in His pathway: it would be glorified in His death. It will be glorified too as a result of the cross: in every company being drawn to the Son, even as He said, "And I, if I be lifted up out of the earth, will draw all to me." The Son will fill every sphere, and His praise will fill every part of the vast universe of bliss.

J. Muckle.

"Praise the Lamb," the chorus waking, All in heaven together throng:

Loud and far each tongue partaking Rolls around the endless song."

God's Righteous Grace.

If a sinner was to be saved for eternity — if the grace of God was to make a righteous basis for justifying the ungodly, Jesus the Son of Man, must be delivered into the hands of man; and then an infinitely fiercer fire must burn — the divine judgment, when God made Him sin for us; for all that man, Satan, even God Himself could do, comes upon Him to the utmost.

W. Kelly. A Prayer.

Lord Jesus Christ, invigorate our poor cold hearts to sound forth the eternal honours of thine adorable Name; and may our lives be more and more the decided evidence of our hearts-love to thee, for "Thou alone art worthy."

C. H. Mackintosh.

S. Jesus Christ, the Same

"Jesus Christ, the Same."

Jesus, well-known in His path of humiliation and sorrow in this world, is presented in the glory of His Person in the first chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews. Being the Son, He is consequently the appointed Heir of all things; and in addressing Him God says, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." Hebrews 1:8. Here is the Apostle, through whom God speaks to men; and in whom is introduced and established the divine and heavenly system of blessing and glory that is about to fill the universe. In Hebrews 2:1-18 He is presented as perfect Man, espousing the cause of men, not that of angels; and delivering men from the bondage of Satan, bringing them into association with Himself; and maintaining as High Priest the divine system He established as Apostle. Well do we then to consider, as exhorted at the beginning of Hebrews 3:1-19, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession.

How sweet it is to the soul to contemplate that the One who took the Name of Jesus, the One we know and love as Jesus, is "Jesus Christ, the Same yesterday, and today, and for ever." This sweet and precious Name is often mentioned in this epistle, where He is so active towards us in priestly grace, succouring, sympathising, and supporting us as we pass through the wilderness; having Himself passed the way before us, knowing experimentally all that we have known of its rough ways, and all that we shall ever be called upon to pass through, for He was tempted in all points, like as we are, sin apart. If we are under pressure, in weakness of body, passing through sorrows, or enduring any of the manifold trials that belong to men down here, how blessed for us that He sits on the throne of grace, to which we can draw near with boldness. He does not promise to take us out of the adverse circumstances, but supplies mercy and help for every time of need; lifting our spirits above the desert testings to be occupied with Himself in the presence of God. To this end He passed through the heavens, to appear before the face of God for us. We often fail, but there can be no failure with Him; He ever lives to make intercession for us, and will maintain us all the way until we reach the rest of God. In Hebrews 8:1-13 we see Jesus as Minister of the Sanctuary and of the true tabernacle, which God pitched and not man. Our souls should rejoice and delight to know that Jesus in heaven maintains us down here in testimony for the pleasure of God; preparing a table at which we can serve God in holy and reverential fear, and where we can feed with deepest pleasure. Knowing the Lord in this way we can truly join the praises He leads to the Father in the midst of the assembly. Then in Hebrews 10:1-39 we see Him as having accomplished a mighty work in offering Himself, a sacrifice for sins, once for all. In the glory of this great work, He now sits down at God's right hand; and we have boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus. God's presence has been opened up to us, and God has given us the moral fitness to be with Him in spirit there, and this through the work of the Lord Jesus upon the cross. Without the work of the cross, and God's working within us, applying that work to heart and conscience we could not be there; but we can enter because Jesus is there, the Great Priest over the house of God. What a place of glory that is! Everything in the holiest speaks of glory, God's glory; and the fragrance of Jesus too fills the dwelling place of God. Even as has been written:

'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. The path of faith we see begun and completed by Jesus in Hebrews 12:1-29. What a path that was, ending with the judgment and shame of the cross! But the joy before Him, the place prepared at the right hand of the throne of God, enabled Him to endure all the judgment and to despise the shame. In lowly grace He endured the contradiction of sinners, and resisted unto blood in the conflict of good against evil. So that we have Him both as an object for the heart and as an example in the course we are called upon to take through this world. If we would be for God's glory, the eye must rest on Jesus, and all inconsistent with Him must be laid aside, and endurance must mark us in the race that leads to where Jesus is gone.

Hebrews 13:1-25 tells us that He is "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and for ever." Whether we view Him yesterday, upon the cross, or today in the presence of God, or to the ages of ages with His loved ones, He abides the same. What comfort to the heart to know Him thus while passing through a world of constant change! Refused by the world, the Lord accepted the outside place, and suffered without the gate. Our place, if we would be faithful to Him, is to share His rejection; therefore are we exhorted to go forth unto HIM without the camp, bearing His reproach. The camp is a worldly system of religion for man in the flesh, out of which those faithful to Christ must remove if seeking His honour, and if desiring His company. The apostle John says, "Little children, it is the last hour." We are on the last lap of the race, and it is the most testing; but if we look to "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and for ever," He will give all the grace and help we need to finish the course aright, and so have His approval at His coming.

J. Muckle.

S. Keeping Rank

Keeping Rank. In the wisdom of God our lot has been cast in the last days, of which the Apostle Paul speaks as "perilous times" in 2 Timothy 3:1; and it behoves us to recognise the true character of the days in which we live, so that we might seek the Lord's mercy to preserve us, and His grace to maintain us, until He comes to rapture us home to His Father and our Father. It must be evident to every spiritual eye that the enemy is doing his utmost to rob the saints of every bit of truth, and to mar their testimony to it; but God is able to keep His own from the withering, evil influences that are all around, and to enable them to manifest their true character as strangers and pilgrims here (1 Peter 2:11). When David, God's anointed, was in rejection and hunted by Saul, there were faithful men who jeopardized their lives for him. Observe what the Spirit of God says of these men in 1 Chronicles 12:1-40. They came to David (1 Chronicles 12:1), they were mighty men (1 Chronicles 12:1), they were armed (1 Chronicles 12:2), they could use both hands in conflict (1 Chronicles 12:2). Such are the men God desires today; those drawn to Christ in true affection, who are strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, who wear the whole armour of God, and who have the arms of righteousness on the right hand and on the left. Among David's warriors were the men of Issachar, "Who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do" (1 Chronicles 12:32), and men who could keep rank, who had a perfect heart (1 Chronicles 12:38). Do we understand the times in which we live? Have we the mind of the Lord regarding these difficult days? And with these things are we seeking to go on together according to the mind of God, with perfect heart, seeking only to be for His pleasure in the conflict of these last days? How many things can turn us aside from doing the will of God, turn us away from the ranks where the truth is being kept for the glory of the Lord. The features of faithful men are also given to us in Exodus 18:20-21. They were to be taught in the word of God, they had to know how to walk, and how to work: they must needs be able men, fearing God, men of truth, hating covetousness; men who could bring peace to the people by righteous judgments. Surely there is a word for us in this Scripture, which has been written for our instruction and encouragement. These are the traits we should covet, so that we might be for God's pleasure in these last days. The way we have been called to is a narrow way, even as the Lord said "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way . . . and few there be that find it." The path is not easy, but His grace suffices; there are many trials and exercises, both in the individual walk and in the assembly, but the resources of Christ are unailing. Paul knew these temptations and exercises in a special way. After enumerating many of his trials he spoke of "the care of all the churches."

Then in 2 Timothy 2:1-26 we get what should be true of the Christian — the features of the man of God. He is to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 2:1), he is to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 2:3), he is not to get entangled with the affairs of this life (2 Timothy 2:4), he is to strive lawfully (2 Timothy 2:5), he is to be a labourer in God's service (2 Timothy 2:6), and he is to consider the word sent from God, so that the Lord might give him understanding in all things. Remembering that Jesus Christ is raised from the dead, according to Paul's Gospel, the man of God will not seek to waste his strength on the things here

that are to perish, but will direct all in view of the resurrection side of death. God's man is a separate man (2 Timothy 2:21), separate from all that is inconsistent with the truth and holiness of God; and his associations will be with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart (2 Timothy 2:22). How very important these Scriptures are, when the inspiration and truth of the Scriptures are being denied on every hand; and when even true believers are careless regarding what is due to the Lord in His assembly, and to God in His house. Scripture is to be our guide; it is God's infallible Word. Even Peter had to be withstood; so that we must not rest in God's servants, but in His living, unerring Word.

What resources and blessing God has given us for these last days! In 2 Timothy 1:1-18 God has given us the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 1:1); He has saved us and called us, and this according to His own purpose and grace, given us in Christ Jesus before the world began (2 Timothy 1:9). If the church has grievously failed, God abides faithful; and it is on God that Paul relies in view of the last days; and he shows us that everything remains in Christ Jesus. Nothing can revoke God's purpose, or overturn God's foundation; His word is our sure guide until the end, and His work can never be destroyed. If we see the great mass of the Christian profession giving up the truth; and many who once valued the truth, no longer walking in the power of it, we can, like Paul, fall back on God and His faithfulness, realising that all is safe in Christ Jesus. With such resources and encouragement we can surely seek the Lord's grace to keep us going on until the end. At the close of his pathway, the Apostle could say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7). Did he say this when all was bright and prosperous in the church? No! the very opposite was true, because all in Asia had turned away from him, and this would include the saints of Ephesus and Colosse. But he had the comfort of the few faithful ones, and above all, the help and comfort of the Lord, who stood with him when all deserted him. May we all seek to be faithful, like Paul, of whom it could be truly said that he KEPT RANK.

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God; and his associations will be with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart (2 Timothy 2:22). How very important these Scriptures are, when the inspiration and truth of the Scriptures are being denied on every hand; and when even true believers are careless regarding what is due to the Lord in His assembly, and to God in His house. Scripture is to be our guide; it is God's infallible Word. Even Peter had to be withstood; so that we must not rest in God's servants, but in His living, unerring Word.

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J. Muckle.

S. Notes of an address on 2Pe_1:1-11.

Notes of an address on 2 Peter 1:1-11.

Peter's second epistle, addressed to those who had received precious faith, is written with the judgment of the world in view. Before he closes the letter, he presents the dissolution of all down here, but also in God's final triumph, the introduction of new heavens and a new earth wherein righteousness dwells. Already he sees the saints as having escaped the corruption of the world, while he speaks of the swift destruction that shall fall upon those marked by evil teachings and dissolute ways. How solemn the world's condition: how dreadful its impending doom; but how blessed the light that has come to us to direct our steps through the darkness of the present scene.

If we have received precious faith, it is the same faith that Simon Peter had, the bondman and apostle of Jesus Christ: the same faith that belonged to the most gifted servant and to the humblest saint. Faith is not the reward of meritorious service, or the result of any natural process in the soul; it is received from God, a gift in sovereign love (Ephesians 2:1-22). And how precious faith is! What in man can compare with it? It lifts the soul to heights beyond all man's loftiest thoughts into the very presence of God, where Christ is, to lay hold of what is really life, to touch the richest of heavenly blessings, to perceive the glories of the land into which the saints soon shall enter, and to behold what is of God in the world to come and in the eternal scene. This faith is through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ. In giving this precious faith to us God has acted in perfect consistency with all His attributes: it was right that He should do it, but it is the fruit of His grace. But faith is given that it might lay hold of the wondrous legacy that God has given to us in His divine power; the things that relate to life and godliness. We have been called into things that are in marked contrast to the things of the world from which we have drawn apart. These are the things connected with the knowledge of God, Who has called us by glory and virtue. In this wondrous calling God has given to us exceeding great and precious promises. Truly He is a giving God: giving us faith, giving us what pertains to life and godliness, and giving us these great and precious promises. Thus we come into the practical enjoyment of the things of God, for through these precious promises we have a nature that is divine, which enables us to enter into the things of God's world, as having escaped the corruption that is in man's world. To have the present good of what God has given us in His great grace there must be diligence to have virtue in our faith. Peter well knew the need for virtue, the courage that enables the Christian to stand firm against the opposition of the enemy, and the seductions of the world; that moral excellence in keeping with the virtue by which we have been called, so that we might be here with divine character, enjoying God's bounty and manifesting the features of Christ. In virtue we are to have knowledge, not a knowledge that puffs up, but the knowledge held in love that gives us the reality in the heart of those things pertaining to life and godliness. Ignorance in divine things exposes the saint of God to many dangers, but true knowledge, that procured through the Spirit of God in communion with Christ, not only preserves, but brings the soul into the enjoyment of the life that is ours in faith, and enables us to maintain the godliness belonging to the called of God. Temperance

is then to be in our knowledge. This would keep us from being inflated with the knowledge God has given us, and would permit us to take a sober view of all things, whether the place that God has given us in His love, the matters that arise in the house of God, or what we meet with in passing through this world. How many have been so absorbed with their natural interests that God's interests have been forgotten, with consequent damage to their own souls and to others also. The path tests us all, so that we must needs have patience, or endurance in our temperance. To the Hebrews Paul wrote, "Ye have need of patience, that having done the will of God, ye might receive the promise." We see endurance in its perfection in the Lord, in Him Who endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself, and Who endured the cross with all its judgment. The cross was His own, we cannot have any part in that, saving that our sins were there; but what a blessed example for us in the endurance manifested in His path through this world. And godliness is to be in our endurance, piety that graces every circumstance of the Christian's life, that rises as the savour of Christ for the pleasure of God.

Brotherly love in our piety will bring rich benefits to the saints of God. Godliness is surely for the pleasure of God, and brotherly love will refresh, comfort, and help the people of God. But brotherly love will not lead us away from the path of godliness, although it may lead us to remain apart from brethren who are walking inconsistently with the path of God's will. This danger is safeguarded by having love in brotherly love, for the love of the divine nature rises above all the weaknesses of nature to maintain God's honour and the true blessing of His own. Love cannot tolerate anything inconsistent with itself, anything unholy or unrighteous. This then is the way to bring forth fruit for the pleasure of God, for without these lovely features, found in their fulness and perfection in Jesus, we cannot come out in the grace of His life. As these things exist and abound in us, we shall not be idle or unfruitful regarding the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, for the knowledge of Him lies in these precious traits. Moreover, as being here manifesting Christ's blessed features, we make our calling and election sure, for these things are the evidence that we are called of God; and thus too are we assured of our entrance into the happy portion awaiting us, in the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

J. Muckle. The Dwelling Place of the Truth. The soul is the dwelling place of the truth of God. The ear and the mind are but the gate and the avenue: the soul is its home or dwelling place. The beauty and joy of the truth may have unduly occupied the outposts, filled the avenues, and crowded the gates — but it is only in the soul that its reality can be known. And it is by MEDITATION that the truth takes its journey from the gate along the avenue to its proper dwelling place.

J. G. Bellett.

S. Psa_116:1-19.

Psalms 116:1-19.

(Revised notes of an address.) The Lord often allows us to pass through very adverse circumstances to bring us into His own presence, and to enable us to prove the sufficiency of His grace. Having passed through very deep exercise of soul, the Psalmist can say, "I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice, and my supplications." To whom can we turn but to the Lord when all here seems to be against us; and having turned to Him in prayer and supplication, the affections of the heart are stirred up, causing praise and the expression of the soul's confidence in Him.

Psalms 116:3 shows the conditions that we must face down here; "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow." Every tie that is formed in this world is to be dissolved, and this is constantly brought before us in our pathway through this scene. Death comes before us; its dark waters rolling in upon the soul as some loved one is taken from us, or as we are laid aside with serious illness. Yet for the Christian the position is so different from what we have here, for we know that death but leads into the presence of Christ, which is far better. The Lord Jesus has passed through death's dark raging flood that we might pass through the waters of Jordan dry shod. In his trouble, the Psalmist calls upon the Name of the Lord, seeking deliverance; and finds that the Lord is gracious and righteous, and that he has to do with a merciful God. If trouble leads to a better knowledge of God, and deeper acquaintance with the Lord, we can thank Him for the wisdom and love that allow the troubles to come. Those who rely on their own wisdom are powerless before the sorrows of death, but those who, in simplicity of heart, call upon the Lord find that He "preserveth the simple." Brought low when face to face with such great troubles and sorrow, the Psalmist realises that help has come to him from God; therefore his soul can rest in the sense of the Lord's goodness. Such are the exercises of the godly, and such the blessed results of passing through trials with God.

Turning to God, after having addressed his own soul, the writer of the Psalm can say "For Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, my feet from falling." It is blessed to relate our exercises and experiences to others; blessed to soliloquize on the grace and mercy of God; but it is a wonderful privilege to be able to return to God, after praying to Him, to acknowledge that He has answered our prayers. If this speaks of one being preserved from death to live a little longer on earth, what character of praise and thanksgiving should come from the hearts of those who know what it is to be delivered from the judgment of God, and to be passed from death into life? The light of Christianity puts an altogether different character upon the experiences set forth in this psalm: we can take up the same language, but its application relates to deeper experiences of soul, and to the knowledge of God in a more wonderful way.

Walking before Jehovah in the land of the living was indeed a precious privilege for one so near to the gates of death, but we can walk before God in the light of the full and perfect revelation that He has made of Himself in the Person of the Son, and as having the life that the Son came to reveal,

possessing it in Himself Who is our life. But we might well challenge our hearts as to whether it is our desire to walk practically before God in the life that He has given to us. We are told in 2 Corinthians 5:15, that Christ "died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again."

Psalms 116:10 is quoted by the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:13, and the circumstances referred to in this chapter are somewhat similar to those of this Psalm. Here we have one encompassed with the bands of death, and in 2 Corinthians 4:1-18 Paul can speak of being "Troubled on every side . . . perplexed . . . persecuted . . . cast down . . . always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." It was the same spirit of faith that marked the Psalmist that caused Paul to speak as he did in this chapter. His affliction taught him to rely on God and to have no confidence in man: the false claims of men being exposed in the presence of death.

Having received so much from the hand of God it was surely a right desire to seek to express gratitude. But what can the creature give to God? God is not asking; He is offering: in His hand is the cup of salvation, and this we take with thankfulness, calling upon His Name. Christians do not make vows, but our hearts can overflow to God with adoration and worship. God does not always intervene to deliver His saints from death, and this we well know in passing through a scene of death; but how comforting it is to realise that "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." With the light of Christianity we know that death for the believer is but "to depart and be with Christ which is far better;" to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. The closing verses present the Psalmist as the servant of the Lord, loosed from his bonds, thanking the Lord and calling upon His Name, paying his vows before all the people in the midst of His house, and calling upon others to praise. What a blessed example for us! We are indeed the servants of God, set free from the bondage of sin and Satan — delivered from the authority of darkness — that, calling upon His Name we might publicly seek the things that are pleasing unto Him, endeavouring, by His grace, to live for Him the time that remains of our earthly sojourn. What a praising people we should be! There will never be a moment like this again, when, in a world of adverse circumstances, we can learn what a God we have. In eternity everything connected with this side will have gone forever, and the thought of it makes a moment like this so exceedingly precious to our souls.

J. Muckle.

Life and Forgiveness. The communication of divine life to the Old Testament saints was in the sovereign working of God just as it is to the saints of the present dispensation. Yet there is this marked difference; the Son of God has died, and now He is presented to us as an object for faith, and unless we eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood we have no life in us. But God's working in them was in view of Christ's dying for them, for without His death their sins could not be forgiven.

S. Psa_139:1-24

Psalms 139:1-24 (Revised notes of an address.) This is a most interesting and instructive Psalm which shows that the Psalmist, and each one of us is under the searching gaze of the eye of God. David realised that the LORD had searched and known him: every part of his being had been thoroughly exposed to the all-seeing eye of Him Who searches the reins and the heart. While it is a solemn thought that nothing in us can be hid from God, it is a healthful exercise to take this matter up before Him as knowing that He is a God of love and rich in mercy. The soul can be at perfect rest in God's presence, even although we know that He knows all about us. How different it would be if we were in the presence of any other with the consciousness that he knew all the secrets of the bosom — the thoughts, feelings, and desires of the sinful heart. But the knowledge that God knows us, though dreadful to the natural man, when exposed before God, brings rest to the saint of God. We can go into God's presence not only knowing that He knows us, but that we know Him. In Him there is the perfection of goodness, and the grace that can make us feel at rest, in the light of His presence.

Every detail of our lives is known to God; every movement of the body, and the thought of the mind and heart at its inception. Every moment of the day of activity, the time of our rest; yea, all the ways that distinguish us down here are thoroughly known to Him. Before the word that has been conceived has left the tongue it is known to God. He knows it altogether: the motive and spirit of its conception, the object of its transmission. Others may be deceived by its sound; we may deceive ourselves regarding the motive for it, but He knows everything about it perfectly. How good it is to go through life in the consciousness of these things. O that we were constantly conscious that we have to do with God in everything. Sometimes God will not let us go forward; at other times He will not let us go back, for He besets behind and before. In His governmental ways with us He knows how to keep us from ways that would dishonour Him and bring shame and sorrow to our poor hearts; and betimes He puts, His hand upon us, so that we might feel that it is Himself that is dealing with us in wisdom and in love. Do we feel with the Psalmist that the knowledge of these things is too wonderful for us? How great God is! and yet to think He stoops to deal with puny mortals; with such insignificant individuals as we are. It is indeed wonderful that God should be so interested in the creatures of his hand. Yet it is so! To have the consciousness that God's eye is upon him constantly is a dreadful thing to the natural man, and at once awakens the desire to be hidden from God. Where can he go to escape the spirit and presence of God, to be sheltered from the eye that penetrates to the deepest recesses of the heart? If he ascended to heaven, God is there; if he took his life and departed to hell, he could not find refuge there. Not even if carried by the swift rays of the morning sun to the distant parts of the ocean where man is not, could he be concealed, but rather would he be led by God's hand, and held in the strength of his grip. Neither darkness nor light could screen him at all times, and in all circumstances, for time and for eternity, the creature of God is thoroughly exposed to the eye of his maker. All the directing forces of man's inner being, all the secret springs of his heart, all the desires and thoughts of his nature and spirit, are in the possession of God Who formed him in the secret processes of his mother's womb.

When we think of how God has made us, does it not make us wonder at His greatness and wisdom? What a marvellous creature man is! Well do we praise God for His creatorial power, and for the wisdom displayed in making such a creature. What mysteries are wrapped up in the development of the unborn child! Every part unperfect, but not imperfect — mysteries of nature, body, mind, soul and spirit; mysteries that alone are known to God. Every member was foreknown to God before it existed: it was written in His book: and before it really existed, during the process of its formation, God's eye rested upon it. How blessed for the Christian to realise that God was interested in him before he had any being. Then to realise, as Paul did, that God's eye was upon him from his mother's womb (Galatians 1:15). There has not been a moment in our lives (and never shall be for all eternity), that God has not been interested in us watching over us; caring for us, with an infinite and eternal love. He knew all about us when we were born in sin and shapen in iniquity; but there was divine provision for it all in the cross of Christ. What a precious thought, He sent His Son to die upon the cross that we might receive the forgiveness of sins, be justified, have peace with God, and be accepted before Himself in His beloved Son.

How precious indeed are God's thoughts to us! And how great is their number! God has sent the Holy Spirit from heaven to indwell us, so that our hearts might be engaged with things that eye hath not seen:" all precious thoughts that belong to Him. And we can look beyond time, when everything is according to God's mind, with Christ the centre of all: and indeed to when God shall be all in all. God has been working in secret in view of Christ's glory. All the members of Christ's body were foreknown to God, every one written in His book; and every one will be perfect in that day when, according to God's will, He shall be displayed as Head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that fills all in all. All God's thoughts for us in relation to Christ are indeed more in number than the sand. How blessed to have the consciousness of God's presence! We can lie down at night, and awake in the morning, with the sense of being in His company; and know that all the time between we have not been out of His presence. As to the wicked who would trouble us here, we can leave them to God. Hating God, and speaking wickedly of Him, we cannot but abhor the wickedness manifested against the God that we have learned in the intimacy of His presence, and in the secret of His wonderful works. But while loathing the evil in others, we must constantly live in self-judgment. We must be open before God; He must search us. And this is the desire of the heart that lives in communion with Him. Every motive of the heart is to be laid bare before Him, every thought brought into His presence. He will enable us to discern anything inconsistent with Himself, and that being judged we shall be led along in the way everlasting.

J. Muckle.

S. The Apostle Paul's Warning.

The Apostle Paul's Warning. In Acts 20:17, the apostle Paul called over to Miletus the elders of the church of Ephesus to speak with them, knowing, that he would not meet them on earth again. There is something exceedingly touching about the last spoken words of this great servant of the Lord, to those who had heard his God-given ministry so long. He did not call all the saints over, only the elders, who had the care of the saints, as he had some very salutary words of warning to speak to them regarding the coming days. So that, while these words are for all the saints, it specially becomes those who have the interest of Christ's saints at heart, to heed them. Although there are no appointed elders in the church today, there are still those who, like the house of Stephanus, have addicted themselves to the ministry; who tend what is dear to the heart of Christ. Such should be spiritually minded, so as to be able to exercise spiritual judgment in the affairs of God's assembly.

Paul could speak to them with apostolic authority, but he founds his instructions on what he had been among them at all seasons, "Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations." In Acts 20:18 he speaks of his manner of life; in Acts 20:19 of his service to the Lord; in Acts 20:20 of his service to the saints and in Acts 20:21 of his testimony to all men. Is this order not of special importance in days of wholesale departure from the truth? Nothing can be right if the manner of life is inconsistent with the word ministered; all takes character from this. Then all true service must have the Lord Himself in view; it is from Him and to Him; He must be the source, the motive, and the object of all done in His Name. Next there are the saints to care for; they are to have what is profitable, and to be taught publicly and from house to house. The Gospel has its place too, and it had a very important place with the apostle, who could say, "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel." So that God's order was, first the Lord, then the saints, then the world.

Going to Jerusalem, he did not have liberty of spirit, not knowing what was before him, saving that the Holy Spirit had forewarned him that bonds and afflictions were to be his. Still, these things did not move him; nor did he count his life dear to him; his great desire was to finish his course, and to fulfil his ministry received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God. God granted him this desire; he finished his course, and he testified of God's grace until the end (2 Timothy 4:7; 2 Timothy 4:17). If we are to learn the truth of God, we must first receive the Gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24). Grace having met our deep need, our souls are helped on with the preaching of the kingdom of God (Acts 20:25). We learn that God has marked out our course for us down here under the authority of His dear Son, where, in subjection to the Lord Jesus we are marked in all our ways by righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. This leads us to the knowledge of "the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27), which Paul had not shunned to declare. To the apostle, God had revealed the deep deep secret of His heart, that great masterpiece and crown of all His ways, the truth of the Mystery; and Paul had brought all the truth committed to him before the saints. He was therefore clear of the blood of all; none could charge him righteously with holding back anything that God had given him to declare.

Later on, the apostle unfolds to the saints at Ephesus, in that remarkable epistle, the purpose of God, according to which we are brought into the highest possible blessing; where the truth of the counsels of God, the truth of the mystery, and other great truths are opened out. There, he prays that Christ might dwell by faith in the hearts of the saints, for only thus could they keep by the Holy Spirit the precious legacy of truth committed to them. Alas! this very church is charged in the Revelation with leaving its first love; Christ had lost His place in the hearts of His loved ones. We can therefore understand the solemn words addressed here to the elders of Ephesus. Does not the history of the church at Ephesus show that Satan's special attack was directed at those who held the truths belonging to God's purpose and counsels, and who sought to answer to what had been revealed to them? Will it be any different today? Are not those who have learned the truth of Paul's Gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery, the special object of the adversary's assault?

First of all the elders are told to take heed to themselves. When we realise that many of them must have been included in "All who are in Asia . . . have turned away from me," we can readily understand the need for this solemn warning. They were also to take heed to all the flock, to feed the church of God, which He had purchased at such a cost, "the blood of His own." Two different evils are to be watched against; first, the grievous wolves who would enter in, not sparing the flock; second, the men who would arise from among them, speaking perverse things, to gain disciples. The former are ungodly men who creep into the professing church for personal advantage, caring nothing for the welfare of the sheep of Christ; the latter are believers, but who care more for themselves than for Christ, seeking a place and a name among the saints, even if they dishonour the Name of Christ in doing so. From such as the latter the apostle had his greatest sorrows. He was not prepared to lower the heavenly standard of truth to secure alleviation from persecution, even if it meant being forsaken by those he greatly loved, who had come under the influence of men; who, for an easy path, lowered the divine and heavenly standard. But if men forsook and turned from him, Paul was able to say, "Nevertheless the Lord stood by me." Paul had trouble from those without, but his deepest sorrows, his heart burnings, and his tears, were mostly from those within the professing church.

Continuing his warning, the apostle asks them to remember how he had not ceased to warn each one night and day, for the space of three years, and that with tears. Well did he know the evil days ahead of the church; so he bids the elders "Watch." Having given his solemn warnings and word of exhortation regarding the impending evil, the apostle commends them to God and to the word of His grace. What a resource we can find in God; what supplies of grace in His word. This precious word can indeed build us up, and give us an inheritance among all those set apart in the goodness of God. In closing this remarkable address, Paul gives another personal testimony; he was an ensample for those who looked after the sheep of Christ; he sought nothing from the saints, and indeed ministered without cost, working with his own hands to meet his temporal needs and the needs of those with him. Truth is not only to be ministered, but to be manifested; and in labouring for the needs of others he was fulfilling the words of the Lord Jesus, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

These solemn warnings come to us in this day that we might "Hold fast" that which has been committed to our trust. There are still those who take the lead among the saints, and happy indeed for the saints if it can be said of their leaders as was said of those in Hebrews 13:7, "Who have

spoken to you the word of God; and considering the issue of their conversation, imitate their faith." Well it is for us if the leaders direct us to "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever." In these closing days of the church's history on earth, let us keep our eye on Christ; He is God's resource for His saints. What a blessed opportunity is now ours, it will never come to us again, to be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. May this be the earnest desire of all our hearts, but as David showed in Psalms 23:1-6, "the green pastures ... and still waters" are for our enjoyment, that we might walk "in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake."

J. Muckle.

S. The Assembly in Time and Eternity.

The Assembly in Time and Eternity.

(Notes of an address) Scriptures read: Matthew 16:13-28; Matthew 17:1-8; Revelation 21:2-3; Revelation 21:10-11. At the close of the Bible Reading we touched on the subject of the Mystery concerning Christ and the church, that which had been hid from ages and generations, but which God now desired to make known to His saints, so that we should be intelligent in regard to His thoughts and will. I thought that we might follow on with what God has told us of the church in Matthew 16:1-28. At this place in the Gospel a distinct change takes place. Earlier, the Jews had rejected the Lord as Messiah; now, as seen in verse 4, He turns from them. But who was it that had been rejected by Israel, whom did men say the Son of Man was? The disciples were able to give the different opinions of men, opinions which showed that mans highest thoughts of Jesus were poor indeed. But now the disciples are challenged: what are their thoughts of Him, "Whom say ye that I am?" Simon Peter responds "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." What a reply Here were thoughts supremely transcending the highest thoughts of men. The One rejected by Israel is indeed the Anointed of God and His own dear Son. But Peter had not discerned the glory of Christ's Person in any natural way; the thought did not proceed from himself, nor did any man communicate it to him. It was a revelation to him from the Father. The Father Himself had enabled Peter to perceive Who Jesus was. And it was on the truth of Christ's Person, thus revealed, that Christ would build His assembly. He was the Son of the living God, and in resurrection He would build a structure against which all the power of Satan could not prevail. In 1 Peter 2:1-25 we learn something more concerning this living structure. It is a spiritual house, composed of living stones; those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; who come to Him as the Living Stone. Every true believer is part of Christ's assembly, and forms part of the spiritual house. In relation to the spiritual house, Christ is seen as the "Chief corner stone, elect, precious;" and the believer in Him is not confounded, but rather enjoys the preciousness connected with the Person of Christ. The Father had given a wonderful revelation to Peter, so that the Lord could say to him, "Blessed art thou Simon Barjona;" and the Lord Himself had spoken great things to him. He had called him Peter, indicating that he was a stone for the building to be built, and declaring the imperishable nature of the structure. Now He commits to Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven, a particular administration connected with His affairs on earth. The kingdom is now in mystery, for on earth we have a great kingdom with many subjects, but without a visible king. Peter, having the keys of the kingdom, admitted the Jews in Acts 2:1-47, and the Gentiles in Acts 10:1-48. All who submit to the authority of Christ, whether in reality or in profession, are viewed as responsible subjects of this kingdom. It is one thing however to be a responsible subject in the kingdom, and quite another to be a stone in the building that Christ calls "My assembly." Peter was given the keys of the kingdom, not the keys of the assembly, nor the keys of heaven. It was into an earthly administration that acknowledged the rule of heaven that Peter admitted men. He has nothing to do with admitting into the church which the gates of hell can not prevail against, or into the presence of God in heaven.

If Peter had the privilege of confessing Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, in Matthew 16:1-28, he has the privilege along with James and John, in Matthew 17:1-27, of witnessing the glory connected with "the Son of Man coming in His kingdom." And this shall soon be the privilege of every member of Christ's assembly. Soon we shall see our blessed Lord in glory and exaltation, soon we shall enter into the cloud where He is, and from whence the Father's voice has been heard. We shall be with Him, and like Him, in the presence of the Father, to enter more deeply into the meaning of the words, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear Him." But how wonderful that we can look into His unveiled face even now, to behold His glory, the glory that proclaims Him to be the Father's beloved Son. Very soon too we shall see Him, according to His own desire, to behold the glory that the Father has given Him as having loved Him before the world's foundation.

Passing to Revelation 21:9 we see the assembly as the bride, the Lamb's wife. Of divine origin, manifesting her heavenly character, the assembly is the vessel of divine glory. Those who are the living stones in the spiritual house are now seen as precious stones reflecting the light of the glory of God. But the shining of the church is compared to "a most precious stone, as a crystal-like jasper stone." Here is a vessel suited for the display of God's own glory; that which He Himself has created and formed, a vessel bearing the same character as Him who sat upon the throne in Revelation 4:3, and which is resplendent in heavenly light. In Revelation 4:2-3 this same assembly is seen in eternity. Under the watchful eye of Christ she has passed through all the vicissitudes of her earthly sojourn, and the millennial display has passed; now she is seen in her pristine beauty, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Here we learn what the church shall be for the eye and heart of Christ for all eternity; also what it shall be as God's tabernacle for His dwelling with men on the new earth.

How near these things are: how very soon and we shall have left all of time behind, and for eternity dwell with the Father and the Son. But how great the grace that has enlightened us regarding his counsels concerning His church, conceived in eternity, formed in time and preserved while in this world, the vessel of His glory for the Millennium, His tabernacle for eternity.

J. Muckle.

God's Love for Me.

God loves me as He loves Christ. I dare to say that. He has glorified God by taking my place. It was a true transfer. When He sits in judgment, we shall be seated on thrones around Him. When He takes up Israel, we shall reign with Him.

J. N. Darby.

S. The Calling of God.

The Calling of God.

1 Corinthians 1:1-2; 1 Corinthians 1:9; 1 Corinthians 1:26-28; Ephesians 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:9-10.

Revised notes of an address by J. Muckle. The previous speaker has brought before us the Son of God as presented to us by John, Paul and Peter. We have heard of the glory of His Person in the past eternity, of the place He now occupies at the Father's right hand, and of the glory that shall be displayed in Him in His coming kingdom. How great is the privilege given to us of God, to thus view the glories of His dear Son; and I have read these verses that we might consider the blessedness of the place into which the saints have been called, where they are to learn God's wonderful secrets, secrets concerning the unsearchable riches of Christ, and of His counsels of grace. In 1 Corinthians 1:1 Paul speaks of himself as a called apostle of Jesus Christ by God's will; he realised the divine call, not only as a saint of God, but as a servant. He did not choose this apostleship himself; it was the last thing he would naturally have desired when as a proud Pharisee he persecuted the Church of God. But God called him in sovereign grace to witness to the glory of His Son, and to minister the truth of the Gospel. That Gospel reached the saints now addressed at Corinth, it had brought to them the knowledge of the true God, and on hearing it they had experienced its drawing power. God called them as He has called us, and as He called Abraham of old; bidding them leave the things in which they had lived formerly to be for His pleasure while passing through this world.

Paul, in 1 Corinthians 1:9, speaks of the faithfulness of God in calling us into the fellowship of His Son. What rest for us to know that the God Who has called us is ever faithful. If men are unfaithful to the call of God, we can always rely on the faithful God to supply all the needed grace and mercy to sustain us in the path to which He has called us. His Son is the bond that unites the saints in the fellowship to which all have been called; it is the only fellowship that is proper to the Christian company on earth; every other professed fellowship really denies the unity of the fellowship that subsists in relation to the Son of God. This is church fellowship, belonging to the one body, where the privileges of the Christian company are enjoyed, and where there is to be the maintenance of all that is due to God in consistency with His holy Name. (John, in his First Epistle, speaks of fellowship with the Father and the Son in relation to the knowledge of the truth of Christianity. It is not church fellowship, but what belongs to us as in the family of God, as knowing God.)

God, in calling by sovereign grace, has silenced the proud boastings of the flesh, for He has not called many from among the great and noble of the earth. Had God called the wise, the intellectuals, the philosophers, the high-born, and such; what manifestations of human pride there would have been; but in calling the foolish, the weak, the despised, and those of no account among men, how God has magnified His grace and made known His wisdom. Those called of God, realising that they owe everything to God, delight to boast in the One Who has called them by His grace, and in His Son in Whom that grace was manifested.

We learn something more of this divine calling in Ephesians 1:1-23. According to His eternal counsels, God has marked us out for richest blessing, choosing us in Christ before the foundation of the world, and predestinating us for sonship for His own good pleasure. The church is united to Christ as His body, in view of the display of His glory; and even now we have been raised up and made to sit together in the heavenly places in Christ, form part of the living structure that is to be a holy temple in the Lord, and are builded together for a habitation of God by the Spirit. What a wonderful calling this is; and in the light of it we have access to the presence of the Father. With all this before his mind, the Apostle exhorts the saints, exhorts us, to walk worthy of the calling wherewith we are called. The dignity and heavenly character of God's calling should ever be in our thoughts as we pass through this world; the heavenly light is to illumine every step of our daily walk, and this for the pleasure of God.

Some one may ask, Can we still walk in the light of this high calling in these days of brokenness and ruin? 2nd Timothy shows that this is still God's mind for us. With the last days in view Paul wrote to tell us that "God has called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages of time." The divine standard for our walk must not be lowered because of the failure of men. We are to be engaged with what was made manifest by the coming into the world of the Lord Jesus, and with the life and incorruptibility that have been brought to light by the Gospel. Engaged with these things, and being strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, we shall indeed seek to live in the light of the calling of God, until we arrive in the scene of cloudless bliss, of which we sometimes sing, "Where God alone, in His own rest, is fully known."

S. The House of God.

The House of God.

(Notes of an address.) In our Reading we have had before us in Hebrews 3:1-19 the subject of the House of God, and it might be helpful for us to consider the same subject from other portions of Scripture. The first mention of God's house is in Genesis 28:1-22, in connection with Jacob, when he journeyed from Beersheba towards Haran. The LORD revealed Himself to Jacob, in a dream by night; in which he saw a ladder reach from earth to heaven, with angels of God ascending and descending upon it: Jehovah standing above it. God was directing the thoughts of Jacob to heaven, showing him that the connection between heaven and earth was in angelic messengers, who carried out the will of Jehovah in relation to His saints. Now the angels are ministering spirits, sent out to serve the heirs of salvation (Hebrews 1:14); those who form the House of God. Our thoughts are now directed to Him Who stands above, Who spoke to Jacob, even to the Lord Himself. We know Jesus as crowned with glory and honour, yea, as the One Who made the worlds, Who in the beginning founded the earth, the heavens being the work of His hands. This is something of the glory of the Person Who stood above Jacob's ladder, of Whom we read today that He is Son over God's house.

God reveals Himself to Jacob, as Jehovah, the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac, and renewed the promise of the inheritance, giving it to him and his seed. To us, God has been revealed as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and as such He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing, in the heavenly places, in Christ: and in Christ, He has given us an inheritance: so that we are heirs of God, Christ's joint-heirs. To Jacob, Jehovah unfolds His purpose for the earth; in the riches of His grace, God has given us to know the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself. God also undertook to preserve Jacob until His will for him was done.

Awaking from his sleep, Jacob feels that the Lord is there, and is afraid, saying, "This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." The holiness of God's house fills the heart of the sinner with dread, as also the saint with a bad conscience. But Jacob acts as he feels the circumstances demanded, setting up the stone that he had used for a pillow, to be a pillar, and he anointed it with oil, saying, "This stone shall be God's house." Jacob declares his determination to regulate his course in relation to the House of God. In due time we learn that the lessons of that night were not lost upon Jacob, for he returns thither, calling upon his house to put away all that was inconsistent with the holiness of God's house. At a later day, Solomon purposes to build a house unto the name of Jehovah his God, according to the word of God spoken to David, which house was completed (1 Kings 5:4-6; 1 Kings 6:37-38). The structure was composed of costly stones, hewn stones; the foundations having also great stones. Are we not reminded by this of the building in Ephesians 2:20-22? There the foundation is laid in the apostles and prophets; Jesus Christ Himself being the corner-stone, in Whom all the building fitted together, groweth to a holy temple in the Lord. It was a great moment in the history of Solomon when the house was

dedicated to God, and filled with His glory. Here was a place where the name of Jehovah was honoured, where He would be worshipped, and where His people would receive His blessing and mind. But Solomon did not continue in the mind of the LORD, directly departing from the plain instructions, given for the king, in Deuteronomy 17:14-20. In almost every detail of these explicit, divine instructions, Solomon is found a transgressor, the sad consequences of his failure being manifested immediately after his death. Soon, the kingdom is divided; afterwards the house becomes defiled and desecrated; ultimately the house is stripped, the glory departs, and it is utterly ruined and destroyed. When we come to 1 Timothy, we have from the Spirit of God, through the apostle Paul, instructions for behaviour in the house of God. Paul had left Timothy at Ephesus to charge some not to teach other doctrines; and told him that the end of what he enjoined was love out of a pure heart, the maintenance of a good conscience and unfeigned faith. The men were to be marked by prayer, indicating dependence and subjection to God's will; the women were to manifest in their dress and deportment true piety. The assembly is God's house, the pillar and base of the truth; that in which the truth of God is manifested in practical life and witness. Alas! how little witness and support there has been in the lives of the professing saints of God to the truth. And have we not to challenge our own hearts as to how we have answered to the mind of God in this? In 2 Timothy, God's house is likened to a great house with vessels to honour and vessels to dishonour; and the question arises, How are we to act in such a state of things? God has given clear instructions for us: if we would be vessels unto honour we must be separate from the vessels to dishonour. Not otherwise can we answer to the mind of God. This is the way He has told us that we can be sanctified and meet for the Master's use. Walking thus we shall not be in isolation; we shall be able to follow righteousness, faith, love and peace with those that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. Paul knew what the path of separation was, for all those in Asia turned away from him. With the desertion of those who should have stood by him, he had the support of the Lord; and at the end could say, "I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

We see some of the principles of God's house in connection with Jacob; dreadful failure in regard to Solomon. So too in 1 Timothy, we learn something of the principles of the House, and in 2 Timothy, the ruin and failure connected with man in responsibility. May we be enabled, in these last days, to be faithful to the Lord and His truth; knowing that soon the day of our responsibility will be past, and we shall enter the rest of God, where we shall see His face, and dwell with Him for evermore.

J. Muckle.

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