

THINGS NEW AND OLD VOLUME 21

by C.H. Mackintosh

A collection of articles and writings by C.H. Mackintosh from Things New and Old Volume 21, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

62 Chapters

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Things New and Old Volume 21

Alone With God

Alone with God! what says that word to me?

It tells of sin confessed, of pardon free,

Of sweet communion, holy liberty,

Of shelter from the storms of life's wild sea.

Alone with God! 'tis there my soul finds rest

When weary, consolation when distress;

Succor when tempted; nourishment when faint;

Comfort in sorrow, sustenance in want.

Alone with God! obtaining, day by day,

Strength for the journey, courage for the fray,

Light for my footsteps, pasture for my soul,

Hope to help onward to the heavenly goal.

Alone with God! learning my Father's will,

Hearing His soothing whisper, "Peace, be still"

Blessed with the knowledge of His sympathy;

Bathed in the light of His all-seeing eye!

Alone with God! close to my Father's breast,

Beyond earth's care, sin's woe, and life's unrest:

Oh! holy happy spot! oh! place of bliss!

Oh! grateful plenitude of heaven-born peace!

'Tis only while on earth that I can be,

Father of holiness, alone with Thee!

Soon in your home of love, earth's wanderings done,

I'll be with Thee for aye—yet not alone!

Clapham.

The Atonement

There is in John 3 a twofold aspect of Christ presented to us, as the object of faith, through which we do not perish, but have everlasting life. As Son of man, He must be lifted up; as only-begotten Son of God, He is given by the infinite love of God.

Many souls stop at the first, the Son of man's meeting the necessity in which men stood as sinners before God, and do not look on to that infinite love of God which gave His only-begotten Son—the love which provided the needed Lamb, the true source of all this work of grace, which stamps on it its true character and effect, and without which it could not be.

Hence such souls have not true peace and liberty with God. Practically for them the love is only in Christ, and God remains a just and unbending judge. They do not really know Him, the God of love, our Savior. Others, alas! with more fatal error, false as to their own state and God's holiness, with no true or adequate sense of sin, reject all true propitiation. The "must be lifted up" has no moral force for them, nothing that the conscience with a true sense of sin needs.

The former was one great defect of the Reformation, the other comes of modern infidelity, for such it really is. Alas! that defect of the Reformation, as a system of doctrine, is the habitual state of many sincere souls now. But it is sad. Righteousness may reign for them with hope; but it is not grace reigning through righteousness. I repeat, God is not known in His nature of love, nor indeed the present completeness of redemption.

The statement of John 3 begins with the need of man in view of what God is, as indeed it must; but it gives us the source and result of it for the soul, its measure, too, in grace, that which was in the heart of God towards a ruined world. As in Heb. 10, to give us boldness to enter into the holiest, the origin is, "Lo! I come to do thy will; by the which will we are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." The offering was the means, but He was accomplishing the will of God in grace, and by the exercise of the same grace in which He came to do it; for a hereby know we love, that he laid down his life for us. So, in Rom. 5, God commends His love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. It is summed up in the full saying: "Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

This point being premised—and it is an important one—I add that we cannot present too simply the value of Christ's blood, and redemption and forgiveness through it, to the awakened sinner whom that love may have drawn to feel his need; for by need, and because of need, the sinner must come—it is his only just place before God. The love of God, and even His love announced in forgiveness through the work of Christ, may, through the power of the Holy Ghost, awaken the sense of need; still having the forgiveness is another thing. That love, brought home to the soul through grace, produces confidence, not peace; but it does produce confidence. Hence we come into the light. God is light, and God is love. Christ in the world was the light of the world, and He was there in divine love. Grace and truth came (ἐλήθη) by Jesus Christ. When God reveals Himself, He must be both—light and love. The love draws and produces confidence; as with the

woman in the city who was a sinner, the prodigal, Peter in the boat. The light shows us our sinfulness. We are before God according to the truth of what He is, and the truth of what we are. But the atonement does more than show this; it meets and is the answer to our case when known. It is the ground, through faith, of forgiveness and peace. (See Luke 7:47-50.) Christ could anticipate His work, and the child of wisdom go in peace. The law may by grace reach the conscience, and make us feel our guilt, but it does not reveal God in love. But that love has done what was needed for our sinful state. Hereby know we love, that He laid down His life for us. He was delivered for our offenses, died for our sins, according to the scriptures, is the propitiation for our sins, set forth as a mercy-seat, through faith in His blood, which cleanses from all sin. With His stripes we are healed. I might multiply passages; I only now cite these, that the simple basis of the gospel in divine love, on the one side, and on the other, the work that love has wrought to purge our sins, and withal our consciences, so that we may be in peace before a holy God, who is of purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look on iniquity, may be simply and fully before us.

We must come as sinners to God, because we are sinners: and we can only come in virtue of that which, while it is the fruit of God's love, meets, according to His holy nature, the sins we are guilty of. But then, while it is true that our sins are removed far from us who believe through grace, as they were carried into a land not inhabited by the scape-goat in Israel, yet we have only an imperfect view of the matter in seeing our sins put away. In that great day of atonement the blood was sprinkled on the mercy-seat and before it, just as it was sprinkled on the lintel and two doorposts, to meet God's eye. "When I see the blood," He says, "I will pass over." It was in view of the sin of Israel, but presented to God. The goat whose blood was shed, was called, on the great day of atonement, "Jehovah's lot." The blood was carried within; so it was with the bullock, and with the bullock it was exclusively this. The testimony was there, blessed be God, that as dwellers on the earth our sins have been carried off where none shall find them; but what characterized the day was putting the blood on the mercy-seat—presenting it to God. On this day only, too, it was done. In the case of the sin of the congregation, or of the high priest, it was sprinkled on the altar outside the veil; but on the great day of atonement alone, on the mercy-seat within.

Now, though the sinner must come as guilty, and because of his need, and can come rightly in no other way, as the poor prodigal, and so many other actual cases, yet this does not reach to the full character of propitiation or atonement, though in fact involving it. The divine glory and nature are in question. In coming, we come by our need and wants; but if we have passed in through the veil, we can contemplate the work of Christ in peace, as viewed in connection with God's nature, though on our part referring to sin. The sins, then, were carried away on the scapegoat, but what God is was specially in view in the blood carried within the veil. The sins were totally and forever taken off the believers, and never found; but there was much more in that which did it, and much more even for us. God's character and nature were met in the atonement, and through this we have boldness to enter into the holiest. This distinction appears in the ordinary sacrifices. They were offered on the brazen altar, and the blood sprinkled there. Man's responsibility was the measure of what was required. His case was met as to guilt; but if he was to come to God, into His presence, he must be fit for the holiness of that presence.

Christ has not only borne our sins, but He has perfectly glorified God on the cross, and the veil is rent, and we have boldness to enter into the holiest. The blood, therefore, of the bullock and of the goat, which was Jehovah's lot, was brought into the holiest. The other goat was the people's lot,

this Jehovah's; He was dishonored by sin; and Christ, the Holy One, was made sin for us, was before God according to what God was in His holy and righteous nature.

Now, says the Lord, is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him; and man entered into the holiest, into heaven itself. Having glorified God in the very place of sin, as made it before God, He enters into that glory on high. Love to God His Father, and absolute obedience at all costs, was perfected where He stood as sin before God. All that God is was glorified here, and here only. His majesty;—it became Him to maintain His glory in the moral universe, and thus in bringing many sons to glory, that He should make the Captain of our salvation perfect through suffering. His truth was made good; perfect, righteous judgment against sin, yet perfect love to the sinner. Had God cut off man for sin, there was no love; had He simply forgiven and passed over all sins, there would have been no righteousness. People might have sinned on without its being any matter. There would have been no moral government. Man must have stayed away from God, and misery and allowed sin have had their fling; or he must have been admitted into God's presence in sin, and sin been allowed there; man incapable withal of enjoying God, and, as sensible of good and evil, more miserable than ever.

But in the cross perfect righteousness against sin is displayed and exercised, and infinite love to the sinner. God is glorified in His nature, and salvation to the vilest, and access to God, according to the holiness of that nature, provided for and made good, and this in the knowledge, in the conscious object of it, of the love that had brought it there; a perfect and cleansing work in which that love was known. This, while the sins were put away, could only be by the cross: God revealed in love, God holy and righteous against sin, while the sins of the sinner were put away, his conscience purged, and, by grace, his heart renewed, in the knowledge of a love beyond all his thoughts; himself reconciled to God, and God glorified in all that He is, as He could not else be; perfect access to God in the holiest, where that blood, the testimony to all this, has been presented to God, and the sins gone forever, according to God's righteousness; while the sinner has the consciousness of being accepted according to the value of that sacrifice, in which God has been perfectly glorified, so that the glory of God and the sinner's presence there were identified. Angels would learn, and principalities and powers, what they could learn nowhere else.

(To be continued, if God permit.)

The Atonement

And this marks the two parts of propitiation—man's responsibility, and access to God given according to His glory and nature: in the sins borne and put away, the scape-goat, God judging evil according to what man ought to be; and access to God according to what He is. The last specifically characterizes the Christian; but the former was necessary, and accomplished for everyone that believes; both by the same work of the cross, but each distinct—judicial dealing, according to man's responsibility, access to God, according to His nature and holiness. The law in itself was the measure of the former, the duty of children; the nature of God of the latter, so that we have the infinite blessedness of being with God according to His nature and perfection, partaking of the divine nature, so as to be able to enjoy it, holy and without blame before Him in love. Of this Christ as man, and we must add as Son withal, is the measure and perfection; and let it not be said that, if we partake of this nature, we need not this propitiation and substitution. This can only

be said or supposed by those who have not got it; because if we partake of the divine nature, we judge of sin in principle as God does, we have His mind as to it, and, as upright, of ourselves as in it, and so come, as I have said, first in lowliness in our need to the cross, and then purged in conscience, comprehend the glory of God in it.

These two points, in their general aspect, are clearly presented in Heb. 9:26-28: Christ appeared once in the end of the world to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; and as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment, so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many. It is carried out in application in chapter 10, where we have no more conscience of sins, and boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

But this leads us to a still wider bearing of the work of the cross. The whole question of good and evil was brought to an issue there: man in absolute wickedness and hatred against God manifested in goodness and love; Satan's whole power as prince of this world, and having the power of death; man in perfect goodness in Christ, obedience and love to His Father, and this in the place of sin as made it, for it was there the need was for God's glory and eternal redemption; God in perfect righteousness, and majesty, and in perfect love. So that all was perfectly settled morally forever. The fruits will be only complete in the new heavens and new earth, though the value of that work be now known to faith; but what is eternal is settled forever by it, for its value is such, and cannot change.

Propitiation, then, meets our sins through grace, according to God's holy nature, to which it is presented, and which has been fully glorified in it. It meets the requirements of that nature. Yet it is perfect love to us; love, indeed, only thus known as wrought between Christ and God alone, the only part we had in it being our sins, and the hatred to God which killed Christ.

But it does more, being according to God's nature, and all that that nature is in every respect. It not only judicially meets what is required by reason of our sins, man's failure in duty, and his guilt, but it opens access into the presence of God Himself, known in that nature which has been glorified in it. Love, God in love working unsought, has through grace made us love, and we are reconciled to God Himself according to all that He is, our conscience having been purged according to His glory, so that love may be in unhindered confidence. Man sits at the right hand of God in virtue of it, and our souls can delight in all that God is, our conscience being made perfect by that which has been wrought. No enfeebling or lowering the holiness of God in His judicial estimate of and dealing with sin; on the contrary, all that He is thus glorified, no pleading goodness to make sin light; but God, in the will and love of salvation, met in that judgment and holiness, and the soul brought to walk in the light, as He is in the light, and in the love which is His being and nature, without blame before Him, a purged conscience so as to be free before Him, but a purged one, which has judged of sin as He does, but learned what sin is in the putting of it away. Without the atonement or propitiation of Christ this is impossible. God is not brought in; it is but human goodness which drops holiness, and overlooks sin, or estimates it according to mere natural conscience. Christ has died, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.

It is not innocence, for the knowledge of good and evil is there, not the slighting of God and an unpurged conscience, not even the return to the former state of Adam (not knowing good and evil, innocent), but God fully revealed and known in majesty, and light, and love, and we brought to Him according to that revelation in perfect peace and joy by a work done for us, which has met and

glorified His majesty, and light, and love in the place of sin, as made it, by Him who knew no sin.

The full result will only be in the new heavens and new earth, the eternal state of blessedness, a condition of happiness not dependent on fulfilling the responsibility in which he who enjoyed it was placed, and in which he failed, but based on a finished work accomplished to the glory of God in the very place of ruin, the value of which can never, in the nature of things, change; it is according to the nature and character of God, it is done, and is always what it is, and all is eternally stable. Righteousness, not innocence, dwells in the new heavens and the new earth, not feeble man responsible, but God glorified for evermore. The re-suit is not all there yet; but we know that the work is done, through the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, and wait as believers for our portion in the rest when all shall be accomplished, accepted in the Beloved.

Judgment is according to man's responsibility, shut out then judicially into that exclusion from God into which man has cast himself; blessing is according to the thoughts, and purpose, and nature of God in the exceeding riches of His grace displayed in our salvation, through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, come to bring us into His presence as sons.

Sin and sins are before God in the cross, and propitiation wrought. There sin and sins met God, but in the work of love, according to holiness and righteousness, which brings to God, according to His nature, those who come to Him by it, cleared from them all forever. J. N. D.

Be Filled With the Spirit

Filled! yea filled to overflowing,
Gracious Spirit! what so precious to my soul
As thy sweet presence? What so effectual
To exclude all else—the strivings
Of this “present evil world;” “the flesh,” “the devil,”
All so ready to intrude upon the heart
Which Thou alone shouldst fill.
Oh, fill, fill, fill my soul,
Leave no room for aught beside.
The ever-living, ever-giving power sent from above
To reign within the temple built for Thine abode!
Why shouldst Thou ever,
Grieved or quenched by me, lie dormant?
Forbid it, that I should not watch or wait
The coming of the glorious One,
Who promises to make us like unto Himself
On that, to us, bright resurrection morn,
When “we shall see Him as He is.”

Be Ye Holy, for I Am Holy

Lord Jesus, Savior! Thou whose glorious face,
We, all-expectant, would rejoice to see;
From whom, when once beheld, our ravish'd gaze
No more could wander, or desire to lose,
If only for a moment, such a sight
Of soul-transporting, satisfying bliss.
Oh, fill us with Thyself; yea, Lord, we long,
Nay, thirst, with ever-growing thirst for more
And more of Thee. Fain would we deeply drink
Into Thy patient spirit; Thine unwearied love,
Thy pure unselfishness that could not see
With unmoved heart, another's sufferings;
Yet could and would in silence bear Thine own.
Oh, that while here in waiting attitude,
We who delight to call Thee Lord and bow
Most gladly to Thy sway, may even here
Have eyes, and hearts, and lives engrossed by Thee.

Conversion: What Is It? Part 1

The first chapter of first Thessalonians presents a very striking and beautiful picture of what we may truly call genuine conversion. We propose to study the picture in company with the reader. If we are not much mistaken, we shall find the study at once interesting and profitable. It will, most assuredly, furnish an answer distinct and clear, to the question which stands at the head of this article, namely, What is conversion?

Nor is this, by any means, a small matter. It is well, in days like these, to have a divine answer to such a question. We hear a good deal, now-a-days, about cases of conversion; and we would heartily bless God for every soul truly converted to Him.

We need hardly say we believe in the absolute, the indispensable, the universal necessity of divine conversion. Let a man be what he may; be he Jew or Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free, Protestant or Roman Catholic; in short, whatever be his nationality, his ecclesiastical position, or his theological creed, he must be converted, else he is on the broad and direct road to an everlasting hell.

There is no one born a Christian, in the divine sense of that word. Neither can anyone be educated into Christianity. It is a fatal mistake, a deadly delusion, a deceit of the arch-enemy of souls, for anyone to think that he can be a Christian, either by birth or education, or that he can be made a Christian by water baptism, or by any religious ceremony whatsoever. A man becomes a Christian only by being divinely converted. What this conversion is, we shall see in the course of our present study. What we would, at the very outset, insist upon, and earnestly press on the attention of all whom it may concern, is the urgent and absolute necessity, in every case, of true conversion to God.

This cannot be set aside. It is the height of folly for anyone to attempt to ignore or to make light of it. For an immortal being—one who has a boundless eternity stretching away before him, to neglect the solemn question of his conversion, is the wildest fatuity of which any one can possibly be guilty. In comparison with this most weighty subject, all other things dwindle into utter insignificance. The various objects that engage the thoughts and absorb the energies of men and women in the busy scene around us, are but as the small dust of the balance in comparison with this one grand, momentous question of the soul's conversion to God. All the speculations of commercial life, all the schemes of money making, the absorbing question of profitable investment, all the pursuits of the pleasure hunter—the theater, the concert, the ball-room, the billiard room, the card table, the dice box, the race course, the hunting ground, the drinking saloon—all the numberless and nameless things that the poor unsatisfied heart longs after, and grasps at—all are but as the vapor of the morning, the foam on the water, the smoke from the chimney top, the withered leaf of autumn—all vanish away, and leave an aching void behind. The heart remains unsatisfied, the soul unsaved, because unconverted.

And what then? Ah! yes; what then? Tremendous question! What remains at the end of all this scene of commercial excitement, political strife and ambition, money making and pleasure hunting? Why then the man has to face death! "It is appointed unto men once to die." There is no getting over this. There is no discharge in this war. All the wealth of the universe could not purchase one moment's respite at the hand of the ruthless foe. All the medical skill which earth affords, all the fond solicitude of affectionate relatives and friends, all their tears, all their sighs, all their entreaties cannot stave off the dreaded moment or cause the king of terrors to sheathe his terrible sword. Death cannot be disposed of by any art of man. The moment must come when the link is to be snapped which connects the heart with all the fair and fascinating scenes of human life. Fondly loved friends, charming pursuits, coveted objects, all must be given up. A thousand worlds could not avert the stroke. Death must be looked at straight in the face. It is an awful mystery—a tremendous fact—a stern reality. It stands full in front of every unconverted man, woman, and child beneath the canopy of heaven; and it is merely a question of time, hours, days, months, or years, when the boundary line must be crossed which separates time, with all its empty, vain, shadowy pursuits, from eternity with all its stupendous realities.

And what then? Let scripture answer. Nothing else can. Men would fain reply according to their own vain notions. They would have us believe that after death comes annihilation. "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." Empty conceit! Vain delusion! Foolish dream of the human imagination blinded by the god of this world! How could an immortal soul be annihilated? Man, in the garden of Eden, became the possessor of a never dying spirit. "The Lord God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul"—not a dying soul. The soul must live forever. Converted or unconverted, it has eternity before it. Oh! the overpowering weight of this consideration to every thoughtful spirit! No human mind can grasp its immensity. It is beyond our comprehension, but not beyond our belief.

Let us hearken to the voice of God. What does scripture teach? One line of holy scripture is quite sufficient to sweep away ten thousand arguments and theories of the human mind. Does death annihilate? Nay! "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."

Mark these words, "After this the judgment." And this applies only to those who die in their sins—only to unbelievers. For the Christian, judgment is passed forever, as scripture teaches in manifold places. It is important to note this, because men tell us that, inasmuch as there is eternal life only in Christ, therefore all who are out of Christ shall be annihilated.

Not so says the word of God. There is judgment after death. And what will be the issue of the judgment? Again scripture speaks in language as clear as it is solemn and impressive. "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before the throne; and the books were opened; and another book, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it: and death and hades delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works. This is the second death—the lake of fire. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." Rev. 20.

All this is as plain as words can make it. There is not the slightest ground for demur or difficulty. For all whose names are in the book of life, there is no judgment at all. Those whose names are not in that book shall be judged according to their works. And what then? Annihilation? Nay; but, "the lake of fire;" and that forever and forever.

How overwhelming is the thought of this! Surely it ought to rouse every soul to the serious consideration of the great subject now before us, namely, the urgent need of conversion to God. This is the only way of escape. An unconverted person, whoever and whatever he is, has death, judgment, and the lake of fire before him, and every throb of his pulse brings him nearer and nearer to those awful realities. It is not more sure that the sun shall rise, at a certain moment, tomorrow morning, than that the reader must, ere long, pass into eternity; and if his name is not in the book of life—if he is not converted—if he is not in Christ, he will, assuredly, be judged according to his works, and the certain issue of that judgment will be the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, and that through the endless ages of a dark and gloomy eternity. Oh! the terrible monotony of hell!

The reader may perhaps marvel at our dwelling at such length on this dreadful theme. He may feel disposed to ask, "Will this convert people?" If it does not convert them, it may lead them to see their need of conversion. It may lead them to see their imminent danger. It may induce them to flee from the wrath to come. Why did the blessed apostle reason with Felix on the subject of "judgment to come?" Surely that he might persuade him to turn from his evil ways and live. Why did our blessed Lord Himself so constantly press upon His hearers the solemn reality of eternity? Why did He so often speak of the deathless worm and the unquenchable fire? Surely it was for the purpose of rousing them to a sense of their danger, that they might flee for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them.

Are we wiser than He? Are we more tender? Have we found out some better mode of converting people? Are we to be afraid of pressing upon our readers or our hearers, the same solemn theme which our Lord so pressed upon the men of His time? Are we to shrink from offending polite ears by the plain declaration that all who die unconverted must inevitably stand before the great white throne, and pass into the lake of fire? God forbid! It must not be. We solemnly call upon the unconverted reader in this our opening paper for the year 1878, to give his undivided attention to the all important question of his soul's salvation. Let nothing induce him to neglect it. Let neither cares, pleasures, nor duties so occupy him as to hide from his view the magnitude and deep seriousness of this matter. "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Oh! reader, if thou art unsaved, unconverted, let us earnestly entreat thee to ponder these things. If God permit, we hope, in a future paper, to unfold what conversion is—how it is affected, and what it involves. But, just now, it seems pressed upon us in the form of a solemn duty to seek to rouse thee to a sense of thy need of being savingly converted to God. This is the only way of entering His kingdom. So our Lord Christ distinctly tells us; and we trust you know this, at least, that not one jot or tittle of His holy sayings can ever pass away. Heaven and earth shall pass away; but His word can never pass away. All the power of earth and hell, men and devils, cannot make void the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. Either of two things for thee—conversion here, or eternal damnation hereafter.

Thus it stands if we are to be guided by the word of God; and, in view of this, is it possible for us to be too earnest, too vehement, too importunate in urging upon every unconverted soul with whom we may come in contact, either with voice or pen, the indispensable necessity, this very moment, of fleeing from the wrath to come, fleeing to that blessed Savior who died on the cross for our salvation; who stands with open arms to receive all who come; and who declares in His own sweet and precious grace, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

(To be continued, if the Lord will)

Conversion: What Is It? Part 2

In our paper for January, we sought to set forth the absolute need, in every case, of conversion. Scripture establishes this point in such a way as to leave no possible ground of objection for anyone who bows to its holy authority. “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Matt. 18:3.

This applies, in all its moral force and deep solemnity, to every son and daughter of fallen Adam. There is not so much as a solitary exception, throughout the thousand millions that people this globe. Without conversion, there is—there can be no entrance into the kingdom of God. Every unconverted soul is outside the kingdom of God. It matters not, in the smallest degree, who I am, or what I am; if I am unconverted, I am in “the kingdom of darkness,” under the power of Satan, in my sins, and on the way to hell.

I may be a person of blameless morals; of spotless reputation; a high professor of religion; a worker in the vineyard; a Sunday School teacher; an office-bearer in some branch of the professing church; an ordained minister; a deacon, elder, pastor or bishop; a most charitable individual; a munificent donor to religious and benevolent institutions; looked up to, sought after, and revered by all because of my personal worth and moral influence. I may be all this and more; I may be, and I may have, all that it is possible for a human being to be or to have, and yet be unconverted, and hence outside the kingdom of God, and in the kingdom of Satan, in my guilt, and on the broad road that leads straight down to the lake that burns with fire and brimstone.

Such is the plain and obvious meaning and force of our Lord’s words in Matt. 18:3. There is no possibility of evading it. The words are as clear as a sunbeam. We cannot get over them. They bear down, with what we may truly call tremendous solemnity, upon every unconverted soul on the face of the earth. “Except ye be converted, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.” This applies, with equal force, to the degraded drunkard that rolls along the street, worse than a beast, and to the unconverted good templar or teetotaler who prides himself on his sobriety, and is perpetually boasting of the number of days, weeks, months or years during which he has refrained from all intoxicating drink. They are both alike outside the kingdom of God; both in their sins; both on the way to eternal destruction.

True it is that the one has been converted from drunkenness to sobriety—a very great blessing indeed, in a moral and social point of view—but conversion from drunkenness to a temperance society is not conversion to God; it is not turning from darkness to light; it is not entering the kingdom of God’s dear Son. There is just this difference between the two, that the teetotaler may be building upon his temperance, pluming himself upon his morality, and thus deceiving himself into the vain notion that he is all right, whereas, in reality, he is all wrong. The drunkard is palpably and unmistakably wrong. Everybody knows that a drunkard is going headlong, and with awfully rapid strides, to that place where he will not find one drop of water to cool his tongue. It is clear that no drunkard can inherit the kingdom of God; and neither can an unconverted teetotaler. Both are outside. Conversion to God is absolutely indispensable for the one as well as the other; and

the same may be said of all classes, all grades, all shades, all castes and conditions of men under the sun. There is no difference as to this great question. It holds good as to all alike, be their outward character or social status what it may— “Except ye be converted, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.”

How important, then—yea, how momentous the question for each one, “Am I converted?” It is not possible for human language to set forth the magnitude and solemnity of this inquiry. For anyone to think of going on, from day to day, and year to year, without a clear and thorough settlement of this most weighty question, can only be regarded as the most egregious folly of which a human being can be guilty. If a man were to leave his earthly affairs in an uncertain, unsettled condition, he would lay himself open to the charge of the grossest and most culpable neglect and carelessness. But what are the most urgent and weighty temporal affairs when compared with the salvation of the soul? All the concerns of time are but as the chaff of the summer threshing-floor, when compared with the interests of the immortal soul—the grand realities of eternity.

Hence it is, in the very highest degree, irrational for anyone to rest for a single hour without a clear and settled assurance that he is truly converted to God. A converted soul has crossed the boundary line that separates the saved from the unsaved—the children of light from the children of darkness—the church of God from this present evil world. The converted soul has death and judgment behind him, and glory before him. He is as sure of being in heaven as though he were already there; indeed he is there already in spirit. He has a title without a blot, and a prospect without a cloud. He knows Christ as his Savior and Lord; God as his Father and Friend; the Holy Ghost as his blessed Comforter, Guide and Teacher; heaven as his bright and happy home. Oh! the unspeakable blessedness of being converted. Who can utter it? “Eye hath not seen, or ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us [believers] by His Spirit; for the Spirit search-eth all things, yea the deep things of God.” 1 Cor. 2:9, 10.

And now let us inquire what this conversion is, whereof we speak. Well, indeed, will it be for us to the divinely instructed as to this. An error here will; prove disastrous in proportion to the interests at stake.

Many are the mistaken notions in reference to conversion. Indeed we might conclude, from the very fact of the vast importance of the subject, that the great enemy of our souls and of the Christ of God would seek, in every possible way, to plunge us into error respecting it. If he cannot succeed in keeping people in utter carelessness as to the subject of conversion, he will endeavor to blind their eyes as to its true nature. If, for example, a person has been roused, by some means or other, to a sense of the utter vanity and unsatisfactoriness of worldly amusements, and the urgent necessity of a change of life, the arch-deceiver will seek to persuade such an one to become religious, to busy himself with ordinances, rites and ceremonies, to give up balls and parties, theaters and concerts, drinking, gambling, hunting and horse-racing; in a word, to give up all sorts of gaiety and amusement, and engage in what is—called a religious life, to be diligent in attending the public ordinances of religion, to read the Bible, say prayers, and give alms, to contribute to the support of the great religious and benevolent institutions of the country.

Now, this is not conversion. A person may do all this, and yet be wholly unconverted. A religious devotee whose whole life is spent in vigils, fastings, prayers, self-mortifications and alms deeds,

may be as thoroughly unconverted, as far from the kingdom of God as the thoughtless pleasure hunter, whose whole life is spent in the pursuit of objects, as worthless as the withered leaf or the faded flower. The two characters, no doubt, differ widely—as widely perhaps, as any two could differ. But they are both unconverted, both outside the blessed circle of God's salvation, both in their sins. True, the one is engaged in "wicked works," and the other in "dead works;" they are both out of Christ; they are unsaved; they are on the way to hopeless, endless misery. The one, just as surely as the other, if not savingly converted, will find his portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.

Again, conversion is not a turning from one religious system to another. A man may turn from Judaism, Paganism, Mahometanism, or Popery, to Protestantism, and yet be wholly unconverted. No doubt, looked at from a social, moral, or intellectual standpoint, it is much better to be a Protestant than a Mahometan; but as regards our present thesis, they are both on one common platform, both unconverted. Of one, just as truly as the other, it can be said, unless he is converted, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Conversion is not joining a religious system, be that system ever so pure, ever so sound, ever so orthodox. A man may be a member of the most respectable religious body throughout the length and breadth of Christendom, and yet be an unconverted, unsaved man, on his way to eternal perdition.

So also as to theological creeds. A man may subscribe any of the great standards of religious belief, the Thirty-nine Articles, the Westminster Confession, John Wesley's Sermons, Fox and Barclay, or any other creed, and yet be wholly unconverted, dead in trespasses and sins, on his way to that place where a single ray of hope can never break in upon the awful gloom of eternity.

Of what use, we may lawfully inquire, is a religious system or a theological creed to a man who has not a single spark of divine life? Systems and creeds cannot quicken, cannot save, cannot give eternal life. A man may work on in religious machinery like a horse in a mill, going round and round, from one year's end to another, leaving off just where he began, in a dreary monotony of dead works. What is it all worth? what does it all come to? where does it all end? Death! Yes; and what then? Ah! that is the question. Would to God the weight and seriousness of this question were more fully realized!

But further, Christianity itself, in all its full-orbed light, may be embraced as a system of religious belief. A person may be intellectually delighted—almost entranced with the glorious doctrines of grace, a full, free gospel, salvation without works, justification by faith; in short, all that goes to make up our glorious New Testament Christianity. A person may profess to believe and delight in this; he may even become a powerful writer in defense of christian doctrine, an earnest eloquent preacher of the gospel. All this may be true, and yet the man be wholly unconverted, dead in trespasses and sins, hardened, deceived and destroyed by his very familiarity with the precious truths of the gospel—truths that have never gone beyond the region of his understanding—never reached his conscience, never touched his heart, never converted his soul.

This is about the most appalling case of all. Nothing can be more awful, more terrible, than the case of a man professing to believe and delight in, yea, actually preaching the gospel of God, in all its fullness, and teaching all the grand characteristic truths of Christianity, and yet wholly unconverted, unsaved, and on his way to an eternity of ineffable misery—misery which must needs be intensified to the very highest degree, by the remembrance of the fact that he once

professed to believe, and actually undertook to preach the most glorious tidings that ever fell on mortal ears.

Oh! reader, whoever thou art, do, we entreat of thee, give thy fixed attention to these things. Rest not, for one hour, until thou art assured of thy genuine unmistakable conversion to God.

(To be continued if the Lord will!)

Conversion: What Is It? Part 3

Having thus far, seen the absolute necessity, in every case, of conversion, and having, in some measure, sought to point out what conversion is not, we have now to inquire what it is. And here we must keep close to the veritable teaching of holy scripture. We can accept nothing less, nothing different. It is greatly to be feared that very much of what passes, now-a-days, for conversion is not conversion at all. Many so-called cases of conversion are published and talked of, which cannot stand the test of the word of God. Many profess to be converted, and are accredited as such, who prove to be merely stony-ground hearers. There is no depth of spiritual work in the heart, no real action of the truth of God on the conscience, no thorough breaking with the world. It may be the feelings are wrought upon by human influence, and certain evangelical sentiments take possession of the mind; but self is not judged; there is a clinging to earth and nature; a lack of that deep-toned earnestness and genuine reality which so remarkably characterize the conversions recorded in the New Testament, and for which we may always look where the work of conversion is divine.

We do not here attempt to account for all these superficial cases; we merely refer to them in order that all who are engaged in the blessed work of evangelization may be led to consider the matter in the light of holy scripture, and to see how far their own mode of working may call for holy correction. It may be there is too much of the merely human element in our work. We do not leave the Spirit of God to act. We are deficient in profound faith in the power and efficacy of the simple word of God itself. There may be too much effort to work on the feelings, too much of the emotional and the sensational. Perhaps, too, in our desire to reach results—a desire which may be right enough in itself—we are too ready to accredit and announce, as cases of conversion, many which, alas! are merely ephemeral.

All this demands our serious consideration. It is of the very last possible importance that we allow the Spirit of God to work and to display—as He most assuredly will—the fruit of His work. All that He does is well done, and it will speak for itself in due time. There is no necessity for us to blaze abroad our cases of conversion. All that is divinely real will shine out to the praise of Him to whom all praise is due; and then the workman will have his own deep and holy joy. He will see the results of His work, and think of them in adoring homage and worship at his Master's feet—the only safe and truly happy place to think of them.

Will this lessen our earnestness? The very reverse; it will intensify our earnestness immensely. We shall be more earnest in pleading with God in secret, and in pleading with our fellows in public. We shall feel more deeply the divine seriousness of the work, and our own utter insufficiency. We shall ever cherish the wholesome conviction that the work must be of God from first to last. This will keep us in our right place, namely, the blessed place of self-emptying dependence upon God, who is the Doer of all the works that are done upon the earth. We shall be more on our faces before the mercy-seat, both in the closet and in the assembly, in reference to the glorious work of conversion; and then, when the golden sheaves and mellow clusters appear, when genuine cases

of conversion turn up—cases which speak for themselves, and carry their own credentials with them to all who are capable of judging—then verily shall our hearts be filled with praise to the God of all grace who has magnified the name of His Son Jesus Christ in the salvation of precious souls.

How much better is this than to have our poor hearts puffed up with pride and self-complacency by reckoning up our cases of conversion! How much better, safer and happier to be bowed in worship before the throne, than to have our names heralded to the ends of the earth as great preachers and wonderful evangelists! No comparison, in the judgment of a truly spiritual person. The dignity, reality, and seriousness of the work will be realized; the happiness, the moral security, and the real usefulness of the workman will be promoted; and the glory of God secured and maintained.

Let us see how all this is illustrated in 1 Thess. 1 “Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the assembly of the Thessalonians in God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ: grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labor of love, and patience of hope”—the grand elements of true Christianity—“in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; knowing, brethren, beloved of God, your election.” How did he know it? By the clear and unquestionable evidence afforded in their practical life—the only way in which the election of any one can be known. “For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.”

The blessed apostle was, in his daily life, the exponent of the gospel which he preached. He lived the gospel. He did not demand or exact aught of them. He was not burdensome to them. He preached unto them the precious gospel of God freely; and in order that he might do so, he wrought with labor and travail, night and day. He was as a loving, tender nurse, going in and out among them. There were with him no high-sounding words about himself, or his office, or his authority, or his gifts, or his preaching, or his wonderful doings in other places. He was the loving, lowly, unpretending, earnest, devoted workman, whose work spoke for itself, and whose whole life, his spirit, style, deportment, and habits, were in lovely harmony with his preaching.

How needful for all workmen to ponder these things! We may depend upon it that very much of the shallowness of our work is the fruit of the shallowness of the workman. Where is the power? Where is the demonstration of the Spirit? Where is the “much assurance?” Is there not a terrible lack of these things in our preaching? There may be a vast amount of fluent talking; a great deal of so-called cleverness; and much that may tickle the ear, act on the imagination, awaken a temporary interest, and minister to mere curiosity. But oh! where is the holy unction, the living earnestness, the profound seriousness? And then the living exponent in the daily life and habits—where is this? May the Lord revive His work in the hearts of His workmen, and then we may look for more of the results of the work.

Do we mean to teach that the work of conversion depends upon the workman? Far away be the monstrous notion! The work depends wholly and absolutely on the power of the Holy Ghost, as the very chapter now lying open before us proves beyond all question. It must ever hold good, in every department and every stage of the work, that it is “not by might nor by power; but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.”

But what kind of instrument does the Spirit ordinarily use? Is not this a weighty question for us workmen? What sort of vessels are “meet for the Master’s use?” Empty vessels—clean vessels. Are we such? Are we emptied of ourselves? Are we cured of our deplorable self-occupation? Are we “clean?” Have we clean hands? Are our associations, our ways, our circumstances, clean? If not, how can the Master use us in His holy service? May we all have grace to weigh these questions in the divine presence! May the Lord stir us all up, and make us more and more, vessels such as He can use for His glory!

We shall now proceed with our quotation. The whole passage is full of power. The character of the workman on the one hand, and of the work on the other, demands our most serious attention.

“And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: so that ye were ensamples [or models] to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything, for they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you.”

This was real work. It carried its own credentials with it. There was nothing vague or unsatisfactory about it—no occasion for any reserve in forming or expressing a judgment respecting it. It was clear, distinct, and unmistakable. It bore the stamp of the Master’s hand, and carried conviction to every mind capable of weighing the evidence. The work of conversion was wrought, and the fruits of conversion followed in delightful profusion. The testimony went forth far and wide, so that the workman had no need to speak about his work. There was no occasion for him to reckon up and publish the number of conversions at Thessalonica. All was divinely real. It was a thorough work of God’s Spirit as to which there could be no possible mistake, and about which it was superfluous to speak.

The apostle had simply preached the word in the power of the Holy Ghost, in much assurance. There was nothing vague, nothing doubtful about his testimony. He preached as one who fully believed and thoroughly entered into what he was preaching about. It was not the mere fluent utterance of certain known and acknowledged truths—not the cut and dry statement of certain barren dogmas. No; it was the living outpouring of the glorious gospel of God, coming from a heart that felt profoundly every utterance, and falling upon hearts prepared by God’s Spirit for its reception.

Such was the work at Thessalonica—a deep, solid, blessed, thorough divine work—all sound and real, the genuine fruit of God’s Spirit. It was no mere religious excitement, nothing sensational, no high pressure, no attempt to “get up a revival.” All was beautifully calm. The workman, as we are told in Acts 17, “came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews; and as his manner was, he went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures”—Precious, powerful reasoning! would to God we had more of it in our midst!—“opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ.”

How simple! Preaching Jesus out of the scriptures! Yes, here lay the grand secret of Paul’s preaching. He preached a living Person, in living power, on the authority of a living word, and this preaching was received in living faith, and brought forth living fruit, in the lives of the converts. This

is the sort of preaching we want. It is not sermonizing, not religious talking, but the powerful preaching of Christ by the Holy Ghost speaking through men who are thoroughly impressed with what they are preaching. God grant us more of this!

Conversion: What Is It? Part 4

The last two verses of our chapter (1 Thess. 1) demand our very special attention. They furnish a remarkable statement of the real nature of conversion. They show, very distinctly, the depth, clearness, fullness, and reality of the work of God's Spirit in those Thessalonian converts. There was no mistaking it. It carried its own credentials with it. It was no uncertain work. It did not call for any careful examination ere it could be accredited. It was a manifest, unmistakable, work of God, the fruits of which were apparent to all. "They themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." Verses 9, 10.

Here, then, we have a divine definition of conversion—brief, but comprehensive. It is a turning from, and a turning to. They turned from idols. There was a complete break with the past, a turning of the back, once and forever, on their former life and habits; a thorough surrender of all those objects that had ruled their hearts and commanded their energies. Those dear Thessalonians were led to judge, in the light of divine truth, their whole previous course, and not only to judge it, but to abandon it unreservedly. It was no half-and-half work. There was nothing vague or equivocal about it. It was a marked epoch in their history—a grand turning-point in their moral and practical career. It was not a mere change of opinion, or the reception of a new set of principles, a certain alteration in their intellectual views. It was far more than any or all of these things. It was the solemn discovery that their whole past career had been one great, dark, monstrous lie. It was the real heart conviction of this. Divine light had broken in upon their souls, and in the power of that light they judged themselves and the entire of their previous history. There was an out-and-out surrender of that world which had hitherto ruled their hearts' affections; not a shred of it was to be spared.

And what, we may ask, produced this marvelous change? Simply the word of God brought home to their souls in the mighty power of the Holy Ghost. We have referred to the inspired account of the apostle's visit to Thessalonica. We are told that "he reasoned with them out of the scriptures." He sought to bring their souls into direct contact with the living and eternal word of God. He did not bring mere human influence to bear upon them. There was no effort to act on their feelings and imagination. All this the blessed workman judged to be utterly valueless. He had no confidence whatever in it. His confidence was in the word and Spirit of God. He assures the Thessalonians of this very thing in the most touching manner, in chapter ii. of his epistle. "For this cause," he says, "thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."

This is what we may call a vital and cardinal point. The word of God, and that alone, in the mighty hand of the Holy Ghost, produced these grand results in the case of the Thessalonians, which filled the heart of the beloved apostle with unfeigned thanksgiving to God. He rejoiced that they

were not linked on to him, but of the living God Himself, by means of His word. This is an imperishable link. It is as enduring as the word which forms it. The word of man is as perishable as himself; but the word of the Lord endureth forever. The apostle, as a true workman, understood and felt all this, and hence his holy jealousy, in all his ministry, lest the souls to whom he preached should in any way lean upon him instead of on the One whose messenger and minister he was.

Hear what he says to the Corinthians: "And I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" 1 Cor. 2:1-5.

Here we have true ministry—"the testimony of God," and "the demonstration of the Spirit"—the word and the Holy Ghost. Nothing else is of any value. All mere human influence, human power, and the results produced by human wisdom or energy, are perfectly worthless—yea, positively mischievous. The workman is puffed up by the apparent results of his work paraded and talked of, and the poor souls that are acted upon by this false influence are deceived, and led into an utterly false position and false profession. In a word, the whole thing is disastrous in the extreme.

Not so when the word of God, in its mighty moral power, and the energy of the Holy Ghost, are brought to bear on the heart and conscience. Then it is we see divine results, as in the case of the Thessalonians. Then indeed it is made apparent, beyond all question, who is the workman. It is not Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, but God Himself, whose work accredits itself, and shall stand forever; all homage to His holy name! The apostle had no need to reckon up and publish the results of his work at Thessalonica, or rather God's work by his means. It spoke for itself. It was deep, thorough, and genuine. It bore, with unmistakable distinctness, the stamp of God upon it, and this was quite enough for Paul; and it is quite enough for every true-hearted, self-emptied workman. Paul preached the word, and that word was brought home, in the quickening energy of the Holy Ghost, to the hearts of the Thessalonians. It fell into good ground, took root, and brought forth fruit in abundance.

And let us mark the fruit. "Ye turned from idols: Here we have, in one word, the whole life of every unconverted man, woman, or child on the face of the earth. It is all wrapped up and presented to our view in the one expression, "idols" It is not by any means necessary to bow down to a stock or a stone in order to be an idolater. Whatever commands the heart is an idol; the yielding of the heart to that thing is idolatry, and the one who so yields it is an idolater. Such is the plain, solemn, truth in this matter, however unpalatable it may be to the proud human heart. Take that one great, crying, universal, sin of "covetousness" What does the inspired apostle call it? He calls it "idolatry." How many hearts are commanded by money! How many worshippers bow down before the idol of gold! What is covetousness? Either a desire to get more, or the love of what we have. We have both forms in the New Testament. The Greek has a word to represent both. But whether it be the desire to grasp, or the desire to hoard, in either case it is idolatry.

And yet the two things may be very unlike in their outward development. The former, that is, the desire to get more, may often be found in connection with a readiness to spend; the latter, on the contrary, is generally linked with an intense spirit of hoarding. There, for example, is a man of

great business capacity—a thorough commercial genius—in whose hand everything seems to prosper. He has a real zest for business, an unquenchable thirst for making money. His one object is to get more, to add thousand to thousand, to strengthen his commercial foundation, and enlarge his sphere. He lives, thrives, and revels in the atmosphere of commerce. He started on his career with a few pence in his pocket, and he has risen to the proud position of a merchant prince. He is not a miser. He is as ready to scatter as to obtain. He fares sumptuously, entertains with a splendid hospitality, gives munificently to manifold public objects. He is looked up to and respected by all classes of society.

But he loves to get more. He is a covetous man—an idolater. True, he despises the poor miser who spends his nights over his money-bags, “holding strange communion with his gold;” delighting his heart and feasting his eyes with the very sight of the fascinating dust, refusing himself and his family the common necessities of life; going about in rags and wretchedness, rather than spend a penny of the precious hoard; who loves money, not for what it can get or give, but simply for its own sake; who loves to accumulate, not that he may spend, but that he may hoard; whose one ruling desire is to die worth so much wretched dust—strange, contemptible desire!

Now these two are apparently very different, but they meet in one point; they stand on one common platform; they are both covetous, they are both idolaters. This may sound harsh and severe, but it is the truth of God, and we must bow down before its holy authority. True it is that nothing is apparently more difficult to bring home to the conscience than the sin of covetousness—that very sin which the Holy Ghost declares to be idolatry. Thousands might see it in the case of the poor degraded miser, who nevertheless would be shocked by its application to a merchant prince. It is one thing to see it in others, and quite another to judge it in ourselves. The fact is, that nothing but the light of the word of God shining in upon the soul, and penetrating every chamber of our moral being, can enable us to detect the hateful sin of covetousness. The pursuit of gain—the desire to have more—the spirit of commerce—the ability to make money—the “profit”—the desire to get on—all this is so “highly esteemed amongst men,” that very few, comparatively, are prepared to see that it is positively “an abomination in the sight of God.” The natural heart is formed by the thoughts of men. It loves, adores, and worships the objects that it finds in this world; and each heart has its own idol. One worships gold, another worships pleasure, another worships power. Every unconverted man is an idolater; and even converted men are not beyond the reach of idolatrous influences, as is evident from the warning note raised by the venerable apostle, “Little children, keep yourselves from idols.” 1 John 5:21.

Reader, will you permit us to put a plain, pointed, question to you, ere we proceed farther? Are you converted? Do you profess to be so? Do you take the ground of being a Christian? If so, have you turned from idols? Have you really broken with the world, and with your former self? Has the living word of God entered your heart, and led you to judge the whole of your past life, whether it has been a life of gaiety and thoughtless folly, a life of busy money-making, a life of abominable vice and wickedness, or a life of mere religious routine—Christless, faithless, worthless religion?

Say, dear friend, how is it? Be thoroughly in earnest. Be assured there is an urgent demand for out-and-out earnestness in this matter. We cannot hide from you the fact that we are painfully conscious of the sad lack of thorough decision amongst us. We have not, with sufficient emphasis or distinctness, “turned from idols.” Old habits are retained; former lusts and objects rule the heart.

The temper, style, spirit, and deportment do not bespeak conversion. We are sadly too like our former selves—too like the openly and confessedly worldly people around us.

All this is really terrible. We fear it is a sad hindrance to the progress of the gospel and the salvation of souls. The testimony falls powerless on the ears of those to whom we speak, because we do not seem as though we ourselves really believe what we are talking about. The apostle could not say to us, as he said to his dear Thessalonian converts, “From you sounded out the word of the Lord.... so that we need not to speak anything.” There is a want of depth, power, and markedness in our conversion. The change is not sufficiently apparent. Even where there is a work, there is a tameness, feebleness, and vagueness about it truly deplorable and discouraging.

But more of this in our next, if the Lord will.

Conversion: What Is It? Part 5

We are now called to consider what we may term the positive side of the great subject of conversion. We have seen that it is a turning from idols—a turning from all those objects which ruled our hearts and engaged our affections—the vanities and follies, the lusts and pleasures, which made up the whole of our existence in the days of our darkness and blindness. It is, as we read in Acts 26:18, a turning from darkness, and from the power of Satan; and, as we read in Gal. 1:4, a turning from this present evil world.

But conversion is much more than all this. It would, in one sense, be but a poor thing, if it were merely a turning “from sin, the world, and Satan.” No doubt, it is a signal mercy to be delivered, once and forever, from all the wretchedness and moral degradation of our former life; from the terrible thralldom of the god and prince of this world; from all the hollowness and vanity of a world that lieth in the arms of the wicked one; and from the love and practice of sin—the vile affections which once held sway over us. We cannot be too thankful for all that is included in this side of the question.

But, we repeat, there is very much more than this. The heart may feel disposed to inquire, “What have we gotten in lieu of all we have given up? Is Christianity merely a system of negations? If we have broken with the world and self—if we have given up our former pleasures and amusements—if, in short, we have turned our back upon what goes to make up life in this world, what have we instead?”

1 Thess. 1:9 furnishes, in one word, the answer to all these inquiries—an answer full, clear, distinct, and comprehensive. Here it is—“Ye turned to GOD.”

Precious answer! Yes, unspeakably precious to all who know aught of its meaning. What have I got instead of my former “idols”? God! Instead of this world’s vain and sinful pleasures? God! Instead of its riches, honors, and distinctions? God! Oh, blessed, glorious, perfect Substitute! What had the prodigal instead of the rags of the far country? The best role in the father’s house! Instead of the swine’s husks? The fatted calf of the father’s providing! Instead of the degrading servitude of the far country? The father’s welcome, his bosom, and his table!

Reader, is not this a blessed exchange? Have we not, in the familiar, but ever charming, history of the prodigal, a most touching and impressive illustration of true conversion in both its sides? May we not well exclaim, as we gaze on the inimitable picture, “What a conversion! What a turning from and turning to!”

Who can utter it? What human tongue can adequately set forth the feelings of the returned wanderer, when pressed to the Father’s bosom, and bathed in the light and love of the Father’s house? The rags, the husks, the swine, the slavery, the cold selfishness, the destitution, the famine, the misery, the moral degradation—all gone, and gone forever; and, instead thereof, the ineffable delight of that bright and happy home; and, above all, the exquisite feeling that all that festive joy which surrounded him was awakened up by the very fact of his return—that it made the

father glad to get him back!

But we shall perhaps be told all this is but a figure. Yes; but a figure of what? Of a precious, a divine reality; a figure of what takes place in every instance of true conversion, if only it be looked at from a heavenly standpoint. It is not a mere surrender of the world, with its thousand and one vanities and follies. It is this, no doubt; but it is very much more. It is being brought to God, brought home, brought to the Father's bosom, brought into the family; made—not in the language of a barren formulary, but in the power of the Spirit, and by the mighty action of the word—a child of God, a member of Christ, and an heir of the kingdom.

This, and nothing less, is conversion. Let the reader see that he thoroughly understands it. Let him not be satisfied with anything short of this grand reality—this turning from darkness to light, from the power of Satan, and from the worship of idols, to God. The Christian is, in one sense, as really brought to God now as if he were actually in heaven. This may seem strong, but it is blessedly true. Hear what the apostle Peter says as to this point: "Christ hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to"—What? Heaven when we die? Nay; but "to bring us to God" now. So also in Rom. 5 we read, "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation."

This is an immense principle. It is not within the compass of human language to set forth all that is involved in being "turned," or "brought to God." Our adorable Lord Jesus Christ brings all who believe in His name into God's presence, in all His own perfect acceptability. They come in all the credit, and virtue, and value of the blood of Jesus, and in all the fragrance of His most excellent name. He brings us into the very same position with Himself. He links us with Himself, and shares with us all He has, and all He is, save His Deity, which is incommunicable. We are perfectly identified with Him. "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me; because I live, ye shall live also." Again, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." "Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doth; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto your Son also, in that marvelous prayer in John 17, we read, "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them." "I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them."

Now it is utterly impossible to conceive anything higher or more blessed than this. To be so thoroughly identified with the Son of God, to be so wholly one with Him as to share in the very same love wherewith He is loved by the Father, to partake of His peace, His joy, His glory—all this involves the very highest possible measure and character of blessing with which any creature could be endowed. To be saved from the everlasting horrors of the pit of hell; to be pardoned, washed, and justified: to be reinstated in all that Adam lost; to be let into heaven, on any ground, or in any character whatsoever, would be marvelous mercy, goodness, and loving-kindness; but to be brought to God in all the love and favor of His own beloved Son, to be intimately associated with Him in all His position before God—His acceptability now—His glory by-and-by—this, truly, is something which only the heart of God could think of, and only His mighty power accomplish.

Well, reader, all this is involved in the conversion whereof we speak. Such is the magnificent grace of God, such the love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins, enemies in our minds by wicked works, serving divers lusts and pleasures, worshipping idols, the blind, degraded, slaves of sin and Satan, children of wrath, and going straight to hell.

And the best of it all is, that it both glorifies the name, and gratifies the heart of God, to bring us into this place of inconceivable blessedness, love, and glory. It would not satisfy the love of His heart to give us any lower place than that of His own Son. Well might the inspired apostle exclaim, in view of all this stupendous grace, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made as accepted in the beloved, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." Eph. 1.

What depth of love, what fullness of blessing, have we here! It is the purpose of God to glorify Himself, throughout the countless ages of eternity, in His dealings with us. He will display, in view of all created intelligences, the riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us, by Christ Jesus. Our forgiveness, our justification, our perfect deliverance, our acceptance—all the blessings bestowed upon us in Christ—are for the display of the divine glory throughout the vast universe, forever. It would not meet the claims of God's glory, or answer the affections of His heart, to have us in any other position but that of His own well-beloved and only-begotten Son.

All this is marvelous. It seems too good to be true. But it is worthy of God, and it is His good pleasure so to act toward us. This is enough for us. It may be, and most assuredly is, too good for us to get, but it is not too good for God to give. He acts toward us according to the love of His heart, and on the ground of the worthiness of Christ. The prodigal might ask to be made as one of the hired servants, but this could not be. It would not be according to the Father's heart to have him in the house as a servant. It must be as a son, or not at all. If it were a question of desert, we do not deserve the place of a servant, any more than that of a son. But, blessed be God, it is not according to our deserts at all, but according to the boundless love of His heart, and to the glory of His holy name.

This, then, is conversion. Thus we are brought to God. Nothing short of this. We are not merely turned from our idols, whatever they were, but we are actually brought into the very presence of

God, to find our delight in Him, to joy in Him; to walk with Him, to find all our springs in Him, to draw upon His exhaustless resources, to find in Him a perfect answer to all our necessities, so that our souls are satisfied, and that forever.

Do we want to go back to the idols? Never! Have we any hankering after our former objects? Not if our hearts are realizing our place and portion in Christ. Had the prodigal any longings after the husks and the swine, when folded in the father's bosom, clothed in the father's house, and seated at the father's table? We do not, and cannot, believe it. We cannot imagine his heaving a single sigh after the far country, when once he found himself within the hallowed circle of that bright and blissful home of love.

We speak according to the divine standard. Alas! alas! many profess to be converted, and seem to go on for a season, but ere long they begin to grow cold, and get weary and dissatisfied. The work was not real. They were not really brought to God. Idols may have been given up for a time, but God Himself was never reached. They never found in Him a satisfying portion for their hearts—never knew the real meaning of communion with Him—never tasted heart-satisfaction, heart-rest, in Christ. Hence, in process of time, the poor heart began to long once more for the world, and back they went, and plunged into its follies and vanities with greater avidity than ever.

Such cases are very sad, very disappointing. They bring great reproach on the cause of Christ, and are used as a plea for the enemy, and as a stumbling-block for anxious inquirers. But they leave the question of divine conversion just where it was. The soul that is truly converted is one who has not merely been turned from this present evil world, and all its promises and pretensions, but who has been led by the precious ministry of the Holy Ghost to find in the living God, and in His Son Jesus Christ, all he can possibly want for time and eternity. Such an one is divinely done with the world. He has broken with it forever. He has had his eyes opened to see, through and through, the whole thing. He has judged it in the light of the presence of God. He has measured it by the standard of the cross of Christ. He has weighed it in the balances of the sanctuary, and turned his back upon it forever, to find an absorbing and a commanding object in the Person of that blessed One who was nailed to the accursed tree, in order to deliver him, not only from everlasting burnings, but also from this present evil world.

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

Conversion: What Is It? Part 6

The more we dwell on 1 Thess. 1:9, the more we are struck with its marvelous depth, fullness, and power. It seems like sinking a shaft into an inexhaustible mine. We have dwelt a little on that very fruitful and suggestive clause, “Turned to God from idols.” How much is wrapped up in it! Do we really understand the force and fullness of it? It is a wonderful thing for the soul to be brought to God—to know Him now as our resource in all our weakness and need—the spring of all our joys—our strength and shield—our Guide and Counselor—our all in all—to be absolutely and completely shut up to Him, wholly dependent upon Him.

Reader, do you know the deep blessedness of all this in your own soul? If you are a child of God, a truly converted soul, then it is your happy privilege to know it, and you ought not to be satisfied without it. If we are “turned to God,” what is it for, but to find in Him all we can possibly want for time and eternity? Nothing can ever satisfy the human soul but God Himself. It is not within the compass of earth to meet the cravings of the heart. If we had the wealth of the universe, and all that that wealth could procure, the heart would still want more; there would still be an aching void which nothing under the sun could fill.

Look at the history of Solomon. Hear him recording his own experience. “I, the preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem; and I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven; this sore travail hath God given to the sons of men to be exercised therewith. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun, and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. That which is crooked cannot be made straight, and that which is wanting cannot be numbered. I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem; yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow. I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure; and behold this also is vanity. I said of laughter, it is mad; and of mirth, what doeth it? I sought in mine heart to give myself to wino, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom, and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life. I made me great works: I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits; I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees. I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle, above all that were in Jerusalem before me. I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces; I get me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem; also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them; I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labor; and this was my portion of all my labor. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had

labored to do; and behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun” Eccles. 1; 2.

Such is the withering commentary upon all earth’s resources, as given by the pen of one who had all that earth could give—of one who was allowed to drain to the very dregs every cup of human and earthly pleasure. And what was it all? “Vanity and vexation of spirit.” “All things are full of labor; man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.” The poor human heart can never be satisfied with the resources of earth. Creature streams can never quench the thirst of the immortal soul. Material things cannot possibly make us truly happy, even if they were permanent. “All is vanity and vexation of spirit.”

The truth of this must be proved by every human heart. Sooner or later all must find it out. Men may turn a deaf ear to it now; they may refuse to listen to the Spirit’s warning voice; they may vainly imagine that this poor world can yield them substantial comfort and happiness; they may eagerly grasp at its riches, its honors, its distinctions, its pleasures, its material comforts; but they will find out their mistake. And, oh, how dreadful to find it out too late! How terrible to open one’s eyes in hell, like the rich man in the parable! What human language can set forth the horrors of a soul shut out forever from the presence of God, and consigned to outer darkness, to the place of weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth? It is absolutely overwhelming to think of it. What will it be to realize it? What will it be to find oneself in the tormenting flames of hell, at the other side of that impassable gulf, where a single ray of hope can never break through the deep and horrible gloom of eternity?

Oh, that men would think of all this in time! that they might flee from the wrath to come, and lay hold on the blessed hope set before them in the gospel; that they might “turn to God.” But alas! the god of this world blinds their minds, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them. He engrosses them with present things—business, money-making, pleasures, cares, lusts, anything and everything but the one thing, in comparison with which all earthly things are but as the small dust of the balance.

But we have digressed from our special theme, to which we must return.

We are particularly anxious to press upon the christian reader the immense importance of seeking to find all his resources in the living God. We have only, for a moment, turned aside from this point, in order to sound a warning note in the ear of any unconverted, careless one who may happen to take up this paper.

We earnestly entreat the latter to turn to God. We entreat the former to seek a deeper acquaintance with the One to whom, by grace, he has turned. We have the two things before us in penning these papers on the great subject of “conversion.” We can truly say, we long to see precious souls converted to God; and we long to see converted souls happy in God.

We are increasingly convinced of the practical importance of Christians proving in their daily life that they have found thorough rest of heart in God. It has immense weight with worldly people. It is a grand point gained when we are able, through grace, to tell the world that we are independent of it; and the only way to do this is to live in the abiding sense of what we have in God. This would impart a moral elevation to our entire course and character. It would deliver us completely from that strong tendency to lean on human props, and to betake ourselves to creature streams, which

we have all, more or less, to lament, and which must assuredly issue in disappointment to us, and dishonor to God.

How prone we are, on all occasions, to look to our fellow men for sympathy, succor, and counsel, instead of looking directly and exclusively to God! This is a serious mistake. It is in principle to forsake the Fountain of living waters, and hew out for ourselves broken cisterns which can hold no water. What can we expect? What must be the issue? Barrenness and desolation. Our God, in very faithfulness to us, will cause our fellow man to fail us, in order that we may learn the folly of leaning upon an arm of flesh.

Hear what the prophet says on this great practical question: "Thus saith the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land, and not inhabited."

But mark the contrast. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." Jer. 17

Oh, reader, it is a grand reality to lean on the arm of the living God—to find in Him our relief and our resource, at all times, in all places, and under all circumstances. He never fails a trusting heart. He will never disappoint us. He may see fit to keep us waiting for an answer to our call, but the time we spend in waiting is well spent, and when the answer comes, our hearts are filled with praise, and we are able to say, "Oh, how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men." Psalm 31:19.

It is a great thing to be able to trust God before the sons of men, to confess His sufficiency for our every exigence. But it must be a reality, and not mere profession. It is no use to talk of leaning on God, while at the same time we are, in one way or another, looking to some poor mortal to help us. This is a sad delusion. But, alas! how often we fall under its power! We adopt the language of dependence upon God, but in reality we are looking to man, and letting him know our wants. We deceive ourselves, and dishonor God, and the end is disappointment and confusion of face.

Header, let us look closely and honestly at this matter. Let us see to it that we understand the meaning of those precious words, "Turned to God." They contain the very essence of true happiness and true holiness. When the heart is really turned to God, it has found the true, the divine secret of peace, rest, and full satisfaction, it finds its all in God, and has no occasion whatever to turn to the creature. Am I in any perplexity? I can look to God for guidance. He has promised to guide me with His eye. What perfect guidance! Can man do better for me? Surely not. God sees the end from the beginning. He knows all the bearings, all the belongings, all the roots and issues of my case. He is an infallible guide. His wisdom is unerring, and moreover He loves me perfectly. Where could I find a better guide?

Am I in want? I can go to God about it. He is the Possessor of heaven and earth. The treasures of the universe are at His disposal. He can help me, if He sees it to be good for me; and if not, the pressure will be much better for me than the relief. "My God shall supply all your need, according

to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus.” Is not this enough? Why look to a creature stream? What a poor thing to have to make known our wants to a human being! It is in reality giving up, so far, the ground of faith, the life of simple dependence on God. It is actually dishonoring our Father. If I apply to my fellow for help, it is tantamount to saying that God has failed me. It is really betraying my loving Father who has taken me up, body, soul, and spirit, to do for me for time and eternity. He has pledged Himself to provide for all my wants, be they ever so many, ever so great, ever so varied. “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”

But we sometimes hear people say that the Lord has told them, or laid it upon their hearts, to apply to some human resource. This is very questionable indeed. It is not at all likely that our God would ever lead us to forsake the Fountain of living waters, and betake ourselves to some broken cistern. His word is, “Call upon me”—not upon your fellow—“in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.”

True it is that God uses the creature to meet our need; but this is a totally different matter. The blessed apostle could say, “God who comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus.” Paul was looking to God for comfort, and God sent Titus to comfort him. Had Paul been looking to Titus, he would have been disappointed.

Thus it is in every case. Our immediate and exclusive reference must be to God in all our need. “We have turned to God from idols;” and hence, in every exigence He is our sure resource. We can go to Him for counsel, for succor, for guidance, for sympathy, for all. “My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defense; I shall not be moved.”

Will this most blessed habit of looking only to God lead us to undervalue the channels through which His precious grace flows to us? The very reverse. How could I undervalue one who comes to me directly from God, as His manifest instrument, to meet my need? Impossible. But I value him as a channel, instead of applying to him as a source. This makes all the difference. We must never forget that true conversion means our being brought to God; and, most surely, if we are brought to God, it is in order that we should find in Him a perfect covering for our eyes, a perfect object for the heart, a perfect resource in all our exigencies, from first to last. A truly converted soul is one who is turned from all creature confidences, human hopes, and earthly expectations, to find all he wants in the living and true God, and that forever.

(To be continued, if the Lord will)

Conversion: What Is It? Part 7

We are now called to consider a deeply practical point in our subject. It is contained in the clause, "To serve the living and true God" This is full of interest to every truly converted soul—every true Christian. We are called "to serve." Our whole life, from the moment of our conversion to the close of our earthly career, should be characterized by a spirit of true, earnest, intelligent service. This is our high privilege, not to say our hallowed duty. It matters not what our sphere of action may be, what our line of life, or what our calling; when we are converted, we have just got one thing to do, namely, to serve God. If there be anything in our calling which is contrary to the revealed will of God—contrary to the direct teaching of His word—then we must at once abandon it, cost what it may. The very first step of an obedient servant is to step out of a false position.

Suppose, for example, the proprietor of a public-house is converted to God. What is he to do? Can he go on with such a business? Can he abide in such a calling with God? Can he continue in the sale of that which entails ruin, misery, degradation, death, and perdition on thousands and hundreds of thousands? Can he possibly serve the living and true God in the bar of a public-house?

We cannot believe it. We may be deemed harsh, severe, and narrow, in writing thus. We cannot help that. We must write what we believe to be the truth.

We are persuaded that the very first act of a converted public-house keeper should be to shut up his shop, and turn his back, with stern decision, on such a godless, horrible calling. To talk of serving God in such an occupation is, in our judgment, a miserable delusion.

No doubt, the same may be said of many other callings, and the reader may feel disposed to ask, "What is a Christian to do? How can he get on?" Our answer is simply this: We are called to serve God, and everything must be tried by this standard. The Christian has to ask himself this one question—"Can I fulfill the duties of this situation to the glory of God?" If not, he must abandon it. If we cannot connect the Name of God with our calling in life, then, assuredly, if we want to walk with God, if we aim at serving Him, if it be our one desire to be found well-pleasing in His sight—then we must give up that calling, and look to Him to open some path for us in which we can walk to His praise.

This He will do, blessed be His Name. He never fails a trusting soul. All we have to do is to cleave to Him with purpose of heart, and He will make the way plain before us. It may seem difficult at first. The path may appear narrow, rough, lonely; but our simple business is to stand for God, and not to continue for one hour in connection with anything contrary to His revealed will. A tender conscience, a single eye, a devoted heart, will settle many a question, solve many a difficulty, remove many a barrier. Indeed the very instincts of the divine nature, if only they be allowed to act, will guide in many a perplexity. "The light of the body is the eye; therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light." When the purpose of the heart is true to Christ—true to His name and cause—true to the service of God, the Holy Spirit opens up the precious treasures of

divine revelation to the soul, and pours a flood of living light upon the understanding, so that we see the path of service as clear as a sunbeam before us, and we have only got to tread it with a firm step.

But we must never, for one moment, lose sight of the grand fact that we are converted to the service of God. The outcome of the life which we possess must ever take the form of service to the living and true God. In our unconverted days we worshipped idols, and served divers lusts and pleasures; now, on the contrary, we worship God in the Spirit, and we are called to serve Him with all our ransomed powers. We have turned to God, to find in Him our perfect rest and satisfaction. There is not a single thing in the entire range of a creature's necessities, for time and eternity, that we cannot find in our own most gracious God and Father. He has treasured up in Christ, the Son of His love, all that can satisfy the desires of the new life in us. It is our privilege to have Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith, and to be so rooted and grounded in love, as to be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Thus filled, satisfied, and strengthened, we are called to dedicate ourselves, spirit, soul, and body, to the service of Christ; to be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. We should have nothing else to do in this world. Whatever cannot be done as service to Christ, ought not to be done at all. This simplifies the matter amazingly. It is our sweet privilege to do everything in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and to the glory of God. We sometimes hear people speak of "a secular calling," as contrasted with what is "sacred." We question the correctness of such a distinction. Paul made tents and planted churches, but in both he served the Lord Christ. All that a Christian does ought to be sacred, because it is done as service to God. If this were borne in mind, it would enable us to connect the very simplest duties of daily life with the Lord Himself, and to bring Him into them in such a way as to impart a holy dignity and interest to all that we have to do, from morning till night. In this way, instead of finding the duties of our calling a hindrance to our communion with God, we should actually make them an occasion of waiting on Him for wisdom and grace to discharge them aright, so that His holy Name might be glorified in the most minute details of practical life.

The fact is that the service of God is a much simpler matter than some of us imagine. It does not consist in doing some wonderful things beyond the bounds of our divinely appointed sphere of action. Take the case of a domestic servant. How can she serve the living and true God? She cannot go about visiting and talking. Her sphere of action lies in the shade and retirement of her master's house. Were she to run about from house to house, she would be actually neglecting her proper work, her divinely appointed business. Harken to the following sound and wholesome words:

"Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; not purloining, but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things." Titus 2:9, 10.

Here we see that the servant, by obedience, humility, and honesty can adorn the doctrine of God just as effectually, according to her measure, as an evangelist ranging the world over in the discharge of his high and holy commission.

Again, we read, "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good-will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men; knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free." Eph. 6

How lovely is all this! What a fine field of service is opened up for us here! How beautiful this "fear and trembling!" Where do we see it now-a-days? Where is the holy subjection to authority? Where the singleness of eye? Where the willing-hearted service? Alas! we see headiness and high-mindedness, self-will, self-pleasing, and self-interest. How must all these things dishonor the Lord, and grieve His Holy Spirit! How needful that our souls should be roused to a sense of what becomes us as those who are called to serve the living and true God! Is it not a signal mercy to every true Christian to know that he can serve and glorify God in the most commonplace domestic duties? If it were not so, what would become of ninety-nine out of every hundred Christians?

We have taken up the case of an ordinary domestic servant, in order to illustrate that special line of practical truth now under our consideration. Is it not most blessed for us to know that our God graciously condescends to connect His Name and His glory with the very humblest duties that can devolve upon us in our ordinary domestic life? It is this which imparts dignity, interest, and freshness to every little act, from morning till night. "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men." Here lies the precious secret of the whole matter. It is not working for wages, but serving the Lord Christ, and looking to Him to receive the reward of the inheritance.

Oh, that all this were more fully realized and illustrated amongst us! What moral elevation it would give to the entire christian life! What a triumphant answer it would furnish to the infidel! What a withering rebuke to all his sneers and cavils! Better by far than ten thousand learned arguments. There is no argument so forcible as an earnest, devoted, holy, happy, self-sacrificing christian life, and this life can be displayed by one whose sphere of action is bounded by the four walls of a kitchen.

And not only does the practical life of a true Christian afford the very best possible answer to the skeptic and the infidel, but it also meets, in a most satisfactory manner, the objections of those "who talk about works, and insist upon putting Christians under the law, in order to teach them how to live. "When people challenge us as to our not preaching up works, we simply ask them, " For what should we preach works?" The unconverted man cannot do any works, save "wicked works," or "dead works." There is not a single thought of his heart, not a single word of his lips, not a single act of his life, for which he does not righteously deserve the flames of an everlasting hell. "They that are in the flesh"—unconverted people—"cannot please God." Of what possible use can it be to preach works to such? It can only cast dust in their eyes, blind their minds, deceive their hearts, and send them down to hell with a lie in their right hand.

There must be genuine conversion to God. This is a divine work, from first to last. And what has the converted man got to do? He certainly has not to work for life, because he has it, even life eternal, as God's free gift, through Jesus Christ our Lord. He has not to work for salvation, because he is saved already— "saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation." What, then, is he called to do? "To serve the living and true God." How? When? Where? In everything; at all times, and in all places. The converted man has nothing else to do but to serve God. If he does anything

else, he is positively untrue, unfaithful to that blessed Lord and Master, who, ere ever He called him to serve, endowed him with the life, and the grace, and the power, whereby alone the service can be rendered.

Yes, reader, the Christian is called to serve. Let us never forget this. He is privileged to “present his body as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is his reasonable, his intelligent service.” This settles the whole question. It removes all difficulties; it silences all objections; it puts everything in its right place. It is not a question of what I am doing, but how I do it—not where I am, but how I conduct myself. Christianity, as displayed in the New Testament, is the outcome of the life of Christ in the believer; it is Christ reproduced in the Christian’s daily life, by the power of the Holy Ghost. Everything the Christian touches, everything he does, everything he says, his whole practical life, from Lord’s day morning till Saturday night, should bear the impress, and breathe the spirit, of that great practical clause on which we have been dwelling—“serving the living and true God.” May it be so more and more! May all the Lord’s beloved people, everywhere, be really stirred up to seek more earnest, out-and-out, whole-hearted devotedness to Christ and His precious service!

(To be concluded in our next, if the Lord will.)

Conversion: What Is It? Part 8

The last words of our chapter—1 Thess. 1—now claim our attention. They furnish a very striking and forcible proof of the clearness, fullness, depth, and comprehensiveness of the apostle's testimony at Thessalonica, and also of the brightness and reality of the work in the young converts in that place. It was not merely that they turned from idols to God, to serve the living and true God. This, through grace, they did, and that, too, with uncommon power, freshness, and fervor.

But there was something more; and we may assert with all possible confidence, that there would have been a grand defect in the conversion and in the Christianity of those beloved disciples, if that had been lacking. They were converted to wait for the Son of God from the heavens.

Let the reader give to this very weighty fact his most devout and profound attention. The bright and blessed hope of the Lord's coming formed an integral part of the gospel which Paul preached, and of the Christianity of those who were converted by his ministry. That blessed servant preached a full gospel. He not only declared that the Son of God had come into the world, to accomplish the great work of redemption, and lay the everlasting foundation of the divine glory and counsels, but that He had gone back to the heavens, and taken His seat, as the victorious, exalted, and glorified Man, at the right hand of the throne of God; and that He is coming again, first, to receive His people to Himself, and conduct them into the very innermost circle of His Father's house—the place prepared for them; and then to come forth with them, to execute judgment upon His enemies—gather out of His kingdom all that offend, and all that do iniquity, and set up His glorious dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth.

All this was included in the precious gospel which Paul preached, and which the Thessalonian converts received. We find an indirect, but very interesting intimation of this in a passage in Acts 17, where the inspired writer records what the infidel Jews thought and said about the apostle's preaching. "But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; whom Jason hath received; and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus."

Such were the ideas which those poor ignorant, prejudiced unbelievers gathered from the preaching of the Lord's beloved servants; and we can see in them the elements of great and solemn truths—the complete upturning of the present system of things, and the establishment of the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him." Ez. 21:27.

But not only did the Lord's coming and kingdom occupy a prominent place in the preaching of the apostle, it also shines brilliantly forth in all his teaching. Not only were the Thessalonians converted to this blessed hope; they were built up, established, and led on in it. They were taught

to live in the brightness of it every hour of the day. It was not a dry, barren dogma, to be received and held as part of a powerless, worthless creed; it was a living reality, a mighty moral power in the soul—a precious, purifying, sanctifying, elevating hope, detaching the heart completely from present things, and causing it to look out, moment by moment—yes, reader, we repeat it with emphasis, moment by moment—for the return of our beloved Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who loved us, and gave Himself for us.

It is interesting to notice that, in the two epistles to the Thessalonians, there is far more allusion to the Lord's coming than in all the other epistles put together. This is all the more remarkable, inasmuch as they were the very earliest of Paul's epistles, and they were written to an assembly very young in the faith.

If the reader will just glance rapidly through these two most precious writings, he will find the hope of the Lord's return introduced in every one of the eight chapters, and in connection with all sorts of subjects. For example, in chapter 1 we have it presented as the grand object to be ever kept before the Christian's heart, let his position or his relationship be what it may—the brilliant light shining at the end of his long pilgrimage through this dark and toilsome world. "Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to wait for"—what? The time of their death? No such thing, no allusion to such a thing. Death, for the believer, is abolished, and is never presented as the object of his hope. For what, then, were the Thessalonian disciples taught to wait? "For God's Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead."

And then mark the beautiful addition! "Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." This is the Person for whom we are waiting; our precious Savior; our great Deliverer; the One who undertook our desperate case, who took, on our behalf, the cup of wrath, from the hand of infinite Justice, and exhausted it, forever; who cleared the prospect of every cloud, so that we can gaze upward into heaven, and onward into eternity, and see nothing but the brightness and blessedness of His own love and glory, as our happy home throughout the everlasting ages.

Oh, beloved christian reader, how blessed to be looking out, morning, noon, eventide, and midnight, for the coming of our gracious Deliverer! What a holy reality to be ever waiting for the return of our own loving and beloved Savior and Lord! How separating and elevating, as we rise each morning to start on our daily course of duty—whatever that duty may be, whether the scrubbing of a floor, or the evangelizing of a continent—to cherish the bright and blessed hope that, ere the shades of evening gather round us, we may be summoned to ascend in the folds of the cloud of glory to meet our coming Lord!

Is this the mere dream of a wild fanatic or a visionary enthusiast? Nay, it is an imperishable truth, resting on the very same foundation that sustains the entire fabric of our most glorious Christianity. Is it true that the Son of God has trod this earth of ours in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth? Is it true that He lived and labored here amid the sins and sorrows of poor fallen humanity? Is it true that He sighed, and wept, and groaned under the sense of the wide-spread desolation which sin had wrought in this world? Is it true that He went to the cross, and there offered Himself without spot to God, in order to vindicate the Divine Majesty; to answer all the claims of the throne of God; to destroy all the works of the devil; to make a public show of all the powers of hell; to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; to bear the sins of all those who, from the beginning to the end of time, should, through grace, believe in His name? Is it true that He lay for three days and three nights in

the heart of the earth, and on the first day of the week rose triumphant from the grave, as the Head of the new creation, and ascended into the heavens, after He had been seen by at least five hundred witnesses? Is it true that, fifty days after His resurrection, He sent down the Holy Ghost, in order to fill and fit His apostles to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth? Is it true that, from the day of Pentecost to this very hour, He has been acting on His people's behalf as an Advocate with the Father, a great High Priest with God; interceding for us in all our failures, sins, and shortcomings, and sympathizing with us in all our infirmities and in all our sorrows; and presenting continually our sacrifices of prayer and praise, in all the fragrance of His own glorious Person?

Are all these things true? Yes, thank God, they are all divinely true, all set forth in the pages of the New Testament, with most marvelous fullness, clearness, depth, and power; all rest on the solid foundation of holy scripture—a foundation which not all the powers of earth and hell, men and devils, can ever touch.

Well, then, the blessed hope of the Lord's coming rests on precisely the same authority. It is not more true that our Lord Jesus Christ lay as a babe in the manger of Bethlehem; that He grew up to man's estate; that He went about doing good; that He was nailed to the cross and laid in the tomb; that He is now seated on the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, than that He will come again to receive His people to Himself. He may come tonight. No one can tell when He will come, but at any moment He may come. The only thing that detains Him is His long-suffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. For eighteen long centuries has He waited, in lingering love, mercy, and compassion; and during all that time salvation has been ready to be revealed, and God has been ready to judge; but He has waited, and He still waits, in long-suffering grace and patience.

But He will come, and we should ever live in the hope of His coming. Thus the apostle taught his beloved Thessalonians to live. Thus he lived himself. The blessed hope was intimately bound up with all the habits and feelings of his daily life. Was it a question of reaping the fruit of his labors? Hear what He says: "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" He would see them all then and there. No enemy will be allowed to hinder that meeting. "We would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again, but Satan hindered us." Very wonderful! Very mysterious! Yet so it was. Satan hindered an angel of God in the discharge of his business in the days of Daniel; and he hindered an apostle of Christ in the accomplishment of his loving desire to see his brethren at Thessalonica. But, thanks be to God, he will not be able to hinder the joyful meeting of Christ and His saints for which we wait. What a moment that will be! What precious reunions! What sweet recognitions! What affectionate greetings of dear old friends! But, far above all, Himself! His smile! His welcome! His soul-stirring "Well done!"

What a precious soul-sustaining hope! Need we wonder at the prominent place it occupied in the thoughts and the teachings of the blessed apostle? He recurs to it on all occasions, and in connection with every subject. Is it a question of progress in the divine life and practical godliness? Thus he puts it: "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all, even as we do toward you; to the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints."

Let the reader specially mark the last clause of this touching and beautiful quotation. "With all his saints." What admirable wisdom shines here! The apostle was about to touch directly upon an error into which the Thessalonian believers had fallen, in reference to their departed friends. They feared that those who had fallen asleep would not participate in the joy of the Lord's coming. This error is completely demolished by that brief sentence, "with all his saints." Not one will be absent from that joyous meeting, that festive scene. Blessed assurance! Triumphant answer to all who would have us believe that none will share the joy of our Lord's coming save those who see this, that, and the other! "With all his saints," spite of their ignorance and their errors, their wanderings and their stumblings, their shortcomings and their failures. Our blessed Savior, the everlasting Lover of our souls, will not shut any of us out at that blissful moment.

Is all this matchless grace to make us careless? God forbid! Nay, it is the abiding sense of it which alone can keep us alive to our holy responsibility to judge everything in us and in our ways which is contrary to the mind of Christ. And not only so, but the hope of our Lord's return, if it be kept bright and fresh in the heart, must purify, sanctify, and elevate our entire character and course, as nothing else can. "Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure." It is morally impossible for anyone to live in the hope of seeing his Lord at any moment, and yet have his heart set upon worldly things, upon money-making, self-indulgence, pleasure, vanity, folly. Let us not deceive ourselves. If we are daily looking out for the Son of God from heaven, we must sit loose to the things of time and sense. We may hold the doctrine of the Lord's coming as a mere dogma in the intellect; we may have the entire range of prophetic truth mapped out before our mind's eye, without its producing the smallest effect upon the heart, the character, or the practical life. But it is another thing altogether to have the whole moral being, the entire practical career, governed by the bright and blessed hope of seeing the One who loveth us, and hath washed us from our sins in His own most precious blood.

Would there were more of this amongst us! It is to be feared that many of us have lost the freshness and power of our true and proper hope. The truth of the Lord's coming has become so familiar as a mere doctrine, that we can flippantly speak of it, and discuss various points in connection with it, and argue with people about it, and, all the while, our ways, our deportment, our spirit and temper give the lie to what we profess to hold.

But we shall not pursue this sad and humbling side of the subject. May the Lord look upon us, and graciously heal, restore, and lift up our souls. May He revive in the hearts of all His beloved people the proper christian hope—the hope of seeing the bright and morning star. May the utterance of the whole heart, and the utterance of the whole life, be, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

Here we must close this paper, and with it the entire series of papers on the great subject which has, for the past few months, engaged our attention. We had hoped to run through the two epistles to the Thessalonians, in company with our readers, in order to prove and illustrate the statement, that the hope of the Lord's return was bound up in the heart of the apostle, with all the scenes, circumstances, and associations of christian life. But we must allow the reader to do this for himself. Sufficient, we trust, has been said to show that true conversion, according to apostolic teaching, cannot stop short of the blessed hope of the Lord's coming. A truly converted person is one who has turned from idols—has broken with the world—broken with his former self—turned to God, to find in Him all he can possibly want for time and eternity, to serve Him, and Him

only—and, finally, “to wait for the Son of God from heaven.” Such we conceive to be the true and proper answer to the question, “What is Conversion?”

Reader, art thou converted? If not, what then? If thou art, does thy life declare it?

Correspondence

1. "W. B." A man who puts pasteboard into shoes and sells them for leather is unworthy of the name of Christian; indeed he is not even an honest man. We may be told, "It is the custom of the trade." Well, how does this alter the matter for one who desires to walk in the fear of God, and to keep a good conscience? It may be the custom of the trade to put shoddy into cloth, to put sand into sugar, to put water in the milk. But can a Christian, or even an honest man do such things? Most assuredly not. The conscience of a Christian must be regulated, not by the custom of the trade, but by the word of God. If this be lost sight of, there is an end to all practical Christianity in commercial life. A christian manufacturer could no more think of putting pasteboard into shoes and selling them as all leather, than he could think of picking a man's pocket. If indeed it be the custom to put pasteboard into shoes—if everybody does it, and everybody knows it, then, of course, there is no deception in the matter. But if I sell a pair of shoes as all leather, when I know they are made of leather and pasteboard, then am I a liar and a thief. I am morally worse than a highway robber, inasmuch as he openly avows what he is, what he does, and what he wants. A man who adulterates his goods is guilty of the very meanest dishonesty.

But then, supposing a person is not a manufacturer, but a salesman in a warehouse or shop—what is he to do? He does not adulterate, he merely sells. Is he dishonest, is he untrue in selling adulterated goods? Unquestionably, if he sells them for genuine. How could a true Christian—how could a really honest man declare an article to be genuine, when he knows it is not? We shall perhaps be told that this is mere scrupulosity. Be it so; we heartily wish there were more of it in commercial life. To us it seems to be only common honesty.

But it will not do in the world. Doubtless; but what does this prove? Simply that the world is untrue and dishonest. If truth and uprightness cannot get on in the world, then what must the world be?

Still, the Christian must be honest. His object is not to get on in the world or to make money, but to glorify God in his daily life. Can he glorify God by adulterating goods, and telling lies?

We feel the immense importance, dear friend, of the subject which you have brought before us. We believe it demands the serious attention of all Christians engaged in manufacture and commerce. There is immense danger of being drawn away from the path of christian integrity, and falling into the wretched spirit of covetousness and competition so rife on all hands. We have to bear in mind that Christianity is a living reality; it is divine life coming out in all the practical details of our daily history; it is not confined to the benches of a meeting room; it has more ways of showing and expressing itself than by preaching, praying, and singing—precious, most precious as all these are in their place. It must come out in the manufactory, in the warehouse, in the shop, in the counting-house, in the daily occupation, whatever that may be. How terrible to think of a man singing and praying on the Lord's day, and, on Monday morning adulterating his bread and selling it as genuine! Oh! let us be honest, come what may. Let us walk in the fear of God. Let us, like the blessed apostle, "exercise ourselves to have always a conscience void of offense, toward God and man."

True, it may cost us something. We may have to suffer for righteousness' sake. But what is all this when compared with the deep joy of walking with God in that narrow path on which the blessed beams of His approving countenance ever shine? Is not a good conscience better far than thousands of gold and silver? Our God will take care of us. He will meet all our real need, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Why should we ever betake ourselves to the contemptible "tricks of trade" in order to make money or make a living, when our Father has pledged Himself to care for us all the journey through?

2. "Mary," Middlesex. We render hearty thanks to God for His exceeding goodness in enabling you to enter on the path of simple obedience to His holy word. May He graciously strengthen and sustain you! May He fill you with the joy of His own blessed presence! You may find the path rough and lonely; but oh! the light of His countenance will more than make up for all that. Go on, dear friend, steadily on. Cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart. It is but a little while of toil, trial, and suffering here, and then the eternal rest of our Father's home above, in unbroken fellowship with the One who loveth us and hath washed us from our sins in His own blood. To Him we do most earnestly commend you, dear friend, in spirit, soul and body. May He deliver you from every evil work, and preserve you unto His heavenly kingdom!

8. "C. A. C.," Valparaiso. We are deeply interested in your letter. May you all be greatly helped and strengthened in the way of truth! We trust the Lord may soon open the way for you to have His table spread in your midst, so that you may taste the sweet privilege of remembering Him in His death—the sweetest privilege of the church of God on earth. Wait on Him about it—wait together—wait patiently. Do not run before Him. See His hand opening the way ere you move one step. Be much in prayer, and in the study of His word. Read Psalm 133 and Philippians 2. May you realize and illustrate those precious scriptures!

4. "M. S. S.," St. Petersburg. Accept our warmest thanks for your deeply interesting letter. Be assured you have our hearty sympathy and earnest prayers in all your exercise. We give you for your comfort, 1 Pet. 5:10, and Heb. 13:20, 21.

Correspondence

4. "M. H.," St. Kilda, Victoria. We have read, with very deep interest and thankfulness, your most kind and encouraging letter. The Lord be praised for all you can tell of His great goodness to you! We deeply feel your kindness in writing. May the Lord greatly bless you! May He pour into your precious soul the rich consolations of His love, and fill you with all joy and peace in believing. We feel for you in your isolation; but Christ is with you and He is enough. You will be sorry to hear that our beloved friend Dr. Mackern, to whom you refer, is no longer with us. He fell asleep, in November, 1874.

5. "T. A. T.," London. There is a very lovely passage at the close of the book of Revelation, to which you have not referred. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Rev. 22:17.) This is but one of a large number of passages which give us the other side of the subject. Your letter is entirely one sided. The writer of the article to which you call our attention, rejects utterly the notion of man's free will. He believes that man is perfectly powerless; and not only so, but in a state of positive enmity against God, so that, if left to himself, he never would come to Christ. All who come to the supper are compelled to come, else they never would be there.

Moreover he most fully believes in the sovereignty of God; and that the names of all who are saved were written in the Lamb's book of life, before the foundation of the world.

But then, on the other side—for we must take both sides—let us ponder such words as these: “I exhort therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; who will have all men to be saved. and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” 1 Tim. 2:1-6.

And again, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” 2 Pet. 3:2.

Now, if it be said, that, in the above scriptures, the words “ any “ and “ all “ refer to the elect, we reply that this is an unwarrantable liberty to take with the word of God. If the inspired writer had meant, “any of the elect,” or “all of the elect,” he would, most assuredly, have said so. But he says nothing of the kind. It is not according to the desire of the heart of God that any should perish.

But man is a responsible being; although your letter is totally silent on this very important question. In short, you seem to lose sight altogether of two weighty truths: first, the largeness of the heart of God—the fullness and freeness of His grace—the wide aspect of His salvation—that His righteousness is unto all—that the gospel is to be preached to every creature—that God commandeth all men everywhere, to repent. Mark 16:15; Acts 17:30; Rom. 3:22.

And, secondly, man's responsibility. Is the sinner responsible or is he not? If he be not responsible, then what mean such words as these—“Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels; in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power?” And again, “For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” 2 Thess. 1:6-9; 2:11, 12.

Are men responsible to believe the gospel? Yes, verily, inasmuch as they shall be punished with everlasting destruction for rejecting it. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? People find difficulty in reconciling man's powerlessness with his responsibility. It is none of our business to reconcile things that are revealed in holy scripture. It is ours to believe. They are reconciled, inasmuch as they are distinctly taught in the word of God. It is remarkable that we do not see the same difficulty in reference to the things of this life. Suppose a man owes you a thousand pounds; but he has by unprincipled extravagance, rendered himself wholly unable to pay you. He is quite powerless. Is he responsible? And are you not perfectly justified, according to worldly principles, in taking legal proceedings against him? How much more will God be justified in His judgment of all those who reject the glad tidings of a full and free salvation sent to them on the ground of the atoning death of His only begotten Son!

6. "It. G.," Ireland. Your poem has come to hand. It is too long for our limited space. Thanks for your kind note.

7. "J. P.," Sale. We cannot conceive how any true Christian could engage in such a practice as card-playing. We consider it perfectly shocking. We must confess your letter surprises us.

8. "M. B.," Dawlish. Your truly kind and interesting letter has come to hand. We are very thankful for the help you have received from the article on Heb. 6 The Lord bless you!

9. "W. L.," Illinois, U.S. 1 Cor. 1:17 gives you a divine reply to your inquiry. May the Great Shepherd and Bishop of souls keep you ever in the holy shelter of His own blessed presence!

Correspondence

10. "J. C.," Cirencester. We should consider it quite wrong to take such a step.

11. "D. W." Old Cumnock. The idea of departed spirits being in an unconscious state is as absurd as it is unscriptural. Has Paul been unconscious for the last eighteen hundred years? If there were any truth in this notion, could he have said, "To die is gain?" Would it be gain to be unconscious? Would it be "far better" than to enjoy Christ here, and serve Him in the gospel and in the assembly? When the Lord said to the dying thief, "Today, shalt thou be with me in paradise," did He mean that he was to be unconscious? Why say, "with me, in paradise?" If he was to be unconscious, what difference could it make where he was to be? When the blessed apostle says, "Absent from the body, present with the Lord," does he mean a state of unconsciousness? Had Stephen nothing but a state of unconsciousness before him, when he said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit?" It is really most deplorable to find any calling themselves Christians, holding such a miserable theory. Excuse our strong language. It is hard to speak in measured terms of such a baseless absurdity as a ransomed spirit asleep in the presence of Christ! May the Lord deliver His people from all vain and foolish notions!

12. "G. B.," Lewisham. We agree with you, in the main; but we need to exercise patience and forbearance in such matters.

13. "F. A. F. G.," Christchurch. The inspired apostle tells us that "every creature of God is good and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." But, on the other hand, he says again, "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." Here we have the two sides of this practical question.

14. "E. J. G.," Jersey. Thanks for your kind note and the accompanying lines.

15. "G. H.," Toronto. Scripture is, as you say, totally silent on the point; and we must ever bear in mind that, where scripture is silent, discussion is useless; where scripture speaks, discussion is closed.

16. "L.," Leicester. The word rendered "rest" in Matt. 11:22 is not the same as in Heb. 4:9. In the former it is ἀναπαυσιν (anapausin); in the latter it is σαββατισμος (sabbatismos). Our Lord says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" This is rest of conscience—rest as to our sins, our guilt, our responsibilities as sinners—rest as to everything

which might raise a question between our souls and God.

But, further, He says, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest." This is rest of heart, as regards our present path—our circumstances, our cares and anxieties, our difficulties and trials. This rest is the opposite of restlessness, and flows from our being subject, in all things, to the will of God, as our blessed Lord was perfectly. He could say, "I thank thee, Father," when everything seemed to be against Him. "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." And when we can say with all the heart, "Thy will be done, O Lord," then we "find rest." If our will be active, we are restless; if our will is subject, we have rest—sweet rest, rest of heart—the peace of God which passeth all understanding. Precious portion!

Then, in Heb. 4:9, we have another thing altogether. "There remaineth a sabbath-keeping for the people of God." This is the future rest, the rest of glory to which we are on our way. It is God's rest into which He will, blessed be His name, conduct us when all our wilderness toil is over. The Epistle to the Hebrews presents the people of God as pilgrims on their way to rest, and it exhorts them to labor to enter into that rest. The sinner is not told to labor for rest, but the Christian is. This makes all the difference.

17. "T. S.," Hamilton, Ontario. There is a pamphlet on the subject, written thirty years ago, to be had of our publisher, Mr. Morrish, 20, Paternoster Square, London, E.C., entitled, "Thoughts on the Lord's Supper, designed for Christians in this Day of Difficulty." Also a small tract, entitled, "Hints and Suggestions as to the Lord's Supper, and those who partake of it."

18. "M. M.," Kingston-on-Thames. The question of insurance, whether of life or property, is entirely one of individual faith. If you put your trust in God, you will have no need of an insurance office. The promise of God, which you get for nothing, is better far than an insurance policy for which you must pay. At least so we judge; but each one must learn this for himself.

19. "J. B.," Kingstown. Thanks for your kind suggestion. The Lord, we trust, will guide, as He has graciously done for the last twenty years.

20. "Hartest," Suffolk. In 1 Timothy 1:20, the apostle delivers Hymenaeus and Alexander to Satan. It sets forth an act of solemn discipline by direct apostolic power. In 1 Corinthians 5 the assembly at Corinth is commanded to deliver the evil doer to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. In both cases, we take it to be an act of discipline. A person put out of the assembly where the Holy Ghost ruled, was handed over to the power of Satan in order that his flesh might be thoroughly judged and crushed—serious, but needed work! May we learn, dear friend, to judge ourselves, in secret, before our God, so that the assembly may not have to deal with us. If the roots of evil are judged in private, the fruit will not appear above the surface of our practical life.

Correspondence

21. "J. F. B.," Penzance. We do not remember the paper to which you refer.

22. "J. S.," Edinburgh. Your appeal is hardly suitable for our pages.

23. "C. M. J.," Dawlish. Your lines have come to hand.

24. "R.B.," Oxon. If you were, as you say, so "careless, indifferent, and utterly hardened," we do not think you would have written such a letter to us. The very fact of your writing to ask us what we think of your case, proves, in our judgment, that you are by no means indifferent to the momentous question of your soul's salvation. You say, "My heart is as hard as a stone; and I don't suppose I should ever think or care one bit about it, if I were not afraid to die, or to think of our Lord's second coming."

Now, dear friend, if your heart were as hard as a stone, you would not be troubled about your state at all. The very fact of your feeling and deploring the hardness of your heart proves that you are not careless, indifferent, and utterly hardened." Why are you afraid to die? Why do you dread the thought of the Lord's coming? Whence come these exercises? Do you not think the Spirit of God is working in you, in order to make you see your true condition in the sight of God, that you may judge yourself, and look to Christ, in true repentance? It is well you should judge the hardness of your heart—well to feel your guilt and danger—well to be afraid of death or the Lord's coming. There is good cause for all this.

But you have no ground whatever for fearing "that God has given you over to impenitence." This is a suggestion of the devil. God has not given you over. He is calling you to come. The door of mercy stands wide open. You never were, and you never can be, more welcome than you are this moment. What was it made the prodigal think of returning to the Father? Was it love for the father, or a desire for his company? Was it a desire to escape from the habits and ways of the "far country?" It was not any of these things. He said, "How many hired servants of my father have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" In other words, it was a selfish motive that brought him back. Did that hinder his reception? Nay, dear friend, the father was glad to get him back on any terms. The joy of the father in getting him back was infinitely greater than his joy in being received. This is the grand point of the parable. "The Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them;" and our blessed Lord spoke those three exquisite parables in reply to their murmurings. He condescends to vindicate the grace of God in receiving sinners. He shows, blessed forever be His name, that it is the very joy of the heart of God to receive sinners. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

"Ah! yes," you say, "one sinner that repenteth; but my heart is as hard as a stone." Why the very fact of your deploring the hardness of your heart is a proof to us of an incipient work of repentance in your precious soul. Come, then, just as you are, to Jesus. "This man receiveth sinners." What kind of sinners? All kinds. If your heart were ever so hard; though your sins were as scarlet; though you were the very vilest sinner on the face of the earth, "This man receiveth sinners." It makes Him happy to do so. It causes joy in heaven when a lost one is found. Do, dear friend, come to Jesus just now. He has glorified God about the question of sin, and hence God can be just, and the Justifier of every soul that simply believes in Jesus. Delay not, we beseech thee, to come. Say not, "I must wait till my heart grows softer, my mind more anxious, my conscience more tender, my motive for coming purer. I must feel the burden of my sins more intensely."

All this is simply the effort of the enemy to keep you away from Christ, by occupying you with yourself. Do not listen to him. Regard him not. Look to Jesus. His love will melt and subdue your hard heart. He died for you when you were a hateful rebel and an enemy. This is your ground for

coming. Do you want to find a title for coming in your softened heart or tender conscience? It will not do. It is a mistake. Your title to come is that you are a lost sinner, and when you come, Christ is your title to everything.

25. "W. J. M.," Teignmouth. Matt. 6:9-15 is the form of prayer which our Lord taught His disciples to use. It suited their condition at that time, and it will, we doubt not, suit the condition of the godly remnant after the church has been taken up. A great change took place when our Lord was glorified. He sent down the Holy Ghost to dwell with and in His people, to lead them into all truth, to teach them how to pray, and to make intercession in them. When our Lord gave His disciples a form of prayer, the Holy Ghost had not been given, because Jesus was not glorified. Compare John 7:39 with 16:7. But from the time the Holy Ghost was given, we have no record of the disciples' prayer being used. In Rom. 8 we read, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us according to God." We are dependent wholly upon the power of the Spirit, and not upon any given form, however perfect in itself. No doubt the disciples' prayer was divinely perfect for the time then present. It could not be otherwise, seeing our Lord gave it. But then the work of redemption was not accomplished; the Holy Ghost was not given; the prayer is not in the name of Jesus. These are weighty considerations for all who desire to understand this subject. We do not doubt in the least that many of the Lord's beloved people are virtually in the condition of the disciples previous to the day of Pentecost. They do not rejoice in accomplished redemption—in full remission of sins—perfect acceptance in a risen Christ; they do not know themselves as sealed by the Holy Ghost. Hence the disciples' prayer is a suited utterance for them. But should they be satisfied in such a condition? Ought they not to know the things which are freely given them of God? Surely they should; but, alas! alas! Christendom's creeds and formularies act as a sad hindrance to these precious souls in understanding and appropriating the true christian position. May the Lord, in His infinite goodness, visit them with the full-orbed light of His salvation!

26. "A Young and Troubled Believer." You are perfectly right, dear friend, in thinking it is the enemy seeking to disturb your mind, and occupy you with anything but Christ. Dismiss the question, once and forever, from your mind, and rest, like a little child, in the simple truth of scripture. Stephen saw the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. We read in Rev. 22, "There shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads." God is revealed in the face of Jesus Christ, and we shall be with Him and like Him forever. May the Lord set your mind at perfect rest!

27. "M. S. S.," St. Petersburg. We heartily thank God for the contents of your letter of February 20th, just received. How good He is, dear friend! And what a grand reality to have Him to lean upon in all the vicissitudes, trials, and exercises of our earthly path! May He keep you ever in the moral shelter of His own most blessed presence, separated to Him; safe in Him; satisfied with Him, until that clay! Many thanks for the poem.

Correspondence

28. "T. P.," Wigan. We have written, more than once, on the subject of eternal punishment, in the pages of "Things New and Old," and we must refer you to those papers, some of which have been reprinted. We have not read the pamphlet sent by you. Indeed, dear friend, we deem it right to tell

you that we never read any books, pamphlets or tracts in which the truth of eternal punishment is denied; or any infidel publication; or any in which the Deity or the perfect humanity of our adorable Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is denied; or such as deny the plenary inspiration of the holy scriptures, given of God in the Hebrew and Greek languages, or any in which the Lord's dear people or His beloved and honored servants are spoken against. We put all such into the fire, at once, believing it to be the best thing to do with them. We do not feel it to be our business to reply to those books; we leave that for other and abler hands; but we are most fully persuaded that they all emanate directly from the father of lies; and we are not going to read anything of his. Being, by the mercy of God, fully convinced of the truth on all the above subjects, we are determined, by His grace, never to read anything in opposition thereto, but to deal with it in the manner aforesaid; and we make this statement for the information of all whom it may concern, in order that they may spare themselves the trouble and expense of sending us any of the above-named publications.

29. "A. F.," New Barnes. We believe that Matt. 18:10-14, furnishes the foundation of the precious truth of the salvation of infants. Do you not believe this? Are you not fully persuaded that all who die in infancy are saved? That inasmuch as their little bodies undergo the penalty of Adam's sin, their precious souls partake of the benefit of Christ's atonement? Well, if you believe this, why should your heart be troubled as to the destiny of your infant child, in the event of the Lord's coming? Can you not fully trust that blessed One who, in the days of His flesh, said, with such touching tenderness, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God"? Can your heart entertain, for a moment, the unworthy thought that your gracious Lord, when He comes for His people, could take the mother to be with Himself and leave her babe behind to perish? You ask if we "can tell you of any scripture which shows what becomes of the infant children of believers, when the Lord has taken His church to Himself!" We reply at once, Matt. 18:10-14. "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. "How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in Heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."

Now, dear friend, is not this a precious answer to your question? Is it not divinely calculated to hush all your anxiety in reference to your precious babe, in the event of the Lord's coming? Will the loving Savior, think you, who uttered these words, ignore them, when He comes for His church? The very thought were blasphemy. Ah! no: beloved, our loving Lord will be fully glorified in receiving to His bosom and taking to his home the infant children of His people, as well as the parents. It is not His will, now, and it cannot be His will, then, that one of these little ones should perish. May your heart find settled rest as to this question, in the eternal truth of God and in the rich and precious grace which shines so brightly and blessedly in Matt. 18:10-14.

30. "W. A.," Faringdon. We cannot insert your article.

31. "J. S.," Herts. The cup in the Lord's Supper occupies a position far too elevated to be, in the very smallest degree, affected by the question of teetotalism.

32. "J. W.," London. To say that "I cannot help sinning," is to deny the very foundations of Christianity. To say that I cannot sin is a deceit and a delusion. To say that I need not sin, is to state a holy christian privilege. The rendering of Gal. 5:17, in our Authorized Version, is not very felicitous. It should be "That ye should not do those things which ye desire."

33. "W. W.," W. In the painful case which you name, we do not believe it to be the right thing for a son to "try and manage a reunion" between the father and mother. If the husband wishes to come back, the wife should receive him. This, we think, is clearly involved in 1 Cor. 7:13. "The woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him." If he wishes to come back, it is tantamount to being pleased to dwell with her and if she be told "not to leave him," it is tantamount to being told to receive him. At least, so we judge. It may be the Lord is about to bring the husband to Himself; and if so, it would be very sad if a christian wife should prove a stumbling-block, by failing in grace. No doubt, he has signally failed in his duty as a husband, in the act of leaving his wife, even were there nothing more serious; but if he really desires—apart from any management or any influence brought to bear upon him—to come back, we cannot but judge it to be the duty of a Christian wife to receive him, and to seek, "by her chaste conversation coupled with fear," to win him for Christ. Should she refuse, and that lie should then be driven away into sin or hardness of heart, she could never forgive herself.

34. "E. D.," Lymington. 1 Cor. 14:34 has no reference whatever to a woman's singing in the assembly. The apostle does not say, "It is not permitted unto them to sing" but "to speak." To apply the passage to singing is simply absurd.

35. "R. C.," Plymouth. The marginal reading of Eph. 6:19, is rather more correct than the text. Our conflict is with the spiritual power of wickedness in the heavenlies. Israel's conflict was with flesh and blood in earthly places; ours is with spiritual powers in heavenly places. The expression "high places" has no such reference as you suggest.

36. "E. J.," Ventnor. Would you like the Lord to come and find you in a skating rink? Can you ask God's blessing on your going to such a place? Can you go to the glory of God? Do you think your Lord would be found in such a place? The next time your "fellow believer" asks you to go, just ask him or her the foregoing questions.

37. "R. W.," Heckmondwike. We could not think of forming, much less of giving, a judgment in any case without having all the facts fully and clearly before us. Ignorance of a single fact might render the judgment not only worthless, but false, inasmuch as that one fact might so materially affect all the other facts as to alter their bearing completely and so reverse the judgment.

38. "E. B.," Brighton. We beg to tender you our hearty thanks for your very kind and encouraging letter. Accept 1 Pet. 5:10.

39. "B. L.," Lower Norwood. Your narrative has come to hand. We can only say, "What hath God wrought!" His Name be praised!

40. "E. P. B.," London. Scripture is totally silent on the point. We should never think of raising such a question.

Correspondence

41. "B. S.," Stockton-on-Tees. There is much truth in your remarks. Let us be more thoroughly in earnest in waiting upon our God, that He may deepen His work in all our souls, and lead us to a closer walk with Himself. We long for more reality, more whole-heartedness, more deep-toned devotedness. May all who really mourn over the lack of these things get together on their faces before God, and persevere in prayer till He sends a full wave of blessing into their midst. We have great confidence in united, hearty, believing prayer.

42. "J. E.," Adelaide. Accept, dear friend, our warmest thanks for your truly kind and encouraging letter. We bless the Lord, with an overflowing heart, for what you can tell us of help and blessing received through our pages. We cannot tell you what joy it is to be allowed to minister to the beloved flock of Christ, in distant regions of the earth where it is not likely we shall ever be in person. May the Lord's richest blessings rest upon you and the beloved friends with whom you are associated. Most gladly would we send you a direct reply; but we trust you will kindly take into your consideration the immense amount of writing which falls to our lot; and that you will take this as an acknowledgment of your most interesting communication.

43. "M. A. L.," Harrogate. Thanks for the sweet lines. We like them much, and shall be happy to insert them.

44. "D. W.," London. It would be a very grave mistake indeed to say "that all the trials and sufferings of Christians are punishments for some particular sin." Very often these things are sent as a preventive, and to draw the heart nearer to Christ. Who would presume to say that the sickness of Epaphroditus, in Phil. 2 was a punishment for some particular sin? The apostle expressly tells us that, "for the work of Christ, he was nigh unto death." Were Timothy's frequent infirmities sent as a punishment for some particular sin?

We do not like the term "punishment" as applied to the dealings of our loving Father. There is nothing penal, in the strict sense of the word, even in His wise and faithful correction. Christ our blessed Substitute exhausted, on our behalf, all that was penal. God chastens His children, in order to make them partakers of His holiness, as we learn in Heb. 12. Moreover, the Father judges His house, as we read in 1 Pet. 4:17. So, in 1 Cor. 11 we are told that many of the Corinthians were visited with bodily sickness and death, because of their disorderly conduct at the Lord's table. But this we are told was in order that they might "not be condemned with the world."

In Jas. 5 we read, "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." The "if" shows that the sickness might not have been sent on account of any particular sin.

In 1 John 5 we read, "If any man see his brother sin a sin not unto death, he shall ask and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death, I do not say that he shall pray for it." For example, "Ananias and Sapphira," and the Corinthians. There may, in any given case, be certain flagrant features attaching to some sin committed causing those who look at things in the light of God's presence to feel instinctively that they could not possibly pray for restoration. We have to do with the government of God which is a very serious matter indeed; and it is one of the enactments of that government that, whatsoever a man—no matter who—"soweth, that shall he also reap." But it is the Christian's happy privilege to view the actings of divine

government through the atmosphere of divine grace.

With regard to 2 Tim. 1:10. You are, perhaps, not aware that the word is “incorruptibility,” and refers to the body. The immortality of the soul rests on the authority of Gen. 2:7, and many other scriptures.

45. “R. J. P.”—“W. B.”—“C. S. L.”—“J. A. J.”—“O. J. P.”—“F. M.”—“W. M. W.,” Boston, Mass. We desire to tender you all our warmest thanks for your truly kind letters. We feel that this is but a very inadequate acknowledgment of such expressions of brotherly love; but we trust you will accept it, under the circumstances. We bless God for the precious link which His own hand has formed between us—a link which can never be snapped. It may be His holy will to permit us to strengthen this link by personal intercourse; but if not, we shall meet in His presence on high, never to be separated. To His most tender love and faithful shepherd care, we earnestly commend each one of you: and all those with whom you are associated. We can assure you we feel deeply touched by your most loving invitation; and we beg you will accept our true and most hearty brotherly love. May the Lord bless and keep you all!

46. “R. B. W.,” Portsmouth. It is entirely a question for individual conscience. We dare not attempt to legislate for another in such a case. The Lord will guide, if the eye be single; but nothing should be done with a doubtful mind.

47. “M. H. R.,” Oswestry. It seems to us there is a little confusion in the lines of our dear departed friend, between our Lord's coming for and coming with His people. Surely, it is not as “the midnight thief,” “He will come to call for his church.” “Ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.” In Rev. 3 the professing church—having sunk to the level of the world, with a name to live, while dead—is threatened with the coming as a thief. But this only proves, all the more forcibly, that the proper hope of the church of God is something quite different. And then we are at a loss to understand the meaning of the last lines, “And oh! who would not the traitor be, To rise and let Him in?”

48. “J. K.,” Stratford, Essex. The word in 1 Cor. 11:2, should be rendered “traditions,” or “directions.” The apostle does not specify what they were; but thank God, we know that whatever ordinances, traditions, or directions are essential for the church, to the end of time, are clearly laid down in the scriptures of the New Testament. This is quite enough for us. Men have no authority whatever to set up rites and ceremonies in the church of God; their doing so can only be regarded, by every heart loyal to Christ, as a daring usurpation of His authority, which He will, most assuredly, judge ere long. We feel increasingly impressed, dear friend, with a sense of the urgent need of testing everything by the word of God, and of rejecting whatever cannot stand the test. It is not only deeply sorrowful, but most solemn, to mark the way in which the authority of Christ, as laid down in His precious word, is virtually set aside by those who profess to be His people and His servants. It never seems to occur to people that they are really responsible before God to judge, by the light of His word, the various things in which they are engaged. Hence it comes to pass that they go on, from week to week, and year to year, with a whole host of things having not a shadow of foundation in holy scripture. How perfectly appalling to think of the end of all this! We may rest assured it will not be with a scourge of small cords that all these things will be driven out of the temple. May God the Holy Ghost rouse, by His mighty ministry, the whole church to a more profound sense of the supreme authority, and all-sufficiency of the holy scriptures!

Correspondence

49. "D. D.," Wells, Norfolk. Heb. 1:14 teaches very plainly the ministry of angels—a most precious truth. How blessedly we are provided for! Christ ministers for us on high. The Holy Ghost ministers in us; and angels minister to us. We thank you, most heartily, for your kind and cheering letter. May showers of blessing descend upon you all, and upon your work!

50. "F. J. S.," Lincoln. It is entirely a matter between your own soul and the Lord. If the infirmity of which you speak hinders you in the Lord's work, it might be right to have it removed. But if it be merely a matter of personal appearance, you could hardly look for God's blessing on the operation, or have it performed to His glory.

51. "C. A. D.," Ottawa. Thanks for your letter and the accompanying lines.

52. "L. M. R.," Woolwich. It is very important that the Christian should be thoroughly clear and above-board in all his ways. There should be nothing questionable in any of his transactions—nothing hidden. We should not put our hand to a single thing which would not bear the very strictest scrutiny. Hence, if this person, "who works for a large Firm in London" is doing anything which she would not wish the Firm to know; if she is receiving anything which she wishes to hide from their knowledge, it is perfectly evident she is not acting uprightly. If she is perfectly clear in what she is doing, why send this question to us? Can she with a good conscience take the discount from the person who supplies her with the things? Should it be termed "discount" or "brokerage?" "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." And again, "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." If it is an understood thing on the part of the Firm, that discount is given, it is all plain and right; but anything underhand is utterly unworthy of one who is called to walk in the light of the divine presence.

53. "I. L.P.," H.M.S. "Shannon," Channel Fleet. There is no question as to the true reading of Rom. 8:1. The last clause should be omitted. The apostle is speaking of the positive standing of the believer, and not of his walk. If you think of your walk, be it ever so upright, ever so pure, ever so elevated, you will find something to judge; hence if it be a question of walk, we could not possibly say, "no condemnation." Is it then implied that the question of walk is not one of capital importance? God forbid that anyone should say or think so; but our walk could never be the basis of "no condemnation," inasmuch as it is not perfect; but our standing is perfect, because it is "in Christ Jesus." In verse 4, we have the subject of our walk introduced, "That the righteousness [δικαιοσύνη] of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." Here, the clause is divinely suitable, but to insert it in verse 1, involves not only redundancy in style, but error in doctrine. It is interesting and instructive to notice that verse 1 gives the condensed statement of chapter v. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Verse 2 sums up chapter 6, "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Verse 3 condenses chapter 7, "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." Mark the marvelous precision of scripture. It does not say, "In the likeness of flesh," for then He would not have been a real man at all. Neither does it say, "In sinful flesh," for then He could not be a perfect Savior. His humanity was as real as it was pure and spotless. All homage to His peerless Name! Universal and everlasting praise to His glorious Person!

64. "F. A. F.," Christchurch. We do not consider Luke 14:26, applicable to your case at all. 1 Tim. 5:4, we should judge a more suitable scripture. If your dear invalid mother needs your care—as, judging from your letter, we assuredly consider she does—your place is at her side. If she could be left alone for a couple of hours, and were willing to spare you, then we feel assured, dear friend, you would delight to be at the table of your Lord. But for a child to neglect a sick mother—to leave her alone, not knowing what might occur, we should judge to be most reprehensible. You must act before the Lord in this matter, regardless of human thoughts.

As to what you say in reference to "nature," we may remark that many err exceedingly through not distinguishing between "nature" and "flesh." We find in 1 Cor. 11, that nature is admitted as a teacher. "Doth not even nature itself teach you." So also in Mark 10, Jesus, beholding the young ruler, loved him, although there was nothing but nature in him. Nature needs to be watched; flesh must be judged and ignored. We all need the adjusting power of divine truth. We are so sadly prone to be one-sided. We run some principles to seed, while others, equally important, are not even allowed to take root. We want to have our character, our conduct, our whole course, brought under the government of "all truth" It is very sad and very humiliating to see some professors talking largely of their high position; but, as to their ways, failing in common righteousness. Let us remember that, "The kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of men."

We cannot but judge, dear friend, that we all need to give more earnest heed to "The white linen which is the righteousness of saints." "I counsel thee," says our Lord Christ, "to buy of me gold tried in the fire"—divine righteousness—"that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment"—human righteousness—"that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear."

May the Lord give us to apply our hearts to these things! There is a terrible amount of sham in the professing church—high profession and low practice—the head in the clouds; but the feet anywhere and everywhere, but in the path of obedience.

55. "A Perplexed One." Take a case. There are two men in yonder life-boat; one was picked up after two hours' terrible struggling with the waves, and the most awful mental agony through fear of death. The other was picked off the wreck, a few minutes after she struck, and hardly had time to feel his danger. Both are in the life-boat—both are safe, the one as safe as the other. They are saved by the life-boat. It is not a question of their previous feelings, but simply of their being in the life-boat.

No doubt, the former will have a deeper sense of the value of the life-boat: but that is a matter of experience and not a question of salvation. There are hardly two cases of conversion alike. Some go through exercises of soul before they come to Christ, others after. It is the Christ I reach, and not the way I reach Him, that saves my soul. We cannot lay down a rigid rule. We believe that all must, sooner or later, learn what the flesh is; and the sooner and the more thoroughly we learn it the better. We have invariably found that those who have gone through the deepest ploughings at the first, make the steadiest and most solid Christians afterward. But we are saved by Christ and not by experience. It often occurs to us that many of our young people who have been religiously brought up, and led to make a profession, are much to be felt for when called to go out into the world. They are ignorant of their own hearts, ignorant of the snares and temptations of the world,

ignorant of the devices of Satan. They have never proved what the world is. They were led, it may be, gradually, imperceptibly, into the divine life, but have never been sifted and tested; and hence when brought face to face with the stern realities of life; when called to grapple with the difficulties of the day; to meet the reasonings of the infidel, the fascinations of ritualism; or the allurements of the world, the theater, the ball-room, the concert, the thousand and one forms of pleasure; they are not able to withstand these things; they are not decided for Christ; their Christianity is not sufficiently pronounced; they give way and fall under the power of temptation; and then they are most miserable, often brought almost to despair. But God, in His mercy, brings them back, after their terrible conflict; and overrules all the exercise for the deepening and consolidation of His work in their souls.

But, if there be not the germ of divine life; if it be merely the effect of religious training and home influence, then alas! the poor soul plunges, with terrible avidity, into the vortex of sin, and rushes headlong to destruction.

How many a lovely youth has gone forth from the parent-roof, virtuous and unsophisticated, ignorant of the cruel ways of the world, and ignorant of his own heart. The enemy lays some trap for him; he is caught in the snare; one thing leads to another; he goes from bad to worse, until, at the last, he becomes the degraded victim of lust and vice, a moral wreck over which broken-hearted parents are called to shed many a bitter tear, or by which their gray hairs are brought down with sorrow to the grave.

We are most thoroughly persuaded that what is needed for the day in which our lot is cast is wholehearted, out-and-out, undivided consecration of heart to Christ—a thorough breaking with the world, in its every phase—that perfect rest and satisfaction of heart in God Himself which renders a man wholly independent of all that this wretched world has to offer. If there be not this, we need not look for any real progress in the divine life.

Correspondence

56. "R. M.," Cluny, Aberdeenshire. We should very much like to gratify you by inserting your poems; but we have more to think of than the gratification of our contributors. Still we feel deeply interested in you, dear young friend, and earnestly commend you to God for His blessing and guidance. Your lines are really very good for one so young, and, as you say, with so few educational advantages. We would fain encourage you to wait much on the Lord to strengthen and instruct you, and fit you, in every way, for whatever path He may design for you. Give yourself to the prayerful study of the word. This is the true secret of preparation for any department of work on which you may be called to enter. Do not be in haste to rush into public service. We all need much secret training in the divine presence, if we are to be used in public.

57. "A. F. C.," Ithaca, New York. Your letter of April 28 has greatly cheered and delighted us. We can only say, with an overflowing heart, The Lord be praised! It is all His sovereign grace, from first to last. May He keep you, beloved friend, very close to His side—the only place of safety, rest, and abiding satisfaction. To Him we do, most earnestly, commend you. Never mind the opposition. You were quite right not to enter upon any explanation. Our place is to obey, not to explain. Let our practical life be the answer to all the accusations and surmisings of men. "By well doing"—not by discussion—"put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." When called upon to apologize and

explain, let our answer be, "I am doing a great work, I cannot come down." It was very kind of you to write and tell us of the blessing through the books. That Christ should be magnified and His beloved flock fed and built up, is just the one object for which we desire to write, to speak, to live. We shall see about sending you some little books such as you desire. May the Lord's richest and best blessing rest upon you I 58. "J. W.," Bristol. Rom. 14:22, with the entire context, teaches us the necessity of walking tenderly in reference to the consciences of our brethren. A man may have faith as to certain things, perfect liberty, in his own mind, whether as regards days or meats or many other minor things; but his faith or his liberty should not lead him to act in such a way as to stumble his weak brother. This is the spirit and teaching of this entire beautiful chapter—this lovely compendium of christian morals. Of course, if there were any attempt to impose the eating of herbs, abstinence from meats, or the observance of days, as a yoke upon the necks of the disciples, it would be our place to resist, with uncompromising decision.

59. "C. G.," South Norwood. Surely we shall not be less intelligent in heaven than we are here; but our natural relationships will not subsist there. We shall know each other in that bright and happy place, only on new creation-ground, as members of the body of Christ, children of the living God. Don't you remember our blessed Lord's reply to the Sadducees, in reference to the woman that had the seven husbands? "Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scripture nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven." It seems to us, dear friend, that many of our questions and difficulties as to the recognition of departed friends arise from our looking at things from a merely human or earthly standpoint. One thing is blessedly clear, we shall see Him, and be like Him, and with Him. This will be enough. We shall know Him and all who belong to Him, as such. The recognition of our natural relationships would be a very questionable addition to our bliss in heaven.

60. "J. S. H." You will find much help on the subject of your letter, in a volume entitled, "Lectures on the New Testament doctrine of the Holy Spirit" by W. Kelly. (Broom, 25 Paternoster Square, London, E.C.)

61. "W. M.," Belfast. Your letter, with the accompanying lines, has come to hand.

62. "M. R.," Teignmouth. As to the Book of Revelation, it is divided into, 1, "The things which thou hast seen," chapter 1:2. "The things that are," or the true condition of the church; the history of its responsibility on the earth, from first to last, chapters 2, 3:3. "The things which shall be, after these things." Chapter 4-22. Chapters 4, 5 are transitional, showing the place which the church and the Old Testament saints will occupy, from the moment of the rapture, until the coming of Christ in judgment with all His saints, chapter 19. The Book of Revelation, being mainly judicial or governmental, does not record the rapture of the saints, or the coming of Christ for His people. The church is seen on earth, in chapters 2, 3. It is seen in heaven, in chapters 4, 5; but we are not told of its going—how or when. Such is not the object of the book. There is not a word about the church on earth from chapter 9 to chapter 18. Other saints will appear on the earth, during the stirring scenes in chapters 6-18; but the church will not be there. In chapter 19, Christ comes in judgment on the Roman Beast and the false prophet, Antichrist or the man of sin. Satan is bound, and Christ reigns for a thousand years. Then comes the judgment of the wicked dead: the consignment of Satan to the lake of fire; and finally the everlasting state. We may just add that,

during the present period, righteousness suffers. During the millennium, righteousness will reign. In the new heavens and new earth, or the eternal state, righteousness will dwell.

A large number of communications must stand over. We trust our correspondents will not think themselves neglected. We find it almost impossible to reply to all.

Correspondence

58. "M. R.," Teignmouth. Phil. 3:21 may be more correctly rendered thus, "Who shall change the body of our humiliation, that it may be fashioned like unto the body of his glory."

59. "J. R. F.," Toronto. Your manuscript has come to hand. It may be you have not noticed in our January issue, a paper on the same subject.

60. "C. E. B.," Boston, Mass. We beg to assure you of our hearty sympathy and earnest prayers. May God abundantly bless you and yours! May He deliver you from every evil work, and preserve you unto His everlasting kingdom! Accept our cordial brotherly love for yourself and all those with whom you are linked in the blessed bonds of christian fellowship.

61. "Little Faith." Our reply to "R. B.," Oxon., in our April issue may help you. Your cases are much alike.

62. "An Anxious Inquirer," Bristol. It is simply an effort of the enemy to disturb your precious soul. It would be a very grave mistake to rest in any special form or mode of conversion. It is the Christ we reach and not the way we reach Him, that saves the soul, tranquillizes the conscience, and satisfies the heart. We have so often replied to correspondents in the same spiritual condition as yourself, that we trust you will find in our answers that which will, by the precious ministry of the Holy Spirit, meet your need. May the gracious Lord Himself stablish, strengthen, settle you!

63. "M. P.," Notting Hill. The difficulty you feel arises from confounding two things which must ever be kept distinct, namely, privilege and responsibility. It is the happy privilege of all Christians to wait for their Lord; and, most surely, when He comes, all His own will be with Him. Not a single member of the body of Christ will be involved in "the great tribulation," for the simplest and most blessed of all reasons, that, ere that tribulation sets in, the whole church will be safely housed in the Father's home above.

But then there is the weighty question of responsibility, and it is mainly to this that those passages which you quote refer. We have to watch and pray; we must keep our lamps trimmed, and our loins girded, not to escape "the great tribulation," but lest we should be found occupied with anything which would make us ashamed before our Lord at His coming.

The grand point, dear friend, is to give all scripture its due place in our hearts, and its proper authority over our entire course and character. This we increasingly feel to be the special need of the day in which our lot is cast.

64. "C. C" Hyde Park, Mass., U.S. We are deeply interested in the case of the aged disciple to whom you refer. May the Lord greatly bless him and strengthen him, and you also, dear friend. It is truly refreshing and encouraging to hear such records of the Lord's goodness. Accept our hearty thanks for your truly kind and sympathizing letter.

65. "F. R.," Bristol. The case, as you put it, is perfectly shocking. A person who could so act is unworthy the name of Christian. We consider you have good reason to be thankful to have escaped such a connection.

66. "L. P. P.," Surrey. "L. B." Your lines have come to hand.

67. "J. W. R.," Southampton. We appreciate your kindness in writing, to tell of the blessing to your precious soul so many years ago. The Lord be praised for His great goodness to you! May He keep you true to His name and to His word, in this day, in which the very elements of divine truth are rapidly fading away from the professing church.

68. "J. H. J.," Kingsland. Your first thought is correct as to 1 Cor. 15:54. Death will then be swallowed up in victory. Glorious prospect!

Correspondence

69. "Inquirer after Truth." We have never read Dr. K.'s remarks on 1 Kings 17 We see no reason to depart from our excellent Authorized Version.

70. "C. J.," London. It must be entirely a question between your own soul and the Lord. We cannot lay down a rule in such a case.

71. "J. W.," Blackburn. We deeply sympathize with you in your very painful and trying position. We most fully enter into all you say, and thoroughly understand your case. But we must remind you that you are the head of your house, and therefore, responsible for all that goes on. Your being an invalid, and unable to work, in no wise touches this great moral principle, though it certainly does render your position more trying and difficult. You should, most assuredly, insist upon having your shop closed on the Lord's day. Nothing should induce you to do business on that day. We trust that you will be enabled, tenderly yet firmly, to carry out what is right, in this matter. We consider it a sad dishonor to the Lord for anyone professing to be a Christian, to keep his shop open on the Lord's day. Were we to pass such a place, we should never imagine that the proprietor was a child of God. Such is our judgment of your case, which must go for what it is worth. If you see it to be right, may the Lord give you grace to act on it!

72. "G. B. F.," Broomholm. You must treat such persons with patience and forbearance, waiting on the Lord to enlighten them more fully as to the true path of a Christian.

73. "W. B.," Wooler. "The camp" in Heb. 13 primarily refers to Judaism; but morally it applies to any system set up for the purpose of furnishing unconverted people with religion.

74. "E. G.," Stockwell. Thanks for the lines. We think you have mistaken the application of John 16:23; but this, in no wise, touches the force and value of your remarks. If we can find space, we shall be happy to insert both pieces, omitting the quotation, which applies to this day, and not to the future.

75. "E.," Clapham. Your poem is to hand.

76. "E. N.," Guernsey. We heartily thank you for your encouraging note. It was truly kind of you to write. The Lord be praised for His great goodness in using the books for your soul's profit!

77. "E. B.," a Cownion, Saint-Pons, Herault. Psalm 69:28, does not speak of "The book of life." The entire psalm presents the sufferings of the Messiah, at the hands of men, and His intercession against them. Awful thought! They are to be blotted out of the book of the living, and not to be reckoned with the righteous. This refers to the judgment executed on the earth. They will be cut off from the place of blessing, and blotted out of the roll of the Israel of God. It has no reference whatever to the Lamb's book of life.

Then, as to the expression in Rev. 3:5. You must remember that in all these seven addresses, the church is looked at in its place of responsibility. It is under judgment. It is not the church as the body or bride of Christ. No member of the body of Christ can ever be blotted out of the book of life. Indeed the passage does not speak of the Lamb's book of life at all. It is a question of responsibility in which there may be failure and consequent judgment. All whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life shall, most assuredly, share in His glory. For all such, blessed be God, there is and can be no judgment, inasmuch as the Lamb has borne the judgment instead. For them, death and judgment are passed forever; and nothing remains but cloudless and everlasting glory.

We need never be the least afraid to trust scripture. There can be no flaw, no defect, no discrepancy there. All is divinely perfect. If there be an apparent difficulty, it is owing to our ignorance, our lack of spirituality of mind, and singleness of eye. Let us own this, and wait on God for further light. As for all those who try to pick holes in the Bible, we can only say, "They do greatly err, not knowing the scriptures, or the power of God." May the gracious Lord open their eyes to see their terrible sin, ere it be too late!

78. "An Inquirer," Pitmachie. It will be well for those persons to whom you refer, to learn that we seek not theirs, but them. They should first give their own selves to the Lord, and then they will know what to do with their money. What the Lord looks for is the heart; when that is given to Him, all will come right.

79. "E. A. G.," East Dulwich. It is a question for individual conscience. There is a very wide difference between a wine merchant and a keeper of a public house; at least so we judge; but it is not our province to lay down rules for other people's conscience. One thing is certain, the path of a true Christian is an exceedingly narrow one.

80. "J. D.," Dundee. We are told to be ready for every good work; to do good unto all, specially to those who are of the household of faith. We think you would have done well to help the poor. As to putting down your name, that is entirely a question of your own spiritual feeling. The blessed Master says, "When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." But then He says also, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." It is always well to have a heart for the poor. It is a cold, heartless, selfish world we are passing through; and we need to live near the exhaustless Fountain of love, so that we may prove to be streams of refreshing to all with whom we come in contact. Our precious Savior "went about doing good." Blessed be His name! May we have grace to walk in His footsteps!

Correspondence

81. "M. H.," Twickenham. "The day of visitation" in 1 Pet. 2:12, refers to any dealing of the hand of God with unconverted people. You may often see the truth of this passage illustrated. When worldly people get into trouble, they often betake themselves to the Lord's people—to the very persons against whom they had spoken evil. When the rich man lifted up his eyes in hell, he begged that Lazarus might be sent to minister to him. The principle is of very wide application.

82. "W. G.," Merthyr. Scripture is silent on the point. You must simply wait on God to give you unity of judgment. Do not force anything, but cultivate a meek and lowly spirit. The Lord will make it all plain before you, if the eye be single. It is good, safe, and pleasant to wait on Him. May He graciously bind your hearts together in true brotherly love, and then you will delight to yield to one another, where there is no divine principle involved. We should just like to give you all, as a sweet portion for your own souls, Psalm 133 and Phil. 2 May you ever realize and illustrate these precious scriptures!

83. "Cipher." We are much struck with your signature. May you ever, in the sense of your own nothingness, abide at the right side of your significant figure; thus you will be peaceful, happy, safe, strong, victorious.

As to your question, there is some difference between "regeneration" and "new birth." The former occurs only twice in the Greek New Testament, namely, in Matt. 19:28: "In the regeneration (παλιγγενεσία), when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory." Here the word obviously refers to the new order of things which shall obtain when our Lord Christ takes the kingdom. Now, we could not apply the term "new birth," in this case. Again, in Titus 3 we read of "the washing of regeneration." Here we have the action of the word and Spirit of God, communicating a new nature, cleansing, renewing, and giving us our place in that new order of things, of which "regeneration" is the forcible expression. It evidently would not do to say, "The washing of the new birth," inasmuch as there is something implied in "regeneration" which is not in "new birth." No doubt there must be the new birth, in order to have our place and portion in the new order of things; but we must ever remember that, in the holy scriptures, there is never a distinction without a difference, and you will at once seize the difference between "the new birth" and "the new order of things." The literal meaning of the word, παλιγγενεσία (palingenesia), is "Genesis again." The old creation passed away, and the new creation established on the ground of accomplished redemption.

Then, as to the term "conversion," it only occurs once in the New Testament, namely, in Acts 15:3—"Declaring the conversion of the Gentiles." It means a turning to, or turning back, and may be applied to the new birth of a soul, or to the restoration of a wanderer, or a fallen one. We trust, beloved friend, that these few hints may help to clear away any little difficulty you may have felt as to the three terms to which you have called our attention.

84. "E. H." If you feel free in spirit to conduct family worship, under the circumstances you name, there is nothing in scripture to forbid your doing so. Why should not a christian mother, or widow, gather her family around her, and read the word of God, and pray with them? This is not speaking in the assembly, neither is it teaching, nor usurping authority over the man. It is a desolate widow bringing her family before the living God, and casting them upon Him who declares Himself to be "the father of the fatherless, and the judge of the widow." We must confess we consider it a touching and beautiful sight. Would we could see it more frequently!

85. "A. McC," Skibbereen. Someone had sent us a copy of the paper. We never take any notice of such things—hardly ever read them. Thanks be to God! we have something better to do.

86. "A. G. C," Lochee. The inspired volume carries its own credentials with it. It speaks for itself. It comes to us with an overwhelming body of evidence, both internal and external. The Apocrypha, on the contrary, carries on its very surface its own condemnation. It contains passages, which you have only to read in order to be convinced that they were never indicted by the Spirit of God. We reject it on the ground of evidence, both internal and external.

87. "G. J.," Erith. You may rest assured there is no contradiction in Pro. 26:4, 5. There is divine wisdom and most precious instruction. There are some cases in which to "answer a fool" is to take common ground with him. This must not be done. Silence is the true answer. Again, there are cases in which not to answer would be to lead the fool to think himself wise. If a man sets up for great wisdom and learning, which he really does not possess, it is well to take the legs from under him—to "shut him up," as we say—"lest he be wise in his own conceit."

88. "J. S.," St. Ives. We quite sympathize with your feeling. It must be entirely a matter between your own soul and your Lord. May He guide and bless you!

89. "Alpha," London. Accept our warmest thanks for your loving and encouraging note. It was very kind of you to write it.

90. "N. B.," Bristol. Our Lord does not forbid "frequent repetition," but "vain repetition." He Himself, blessed be His name! in His agony in the garden, prayed the same thing three times over. This is sufficient to prove that there may be repetition which is very far indeed from being "vain." An individual, in the privacy of his closet, or a number of Christians in public assembly, may earnestly, fervently, perseveringly, and importunately urge, and re-urge, a certain matter which presses heavily on the heart, without being open to the charge of "vain repetition."

91. "M. L.," Suffolk. In all cases of persons taken away judicially, such as Ananias and Sapphira, and those in 1 Cor. 11, the question of the soul's salvation is not raised. It is a serious thing for anyone to say, in any given case, "Such an one was cut off in judgment." It must be very palpable indeed to warrant such a statement.

92. "A. T." You should write to the author of the tract for an explanation of his meaning.

93. "B. A. H.," Torquay. We cannot attempt, in our limited space, an exposition of all the passages you name. To enter fully into them would demand an entire number. Many of the passages have been expounded in former numbers; to these we must refer you. We would merely remark, as to Heb. 9:27, that it does not say, "It is appointed unto all men once to die," &c. Thank God, it is not so. "It is appointed unto men;" but we are taken completely off the ground of judgment. Death and judgment are behind us. Christ took our place in death and judgment, and we are linked with Him. "As he is, so are we in this world." This gives us holy boldness even as to the day of judgment. All that had to be judged, was judged in the cross; there is nothing but glory before us.

94. "C. P. B.," Croydon. Your package has come to hand; but we cannot find space for the pieces in this year's volume.

The Cross and the Judgment-Seat

When visiting a young man a few months ago who was evidently on his death-bed, I felt some difficulty in reaching his conscience, though he professed to be a believer in Christ and prepared to die. Those who were nearly related to him and had the greatest personal interest in him endeavored to confirm his words with an "O yes, dear—is prepared." With the best intention, no doubt, this was said; the friend was anxious to soothe his mind and keep him quiet, and to make me feel satisfied with his condition. But the religion of the friend was of the same character as his own: generally religious, attentive to the prescribed system of the religious duties of their denomination; but knowing little of sin, or of deliverance from it through the death of Christ, or of the peace which the cross gives.

This is the religion of unsuspecting, unconcerned thousands; and most difficult to deal with. There is nothing clearly defined or fixed in the mind; there is a general belief in Christ, in His cross, in being religious, in belonging to some church, but there is nothing definite to lay hold on. And the world, it will be found, has a large place in the hearts of such. It has never been judged in the sight of God; indeed, it is a common saying with many that, "It is right to enjoy the world in a reasonable way;" but that reasonable way extends to the bent of their own inclination, and is measured by their own thoughts and desires, not by the word of God. This is far, far away from the religion of Christ, it is like another religion altogether, and it is most difficult to touch the consciences of such professors, their lives being outwardly blameless, and their religious duties being fairly attended to.

After some conversation, I at length said to the dying young man, "Were the Lord to take you away, dear—and you to stand before the judgment-seat of God, what would you say of yourself?" The dear youth simply answered, "I would say, I am a poor sinner no doubt thinking this the most humble and proper thing to say of himself. "But the judgment-seat," I said to him, "has no mercy or pardon for sinners; it could only condemn such. This would be the right thing to say before the cross, but not before the judgment-seat. If we place a plumb-line against a crooked wall, it does not make it straight, but only shows its crookedness. Christ is God's standard, and none can be approved before His tribunal who are not as absolutely perfect as Christ." This led to a conversation on the subject of the cross and the judgment-seat, which I need not attempt to repeat, but would only add a few words for the sake of those who survive the dear, amiable young man, who is now, I trust, resting with the Lord in the paradise above.

The sinner is in his right place when before the cross where God is judging sin in the holy, sinless, Sufferer. It is only there we can learn its evil and malignant nature, and how impossible it is for God to overlook the least stain of sin.

When the sense of sin has thus reached the conscience, the sinner feels that without Christ he is lost forever. But while the cross reveals God's hatred of sin, it also reveals His love to the sinner; if His righteousness condemns sin, His love provides a Savior for the sinner. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This grand foundation gospel text is divinely fitted to meet the whole

condition of the individual sinner, and of all mankind. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.... There is no difference." And the more deeply we feel the sense of sin, and how unbearable it is to God, the more deeply shall we feel the greatness of His love in giving the blessed Jesus to die in our stead. John 3:16; Rom. 3:22, 23.

CONVICTION OF SIN.

But here God will have reality; the conscience must be exercised; it is more than an intellectual conclusion—more than a vague, general, apprehension of the "gospel plan," and being satisfied therewith. There must be definiteness of thought and personal conviction. Sin is a reality; holiness is a reality; the death of Christ is a reality; and the soul's exercise must be a reality. Not that pardon and salvation depend upon any process through which we must pass; for we read that the look of faith saves the soul. "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." (Isa. 45:22.) It is not said that we shall be saved for looking, or after looking, but in looking; as in the case of the serpent-bitten Israelites. "And if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." (Numb. 21) Not merely was he cured, but lived—a new life in the very circumstances of death. The blessed Lord applies the same truth in John 3 "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have eternal life."

At the same time, while we rejoice in the glorious freeness of the gospel, we must still affirm that the sinner cannot be too deeply exercised about his sins before God, or in too close quarters with Him as to his guilt. If he has not this kind of exercise before he is saved, he must have it afterward. Without it we could not appreciate the love of God in the gift of His Son, or the value of the Savior's blood. It was this that led David to cry out in the bitterness of his soul; "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." He lost sight, for the moment, of those against whom he had so grievously sinned, and saw his sin only as against God. And this is the sure way of receiving the immediate forgiveness of all our sins. As David further says, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean, wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." We must be whiter than snow to be approved before the judgment-seat of God.

But there is no question, blessed be God, when the sinner stands before the cross, as to the amount of his guilt. Grace meets him: the rich, free grace of God meets him without a question, and says, "Thy sins," not may, or will be, but "are forgiven." The sinner may be on his death-bed, like the thief on the cross; or he may be in the bloom of blameless youth; the one may owe fifty and the other five hundred pence, but both are "frankly forgiven." Every case of conversion we read of in the New Testament, clearly proves this, and the most hopeless case of all—the thief on the cross—is the finest conversion on record. This is grace, the grace of God, on the ground of the work of Christ to the chief of sinners. Without a word of reproach he is assured of being with Jesus that very day in paradise. And so it was with the Father, and His prodigal son: without a word of reproach, without a reference to the past, the Father fell on the prodigal's neck and kissed him. The heart was too full for utterance. Words would have been poor indeed, compared with that silent kiss of peace, and with the ring—pledge and seal of eternal love.

THE GROUND OF RECEPTION.

But how is it, some may ask, that God can thus receive the sinner without any reference to the past? The cross alone explains this; redemption was fully accomplished there; every requirement of heaven, and every need of the sinner were fully and perfectly met in the obedience unto death of the Lord Jesus Christ. "It is finished," were his last words in testimony on the cross; so that God is just, and righteous, while He is the Justifier of them that believe in Jesus. "When the sinner comes before God as a true believer in the precious blood of Christ, which was shed on the cross and sprinkled on the mercy-seat—what can God say to him? Were He to condemn him for the past; that would be to deny His own word and the efficacy of the blood. What then will He say to him, what will He do with him? He will receive him in the full credit of the Person and work of His beloved Son; and that means, He will meet him with all that is due to Christ Himself. Oh! wondrous, vast, measureless blessing! To be blessed with all that is due to Christ! His place in heaven and His welcome there: His life, His righteousness, His dignity, His honors, and His glories, as the risen and exalted Man are all ours in Him, and that forever and ever. Amen! Amen! cries responsive faith. The heart is broken and healed, and bows in the meltings of worship, adoration, and praise.

And this too, observe, dear reader, is the righteousness of God. Most truly it is mercy, wondrous mercy; grace, boundless grace; compassion, deep compassion; but God is pleased to call it His righteousness: "Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all [set before all] and upon [actually upon] all them that believe: for there is no difference." And again, as the apostle says, "We pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God. For be bath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might become the righteousness of God in him." Surely the righteousness of God is a divine title to the glory of God, and this we most plainly have in Christ. Rom. 3 Cor. 5:21.

But if the reader will turn to 1 John 4:9-17, he will have the cross and the judgment-seat before him in a plain and most blessed way. In verses 9, 10, we have the cross, its immediate results, and the love of God as the source of all our blessing. "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Here we have "life" and "propitiation." By the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, all that was ours as children of the first Adam, was put away. He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. "Knowing this that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed." (Rom. 6) That means, the whole system of sin in which we stood is destroyed, judicially, yet absolutely to faith.

We have also life through His death on the cross. "That we might live through him." He gave Himself for us. Not merely His blood or His life, but Himself. Thus it is, all glory to God! All that was ours, as guilty and ruined sinners, He put away; and all that is His as risen and glorified, He makes ours, as the fruit of God's love, and on the ground of accomplished righteousness. When this is clearly seen, we shall not be surprised, or find any difficulty, with verse 17, which says, "Herein is love with us made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world." Surely, if He has put away all that was ours, and has given us all that is His, we must be as He is, we could not be anything else. And this is true to faith now, though still encompassed with many infirmities, and surrounded with the evil of this world; and the blessed Lord in the very center of heaven's brightest glory! yet the marvelous truth remains the same, "As he is, so are we in this world."

This is true preparation for a sick-bed, a death-bed, the judgment-seat; or, for the Lord's coming to take us up collectively to be with Himself. There is nothing vague or indefinite in the word of God. All truth is absolute and positive. The intelligent believer can say,—As Christ is in the glory, so am I, though still in the world; he may be feeble and suffering, poor and needy, or active and vigorous in service, and surrounded with innumerable mercies, the truth remains unchanged and unchangeable. As He is, so are we in this world. This alone gives boldness in the day of judgment.

Oh, that all who read this paper may lay these truths seriously to heart! Nothing less will secure a happy eternity! But what must that heaven be when all are perfect as Christ, and one with Him in His dignities and glories! All that we were as guilty sinners, root and branch, the cross has completely taken away; all that Christ is as the risen and glorified Man is made ours through faith in Him; He gave Himself for us.

What an overwhelming thought this truth gives of a believer's entrance into heaven! To enter in the full credit of Christ Himself; and that, whether we go up individually or collectively, is more than we can realize. It is difficult to grasp, to believe, yet it is the plain truth of God. We may assent to it when another repeats it; or we may learn to say it ourselves, but do we live in the power and enjoyment of it? If so, the world will soon find its true place in our sight, and Christ His right place in our thoughts and affections.

But this paper has been written chiefly for those who are unprepared for a death-bed and the judgment-seat. Leave not, my dear reader, this all-important question until the doctor has pronounced your case hopeless. Then you may be unfit to think of anything seriously. Surely it is a solemn thing to die! All feel this. But it is a terrible thing for the unprepared! To stand before the tribunal of God in all thy sins, what must thy sentence be? There can only be one—"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." The curse of God is inseparable from sin. And there is no appeal from this tribunal; the sentence is final; and thou must take thy place with those evil angels in the depths of woe, woe, unutterable. No friendly smile will ever greet thee there. None of the inhabitants of that region of despair ever smile; they only weep and wail and gnash their teeth in self-reproach, and blaspheme the God of holiness. Think, oh think of this now, my dear reader! Thou hast seen what a state of unmingled blessedness the believer enjoys after he leaves this world; but for the unbeliever, there is nothing but eternal misery. The thought is overwhelming; my heart breaks for thee. Neglect not, I beseech thee, this great salvation. It is full, it is free, it is everlasting, it waits thy acceptance! reject not the Savior of sinners, or thy portion may be amongst the lost, the desolate, the forsaken, where no friendly voice will ever be heard, where no ray of hope can ever enter, and where thy soul must sink beneath the weight of thy sins in endless despair. Turn, oh turn to Jesus now; look, oh look to Jesus now; believe, oh believe in Jesus now; trust, oh trust to Jesus now; then that word will surely be for thee, "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." Psalm 2.

The Cross: What Is It? and What Has It Done for Us?

WE would earnestly invite the christian reader to spend a few moments in meditating on the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, in its two grand fundamental aspects, namely, as the basis of our worship and our discipleship—our peace and our testimony—our relation to God and our bearing toward the world.

If, as a convicted sinner, I look at the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, I behold in it the everlasting foundation of my peace. I see “sin” judged and condemned in its root; and I see my “sins” borne and put away. I see God to be, in very deed, “for me,” and that, moreover, in the very condition in which my convicted conscience tells me I am. The cross presents God as the penitent sinner’s Friend. It reveals Him in that most wondrous character as the righteous Justifier of the most ungodly sinner who truly believes in Jesus. Creation could not do this. Providence could not do it. The Law could not do it. Therein I may see God’s power, His majesty, His wisdom, His holiness; but what if all these should be ranged against me? Looked at in themselves, abstractedly, they must be so, for I am a sinner; and power, majesty, wisdom, holiness could not put away my sins, or justify God in receiving me.

But, blessed forever be the God of all grace! the precious cross of Christ changes the aspect of things entirely. There I find God Himself dealing with sin in such a way as to glorify Himself infinitely and everlastingly, in view of the whole universe and all created intelligence. There I see the magnificent display and perfect harmony of all the divine attributes. I see love, and such love as captivates and assures my heart, and weans it from every other object. I see wisdom, and such wisdom as baffles devils, astonishes angels, and turns all the wisdom of the world into thorough foolishness. I see power, and such power as bears down all opposition, and sweeps away every hostile influence—the mighty power of God, unto salvation. Wondrous thought! I see holiness, and such holiness as cannot be satisfied with anything less than the eternal banishment of sin from the wide creation of God. I see grace, and such grace as sets the believer in the immediate presence of God—in the holiest of all, without one spot or stain of sin or guilt—yea, such grace as brings him into the Father’s house, the Father’s bosom.

Where could I see all these but in the cross? Nowhere else. There God and sin met once. What a meeting! There Christ, the spotless, holy, precious Lamb of God, the eternal Son of the Father, His only begotten and well-beloved Son, the only perfect Man that ever trod this sin-stained earth, was made sin; there God dealt with Him in our stead, poured out upon Him all the billows and waves of His righteous wrath. Sin was judged and condemned; Satan vanquished; God’s majesty, truth, holiness and righteousness most gloriously vindicated; and the imperishable foundation laid for the perfect remission of all our sins, and our everlasting felicity and glory in our Father’s house and in the kingdom of His dear Son.

How precious, therefore, is the cross, in this aspect of it, as the basis of the believer’s peace, the basis of his worship, and of his eternal relationship with God who is there so blessedly and so gloriously revealed!

How precious to God, as furnishing Him with a righteous ground for the full display of all His matchless perfections, and in His most gracious dealings with the sinner! So precious is it to God that, as a recent writer has well remarked, "All that He has said, all that He has done, from the very beginning, indicates that it was ever uppermost in His heart. And no wonder! His dear and well-beloved Son was to hang there, between heaven and earth, the object of all the shame and suffering that men and devils could heap upon Him, because He loved to do His Father's will, and redeem the children of His grace. It will be the grand center of attraction, as the fullest expression of His love, throughout eternity."

But there is another aspect of the cross of our adorable Lord and Savior which demands our most profound consideration, and that is as the foundation of our practical discipleship and testimony. We must never forget that the same cross which connects me with God, has separated me from the world. A dead man is, evidently, done with the world; and hence the believer, having died with Christ, is done with the world, in spirit and principle, though in it, of course, as regards the fact of his condition. He died in Christ; and, having risen with Christ, he is connected with God, in the power of a new life, a new nature. Being thus inseparably linked with Christ, he, of necessity, participates in His acceptance with God, and in His rejection by the world. The two things go together. The former makes him a worshipper and a citizen in heaven; the latter makes him a witness and a stranger on earth. That brings him inside the veil; this puts him outside the camp. The one is as perfect as the other, and each should have its due effect upon the character and conduct. If the cross has come between me and my sins, it has just as really come between me and the world. If it has, forever, canceled all my guilt, and struck the crushing burden from my agonized conscience, it has also snapped every link which bound me to this present evil world. If it has procured me the full and everlasting remission of my sins, it has also secured the thorough condemnation of sin—the judgment of my sinful nature—the utter rejection of my sinful self. If it has brought me into the place of perfect peace with God; it has also called me into the place of warfare with the world, the flesh and the devil.

Now, we should clearly understand, and rightly distinguish between, both the above aspects of the cross of Christ. If we fail in our apprehension of either, there must be a corresponding defect in our character and walk. We should not profess to enjoy the one, while we refuse to enter into the other. If the ear is open to hear Christ's voice within the veil, it should be open also to hear His voice outside the camp. If we enjoy the precious atonement which the cross has accomplished, we should also accept the rejection which it necessarily involves. The former flows out of the part which God had in the cross; the latter, out of the part which man had therein.

All this is involved in the glorious doctrine of the cross. Well therefore might the blessed apostle say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Paul looked upon the world as a crucified thing; and the world, in having crucified Christ, had crucified all who belong to Him. Hence there is a double crucifixion as regards the believer and the world; and if this were more fully entered into, it would prove the utter impossibility of amalgamating the two.

Beloved Christian reader, let us deeply, honestly and prayerfully ponder these things. May we seek a fuller understanding of these two grand aspects of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that our course, as Christians, may be more thoroughly decided, our devotedness to Christ more

distinct and unequivocal, while we wait and long for that blissful moment when we shall see Him as He is, and be like Him and with Him forever! God, in His infinite goodness, grant it for Jesus Christ's sake!

Divine Love

“Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God. Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” John 3:1-3.

Behold what love, what boundless love

The Father hath bestowed

On sinners lost, that we should be

Now called the sons of God.

In matchless grace, in wondrous love

He sent His blessed Son,

That He His scattered children thus

Might gather into one.

No longer far from Him, but now

By precious blood made nigh,

Accepted in the Well-beloved,

Near to God’s heart we be.

What we in glory soon shall be,

It doth not yet appear,

But when our precious Lord we see,

We shall His image bear.

With such a blessed hope in view

We would more holy be,

More like our risen, glorious Lord,

Whose face we soon shall see.

M. S. S. St. Petersburg.

Epaphroditus

We want the reader to turn with us for a few moments to Phil. 2, and study the brief sketch of the interesting character of Epaphroditus. There is great moral beauty in it. We are not told very much about him, but, in what we are told, we see a great deal of what is truly lovely and pleasant—much that makes us long for men of the same stamp in this our day. We cannot do better than quote the inspired record concerning him; and may the blessed Spirit apply it to our hearts, and lead us to cultivate the same lovely grace which shone so brightly in that dear and honored servant of Christ!

“I supposed it necessary,” says the blessed apostle, to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and companion in labor, and fellow-soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants. For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. For indeed he was sick nigh unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. I sent him therefore the more carefully, that when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation; because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.” Phil. 2:25-30.

Now it is quite possible that some of us, on reading the above, may feel disposed to inquire if Epaphroditus was a great evangelist or teacher, or some highly-gifted servant of Christ, seeing that the inspired apostle bestows upon him so many high and honorable titles, styling him his “brother, and companion in labor, and fellow-soldier.”

Well, we are not told that he was a great preacher, or a great traveler, or a profound teacher in the church of God. All that we are told about him, in the above touching narrative, is that he came forward in a time of real need to supply a missing link, to “stop a gap,” as we say. The beloved Philippians had it upon their hearts to send help to the revered and aged apostle in his prison at Borne. He was in need, and they longed to supply his need. They loved him, and God had laid it upon their loving hearts to communicate with his necessities. They thought of him, though he was far away from them; and they longed to minister to him of their substance.

How lovely was this! How grateful to the heart of Christ! Harken to the glowing terms in which the dear old prisoner speaks of their precious ministry. “But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.... Notwithstanding, ye have well done that ye did communicate with my affliction. Now, ye Philippians, know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift; but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound; I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God.”

Here we see the place which Epaphroditus filled in this blessed business. There lay the beloved apostle in his prison at Borne, and there lay the loving offering of the saints at Philippi. But how was it to be conveyed to him? These were not the days of check banks and post-office orders. No, nor of railway traveling. It was no easy matter to get from Philippi to Rome in those days. But Epaphroditus, that dear, unpretending, self-surrendering servant of Christ, presented himself to supply the missing link; to do just the very thing that was needed, and nothing more; to be the channel of communication between the assembly at Philippi and the apostle at Borne. Deep and real as was the apostle's need, precious and seasonable as was the Philippians' gift, yet an instrument was needed to bring them both together, and to apply the latter to the former; and Epaphroditus offered himself for the work. There was a manifest need, and he met it—a positive blank, and he filled it. He did not aim at doing some great showy thing, something which would make him very prominent, and cause his name to be blazed abroad as some wonderful person. Ah! no, Epaphroditus was not one of the pushing, self-confident, extensive class. He was a dear, self-hiding, lowly servant of Christ, one of that class of workmen to whom we are irresistibly attracted. Nothing is more charming than an unpretending, retiring man, who is content just to fill the empty niche; to render the needed service, whatever it is; to do the work cut out for him by the Master's hand.

There are some who are not content unless they are at the head and tail of everything. They seem to think that no work can be rightly done unless they have a hand in it. They are not satisfied to supply a missing link. How repulsive are all such! How we retire from them! Self-confident, self-sufficient, ever pushing themselves into prominence. They have never measured themselves in the presence of God, never been broken down before Him, never taken their true place of self-abasement.

Epaphroditus was not of this class at all. He put his life in his hand to serve other people; and when at death's door, instead of being occupied with himself or his ailments, he was thinking of others. "He longed after you all, and was full of heaviness"—not because he was sick, but—"because ye had heard that he had been sick." Here was true love. He knew what his beloved brethren at Philippi would be feeling when informed of his serious illness—an illness brought on by his willing-hearted service to them.

All this is morally lovely. It does the heart good to contemplate this exquisite picture. Epaphroditus had evidently studied in the school of Christ. He had sat at the Master's feet, and drunk deeply into His spirit. In no other way could he have learned such holy lessons of self-surrender and thoughtful love for others. The world knows nothing of such things; nature cannot teach such lessons. They are altogether heavenly, spiritual, divine. Would that we knew more of them! They are rare amongst us, with all our high profession.

There is a most humiliating amount of selfishness in all of us, and it does look so hideous in connection with the name of Jesus. It might comport well enough with Judaism, but its inconsistency with Christianity is terribly glaring.

But we must close; and, ere we do so, we shall just notice the very touching manner in which the inspired apostle commends Epaphroditus to the assembly at Philippi. It seems as if he could not make enough of him, to speak after the manner of men. "He longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. For indeed he was sick nigh unto

death; but God had mercy on him, and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.” How deeply affecting! What a tide of divine affection and sympathy rolled in upon that unpretending, self-sacrificing, servant of Christ! The whole assembly at Philippi, the blessed apostle, and, above all, God Himself, all engaged in thinking about a man who did not think about himself. Had Epaphroditus been a self-seeker, had he been occupied about himself or his interests, or even his work, his name would never have shone on the page of inspiration. But no; he thought of others, not of himself, and therefore God, and His apostle, and His church, thought of him.

Thus it will ever be. A man who thinks much of himself saves others the trouble of thinking about him; but the lowly, the humble, the modest, the unpretending, the retiring, the self-emptied, who think of, and live for, others, who walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, these are the persons to be thought of and cared for, loved and honored, as they ever will be, by God and His people.

“I sent him therefore the more carefully,” says the beloved apostle, “that when ye see him again ye may rejoice, and that I maybe the less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation. Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.”

Thus it was with this most dear and honored servant of Christ. He did not regard his life, but laid it at his Master’s feet, just to supply the missing link between the church of God at Philippi, and the suffering and needy apostle at Rome. And hence the apostle calls upon the church to hold him in reputation, and the honored name of Epaphroditus has been handed down to us by the pen of inspiration, and his precious service has been recorded, and the record of it read by untold millions, while the name and the doings of the self-seekers, the self-important, the pretentious, of every age, and every clime, and every condition, are sunk—and deservedly so—in eternal oblivion.

God's Love and Man's World

John's first Epistle brings out the contrast of the Father's heart and the world very distinctly. In it the world is characterized by seven things: in chapter 2:16 it is a

LUSTFUL WORLD.

Man's eye, ear, and heart are all tainted with the corrupt lusts of the world, which drown men in perdition. Notwithstanding all the learning and refinement abroad, the root of evil is untouched, the bad soil of the human heart producing the noxious weeds of uncleanness, fornication, idolatry, and lasciviousness.

In the second place, in chapter 2:17, we learn that it is a

TRANSIENT WORLD.

Its pleasures are only for a season, its sins have their termination, its hopes are blighted, its ambition disappointed-evanescent, passing, transient is stamped upon it; the feet which trod the earth gaily, soberly, or sadly a century ago, now, for the most part, lie moldering in the cold, silent grave.

Again, we learn (chap. 3:1) that it is an ignorant world. "The world knoweth us not, because it knew him not." Alas, for its boasted intelligence, knowledge, and wisdom; the light (Christ) shining in darkness only discovered how black and deep that darkness was; and it is the same world still, the mystery of godliness has never been unraveled by the wise ones here, for the world by wisdom knew not God, and it is true today that some have not the knowledge of God—this is spoken to their shame.

But not only is man's mind blinded by the ignorance that is in him, but we learn that he can hate what he does not understand; and so chapter 3:13 reveals it as a hateful world.

It hated Christ when He was on earth; it hates those who are Christ's now, for no other reason than that the heart of man, which is so dark that it cannot understand God, is so utterly ruined, that it is full of enmity against that which it cannot understand or appreciate, and can hate that which is light and purity, because it is filthy and corrupt; so that the two things which were true of Christ when here, should be true of all believers now; they are a misunderstood people, and a hated people.

In chapter 5:1-4 we learn that it is an anti-christian world.

Evil spirits, making use of the name of Christ, and personating the power of the Holy Ghost, were using men to blaspheme and deny the only true God and His Son Jesus Christ, by introducing a false Christ, and saying He was not a real man; they sought to bring ruin and discredit upon the grand and glorious truths of Christianity, and verse 5 shows us how readily man drank in the poisoned lie of the serpent, and shows us a

DELUDED WORLD.

“The world heareth them;” it had no ear for Christ, no heart for Christ, charm He never so wisely; but Satan’s gilded chains enthrall the minds of his willing captives; and today the world is characterized by the blinding of the God of this world, who has shrouded in deathly deceit the hearts of those that believe not. On the other hand, those who are not of this world but are of God, are those who have heard God’s word, believed that the true Christ of God, the Son of the Father, came from God, and instead of listening to the lie of Satan, “hear us” (ver. 6), that is, the apostles, those whom God used to convey His mind in His word; and as the Lord says, “My sheep hear my voice,” all who have not heard His voice are deluded still by the voices not of God, and, alas! prove that, instead of being children in the Father’s many-mansioned house, they belong to a

SATANIC WORLD,

For “the whole world lieth in wickedness” (chap. 5:19), or in the arms of the “wicked one.” Imagine the darling babe of your bosom enveloped in the coils of a deadly serpent, whose glittering eyes and deadly fangs await in gloating desire the life of its victim, and you have a faint picture of this lustful, transient, ignorant, hateful, anti-christian, deluded, Satanic world, the end of which will be, for all who belong to it, “everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power, and the lake of fire which burneth forever and ever.”

We have seen the world in its enmity, ruin, and sin, and as we think of the holiness of God, ice may well exclaim that justice, eternal justice, demands punishment without mercy; but, oh, wonder of wonders! a way has been found by which God can be just, and the Justifier of the believer; and in this action of our God we learn His love, for we read this very world is that which “God so loved, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”—not the elect world, the refined world, the religious world, but this world of sinners of the deepest dye—this world that in itself deserves nothing but righteous indignation and eternal condemnation.

And now notice the contrast between it and the heart of God. In chapter 2 the love has manifested itself in providing a righteous basis upon which it can act, “Grace reigning through righteousness,” not at the expense of it, and so we read of a propitiation, not merely for the Jew, but for the whole world. A Jew understood a mercy-seat; it was a new thing for a Gentile; but the heart of God must take in the whole world—nothing less. So there is a golden seat, upon which blood, precious blood, has been sprinkled, God’s claims have been satisfied, justice, holiness, and all His attributes fully, completely, entirely met. Man sinned—Christ died. Man outraged God—that very God provided a mercy-seat, In chapter 4:9 we read, “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his Son into the world, that we might live through him.” Sin had reigned unto death, grace now reigns through righteousness unto eternal life. Man had destroyed himself, but God had not changed, and so we find His blessed love delighting itself in conferring upon prodigals, lost and dead,

LIFE ETERNAL.

But the next verse (10) tells us that we are guilty sinners, as well as dead sinners, and so we need an atonement to be made for our guilt. Again God acts, satisfying His own claims, and meeting the sinner’s need. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, bat that he loved us, and sent his Son the

propitiation for our sins.” God is holy, we are unholy; none could by any means give to God a ransom for his soul, so God, out of the fullness of His love, provided a PROPITIATION for our sins. Man had sold himself to Satan, departed from God, earned hell and destruction; to save, deliver, rescue him from this, God has provided a Savior (ver. 14), and that Savior is no less than His beloved Son, through whose name is preached the joyful news of a full, free, present, and eternal SALVATION.

Nay, more, God has not only wrought this salvation, but Christ having taken our place in judgment, we have His place before God, as a present reality, and the result is, boldness in the day of judgment; and in order to assure our hearts, and give us the enjoyment of our place before Himself, being justified by faith, we have peace with God; all the floodgates being removed, God can let in the mighty tide of His love into our souls, and shed abroad that love in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, and thus eject fear from our hearts.

Nay, more, in chapter v. we find that one simple act of faith has so connected us with Christ, and all that is Christ's, that we get victory over the world, as the result of present association with Christ, the victorious Conqueror, and instead of being “of the world,” we are delighted to hear Him tell us “we are of God,” and praise and adore, as we marvel and say, “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. Beloved, it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” (1 John 3:1, 2.)

It is thus we are entitled to speak who through grace have found our sins atoned for, God's claims met, eternal life given, peace made, fear ejected, boldness conferred, and victory ours, and that through Christ alone, as the divine channel through which God can righteously bless.

Is my reader a stranger to these things? If so, permit me to direct your earnest, instant, serious gaze to the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, and listen to the word of God. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,” and be privileged to possess and enjoy eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 5:21); peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1); joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:11); and a full, final and complete victory over sin, Satan, and death, through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 15:57.) H. N.

Grace and Holiness

“C,” London. Thank God we are under grace. But does this blessed fact weaken, in any way, the truth that “Holiness becometh God’s house forever”? Has it ceased to be true, that “God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his saints; and to be had in reverence of all those who are about him”? Is the standard of holiness lower for the church of God now, than it was for Israel of old? Has it ceased to be true that “our God is a consuming fire”? It does not say, “God out of Christ;” but “our God.” What do we know of God out of Christ? Is evil to be tolerated because “we are not under law, but under grace”? Why were many of the Corinthians weak and sickly? Why did many of them die? Why were Ananias and Sapphira struck dead in a moment? Did that solemn judgment touch the truth that the church was under grace? Assuredly not. But neither did grace hinder the action of judgment. God can no more tolerate evil in His assembly now, than He could in the days of Achan.

You say, “We must not draw comparisons between God’s dealings with His earthly people, and His dealings with His church.” What mean the following words, in 1 Cor. 10? “Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Bock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted..... Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.”

Is not this drawing a comparison between God’s dealings with His earthly people and His church now? Yes, verily; and well will it be for us all to ponder and be admonished by the comparison. It would be sad indeed if we were to draw a plea from the pure and precious grace in which we stand for lowering the standard of holiness. We are called to purge out the old leaven, on the blessed ground that “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.” Is not this “drawing a comparison”? The assembly at Corinth was commanded—woe be unto them if they had refused—to put away from among them the wicked person, to deliver him to Satan for the destruction of the flesh.

True, they were not called to stone him, or to burn him; and here we have a contrast rather than a comparison. But they had to put him out from among them, if they would have the divine presence in their midst. “Thy testimonies are very sure; holiness becometh thy house, O Lord, forever.” Can you not praise Him for the holiness as well as the grace? Can you not, as the standard of holiness rises before you, add your doxology, “Blessed be his name forever and ever! Amen, and amen”? We trust you can. We are disposed to think that your remarks are the fruit of that one-sidedness to which we are all so prone, and which must ever prove a sad hindrance to our progress in the knowledge of divine truth.

We must never forget that, while we stand in grace, we are to walk in holiness; and, as regards the assembly, if we refuse to judge bad doctrine and bad morals, we are not on the ground of the assembly of God at all. People say we must not judge; God says we must. "Do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." If the assembly at Corinth had refused to judge that wicked person, it would have forfeited all title to be regarded as the assembly of God; and all who feared the Lord would have had to leave it. It is a very solemn matter indeed to take the ground of the assembly of God. All who do so have to bear in mind that it is not at all a question of whom we can receive, or what we can tolerate, but what is worthy of God? We hear a great deal now-a-days about the "broad" and the "narrow" we have just to be as broad and as narrow as the word of God.

He Loved Me, and Gave Himself for Me

Thy love, Lord Jesus, ever be
The link between Thyself and me;
Thy truth, the staff on which I lean,
Thyself, the power from earth to wean;
Thy strength in weakness perfect made,
On Thee, the Mighty, help is laid;
Oh! let me never from Thee stray,
But keep me in the narrow way;
Clothe me in Thine armor bright,
Keep me walking in the light;
Ever looking off to Thee,
Nothing in myself to see.

The Head Pew-Opener

A woman, who had been “Head Pew-opener” in a church in London for forty years, was remarkable for her Pharisaism. She had never missed “church” during all that lengthy period; on saint-days and Sundays she was regularly at her post. The vestments, the wine; the bread, the alms-boxes were all under her care and supervision, nor would she, for the world, allow things so “holy” to be touched by other hands, if she could help it.

The cleaning, sweeping, lighting were done by others; her charge was the “holy things”—to cut the bread into cubes of equal size, to decant the wine into the chalice, to see that the vestments were properly prepared, and conveniently hung, for the incumbent, on one hook, and for the curate, on the other, in the vestry; to usher the “better class” of pew-holders into their seats, and those only; to supervise the operations of the other pew-openers, and scold the old beadle occasionally, were her duties, and privileges too.

Always there, and joining in all the prayers and responses, listening to the reading of the Bible, and to some thousands of sermons, exact in all her duties, moral in her life, and without a stain upon her character, surely she was fit, if ever woman was, for heaven, “when it should please God that her time was come.” Do not you think so, my reader? Forty years of regular attendance on public worship—week-days, saint-days, and Sundays—think of that!

Well, she did think of it, and it gave her profound satisfaction.

If it be true that

“Tis religion that must give

Sweetest pleasures while we live;

Tis religion must supply

Solid comfort when we die,”

she had enough “religion” for half-a-dozen ordinary people, and it would seem she thought so. As to the Bible, she had heard it read so often in church, that she knew it pretty well by heart, and the Prayer-book too, of course.

Besides the regular religious services called public worship, she, as “Head Pew-opener” was always present at baptisms, marriages, and funerals, and had attended them so often, that she was an authority on the whole subject to every new curate just from college, and could have gone through all the ceremonies without any book at all.

In short, she was a living, moving, breathing epitome of religiousness, and her very manner savored of a full consciousness of the fact. No Pharisee that ever lived, no devotee, nun, monk, friar, or hermit could possibly lay claim to more of it than she had, and if religiousness could save anyone, she was entitled to be saved out-and-out.

But one day trouble came upon her, and sorely disturbed “the even tenor of her way,” as it will do even with the most religious; and a christian visitor, on calling upon her one morning, as he had occasionally done before to little purpose, found her in considerable distress of mind. She was a widow, her grown-up children were scattered here and there, some in one place, and some in another, and she had that morning heard of something, as to one of her sons, which gave her much concern. What it was, the writer now forgets; but he well remembers how greatly her Pharisaical heart was softened by the calamity that had come upon her so unexpectedly, and how much more ready than ever before she seemed to be to listen to what he had to say.

In course of conversation she remarked, with tears in her eyes, “We must expect these things, you know, sir, as a punishment for our sins.” Now, the visitor must confess that he was at first quite taken aback to hear so excellent a woman (in her own judgment) acknowledge to any “sins” at all. Had she not been cleared every Sunday morning, for forty years, when the Absolution was read, and “declared and pronounced” forgiven? Had she not been as regular in her “attendance on divine service” as the two clergymen put together? Could any one of her ungodly neighbors (with whom she had as little association as a clean surplice with a sweep’s frock) point the finger at her?

Ah! but, my reader, God had come in, and, for the first time since she was born, she had begun to question her position before Him. Have you ever done so? You will have to do with God at some time or other—it must come to that, either before the grave, or after it; why not now? “As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue confess to God;” better now than before the great white throne, for, “behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation:” then is “the day of judgment,” and no Savior for the lost!

Recovering from his momentary surprise, the visitor remarked, “God does not punish sin in that way, and if He did, it could not put sin away. Moreover, the sinner could not bear the judgment due to one sin, much less to all he has committed. Nothing less than everlasting wrath is the due reward of sin.”

“Very true, sir,” said the pew-opener, who, after forty years of regular attendance at church, of course knew, or affected to know, all about these things. “Very true, sir; still, God chastens His children!”

“Those that are His children, yes; but not to put away their sins. The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, can alone do that, and ‘He cleanseth us from all sin,’ so that there are none left to punish us for.” And, so saying, the visitor took his departure, little supposing that remarks so few and simple would have any more effect than many that had been made before in vain. No; it is not in the force or wisdom of man’s words, much less in that religious excitement which is now all but universal, that “the power of God unto salvation” is found. It is neither in the wind, the earthquake, nor the fire, that the Lord is known, but in “the still small voice.”

Have you, my reader, ever heard that voice? Has God ever spoken to you in His word? If not, you are yet in your sins, however frequently you may have heard or read the Bible, repeated prayers, or attended on religious ordinances.

This woman was; but God was pleased, in His infinite grace and love, to speak to her conscience, in that short sentence, “Nothing less than everlasting wrath is the due reward of sin and, in a moment, forty years of Pharisaism and self-righteousness were swept away forever. Convicted of

sin before God, she saw that “all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags;” like Bartimaeus of old, “she cast away her garment, and rose” out of the condition of religion apathy in which she had so long been, “and came to Jesus.”

Often had she heard, and long had she known, that word, “the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.” She knew it was in the Bible, and in the Prayer-book too, and to count the number of times it had been repeated in her hearing, would have been almost as difficult as to count the number of the stars. Her very familiarity with the phrase, as a phrase, had deprived it of all point and meaning to her conscience.

How is it with my reader? Let him ask his own soul the question, for, as some waters are said to petrify wood to stone, so a religious familiarity with scripture phraseology, if it be not received as God speaking to the soul of the hearer or reader, only encrusts the heart with a coating more impenetrable than the stoutest plates of steel on an English ironclad.

But God had stripped off the adamantine veil from this woman’s heart and conscience, that it was “naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom she had to do;” she had, as I have said, fled to Jesus, who declares, “Him that cometh unto me, I will in nowise cast out.” There, in His presence, she learned the full and blessed import of words so often heard before, “The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin,” and, believing them as spoken to her of God Himself, she got peace at once.

If the visitor was surprised to hear her acknowledge to “sins,” in the last interview, his surprise was great indeed when, on calling again, he witnessed the change which grace had wrought in some two or three short weeks. She was so altered, that, except in features, she was hardly the same woman, and even over them had passed an indescribable something that spoke of a complete revolution within. Yes, she was verily “a new creature in Christ Jesus.”

“What you said, sir, as to the judgment due to sin, and that God does not punish us for it in this world, set me thinking. Sin seemed an awful thing to me, for it is against God, and not against our neighbor. “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done evil in thy sight.” But, thank God, His blessed Son bore the judgment which we could never have borne, and His blood ‘cleanseth us from all sin.’”

She had sought to be justified on the ground of religious works, she now found herself justified on the ground of faith, which is simply taking God at His word; and hence she had “peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” The consciousness of this shed a halo of life and peace around her, so that all who had so long known her in the church she attended, marked and commented on the humble, happy, altered deportment she unconsciously manifested.

She has, doubtless, long since gone home. The old church bell will never more summon her to duties she had once prized as a part of her religious life: the formal services, the organ’s peal, the solemn chant, the pulpit orations, all once trusted in as forming together a part of her justification before God, are gone forever, and in their stead the glory of God, the ceaseless harmony of the golden harps, the hallelujahs of the redeemed, “unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father,” now surround her; she gazes, with undimmed eyes, upon that face, once “so marred” for us, and knows, as she could not know it here, the wondrous depths of the love that snatched her from the very brink of

the abyss on which she had stood so unconsciously for forty years, blinded by the false peace of “religious exercises,” in the room of Christ.

May my reader learn a solemn lesson from “The Head Pew-opener.”

J. L. K.

How to Study Scripture

It is a very difficult thing for anyone to attempt to prescribe for another the proper method of studying scripture. The infinite depths of holy scripture, like the exhaustless resources that are in God, and the moral glories of the Person of Christ, are only unfolded to faith and need. This makes it so very simple. It is not cleverness, or intellectual power, we need, but the artless simplicity of a little child. The One who indited the holy scriptures must open our understandings to receive their precious teaching. And He will do so, if only we wait on Him in real earnestness of heart.

But we must never lose sight of the weighty fact, that it is as we act on what we know that our knowledge shall increase. It will never do to sit down like a bookworm to read the Bible. We may store our intellect with biblical knowledge, we may have the doctrines of the Bible and the letter of scripture at our finger-ends, without one particle of unction or spiritual power. We must go to scripture as a thirsty man goes to a well; as a hungry man goes to a meal; as a mariner goes to a chart. We must go to it because we cannot do without it. We go, not merely to study, but to feed. The instincts of the divine nature lead us naturally to the word of God, as the new-born babe desires the milk by which he is to grow. It is by feeding on the word that the new man grows.

Hence we may see how very real and practical is this question of how to study scripture. It is intimately connected with our entire moral and spiritual condition, our daily walk, our actual habits and ways. God has given us His word to form our character, to govern our conduct, and shape our course; and therefore, if the word has not a formative influence, and a governing power over us, it is the height of folly to think of storing up a quantity of scriptural knowledge in the intellect. It can only puff us up, and deceive us. It is a most dangerous thing to traffic in unfelt truth; it superinduces a heartless indifference, levity of spirit, insensibility of conscience, perfectly appalling to people of serious piety. There is nothing that tends so to throw us completely into the hands of the enemy as a quantity of head knowledge of truth, without a tender conscience, a true heart, an upright mind. The mere profession of truth which does not act on the conscience, and come out in the life, is one of the special dangers of the day in which our lot is cast. Better, by far, only know a little in reality and power, than profess a quantity of truth that lies powerless in the region of the understanding, exerting no formative influence upon the life. I would much rather be honestly in Rom. 7, than fictitiously in chapter viii. In the former case I am sure to come right, but in the latter there is no telling what I may come to.

As to the question of making use of human writings to help us in the study of scripture, great caution is needed. No doubt the Lord may, and does, make use of the writings of His servants, just as He uses their oral ministry, for our instruction and edification. Indeed, in the present broken and divided state of the church, it is wonderful to mark the Lord's rich grace and tender care in feeding His beloved people with the writings of His servants.

But, we repeat, great caution is needed, earnest waiting on the Lord, that we may not abuse so precious a gift, that it may not lead us to trade on borrowed capital. If we are really dependent upon God, He will give us the right thing; He will put the right book into our hands; He will feed us

with food convenient for us. Thus we receive it from Himself, and hold it in communion with Himself. It is fresh, living, powerful, formative; it tells on the heart, and shines in the life; and we grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Precious growth! would there were more of it!

Finally, we have to remember that holy scripture is the voice of God, and the written word is the transcript of the living word. It is only by the Holy Spirit's teaching we can really understand scripture, and He reveals its living depths to faith and need. Let us never forget this.

If Need Be

"If need be," Lord! the spirit trembling cries,
In answer to Thy word.
Yet we would count upon the rich supplies
Thy grace will still afford.
'Tis only for a " little season"—then
All trial will be o'er;
The rolling waves will be forgotten—when
We reach the heavenly shore.
"If need be," Yes! the wayward heart would cling,
To fleeting scenes of time;
Instead of soaring upward on the wing
Of faith to yonder clime,
Where winds and storms of earth can never come,
Or clouds o'er cast the skies;
Where Thou wilt take us to Thy Father's home.
And wipe our weeping eyes.
Lord! what the need?—O, make us fully know
Thy purposes of love;
Lowly beneath the chastening rod to bow,
Thy faithfulness to prove.
A loving Father's hand would never strike
His child a needless blow.
Surely! the goodness and the rod alike
His love and wisdom show.
Lord, let Thy precious name be glorified
In every sorrow here,

And let Thy words of comfort be applied
To dry up every tear.
There is a bright inheritance on high,
For those who, bought by blood,
Would ever on Thy gracious care rely—
“Kept by the power of God.”
When troubles press, and all things dark appear.
In this sad scene of strife;
We look above, where we shall joyful wear
The glorious “Crown of Life,”
Promised to those who love Thee, and endure
According to Thy will.
Truly—such hope, so blest, and yet so sure,
Our waiting souls must fill!
“If need be,” Lord!
Again we trembling cry—
And yet with trustful gaze,
We ask that Thou wouldst guide us with Thine eye.
Wouldst lead us in Thy ways.
And, though the raging fire around us play,
Let it but burn the dross.
Our strength, by Thee, proportioned to our day,
We shall not suffer loss.
The “need be” past—the “little season” o’er—
And we shall see Thy face.
Thy weary ones will wander here no more,
But rest in Thine embrace.
We wait for Thee, Lord Jesus!—haste that day,
When Thou wilt meet Thy bride;

Wilt bear her on the glorious cloud away,
And seat her by Thy side.

If Saved—What Am I Saved for?

The first and most important question with all who have reached the period of responsibility, is surely the salvation of the soul. Compared with this, all other questions sink into utter insignificance. “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mark 8:36, 37.) One human soul, according to the Lord’s estimate, is of more value in His sight than the whole world. And were we to look at things from His point of view, our estimate would be the same. He gives us heaven’s estimate of such things. The one is matter, the other is spirit; the one will pass away as if it had never been; the earth, with all its precious metals, so-called, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up; the other will survive the wreck of all matter, the dissolution of all earthly things, and live on, and on, through all changes, either in happiness or misery, forever and forever. The soul, being immortal, must surpass in value the whole material universe.

Were christian parents sufficiently alive to this solemn fact, they would make the conversion of their children, in their early years, the first object in their instruction and training. God only, we know, can plant the pulse of divine life in the child of nature, but that should not make us careless or indifferent to the need and importance of the new birth. Rather, it should make us more dependent upon God, and more diligent in pleading His needed grace. The main point here is, Have we fully realized the importance of the soul’s salvation, as far above and beyond all other considerations? If so, the heart will find relief in constantly pouring out its deep and uppermost desires into the bosom of our God and Father. The bare thought crossing the mind of such an one being lost will quicken our zeal into a burning flame. And, if the heart be rightly balanced as to this question, the means will be used with an earnestness as if all depended on them; and yet, all the while, cherishing the deepest convictions that, without the operations of God’s Holy Spirit, there will be no immediate results. But there will be deep reality and burning earnestness everywhere—before God in prayer, and before the children in a living example of the spirit of Christ, and with suitable care to win the heart for Him. There is no reason why christian parents should not reckon upon God for the conversion of their children before they leave the family roof for schools or trades.

If love for souls is the best gift of the evangelist, there is no better preparation for the work than this deep heart exercise about those we love, especially our own children. Whatever the special gift may be in the speaker, there will be earnest pleading, even to agony, and appeals which must be felt to come from the heart, even though the hearers remain unconverted.

The Lord is holding everything in His own hand, and waiting His time, but He is thereby deepening in the soul of His servant the sense of the great reality of these things. Only, the pleading one must take care that his faith fail not, that he holds fast by the truth of God, and that he calmly counts on Him who will surely satisfy the desires He has created. We may have no direct promise to plead, but we can always say, “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” (Rom. 8:32.) God will never disown the faith that

trusts in Him as He has revealed Himself in the Person and work of His beloved Son.

It is also of unspeakable importance, when the soul is converted, to have the whole question of salvation fully settled. This is often left with a measure of uncertainty, or with nothing more than a hope that it is so, though sometimes accompanied with a fear that it may not be so after all. So long as this is the case, the young believer will be occupied with himself, and can make no progress in the divine life. This, alas! is the sad state of many; and even where there is a measure of certainty of salvation, it is often with so little intelligence, that the soul is not perfectly free and happy.

The first question, then, to be settled is, the absolute certainty of salvation, according to the full efficacy of the work of Christ, and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, as the seal of that work. "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." (Eph. 1:13.) Here we have something like the divine process. The gospel of salvation is heard, Christ is trusted, the full truth is believed, and the soul is sealed with the Holy Spirit.

In chapter 2 it is said, "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace." This is precious! If Christ be our peace, it can never be lost. We may lose the enjoyment of it, but never the peace itself, inasmuch as Christ can never lose His peace with God. He is also said to be our righteousness. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. 5:21.) This is absolute! We are made the righteousness of God in Christ. This is our condition in the presence of God in Christ—righteousness absolute! See also Rom. 4:25; 5:1, 2.

From such scriptures, faith will have no difficulty in answering the question as to the certainty and completeness of salvation. Then comes the second question—What am I saved for? Surely to give my heart, unreservedly and undividedly, to the Lord; to care only for His glory, and for what will please and serve Him.

But as we have no space to enlarge upon this point at present, we will merely state the three grand positions or relations of the Christian, and leave the thoughtful to meditate on their privileges, blessings, and responsibilities.

1. Every Christian is a child in the family of God. "For we are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Again, "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." And this is, "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." But, as His children, He looks for us to "be holy and without blame before him in love." Gal. 3:26; Eph. 1:4-6.

2. Every Christian is a member of the body of Christ. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." And this, too, in resurrection, where no change can ever take place; "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." And being thus livingly united to the Head in heaven, we are members one of another. "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." (1 Cor. 12; Eph. 5; Rom. 12) While nothing can exceed the reality and blessedness of this vital union, it also involves the most weighty responsibility. We cease to be

simply individual in our actions; the whole body is affected by our spirit and ways. This consideration ought to make every Christian most careful to act consistently with his relation to the Head and members of the body of Christ; "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it." 1 Corinthians 12:26.

3. Every Christian is a servant in the kingdom. It is through much tribulation that we enter into the kingdom; not so into the family, or the body, but into the kingdom. In Hebrews, service is connected with a purified conscience: "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." In Thessalonians we find it connected with conversion, and the hope of the Lord's return: "Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven." In the parable of the pounds, the blessed Lord places this truth most fully and distinctly before us, with its own rewards: "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have shown toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." But the character and fruit of our service will not be known until the bright millennial day, when the time spoken of shall have come; "That thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to them that fear thy name, small and great." Acts 14:22; Heb. 9:14 Thess. 1:9; Luke 19; Heb. 6:10; Rev. 11:18.

May the Lord, in His great mercy, lead all who read these pages, not only to know for certain that they are saved, but also to know what they are saved for, and to act consistently as a child in the family, a member in the body, and a servant in the kingdom.

Isolation

It is one of our great difficulties at the present moment—indeed it has ever been a difficulty—to combine a narrow path with a wide heart. There is very much, on all sides, tending to produce isolation. We cannot deny it. Links of human friendship seem so fragile; so many things crop up to shake confidence; so many things which one cannot possibly sanction, that the path becomes more and more isolated.

All this is unquestionably true. But we must be very careful as to how we meet this condition of things. We have little idea how much depends on the spirit in which we carry ourselves in the midst of scenes and circumstances which, all must admit, are peculiarly trying.

For example, I may retire in upon myself, and become bitter, morose, severe, repulsive, withered up, having no heart for the Lord's people, for His service, for the holy and happy exercises of the assembly. I may become barren of good works, having no sympathy with the poor, the sick, the sorrowful: living in the narrow circle within which I have retired; thinking only of myself, my personal and family interests.

What, we may well inquire, can be more miserable than this? It is simply the most deplorable selfishness; but we do not see it, because we are blinded by our inordinate occupation with other people's failures.

Now it is a very easy matter to find out flaws, foibles, and faults in our brethren and friends. But the question is, How are we to meet these things? Is it by retiring in upon ourselves? Never; no, never. To do this is to render ourselves as miserable in ourselves as we are worthless, and worse than worthless, to others. There are few things more pitiable than what we call "a disappointed man." He is always finding fault with others. He has never discovered the real root of the matter, or the true secret of dealing with it. He has retired, but it is in upon himself. He is isolated, but his isolation is utterly false. He is miserable; and he will make all who come under his influence—all who are weak and foolish enough to listen to him—as miserable as himself. He has completely broken down in his practical career; he has succumbed to the difficulties of his time, and proved himself wholly unequal to meet the stern realities of actual life. And then, instead of seeing and confessing this, he retires into his own narrow circle, and finds fault with everyone except himself.

How truly delightful and refreshing to turn from this dismal picture to the only perfect Man that ever trod this earth! His path was indeed an isolated one—none more so. He had no sympathy with the scene around Him. "The world knew him not." "He came unto his own [Israel], and his own received him not." "He looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but he found none." Even His own beloved disciples failed to sympathize with, or understand Him. They slept on the mount of transfiguration, in the presence of His glory; and they slept in the garden of Gethsemane, in the presence of His agony. They roused Him out of His sleep with their unbelieving fears, and were continually intruding upon Him with their ignorant questions and foolish notions.

How did He meet all this? In perfect grace, patience, and tenderness. He answered their questions; He corrected their notions; He hushed their fears; He solved their difficulties; He met their need; He made allowance for their infirmities; He gave them credit for devotedness in the moment of desertion; He looked at them through His own loving eyes, and loved them, notwithstanding all. "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end."

Christian reader, let us seek to drink into our blessed Master's spirit, and walk in His footsteps; and then our isolation will be of the right kind, and though our path may be narrow, the heart will be large.

Jericho and Achor: Part 1

We must ever remember the grand practical truth that, in the history of God's ways with His people, privilege and responsibility are intimately bound up together. To talk of privilege, or think of enjoying it, while neglecting the responsibility, is the very grossest delusion possible. No true lover of holiness could think for a moment of separating them—nay, he must ever delight in strengthening and perpetuating the precious link.

Thus, for example, in Israel's case, who could estimate aright the high privilege of having Jehovah dwelling in their midst? By day and by night, there He was, to guide and guard, shield and shelter them; to meet their every need, to give them bread from heaven, and bring them forth water out of the flinty rock. His presence was a safeguard against every foe; no weapon formed against them could prosper; not a dog might move his tongue against them; they were at once invulnerable and invincible; with God in their midst they had nothing whatever to fear. He charged Himself with all their wants, whether great or small. He looked after their garments, that they might not wax old; He looked after their feet, that they might not swell; He covered them with the shield of His favor, so that no arrow might touch them; He stood between them and every foe, and flung back in the enemy's face every accusation.

Thus much as to the high privilege. But mark the corresponding and connected responsibility. See how both are indissolubly bound up together in the following weighty words: "For the Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be holy; that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee"

Precious privilege! Blessed responsibility! Who would dare to dissolve the hallowed connection? Had Jehovah deigned to come down into their midst, and walk with them, and tabernacle amongst them? Had He, in infinite grace, condescended to be their traveling companion? Was He there for exigence of every hour? Yes; blessed be His holy Name. If so, then what did His presence demand? We have seen something of what His presence secured; but what did it demand? Holiness! Israel's whole conduct was to be regulated by the great fact of the Divine Presence in their midst. Not only their great public national institutions, but their most private habits, were to be brought under the controlling influence of Jehovah's presence with them. He regulated what they were to eat, what they were to wear, how they were to carry themselves, in all the scenes, circumstances, and relationships of daily life. By night and by day, sleeping and waking, sitting in the house or walking by the way, alone or in company, He looked after them. Nothing was to be allowed in any wise inconsistent with the holiness and purity which became the presence of the Holy One of Israel.

Was all this irksome? Were the privileges irksome? Was it irksome to be led, clothed, guided, guarded, and cared for, in every possible way? Was it irksome to repose beneath the overshadowing wings of the God of Israel? Surely not. Why, then, should it be irksome to keep their persons, their habits, and their dwellings clean? Must not every true heart, every upright mind, every tender conscience delight as thoroughly in the responsibility which the Divine

Presence necessarily involves, as in the privileges which it infallibly secures? Yea, rather, must we not rank the very responsibility itself amongst our richest and rarest privileges? Unquestionably. Every true lover of holiness will esteem it a signal mercy—a very high order of blessing—to walk in company with One whose presence detects and condemns every form of evil. “Thy testimonies are very sure; holiness becometh thy house, O Lord, forever.”

The foregoing train of thought will enable us in some measure to understand the history of Achan, in Josh. 7—a history solemn and impressive in the very highest degree—a history which utters in our hearing, with deepest emphasis, words which our careless hearts are only too ready to forget, “God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.” Had Achan remembered this, it would have taught him the holy necessity of nipping in the very bud the covetousness of his heart, and thus have spared the whole assembly the humiliating defeat at Ai, and all the consequent sorrow and discipline. How terrible to think of one man, for the sake of a little personal gain, which, at best, could last but for a moment, plunging a whole congregation into the deepest trouble! And, what was worse than all, dishonoring and grieving that blessed One who had deigned, in His infinite goodness, to take up His abode in their midst. How well it would be if each one of us, when tempted to commit any secret sin, would just pause, and ask ourselves the question, “How can I do this thing, and grieve the Holy Spirit of God who dwells in me, and bring leaven into the assembly of God’s people?” We ought to remember that our private walk has a direct bearing upon all the members of the body. We are either helping or hindering the blessing of all. We are none of us independent atoms, we are members of a body incorporated by the presence of the Holy Ghost; and if we are walking in a loose, carnal, worldly, self-indulgent spirit, we are grieving the Spirit, and injuring all the members. “But God hath tempered the body together.... that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.” 1 Cor. 12:24-26.

It may seem hard to grasp this great practical truth—hard to see how our private condition and conduct can affect our fellow-members; but the simple and obvious fact is, we must either admit this, or maintain the monstrous notion that each Christian is an independent person, having no connection with the whole body of believers. If he be a member of a body, all the members of which are bound together, and linked with the Head by the personal indwelling of the Holy Ghost, then, verily, it follows that his walk and ways affect all his fellow-members, just as really as if any member of the human body suffers, all the other members feel it. If there is anything wrong with the hand, the foot feels it. How is this? Because the head feels it. The communication, in every instance, is with the head first, and from the head to the members.

Now, though Achan was not a member of a body, but merely of a congregation, yet we see how his private conduct affected the whole assembly. This is all the more striking, inasmuch as the great truth of the one body was not unfolded, and could not be, until—redemption being a grand accomplished fact—the Head took His seat on the throne of God, and sent down the Holy Ghost to form the body, and link it by His personal presence and indwelling to the Head in heaven. If the secret sin of Achan affected the most remote member of the congregation of Israel, how much more (may we not say?) doth the secret sin of any member of the body of Christ affect all the members thereof.

Let us never forget this weighty truth. May we keep it ever in the remembrance of the thoughts of our hearts, that so we may see the urgent need of a careful, tender, holy walk; that we may not dishonor our glorious Head, grieve the blessed indwelling Spirit, or injure the very feeblest member of that body of which, by the sovereign grace of God and the precious blood of Christ, we form a part.

But we must proceed with our subject, and, in so doing, call the special attention of the reader to the way in which the sin of Achan was traced home to him. It is all most solemn. He had little idea whose eye was resting upon him, when he was carrying on his secret wickedness. He would, no doubt, think himself all right, and very successful, when he had the money and the garment safely hidden in his tent—fatal, guilty, wretched treasure! Unhappy man! How dreadful is the love of money! How terrible is the blinding power of sin! It hardens the heart, deadens the conscience, darkens the understanding, ruins the soul; and, in the case before us, brought defeat and disaster upon some six hundred thousand people.

“And the Lord said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?”—there is a time for lying on the face, and there is a time for standing on our feet; a time for devout prostration, and a time for decided action. The instructed soul will know the time for each—“Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them; for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed; neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you. Up, sanctify the people, and say, sanctify yourselves against to-morrow; for thus saith the Lord God of Israel, There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies until ye take away the accursed thing from among you.”

How peculiarly solemn is all this! How very arresting! How soul-subduing! God’s people—those who bear His Name, and profess to hold His truth, who stand identified with Him in this world, must be holy. He cannot lend the sanction of His presence to that which is unholy or impure. Those who enjoy the high privilege of being associated with God are solemnly responsible to keep themselves unspotted from the world, else He must take down the rod of discipline, and do His strange work in their midst. “Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord.”

“Thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you. In the morning therefore ye shall be brought according to your tribes; and it shall be, that the tribe which the Lord taketh shall come according to the families thereof; and the family which the Lord shall take shall come by households; and the household which the Lord shall take shall come man by man.”

This, surely, was coming to close quarters. The sinner might seek to persuade himself that discovery was impossible; he might cherish the fond hope of escaping amid the many thousands of Israel. Miserable delusion! He might be sure his sin would find him out. The self-same Presence that secured individual blessing, secured with equal fidelity the detection of the most secret individual sin. Escape was impossible. If Jehovah was in the midst of His people to lay Jericho in ruins at their feet, He was there also to lay bare, in its deepest roots, the sin of the congregation, and to bring forth the sinner from his hiding-place to bear the penalty of his wickedness.

How wondrous are God's ways! First, the twelve tribes are summoned, and the transgressor might deem himself far removed from detection. But one tribe is fixed upon! Still, he might escape amid so many. Nearer still! The family is fixed upon! And yet nearer; the very household is actually singled out; and, last of all, "man by man!" Thus, out of six hundred thousand people, the all-searching, keenly penetrating eye of Jehovah reads the sinner through and through, and marks him off before the assembled thousands of Israel.

"And it shall be, that he that is taken with the accursed thing shall be burnt with fire, he and all that he hath; because he hath transgressed the covenant of the Lord, and because he hath wrought folly in Israel. So Joshua rose up early in the morning, and brought Israel by their tribes, and the tribe of Judah was taken. And he brought the family of Judah: and he took the family of the Zarahites: and he brought the family of the Zarahites man by man; and Zabdi was taken; and he brought his household man by man; and Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken."

"Our God is a consuming fire." He cannot tolerate evil in the ways of His people. This accounts for the solemn scene before us. The natural mind may reason about all this—it may marvel why the taking of a little money and a garment from amid the spoils of a doomed city should involve such awful consequences, and entail such a severe punishment. But we have to remember that the natural mind is utterly incapable of understanding the ways of God. And not only so, but may we not ask the objector, How could God sanction evil in His people? How could He go on with it? What was to be done with it? If He was about to execute judgment upon the seven nations of Canaan, could He possibly be indifferent to sin in His people? Most assuredly not. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore will I punish you for your iniquities.■■■ The very fact of His taking them into relationship with Himself was the ground of His dealing with them in holy discipline.

It is the very height of folly for men to reason about the severity of divine judgment, or the apparent lack of proportion between the sin and the punishment. All such reasoning is false and impious. What was it that brought in all the misery, the sorrow, the desolation, the sickness, pain, and death—all the untold horrors of the last six thousand years? What was the source of it all? Just the one little act—as man would call it—of eating a bit of fruit! But this little act was that terrible thing called sin—sin against God! And what was needed to atone for this? How was it to be met? What stands over against it as the only adequate expression of the judgment of a holy God? What? The burning in the valley of Achor? Nay. The everlasting burnings of hell? Nay; something far deeper and more solemn still. What? The cross of the Son of God! The awful mystery of the death of Christ! That terrible cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?,"■■ Let men remember this, and cease to reason.

Jericho and Achor: Part 2

The christian reader will do well to turn, first of all, to the two chapters named above, and give them a careful reading. They furnish a very striking and impressive record of the double effect of God's presence with His people. In chapter 6 we are taught that the divine presence ensured victory over the power of the enemy. In chapter 7 we learn that the divine presence demanded judgment upon evil in the bosom of the congregation. The ruins of Jericho demonstrate the one; the great heap of stones in the valley of Achor attests the other.

Now, these two things must never be separated.

We see them vividly illustrated in every page of the history of God's people, both in the Old and in the New Testament. The self-same presence that secures victory demands holiness. Let us never forget this. Yea, let us keep it ever in the remembrance of the thoughts of our hearts. It has an individual, as well as a collective application. If we are to walk with God, or rather if He is to walk with us, we must judge and put away everything inconsistent with His holy presence. He cannot sanction unjudged evil in His people. He can pardon, heal, restore, and bless, but He is intolerant of evil. "Our God is a consuming fire." "The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God."

Should the thought of this discourage or depress any true-hearted child of God or servant of Christ? Most certainly not. It should neither discourage nor depress, but it should make us very watchful over our hearts, very careful as to our ways, as to our habits of thought, feeling, and conversation. We have nothing whatever to fear so long as God is with us, but He cannot possibly sanction evil in His people, and every true lover of holiness will heartily bless Him for this. Could we possibly desire it to be otherwise? Would we wish the standard of holiness to be lowered the breadth of a hair? God forbid. All those who love His name can give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness. They rejoice in the precious truth that holiness becometh His house forever. "Be ye holy, for I am holy." It is not by any means on the miserable principle wrapped up in the words, "Stand by thyself; I am holier than thou." Thank God it is not this. It is not a question of what we are, but of what He is. Our character and conduct are to be formed by the truth of what God is. Marvelous grace! Most precious privilege! No human language can set forth its deep blessedness.

God must have His people like Himself. If they forget this, He will very speedily remind them of it. If He, in infinite grace, links His name and His glory with us, it behooves us, most surely, to look well to our habits and ways, lest we bring any reproach on that name, lest we tarnish the luster of that glory. Is this legal bondage? Nay, it is the very purest, highest, holiest liberty. We may rest perfectly assured of this, that we are never further removed from every trace of legality than when treading that path of true holiness which becomes all those who bear the name of Christ. "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

This great truth holds good at all times. We see it in the ruins of Jericho. We read it in the valley of Achor. What was it that caused the frowning walls and towering bulwarks of Jericho to fall down fiat in one moment at the sound of a ram's horn and the shout of the people? The presence of Jehovah. Yes; and if the whole land of Canaan had been studded with fortifications, from Daniel to Beersheba, they would all have been leveled in like manner before that invincible Presence.

But what means the humiliating defeat before the insignificant city of Ai? How comes it to pass that the hosts of Israel, so recently triumphant at Jericho, have to flee ignominiously before a mere handful of men?

Ah! the answer tells a sorrowful tale. Here it is; let us hearken to it, and ponder it in the deepest depths of our moral being. Let us seek to profit by it. Let us be solemnly warned by it. It has been written for our admonition. The Holy Ghost has taken the pains to record it for our learning. Woe be to the one who turns a deaf ear to the warning voice!

“But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing; for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing; and the anger of the Lord was kindled against”—whom? Achan merely? or his household, or his family, or his tribe? Nay, but “against the children of Israel.” The whole assembly was involved in the evil. How was this? The divine presence imparted a unity to the whole assembly; it bound them all together in such a manner as to involve all in the sin of one. It was one assembly, and hence it was impossible for anyone to take independent ground. The sin of each was the sin of all, because God was in their midst, and He could not sanction un-judged evil. The whole congregation was involved, and had to clear itself of the evil ere Jehovah could lead it on to victory. Had He allowed them to triumph at Ai, it would have argued that He was indifferent to the sin of His people, and that He could give the sanction of His presence to “an accursed thing,” which were simply blasphemy against His holy name.

“And Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Beth-aven, on the east side of Beth-el, and spake unto them, saying, Go up and view the country. And the men went up and viewed Ai. And they returned to Joshua, and said unto him, Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai”—more easily said than done—“and make not all the people to labor thither, for they are but few”—yet quite too many for Israel with an Achan in the camp. “So there went up thither of the people about three thousand men; and they fled before the men of Ai. And the men of Ai smote of them about thirty and six men; for they chased them from before the gate, even unto Shebarim, and smote them in the going down; wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water. And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the Lord until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads.”

Here was a strange and unlooked-for experience! “And Joshua said, Alas! O Lord God, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites to destroy us? Would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan! O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies? For the Canaanites, and all the inhabitants of the land, shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth; and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?”

Joshua, that beloved and honored servant of God, did not see, did not understand, that it was the very glory of that “great name” which necessitated the defeat at Ai, just as it had achieved the victory at Jericho. But there were other elements in that glory beside power. There was holiness, and that holiness rendered it impossible for Him to lend the sanction of His presence where there was unjudged evil. Joshua should have concluded that there was something wrong in the condition of the people. He ought to have known that the hindrance was with Israel, and not with Jehovah. The same grace that had given them victory at Jericho would have given it at Ai, if things were right. But, alas! they were not right; and hence defeat, and not victory, was the order of the day. How could there be victory with an accursed thing in the camp? Impossible! Israel must judge the evil, or Jehovah must judge Israel. To have given them a victory at Ai would have been a reproach and a dishonor to the One whose name was called upon them. The Divine Presence absolutely demanded judgment upon the evil; and unless that was immediately executed, further progress in the conquest of Canaan was wholly out of the question. “Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord.” “Holiness becometh thy house, O Lord, forever.”

“And the Lord said unto Joshua, Get thee up: wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned”—not merely Achan— “and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them; for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed; neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you.”

This is peculiarly solemn. The whole congregation is held responsible for the evil. “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” Unbelief may inquire how all are involved in the sin of one; but the word of God definitively settles the question. “Israel hath sinned”—“they have taken”—“they have stolen”—“they have dissembled.” The assembly was one; one in privilege, one in responsibility. The sin of one was the sin of all, and all were called upon to clear themselves thoroughly by putting away the accursed thing from among them. There was not a single member of that large congregation who was not affected by Achan’s sin. This may seem strange to mere nature, but such is the solemn and weighty truth of God. It was true in the assembly of Israel of old, and assuredly it is not less true in the church of God now. No one could take independent ground in the assembly of Israel; how much less can he take it in the church of God! There were over six hundred thousand people who, to speak after the manner of men, were wholly ignorant of what Achan had done; and yet God’s word to Joshua was, “Israel hath sinned.” All were involved; all were affected; all were defiled, and all had to clear themselves, ere Jehovah could again lead them on to victory. The presence of God in the midst of the assembly formed the unity of all; and the presence of the Holy Ghost in the church of God, the body of Christ now on the earth, binds all up in one divine indissoluble unity. Hence, to talk of independency is to deny the very foundation truth of the church of God, and to prove, beyond all question, that we understand neither its nature nor its unity, as set forth on the page of inspiration.

But if evil creeps into an assembly, how is it to be met? Here it is: “Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against tomorrow; for thus saith the Lord God of Israel, There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies until ye take away the accursed thing from among you.” Were they one in privilege? Were they one in the enjoyment of the glory and strength which the Divine Presence secured? Were they one in the

splendid triumph at Jericho? Who would deny all this? Who would wish to? Why, then, seek to question their oneness in responsibility—their oneness in respect to the evil in their midst, and all its humbling consequences? Surely, if there was unity in anything, there was unity in everything. If Jehovah was the God of Israel, He was the God of all, the God of each; and this grand and glorious fact was the solid basis both of their high privileges, and their holy responsibilities. How could evil exist in such an assembly, and a single member be unaffected by it? How could there be an accursed thing in their very midst, and a single member not be defiled? Impossible. We may reason and argue about it until the tongue cleaves to the roof of the mouth, but all the reasoning and argument in the world cannot touch the truth of God, and that truth declares that “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.”

But how is the evil to be discovered? The presence of God reveals it. The selfsame power that had leveled the walls of Jericho, detected, revealed, and judged the sin of Achan. It was the double effect of the same Blessed Presence, and Israel was called to share in the one as well as in the other. To attempt to separate the two is folly, ignorance, or wickedness. It cannot be done, and ought not to be attempted.

(To be continued, if the Lord will)

Jericho and Achor: Part 3

It is always well for the Christian to be able to give a calm and decided answer to the objection which infidelity is sure to offer to the actings of divine government. The answer is this—"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" If the creature is to be allowed to judge the Creator, there is an end of all government in the vast universe of God. Hence, when we hear men daring to pronounce judgment upon the ways of God, and undertaking to decide what is, or what is not, fit for God to do, this grand preliminary question invariably suggests itself—"Who is to be judge?" Is man to judge God? or is God to judge man? If the former, there is no God at all; and if the latter, then man has to bow his head in reverent silence, and own his utter ignorance and folly.

The fact is, if man could comprehend the government of God, he would no longer be man, but God. What contemptible folly, therefore, for a poor, shallow ignorant, short-sighted mortal to attempt to pronounce, an opinion upon the profound mysteries of divine government! His opinion is not only utterly worthless, but, in the judgment of every truly pious mind, positively impious and blasphemous, a daring insult offered to the throne, to the nature, and to the character of God, for which he will, most assuredly, have to answer before the judgment-seat of Christ, unless he repent, and find pardon through the blood of the cross.

The foregoing line of thought has suggested itself in connection with the solemn scene in the valley of Achor. The unbelieving mind may feel disposed to start an objection on the ground of the apparent severity of the judgment; to institute a comparison between the offense and the punishment; to call in question the equity of Achan's children being involved in their father's sin.

To all this we simply reply, "Are we competent to judge?" If any man thinks he is, it is tantamount to saying that God is not fit to govern the world, but should give place to man. This is the real root of the whole matter. Infidelity wants to get rid of God altogether, and set up man in His place. If God is to be God, then, most certainly, His ways, the actings of His government, the mysteries of His providence, His purposes, His counsels, and His judgments must lie far beyond the range of the most gigantic human or angelic mind. Neither angel, man, nor devil can comprehend Deity. Let men own this, and hush into eternal silence their puny, ignorant, and contemptible reasonings. Let them take up the language of Job when his eyes were opened: "Then Job answered the Lord, and said, I know that thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? Therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak; I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." When the soul gets into this attitude, there is an end of all infidel questions. Till then there is little use in discussion.

Let us now turn, for a few moments, to contemplate the solemn scene in the valley of Achor; and let us remember that "whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning." May we learn to watch, with holy jealousy, the incipient workings of evil in our hearts. It is on these men ought to sit in judgment, and not on the pure and perfect actings of divine government.

Joshua's address to Achan is solemn, weighty, and powerful. "My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me."

Here is the all-important matter. "Give glory to Jehovah, God of Israel." All hinges upon this. The Lord's glory is the one perfect standard by which all is to be judged—the perfect gauge by which everything is to be measured—the perfect touchstone by which all is to be tried. The one great question for the people of God, in all ages and in all dispensations, is this— "What is suited to the glory of God!" In comparison with this, all other questions are less than secondary. It is not a question of what is suitable to us, or what we can tolerate or agree with. This is a very minor consideration indeed. What we have ever to look to, and think of, and provide for, is the glory of God. We have to ask ourselves the question, in reference to everything that comes before us, "Will this comport with the glory of God?" If not, let us, by His grace, fling it aside.

Well would it have been for Achan had he thought of this, when his eye rested on the cursed treasure! What misery it would have saved him! What sorrow and trouble it would have saved his brethren! But, alas! alas! people forget all this when lust dims the eyes, and vanity and folly possess the heart; and onward they go, until the heavy judgment of a holy, sin-hating God overtake them. And then, forsooth, men presume to comment upon such judgment as unworthy of a gracious and beneficent Being. Ignorant presumption! They would fain have a god of their own imagination, one like themselves, who can make light of sin, and tolerate all sorts of evil. The God of the Bible, the God of Christianity, the God of the cross, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ does not suit such infidel reasoners. Their deep heart-utterance to Him is, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

"And Achan said, Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done; when I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it."

Here the dark, defiling river is traced up to its source in the heart of this one unhappy man. Oh, how little did he think whose eye was resting on him during the entire progress of this most melancholy and disastrous affair! He thought but of one thing, namely, the gratification of his covetousness. He saw, he coveted, he took, he hid; and there, no doubt, he thought the matter would end. He would have his treasure, and no one would be the wiser.

But, ah! the eye of Jehovah, the God of Israel, was upon him; that holy eye from which no secret thing is hidden, which penetrates to the profoundest depths of the human heart, and takes in at a glance all the hidden springs of human action. Yes, God saw it all, and He would make Israel see it, and Achan also. Hence the lamentable defeat at Ai, and all that followed.

How peculiarly solemn! The whole assembly involved in shameful defeat and disaster; Joshua and the elders of Israel, with rent garments and dust upon their heads, prostrate on their faces from morning till evening! And then the divine challenge and rebuke; the solemn muster of the hosts of Israel, tribe by tribe, family by family, household by household, man by man.

And why all this? Just to trace the evil to its source, bring it all out, and have it judged in the sight of the wide universe of God. All created intelligence must be made to see and confess that the

throne of God can have no fellowship with evil. The same power that had leveled the walls of Jericho, and executed judgment upon its guilty inhabitants, was to be manifested in detecting Achan's sin, and in evoking from the very depths of his convicted heart the confession of his terrible guilt. He, in common with all his brethren, had heard Jehovah's solemn charge: "And ye, in anywise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make"—not merely any one individual's tent, but—"the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the Lord; they shall come into the treasury of the Lord."

All this was plain enough. No one could mistake it. It only needed an attentive ear and an obedient heart. It was as plain as the commandment delivered to Adam and Eve amid the bowers of Eden. But Achan, like Adam, transgressed the plain and positive command. Instead of hiding it in his heart, that he might not sin against God, he trampled it under his feet, that he might gratify his sinful desires. He fixed his covetous gaze upon the accursed thing, in itself nothing but a wretched pile of dust, but through Satan's power and Achan's erring heart turned into an occasion of sin, shame, and sorrow.

Oh, reader, how sad, how sorrowful, how terrible a thing it is to allow the poor heart to go after the wretched things of this world! What are they all worth? If we could have all the garments that were ever made in Babylon, all the gold and silver that ever issued from the mines of Peru, California, and Australia; all the pearls and diamonds that ever glittered on the kings, princes, and nobles of this world; could they give us one hour's true happiness? Could they send a single ray of heavenly light into the soul? Could they impart to us one moment's pure spiritual enjoyment? Not they. In themselves they are but perishable dust, used of Satan, a positive curse, misery, and degradation. Not all the riches and material comforts which this world could offer are worth one hour's holy communion with our heavenly Father and our precious Savior. Why should we covet this world's wretched wealth? Our God will supply all our need, according to His riches in glory, by Christ Jesus. Is not this enough? Why should we put ourselves within the range of Satan's power, by setting our hearts upon the riches, honors, or pleasures of a wicked world which is ruled by the arch-enemy of God and of our souls? How well it would have been for Achan, had he rested content with what the God of Israel had given him! How happy he might have been, had he been satisfied with the furniture of his tent, the smile of Jehovah, and the answer of a good conscience!

But he was not; and hence the appalling scene in the valley of Achor, the record of which is enough to strike terror into the stoutest heart. "So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent; and, behold, it was hid in his tent, and the silver under it. And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the Lord. And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan, the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had; and they brought them unto the valley of Achor. And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? The Lord shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones. And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called the valley of Achor [that is, trouble] unto this day." Josh. 7:19-26.

How deeply solemn is all this! What a warning note it sounds in our ears! Let us not attempt, under the false influence of one-sided notions of grace, to turn aside the holy edge of such a passage of scripture. Let us read, with earnest attention, the inscription on that awful monument in the valley of Achor. What is it? "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." Ami again, "If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy." And, further, "Our God is a consuming fire."

Weighty, solemn, searching words these! Much needed, surely, in these days of flippant, easy-going profession, when the doctrines of grace are so much on our lips, but the fruits of righteousness so little seen in our lives. May we learn from them the urgent need of watchfulness over our hearts, and over our private life, that evil may be judged and nipped in the bud, so that it may not bring forth its sad, shameful, and sorrowful fruit in our practical career, to the gross dishonor of the Lord, and the grievous sorrow of those with whom we are linked in the bonds of fellowship.

(To be continued if God permit.)

Jericho and Achor: Part 4

There is a very interesting allusion to “the valley of Achor” in Hos. 2, at which we may just glance for a moment in passing, though it does not connect itself with the special line of truth which we have had before us in this series of papers.

Jehovah, in speaking, by His prophet, of Israel, says, “Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope; and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.” Verses 14, 15.

What touching grace shines in these words! “The valley of Achor”—the place of “trouble”—the place of deep sorrow and shame—the place of humiliation and judgment—the place where the fire of Jehovah’s righteous wrath consumed the sin of His people—there shall be “a door of hope” for Israel by-and-by; there, too, she shall sing as in the days of her youth. How wonderful to hear of songs of praise in the valley of Achor! What glorious triumphs of grace! What a bright and blessed future for Israel!

“It shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call me Ishi [my husband], and shalt call me no more Baalim [my lord]. For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name. And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground; and I will break the bow, and the sword, and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely. And I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies; I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the Lord. And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord; I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel. And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people, and they shall say, Thou art my God.” Hos. 2:14-23.

However, this reference to “the valley of Achor,” in the future, is a digression from our special theme, to Which we must now return; and in so doing, we shall ask the reader to turn with us, for a few moments, to the Opening chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. Here we find the same grand results of the presence of God in the midst of His people as we have seen in the opening of the book of Joshua, only in a much more glorious manner, as we might expect.

On the day of Pentecost, God the Holy Ghost came down to form the assembly, and take up His abode therein. This great and glorious fact was grounded on the accomplishment of the work of atonement, as attested by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and His glorification at the right hand of God.

We cannot attempt to unfold this truth, in all its bearings, in this brief article; we merely call the reader’s attention to the two practical points which have been before us—namely, the privilege

and responsibility connected, of necessity, with the Lord's presence in the midst of His people. If He was there to bless—as He most surely was—He was also, and quite as surely, there to judge. The two things go together, and we must not attempt to separate them.

And first, then, if we would know something of the privileges and blessings of the divine presence in the assembly, let us ponder such a passage as the following: "And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, as every man had need." The blessed effect of the realized presence of the Holy Ghost was to bind their hearts together in a holy and loving fellowship; to cause them to let go earthly things, and lead them to merge their personal interests in the common good.

Precious fruits! Would that we saw more of them! No doubt times are changed; but God is not changed, and the effect of His realized presence is not changed. True, we are not in Acts 2. Pentecostal times have passed away; Christendom has proved a complete failure; the professing church has hopelessly fallen. All this, alas! is true; but Christ, our Head, abides, in all His living power and unchangeable grace. "The foundation of God standeth sure"—as sure, as safe, and as solid today, as it was on the day of Pentecost. No change here, blessed be God; and hence we may say, with all possible confidence, that where His presence is realized, even though it be only by "two or three" gathered in the name of Jesus, there the same lovely fruits will be found. Hearts will be knit together; earthly things will be surrendered; personal interests will be merged. It is not merely a question of throwing our goods into a common heap, but of the grace which once took that special form, and which, at all times, would lead us, not merely to surrender our possessions, but ourselves, for the good of others.

It is a very grave mistake indeed for anyone to say, or to think, that, because we are not in Pentecostal times, we cannot count on the presence of God with us in the path of holy obedience to His will. Such a thought should be judged as sheer unbelief. We are certainly shorn of many of the Pentecostal gifts, but we are not bereft of the Giver. The blessed Comforter abides with us; and it is our happy privilege to be in a position in which we can enjoy His presence and ministry.

The thing is to be in that position; not merely to say we are in it, to boast of being in it, but really to be in it. We may well apply here the pointed question of the blessed apostle, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say" he is on divine ground, if he be not really there? Assuredly it profits nothing.

But let us not forget that, although we are not in Acts 2, but in the Second Epistle to Timothy—although we are not in the refreshing scenes of Pentecost, but in the "perilous times" of "the last days," yet the Lord is with those "who call on him out of a pure heart," and His presence is all we want. Let us only trust Him, use Him, lean upon Him. Let us see to it that we are in the position in which we can count on His presence—a position of entire separation from all that He judges to be "iniquity;" from the "dishonorable vessels" in "the great house" and from all those who having a form of godliness, deny the power thereof.

These, we may rest assured, are the absolutely essential conditions on which the Divine Presence can be realized by any company of Christians. "We may come together, and form ourselves into an assembly; we may profess to be on divine ground; we may call ourselves the assembly of God; we may appropriate to ourselves all those passages of scripture which only apply to those who are

really gathered by the Holy Ghost to the name of Jesus. But if the essential conditions are not there—if we are not “calling on the Lord out of a pure heart”—if we are mixed up with “iniquity”—if we are associated with “dishonorable vessels”—if we are walking, hand-in-hand, with lifeless professors, who deny in practice the power of godliness—what then? Can we expect to realize the Lord’s presence? As well might Israel have expected it with an Achan in the camp. It cannot be. In order to reach divine results, there must be divine conditions. To look for the former without the latter is vanity, folly, and wicked presumption.

Let not the reader mistake our meaning. We are not now treating, or even touching, the great question of the soul’s salvation. This, precious and important as it is to all whom it may concern, is not at all our subject in this series of papers on “Jericho and Achor.” We are dealing with the solemn and weighty question of the privilege and responsibility of those who profess to be the Lord’s people, gathered to His name; and we are specially anxious to impress upon the mind of the reader, that, notwithstanding the hopeless ruin of the professing church, its utter failure in its responsibility to Christ as His witness and light-bearer in the world, yet it is the happy privilege of “two or three” to be gathered in His name, apart from all the evil and error around, owning our common sin and failure, feeling our weakness, and looking to Him to be with us, and bless us, according to the unchangeable love of His heart.

Now, to those thus gathered, there is no limit whatever to the measure of blessing which our ever gracious and faithful Lord can bestow. “He has the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars”—the fullness of spiritual power, ministerial gift, and authority for His church. Such is His style and title in addressing the church at Sardis, which sets before us the history of Protestantism.

It is not said, as in the address to Ephesus, that He holds the seven stars in His right hand. There is a grave difference as to this; and it is our bounden duty to recognize both the difference and the cause. When the church began, on the day of Pentecost, and during the days of the apostles, Christ, the Head, not only possessed all spiritual gift, power, and authority for His church, but was owned as the actual Administrator thereof. He held the stars in His right hand. There was no such thing known or thought of as human authority in the assembly of God. Christ was owned as Head and Lord. He had received the gifts, and He dispensed them according to His sovereign will.

Thus it should ever be. But, alas! man has intruded upon the hallowed sphere of Christ’s authority. He presumes to meddle in the appointment of ministry in the church of God; without so much as a single atom of divine authority, without any ability whatsoever to impart the necessary gift for ministry, he nevertheless takes upon himself the awful responsibility of calling, appointing, or ordaining to the ministry in the church of God. As well might the writer of these lines undertake to appoint a man as an admiral in Her Majesty’s fleet, or a general in her army, as for any man, or body of men, to appoint a man to minister in the church of God. It is a daring usurpation of divine authority. None can impart ministerial gift, and none can appoint to any branch of ministry, but Christ, the church’s Head and Lord; and all who undertake to do so, will have to account to Him for so doing.

It may be that many who thus act, and many more who sanction, or are identified with such acting, are not aware of what they are doing; and our God is gracious and merciful in bearing with our feebleness and ignorance. All this is blessedly true; but as to the principle of human authority in the church of God, it is utterly false, and should be rejected with holy decision by everyone who

loves, reverences, and adores the great Head of the church and Lord of the assembly, who, blessed be His name, still has the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars. He has them now just as positively as in apostolic times; and all who take their true place, the place of self-judgment and humiliation—all who truly own our common sin and failure, on departure from first love, first principles—all who really, in true humility of mind, look to Christ alone for all they want—all who, in real earnestness of heart and godly sincerity, bow to His word and confess His name—all such will assuredly prove the reality of His presence—they will find Him amply sufficient for all their need. They can count on Him for the supply of all ministerial gift, and for the maintenance of all godly order in their public reunions.

True, they will feel—must feel—that they are not in the days of Acts 2, but in the days of 2 Timothy. Yet Christ is sufficient for these, as He was for those. The difficulties are great, but His resources are infinite. It were folly to deny that there are difficulties; but it is sinful unbelief to question the all-sufficiency of our ever gracious and faithful Lord. He has promised to be with His people right on to the end. But He cannot sanction hollow pretension, assumption, or affectation. He looks for reality, for truth in the inward parts. He will have us in our right place, owning our true condition. There He can meet us, according to His infinite fullness, and according to the eternal stability of that grace which reigns through righteousness unto eternal life.

But, oh! let us never forget that our God delights in uprightness of heart and integrity of purpose. He will never fail a trusting heart; but He must be trusted fully. It will not do to speak of trusting Him, while, in reality, we are leaning on our own appliances and arrangements. Here is precisely where we so sadly fail. We do not leave room for Him to act in our midst. We do not leave the platform clear for Him. Thus we are robbed, and that to an extent of which we have little idea, of the blessed manifestation of His presence and grace in our assemblies. His Spirit is quenched and hindered, and we are left to feel our barrenness and poverty, when we might be rejoicing in the fullness of His love and in the power of His ministry. It is utterly impossible that He can ever fail those who, owning the truth of their condition, earnestly look to Him. He cannot deny Himself; and He can never say to His people that they have reckoned too largely on Him.

It is not that we are to look for any special display of power in our midst, anything that might attract public attention, or make a noise in the world. There are no tongues, no gifts of healing, no miracles, no extraordinary manifestations of angelic action on our behalf. Neither are we to look for anything similar to the case of Ananias and Sapphira—the sudden and awful execution of divine judgment, striking terror into the hearts of all, both inside and outside the assembly.

Such things are not to be looked for now. They would not comport with the present condition of things in the church of God. No doubt, our Lord Christ has all power in heaven and on earth, and He could display that power now, just as He did in Pentecostal times, if it so pleased Him.

But He does not so act, and we can readily understand the reason. It is our place to walk softly, humbly, tenderly. We have sinned, and failed, and departed from the holy authority of the word of God. We must ever bear this in mind, and be content with a very low and retired place. It would ill become us to seek a name or a position in the earth. We cannot possibly be too little in our own eyes.

But, at the same time, we can, if in our right place, and in a right spirit, fully count on the presence of Jesus with us; and we may rest assured that where He is—where His most gracious presence is felt—there we may look for the most precious results, both in the way of binding our hearts together in true brotherly love; in causing us to sit loose to all earthly possessions and earthly ties; in leading us forth in grace and kindness toward all men; and also in putting away from amongst us all who would defile the assembly by unsound doctrine or unholy morals.

Jesus Bore His Sorrows Alone

“Jesus bore his sorrows alone, but shares His glory with his people.”

Lord, Thou didst bear

The hidings of His face who was thine all!

The noon-tide air

Scarce fanned thy bleeding brow; the bitter gall

Had touched thy lips; and fled was every friend!

Thus wert Thou left alone, Thy life of toil to end!

And Thou hast died;

For sinners, Lord, Thy precious life was given!

Thou hast supplied

Our every need; and now enthroned in heaven,

Thou art yet waiting for the joyful day,

The hour when Thou from earth shalt call Thy saints away.

And Thou hast met

Thy Father's smile, hast won Thy glorious rest;

And no regret,

No sorrow now can fill Thy peaceful breast;

Thy toils and trials past, Thy sufferings o'er,

Sweet thought, Thou blessed One! “those eyes shall weep no more.”

Yet not alone

Thou bearest the glory, Lord of life and love

Though all thine own

Thy sorrows were; and none below, above,

Thy deep, surpassing griefs and pangs could share,

When, singly, Thou Thyself our weight of sin didst bear.

Thy glories, Lord—

Thy bright inheritance, a crown, a throne—
Thou in Thy word
Hast promised those whom Thou didst call Thine own.
O wondrous grace, too high for us to scan,
The Son of God thus links Himself in love to man!
Lord, we are, now,
United unto Thee, our living Head;
May we then see,
By faith, a risen Savior, who was dead,
But ever liveth now to intercede,
And for His “little ones” in this dark world to plead!
And thus we may
Still rise above the fading objects here,
And view the day
When, “Lord of Lords” the Savior shall appear;
Content to follow Him, to bear the Cross,
Counting for His free love, all things beside “but loss.”
C. A. H.

Jesus Only

On my way home one evening, I noticed that a building—called in this country a church—was brilliantly lighted up.

Before I came to it a gentleman touched my arm, and said, “Will you come in to our service at the church?”

“No, thank you,” I said.

“I can get you a seat close to the pulpit, if you will come in,” said the gentleman. “No, not tonight.”

“You had better come tonight,” said he: “You may never have another opportunity.”

“No, thank you,” I said; and I looked up to the Lord to have a word to say to this zealous one.

By this time we had arrived opposite the doors of the church, and I noticed over the porch these words, “Jesus only.”

I looked at the gentleman and said, “I see you have ‘Jesus only’ outside your church, but have you ‘Jesus only’ inside?”

“Oh, come in,” he repeated.

“But tell me, What is the way to be saved from the wrath to come?”

“You must believe in Jesus, enter the church, and lead an upright life,”

“Oh then,” I said, “it is not Jesus only.” I must enter the church and lead an upright life besides. You see it is not Jesus only.

“No, no! not exactly,” he replied; and we parted.

This passage came to my mind: “There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12.) How sad it is, I thought, that they teach in that church that three things are necessary to salvation. We read nothing in the scripture about “entering the church,” or “leading an upright life,” as a means of salvation.

Every believer is a part of the true church, and should seek light from above, as to what Christians he should unite himself with; but this is not that he may be saved, but because he is saved; and surely too he should lead an upright life. But for salvation Jesus said, “He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.”

How is it with you, my reader? are you trying to be saved by three things, and two of them your own doing—or will you let it be “Jesus only?”

Reflections on the Epistle of Jude

We now come to consider one of the principal means by which the saint is maintained in the conscious enjoyment of the divine favor “building up yourselves on your most holy faith.”

No christian duty, or rather, no distinctive christian privilege, is more nourishing, more strengthening to the heart, than this holy building. It evidently implies progress in the knowledge of the truth and that by the believer's diligent study of the word. We are not called to rest merely on the true foundation but to build upon it. “The faith once delivered to the saints,” finds a place not only in the sacred writings, but in the heart of the growing Christian. The word “faith” here means, not the Christian's act of faith, but the truths which he believes—it is the object, not the act of faith. This also is the way, the sure way, of keeping ourselves in the love of God, in communion with Him.

Bui why is it called not only “faith,” but “our most holy faith?” Because they are the words of the thrice Holy One who reveals them, and the heart is purified by faith. When we are built up by this faith we must be made holy. “As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.” (1 Pet. 1:15, 16.) It is also holy faith, inasmuch as it separates the believer from the overspreading evil which may be more or less developed in his day. “Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world: looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Titus 2:12, 13, 14.

The apostle Peter in the commencement of his second Epistle introduces a line of truth, which, while exceedingly valuable in itself, forms the best commentary we can have on the exhortations of the apostle Jude. “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue; whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” Here the Christian is said to be “called,” as in our kindred Epistle, but not to keep himself in the love of God, or to build himself up on his most holy faith; but to that which will accomplish precisely the same objects. He is “called to glory and virtue;” glory as an object, and virtue, or moral courage, by which difficulties are overcome, the old nature kept in check, victory gained over the enemies of our faith, and communion with God maintained.

This expression, so important to be understood, “Is really not to glory and virtue,” says one, “but by his own glory and by virtue” What serves to make it plain is this:—“Adam was not called” when in paradise. When innocent, he was not called by God's own glory and by virtue. What Adam was bound to do was just to stay where he was. That is, he was responsible to do the will of God, or rather, not to do what God prohibited in his case.... Our calling is by God's own glory. The whole principle of Christianity is just this. It takes the believer out of the place in which he naturally is; and

therefore it is spoken of as a calling.

The christian “calling” supposes that the gospel, when received, deals with the soul by the power of the Spirit of God; and that he who receives it is called out of the condition in which man is plunged by sin; not put back again into the position of Adam, but taken into another position altogether. It is no longer a question of man on earth; he is called by God’s own glory and by virtue. It is by God’s own glory, because if God saves, He calls to stand in nothing less than that glory.

And observes another, “Thus we have the call of God, to pursue glory as our object, gaining the victory by virtue—spiritual courage. It is not a law given to a people already gathered together, but glory proposed, in order to be reached by spiritual energy. Moreover, we have divine power acting according to its own efficacy, for the life of God in us, and for godliness. Now in connection with these two things—namely, with glory and with the energy of life, very great and precious promises are given to us; for all the promises in short are developed either in the glory or in the life which leads to it. By means of these promises we are made morally partakers of the divine nature. Precious truth! Privilege so exalted, and which renders us capable of enjoying God Himself as well as all good.”

Such is the call of divine grace; and here, all is strictly individual. Each believer is called to walk according to this new standard, the glory of God, and this new energy, moral courage. The effect of sin is to rob God of His glory, as it is written, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” But the effect of the call of grace by the gospel of Christ, who glorified God on the earth, is to place the believer in the unclouded beams of the divine glory, in all the moral fullness of Christ Himself, and there to find his home and rest forever. What a prospect! What a future! And for such feeble failing ones as we now are! Need we wonder at the apostle saying, in view of this, “We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord?” 2 Cor. 5:8.

But blessed beyond expression as all this is, it is not enough practically for the believer. Jude says, “Build,” build an edifice as it were for the service of the Lord and the glory of His name. Peter says, “add,” add to all this, to what? These exceeding great and precious promises, whereby ye are partakers of the divine nature, with all its privileges and blessings. “And besides this,” as he says, “giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue.” This is the most important addition and gives reality to all the rest. Without this difficulties are not overcome, and communion with God is interrupted. “And to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 2 Pet. 1:3-8.

Reflections on the Epistle of Jude

When the sinner first receives the message of the gospel, and bows by faith to the name of Jesus, under a sense of his sin and guilt before God, the Holy Spirit, we know, is at work in that soul. There is repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is a child of God, though, for a time, there may be great feebleness of faith as to the completeness of the work of redemption, and as to his forgiveness and acceptance, in virtue of that finished work. But when he

has learned these further truths by divine teaching, he rests in that work, he has peace with God, he knows he has eternal life, and joy fills his heart. Now he is not only quickened as a sinner, but scaled as a believer.

There must at least be a moment of time between quickening and scaling. The one follows the other; as saith the apostle, "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were scaled with that Holy Spirit of promise," And again he says, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." The Christian is now indwelt by God the Holy Ghost, in whose power he prays, subject in heart and conscience to the word of God, and by whoso indwelling he is united to the exalted Lord in glory.

This is the distinctive truth of the present dispensation, the believer's practical security against the evils that surround him, and most subservient to the one grand exhortation of the apostle, "Keep yourselves in the love of God."

The Mercy of Our Lord Jesus.

The coming of the Lord Jesus is the grand future of the faithful. Though they may be endeavoring to keep themselves in the love of God; to build themselves up on their most holy faith, and to pray in communion with God through the power of the Holy Spirit, the end of all is, looking for the mercy of the Lord Jesus unto eternal life—for a life of eternal, unmingled blessedness, with our God and Father in the presence of His glory. The coming of the Lord to take us up to be with Himself, is here viewed, not as His love and faithfulness—though unchangeable in both—but rather as a mercy, for surely it will be a great mercy to be taken away from the presence of such mere formalism and abounding wickedness. The apostle Paul, in referring to the kindness of Onesiphorus, speaks of the Lord showing mercy to those who had been faithful in a time of trial. "The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day; and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well" (2 Tim. 1:16-18.) The special truth here is, the coming of the Lord for His saints, which is looked at as a mercy. The ungodly will be dealt with, and the unrighteous judged with all the workers of iniquity at the appearing of the Lord with His saints in full manifested glory.

Discipline.

Grace and wisdom are especially needed, in such times as the apostle speaks of, to distinguish between those who may be drawn aside. The "difference" here spoken of is no doubt a divine principle, but great spiritual discrimination is necessary in dealing with such cases. A more manifest judgment must be expressed against a leader in evil, than against some who may have been led away. But these are matters for local investigation, and for the spiritual judgment of the humble, who wait on God for His divinely given wisdom and grace. Many have mistaken what may be called a human opinion of a case in question, for a spiritual judgment, and thereby widened the breach in place of healing it. The opinion oft repeated, may so prejudice many minds that a happy settlement of the question can never be attained. It is the spiritual judgment of the saints—of the lowly—not the opinion of an influential brother, which will tend to heal, to humble, to restore communion, and to receive the sanction of the Lord. "And of some have compassion, making a difference; and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh."

The Doxology.

The heart of the apostle, as he turns to God and thinks of the blessed portion of the faithful, overflows with praise. This is characteristic of all the apostolic doxologies. God having so revealed Himself in His grace and goodness to the spiritual understanding of the sacred writers, they usually wind up their communications with a burst of intelligent praise.

We see this beautifully exemplified in the case of the apostle Paul, especially in his epistles to the Romans and the Ephesians. At the close of the eleventh chapter of his epistle to the Romans, after glancing rapidly at Israel's past history, their present blindness, their future restoration, the thought of the Deliverer coming out of Zion to turn away ungodliness from Jacob, his heart overflows with adoring wonder, which finds its expression in language so rapturous and sublime, that everything is lost sight of but God Himself. "O, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory forever. Amen."

In his other doxology at the close of the sixteenth chapter, we have an entirely different order of thought. There the apostle speaks as if the welfare of the saints was everything, though it is in view of the power of God, who only is able to do all for them. His heart deeply and tenderly anxious for their stability in the faith, he commends them to God according to the gospel with which he had been entrusted. The inspired salutations may have awakened in his heart the deep sympathies of fellowship, and brought the saints before him in a special way. "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith. To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen."

in the epistle to the Ephesians, the great object of the apostle, or, rather of the Spirit of God by the apostle, is to make known the heavenly relations and blessings of the church in Christ—its position in heavenly places in Him; and with this agrees his brief but magnificent doxology at the close of the third chapter. "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us. Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." It is evident that the soul of the apostle was greatly carried away, indeed lost in adoring wonder as he was made the intelligent channel of such rich communications to the church at Ephesus, and through the same epistle to the church in all ages. Unlike the prophets of old who had no personal interest in their revelations, he tasted, he drank deeply, of the sweetness of those living waters which proceed from the throne of God and the Lamb—the eternal counsels of God in Christ, according to which the church is blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. Hence the apostle could say, "According to the power that worketh in us." It was thus the language of a heart that felt deeply what it uttered, and the intelligence of a mind that beamed with heavenly light. This is the immense advantage which the Christian has over the prophets of old with reference to divine communications. Thus we read with reference to the latter, "Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they

did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.” 1 Pet. 1:11.

This is the true principle of all the doxologies: “According to the power that worketh in us;” not merely by us, but in us. And as Paul says, in writing to the Galatians, “When it pleased God.... to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen not even to me or by me, but in me.” It is the effect of the Holy Ghost in us, making good to the soul the divine revelations of the person and work of Christ, together with His present position in glory and the bright hope of His return. “Howbeit when he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he shall show you things to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you.... At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” John 14; 15; 16

It is from this great principle—distinctive and characteristic of the present period—that we expect to find great fervency and earnestness in teachers and preachers of the word of God. It is their privilege to enter by the power of the Holy Ghost into the nature and character of their message. This gives true spiritual feeling, which ought to rise to the height or descend to the depth of their discoveries of the truth of God. Surely nothing can be more inconsistent, more unseemly, than for those who have the Holy Ghost in them, to minister the word or preach the gospel as if they did not feel the weight and reality of their message, or enjoy its sweetness. Can such be in communion with God as to their subject? Can we discover or feel the unction and power of the Holy Ghost, as we listen to a clear but cold didactic manner of address? Was not the soul of the apostle rapt in admiring love when inspired to communicate to the children of God the previously hidden mystery? He prays that they may be rooted and grounded in love: that they may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; but he does not say of what; he found himself at a center of blessing, which has no circumference; but though overwhelmed with the vastness of the divine communications, he falls back on the well-known love of his Savior and Lord. “And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.” What a filling, what an overflowing of the vessel must this be! “With all the fullness of God.” Such is the happy privilege of those to whom the Holy Ghost reveals the mystery, not Christ merely, not the church merely, but Christ and the church. “This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” Eph. 5:32.

Again, we find the same apostle in 2 Cor. 5 often speaking of the judgment seat of Christ, and thinking of unconverted men who must stand before that tribunal under a responsibility entirely their own, in a state of mind bordering on the most desperate earnestness. “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.” It would appear that his appeals, his warnings, his entreaties, founded on the terrors of the judgment seat, were of such a character as to expose him to the rude and uncharitable remarks of others, as he says, “For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God; or whether we be sober, it is for your cause.” But he cared little for this, as everything was so real, so present, to him. The words of his testimony burned in his heart, and on his lips, and he earnestly desired that they might burn in the hearts of others, whether by tongue or by pen.

Reflections on the Epistle of Jude

We now return to the doxology in our epistle. The apostle, as we have seen, is not occupied in this epistle with the great outlines of truth, or with the work and efficacy of redemption, as Paul in the

Epistle to the Romans; or with the nature and unity of the church of God, as in Ephesians. Nevertheless, he finds that in his communications which fills his heart with the most sweet and comely praise. It is really the manifestation of what God is Himself, and in His marvelous and gracious dealings with man, that fills the Christian's heart with wonder and adoration. The Christian is expected to sing praises with the heart and with the understanding, and that continually. "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks unto his name." Heb. 13:15.

Having traced, in the most energetic style, the crafty devices of the enemy, the corruption of the church, the apostasy and judgment of false professors; and having also pointed out the narrow path for the faithful, and the plain duty of every individual believer, our apostle now turns to God, in whom all his confidence is placed, and his heart rises in gratitude and praise as he contemplates His faithful love and tender care. "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy; to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

While it is quite true that the people of God in all ages will be surely brought to heaven, and dwell in the presence of His glory forever, we believe there is a special promise of blessing in this passage to those who are waiting for Christ to come and take them up to be with Him where He is. The christian character can never be fully formed without this hope. Hence the mighty difference, both as to inward blessedness and outward development of christian character, when this hope rules in all things. "Every man," says John, "that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure." Not that he is pure as Christ is pure, but Christ is his standard, and he purifies himself as He is pure. What is to govern the affections, what is to subdue the will, what is to wither up the glory of this world, if the Person and return of Christ are not before the believer as the very sum and substance of his Christianity? The believer that thinks the coming of the Lord means nothing more than His coming for us at death, can scarcely rise above the hope of being saved at last, and is often afflicted with doubts and fears. Besides, the scriptures speak of Christ coming "a second time," whereas, if He came for believers at their death, He must have come millions of times.

When Christ, risen and glorified, is before the soul as its all-governing object, the Holy Ghost feeds and nourishes that soul as with the marrow and fatness of the truth of God. By the teaching of the Holy Spirit he sees that blessed One in the glory as his life and righteousness in the presence of God. And if Christ be his righteousness there, absolute perfection is his; he must be presented without blame before God. And if Christ be his life, he has a divine capacity to enjoy those things which are above, where Christ sitteth, and not only with joy, but with exceeding joy. Conscious union with the Head will also be a present result of the Holy Ghost in us, and a desire to walk consistently therewith.

"It is important to observe," says one, "the way in which the Spirit of God speaks, in the epistles, of a power that can keep us from every fall, and unblameable; so that a thought only of sin is never excusable. It is not that the flesh is not in us, but that, with the Holy Ghost acting in the new man, it is never necessary that the flesh should act or influence our life. (Compare 1 Thess. 5:22.) We are united to Christ, He represents us before God, He is our righteousness. But at the same time, He who, in His perfection, is our righteousness is also our life; so that the Spirit aims at the manifestation of this same perfection, practical perfection, in the daily life. "He who says, I abide in

him, ought to walk as he walked." The Lord also says, "Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

Thus Jude winds up his brief epistle by bringing before us our present position of security and blessing, and our future of joy and glory, in full conformity to the image of the blessed Lord Himself. "We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Oh, that these precious words, with which Jude closes his epistle, may challenge every heart that reads them! Am I thus waiting for Christ? Am I rejoicing in the hope of being presented faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy? Am I keeping myself in the love of God? Am I building up myself on my most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, and looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life?

May the Lord bless His own word to our souls, keep us from every kind of failure, enabling us to glorify Him in our walk and conversation, so shall we ascribe unto Him the glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.

Life-Works

“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” Gal. 6:10.

If aught could enhance the value of these lovely words, it would be the fact of their being found at the close of the Epistle to the Galatians. In the progress of this very remarkable writing, the inspired apostle cuts up by the roots the entire system of legal righteousness. He proves, in the most unanswerable way, that by works of law, of any sort, moral or ceremonial, no man can be justified in the sight of God. He declares that believers are not under law, in any way whatever, either for life, for justification, or for walk—that if we are under law, we must give up Christ; we must give up the Spirit of God; we must give up faith; we must give up the promises. In short, if we take up legal ground in any shape whatever, we must give up Christianity and lie under the actual curse of God.

We do not attempt to quote the passages, or to go into this side of the question at all, just now. We merely call the earnest attention of the christian reader to the golden words which stand at the head of this brief article—words which, we cannot but feel, come in with incomparable beauty and peculiar moral force at the close of an epistle in which all human righteousness is withered up and flung to the winds. It is always needful to take in both sides of a subject. We are all so terribly prone to one-sidedness, that it is morally healthful for us to have our hearts brought under the full action of all truth. It is alas! possible for grace itself to be abused; and we may sometimes forget that, while we are justified in the sight of God only by faith, yet our faith must be evidenced by works. We have, all of us, to bear in mind that while law-works are denounced and demolished, in the most unqualified manner, in manifold parts of holy scripture, yet that life-works are diligently and constantly maintained and insisted upon.

Yes, beloved christian reader, we have to bend our earnest attention to this. If we profess to have life, this life must express itself in something more tangible and forcible than mere words or empty lip profession. It is quite true that law cannot give life, and hence it cannot produce life-works. Not a single cluster of living fruit ever was, or ever will be, culled from the tree of legality. Law can only produce “dead works” from which we need to have the conscience purged just as much as from “wicked works.”

All this is most true. It is demonstrated in the pages of inspiration beyond all possibility of question or demur. But then there must be life-works, or else there is no life. Of what possible use is it to profess to have eternal life; to talk about faith; to advocate the doctrines of grace, while, at the same time, the entire life, the whole practical career is marked by selfishness in every shape and form? “Whoso,” says the blessed apostle John, “hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” So also the apostle James puts a very wholesome question to our hearts, “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked or destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in

peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?"

Here we have life-works insisted upon in a way which ought to speak home, in the most solemn and forcible way to our hearts. There is an appalling amount of empty profession—shallow, powerless, worthless talk in our midst. We have a wonderfully clear gospel—thanks be to God for it! We see very distinctly that salvation is by grace, through faith, not by works of righteousness, nor by works of law.

Blessedly true! But when people are saved, ought they not to live as such? Ought not the new life to come out in fruits? It must come out if it be in; and if it does not come out, it is not there. Mark what the apostle Paul says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast." Here we have what we may call the upper side of this great practical question.

But there is another side to which every true, earnest Christian will delight to give his attention. The apostle goes on to say, "We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before prepared that we should walk in them."

Here we have the whole subject fully and clearly before us. God has created us to walk in a path of good works, and He has prepared the path of good works for us to walk in. It is all of God, from first to last, all through grace, and all by faith. Thanks and praise be to God that it is so! But, let us remember that it is utterly vain to talk about grace and faith, and eternal life, if the "good works" are not forthcoming. It is useless to boast of our high truth, our deep, varied, and extensive acquaintance with scripture, our correct position, our having come out from this, that, and the other, if our feet are not found treading that "path of good works which God hath before prepared" for us. God looks for reality. He is not satisfied with mere words of high profession. He says to us, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth." He, blessed be His name, did not love us in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth; and He looks for a response from us—a response clear, full, and distinct—a response coming out in a life of good works—a life yielding mellow clusters of those "fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God."

Beloved christian reader, do you not consider it to be our bounden duty, to apply our hearts to this weighty subject? Ought we not diligently to seek to promote love and good works? And how can this be most effectually accomplished? Surely by walking in love ourselves, and faithfully treading the path of good works in our own private life. For ourselves, we confess we are thoroughly sick of hollow profession. High truth on the lips and low practice in daily life, is one of the crying evils of this our day. We talk of grace; but fail in common righteousness—fail in the plainest moral duties, in our daily private life. We boast of our "position" and our "standing;" but we are deplorably lax as to our condition and state.

May the Lord, in His infinite goodness, stir up all our hearts to more thorough earnestness in the pursuit of good works, so that we may more fully adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things!

Mary at the Sepulcher

In John 20 we have a scriptural illustration of affection for Christ; Mary Magdalene came early when it was yet dark to the sepulcher; she did not wait for sunrise, but while nature was still shrouded in darkness, her affection hastens here to the only spot on earth that had any interest for her—the grave of her Lord. Oh! what a character this stamps upon the earth, it was the grave of Jesus! Beloved reader, has it this character to you?

Now observe the Person of the blessed Lord was engaging the affections of the heart of Mary, and hence, how could she domicile where He was not?

Not so Peter and John; having satisfied themselves that the sepulcher was empty, having carefully examined the empty grave, and seen the garments of death left behind by the mighty Conqueror who had risen out of them, they return to their own home.

But look at Mary, she has no home; and in more senses than one did this devoted woman stand “without;” for not finding her Lord, she was truly without home, or cheer, or solace in her sorrow, a broken-hearted woman whom none can comfort; and yet it is a lovely sight, to see her in all her genuine personal love for Christ, standing, weeping, stooping down, and looking into His grave!

Ah! is this not rare—the spirit of it I mean—in these days? If I were asked what is the characteristic feature of the present time, what should I say? If I spoke the truth, I should say, HEARTLESSNESS AS TOUCHING CHRIST. Is it nothing to you, beloved reader, that Christ is rejected and cast out by man? Oh! is it not very little thought of, and lightly esteemed? The absence of affection accounts for the little loyalty there is to the Lord Jesus. How few hearts are really true to Him! It is not possible to drill them into it; and mere knowledge cannot secure it. There is no lack of information as to Christ and His interests, yet it is a dry, cold thing, because it is not Christ. The question for the moment is, “What think ye of Christ?”

Another truth of exceeding beauty may be seen here, namely, How genuine affection gauges everything—measures everything. To Him who she thought was the gardener, she says, “Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.” Observe, she does not say who it is, but, “Him;” gauging everyone’s thoughts by her own; and as she was full of Him in her thoughts, supposing everyone else was like herself! Alas! how little of this we find in ourselves or around us!

But observe too how her affection was the gauge of her ability, “I will take him away.” If she had reasoned or calculated, she might well have hesitated, ere she proposed such a task; but affection never calculates; its power or ability is itself.

And now the moment has arrived for Jesus to make Himself known. What a moment for Him—for her! He fulfills John 10, and “calleth his own sheep by name,” and she answers to John 10, “The sheep hear his voice.” He gives her to hear her name from His own very lips—Mary!

What a scene it is! The history of the first garden, its blight and sin, all reversed. The history of the first garden, with a fallen man and woman driven out by the hand of God, is closed at the cross of Jesus, and here in this second garden we find a risen Man and a redeemed woman, whose affection for His Person the blessed Lord appreciates at such worth, that He commissions her to be the bearer, to His disciples, of the most wonderful tidings that human lips ever announced. “Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father; and to my God and your God.”

May the Lord awaken in the hearts of His people, in these days so sadly fruitful in debates, strifes, whisperings and confusion—but days of barrenness surely as to loyalty of affection for Christ—such true self-judgment as will lead to more whole-hearted devotedness, at all cost, to His person, honor, and interests!

w. T. T.

My Father's House

Oh, what a home! The Father's house,
There love divine doth rest;
No other spot can hold the hearts
Of those by Jesus blest.
His homemade ours—
His Father's love
Our heart's full portion given—
The portion of the only Son,
The great delight of heaven.
Oh, what a home!
The Father knows—
And only He—the Son:
The Son well knows the Father too,
His well-beloved One:
Dwells in His bosom—
knoweth all That in that bosom lies,
And came to earth to make it known;
That we might share His joys.
Oh, what a home!
Love upon love
Re-echoing through its breadth;
The Son's divine affections flow
Throughout its height and depth.
And full response the Father gives,
Heart answering to heart,
And not a cloud to cross the scene

A shadow to impart.

Oh, what a home! But such His love

That He must fetch us there,

To fill that home, to be with him,

And all His glory share.

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 of heaven.

My Joy

Thou art my joy, Lord Jesus! Thou art my glorious Sun!
In the light that shineth from Thee I gladly journey on.
There is a hidden beauty, a healing, holy light,
In Thy countenance, uplifted, upon the inward sight.
Oh! purer than the morning, and brighter than the noon,
And sweeter than the evening—a thousand joys in one—
Thou brightness of God's glory, and Lord of all above,
Son of the Father's bosom, and image of His love!
O Jesus! let me ever behold my joy, my friend,
And let my deep communion be with Thee to the end.
In secret let me see Thee—let all that Thou hast been,
And all thou art, in heaven, outshine before me then.
And let my memory treasure each little word and way,
Expressing, in its measure, the deeps that in Thee lay.
Oh! there are joys unspoken, and mounts of sacred light,
And visions of Thy glory, to bless the seeker's sight.
Then why be like a stranger, or like a passerby
When I might hold Thee ever in blissful company?
O, lift Thy face upon me, and keep me by Thy side;
And fill me with Thy presence, and in my heart abide.

My Soul Waitheth for the Lord

I wait for Thee, O Lord!

Thou art the Bridegroom dear,
Who all my wayward heart hast won,
Whose step I long to hear.

I wait for Thee, O Lord!

Thy glorious face to see,
That holy face that once was marr'd—
Was marr'd, O Lord, for me.

I wait for Thee, O Lord!

Before Thy feet to fall!
Lowly to worship and adore Thee
Lord, my All in All.

I wait for Thee, O Lord!

Thy wondrous voice to hear,
Louder than many waters' noise,
As silver trumpet clear.

I wait for Thee, O Lord!

Thy tender touch to feel,
That tender touch which even here
The broken heart can heal.

I wait for Thee, O Lord!

Thy glory to behold—
The Father's gift, because of love
He had for Thee of old.

I wait for Thee, O Lord!

And Thou dost wait for me:

Thy faithful heart longs for the hour
When I with Thee shall be.
I wait for Thee, O Lord!
The rapture deep to know,
Of living evermore with Thee,
Love cannot more bestow.
I wait for Thee, O Lord!
But for a little while:
This night, O Lord, mine eyes may meet
Thy joyful tender smile.
E. B.

None but Christ

O Christ! in Thee my soul hath found,
And found in Thee alone,
The peace, the joy, I sought so long—
The bliss till now unknown.
I sighed for rest and happiness,
I yearned for them not Thee;
But while I passed my Savior by,
His love laid hold on me,
I tried the broken cisterns, Lord,
But ah! the waters failed!
E'en as I stooped to drink they'd fled,
And mocked me as I wailed.
The pleasures lost I sadly mourned,
But never wept for Thee,
Till grace the sightless eyes received
Thy loveliness to see.
Now, none but Christ can satisfy,
None other name for me!
There's love, and life, and lasting joy,
My Lord, in only Thee.
B.E.

Obedience: What Is It? and Are We Yielding It?

It is of the very last possible importance for the Christian to have a clear apprehension of the true character of christian obedience. It is, of course, perfectly evident that I must be a Christian before ever I can yield christian obedience. A child can understand this. I must be in a position in order to discharge the duties which belong to it. I must be in a relationship ere I can know, feel, or display the affections which flow out of it.

If we keep this simple principle in our minds, it will prevent our attaching a legal idea to the word obedience. There is not, and cannot be, a single trace of legality in the obedience to which we are called as Christians, seeing that, ere we can take a step in that most blessed path, we must have divine life. And how do we get this life? “Not by works of righteousness,” surely; not by legal efforts of any kind whatsoever, but by the free gift of God—all praise and thanks to His holy name! “The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” And how is this life communicated? How are we quickened, or born again? By the word and Spirit of God, and in no other way. We are by nature “dead in trespasses and sins.” There is not in any son or daughter of Adam a single pulsation of divine life. Take the very fairest specimen of mere nature—take the most refined, cultivated, moral, and amiable person in the very highest circle of social life; take the most religious and devout person in mere nature, and there is not so much as one spark of divine or spiritual life.

This, no doubt, is very humbling to the human heart, but it is the plain truth of holy scripture, which must be constantly maintained and faithfully set forth. We are by nature alienated from God, enemies in our minds by wicked works, and hence we have neither the will nor the power to obey. There must be a new life, a new nature, before a single step can be taken in the blessed pathway of obedience; and this new life is communicated to us by the free grace of God, through the operation of the Spirit, who quickens us by the word.

A passage or two of holy scripture will set this matter clearly before the mind of the reader. In John 3 we read, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” Here we have the word presented under the figure of water, as we read in Eph. 5 of “the washing of water by the word.” Again, in Jas. 1 we read, “Of his own will begat he us, by the word of truth.” It is not possible to conceive anything more entirely independent of human effort than the new birth as here set forth. It is wholly of God, of His own will, and by His own power. What has a man to do with his natural birth? Surely nothing. What, then, can he have to do with his spiritual birth? It is of God exclusively, from first to last. All praise to Him that it is so!

Take one more uncommonly fine passage on this great subject. In 1 Pet. 1:23, we read, “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away. But the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.”

Nothing can be more precious than this. When the glad tidings of salvation fall with power upon the heart that is the birth moment. The word is the seed of divine life, deposited in the soul by the Holy Ghost. Thus we are born again. We are renewed in the very deepest springs of our moral being., We are introduced into the blessed relationship of sons, as we read in Gal. 4. "When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son"—marvelous grace!—"made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."

Here, then, we have the true ground of obedience clearly and fully set before us. It is eternal life possessed, and eternal relationship enjoyed. There can be no legality here. We are no more servants on legal ground, but sons, on the blessed and elevated ground of divine love.

But we must remember that we are called to obedience. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" is the very first breathing of a new-born soul. It was the question which emanated from the broken and penitent heart of Saul of Tarsus, when smitten to the ground by the manifested glory of the Son of God. Up to that moment, he had lived in rebellion against that blessed One; but now he was called to yield himself, body, soul, and spirit, to a life of unqualified obedience. Was there aught of the legal element in this? Not a trace, from beginning to end. "The love of Christ," he says, "constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead. And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." 2 Cor. 5

Here, beloved christian reader, lies the grand motive-spring of all christian obedience. Life is the ground; love the spring. "If ye love me, keep my commandments." And again, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." How precious! Who can adequately set forth the blessedness of this manifestation of Christ to the obedient heart? Should we not earnestly long to know more of it? Can we expect it if we are living in the habitual neglect of His holy commandments? It is "he that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." Have we His commandments? And are we keeping them? How utterly worthless is mere lip profession! It is like the son in the parable, who said, "I go, sir, and went not." It is empty, hollow, contemptible mockery. What father would care for loud profession of affection on the part of a son who cared not to carry out his wishes? Could such a son expect to enjoy much of his father's company or confidence? Surely not; indeed it is more than questionable if he could value either the one or the other. He might be ready enough to accept all that the father's hand could bestow to meet his personal wants; but there is a very wide difference indeed between receiving gifts from a father's hand, and enjoying fellowship with that father's heart.

It is this latter we should ever seek, and it is the precious fruit of loving obedience to our Father's words. "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings." Can aught, this side of heaven, be more precious than to have the Father and the Son coming to us, and making their mansion with us? Do we know what it means? Do we enjoy it? Is it common to all? By no means! It is known only to those who know, and have, and keep the words of Jesus. He

speaks of “his commandments” and “his words.” What is the difference? The former set forth our holy duty; the latter are the expression of His holy will. If I give my child a commandment, it is his duty to obey, and if he loves me, he will delight to obey. But supposing he has heard me saying, “I like so-and-so,” and that he does that thing, without being directly commanded to do it, he gives me a much more touching proof of his love, and of his affectionate interest in all my wishes; and this, we may rest assured, is most grateful to a loving father’s heart, and he will respond to this loving obedience by making the obedient child his companion, and the depository of his thoughts.

But there is more than this. In John 15 we read, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you.”—Amazing truth!—“Continue [or abide] ye in my love.” How is this to be done? “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall continue [or abide] in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.”

Here we learn the wondrous truth that we are called to the very same kind of obedience as that which our adorable Lord and Savior rendered to the Father, when He walked as a man on this earth. We are brought into full fellowship with Himself, both in the love wherewith we are loved, and the obedience which we are privileged to render. This is most blessedly confirmed by the Spirit in the First Epistle of Peter, where Christians are spoken of as “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” Chapter 1:2.

Let the reader carefully note this. We are elected of the Father, and sanctified by the Spirit to obey as Jesus obeyed. Such is the plain teaching of the passage. That blessed One found His meat and drink in doing the Father’s will. His only motive for acting was the Father’s will. “I delight to do thy will, O my God.” There was no opposing element in Him, as there is, alas! in us. But, blessed be His name! He has linked us with Himself, and called us into blessed fellowship, both in the Father’s love to Him, and in His obedience to the Father.

Marvelous privilege! Would that we appreciated it more! Oh, that we rendered a more loving obedience to all His precious commandments and sayings, that so He might manifest Himself to us, and make His abode with us. Blessed Lord, do make us more obedient in all things!

One Thing I Do

Trusting in the Lord thy God,

Onward go.

Holding fast His faithful word,

Onward go.

Not denying His worthy name,

Though it brings reproach and shame,

Spreading still His wondrous fame,

Onward go.

Has He called thee to the plow?

Onward go.

Night is coming, serve Him now—

Onward go.

Faith and love in service blend,

On His mighty arm depend,

Standing fast until the end,

Onward go.

Has He given thee golden grain?

Onward go.

Sow, and thou shalt reap again—

Onward go.

To thy Master's gate repair,

Watching be and waiting there,

He will hear and answer prayer—

Onward go.

Has He said the end is near?

Onward go.

Serving Him with holy fear,

Onward go.

Christ thy portion, Christ thy stay—

Heavenly bread upon the way,

Leading on to glorious day—

Onward go.

In this little moment then

Onward go.

In thy ways acknowledge Him,

Onward go.

Let His mind be found in thee:

Let His will thy pleasure be,

Thus in life and liberty

Onward go.

E. B.

Out and Into

“He brought us OUT that He might bring us IN.”—Deut. 6:23.

Out of the distance and darkness so deep,

Out of the settled and perilous sleep.

Out of the region and shadow of death,

Out of its foul and pestilent breath;

Out of the bondage and wearying chains,

Out of companionship ever with stains

Into the light and the glory of God,

Into the holiest, made clean by blood;

Into His arms—the embrace and the kiss,—

Into the scene of ineffable bliss;

Into the quiet, the infinite calm,

Into the place of the song and the psalm.

Wonderful love, that has wrought all for me!

Wonderful work, that has thus set me free!

Wonderful ground upon which I have come I

Wonderful tenderness, welcoming home!

Out of disaster and ruin complete,

Out of the struggle and dreary defeat;

Out of my sorrow and burden and shame,

Out of the evils too fearful to name;

Out of my guilt, and the criminal's doom,

Out of the dreading, the terror, the gloom

Into the sense of forgiveness and rest,

Into inheritance with all the blest,

Into a righteous and permanent peace,

Into the grandest and fullest release;
Into the comfort without an alloy,
Into a perfect and confident joy.
Wonderful holiness, bringing to light!
Wonderful grace, putting all out of sight!
Wonderful wisdom, devising the way!
Wonderful power, that nothing could stay!
Out of the horror at being alone,
Out, and forever, of being my own;
Out of the hardness of heart and of will,
Out of the longings which nothing could fill;
Out of the bitterness, madness and strife,
Out of myself, and of all I called life: —
Into communion with Father and Son,
Into the sharing of all that Christ won;
Into the ecstasies full to the brim,
Into the having of all things with Him;
Into Christ Jesus, there ever to dwell,
Into more blessings than words e'er can tell.
Wonderful lowliness, draining my cup!
Wonderful purpose, that ne'er gave me up!
Wonderful patience, that waited so long!
Wonderful glory, to which I belong!
Out of my poverty, into His wealth,
Out of my sicknesses, into pure health,
Out of the false, and into the true,
Out of the old man, into the New,
Out of what measures the full depth of "lost!"
Out of it all, and at infinite cost!

Into what must with that cost correspond,
Into that which there is nothing beyond
Into the union which nothing can part,
Into what satisfies His, and my, heart!
Into the deepest of joys ever had—
Into the gladness of making God glad!
Wonderful Person, whose face I'll behold!
Wonderful story, then all to be told!
Wonderful all the dread way that He trod!
Wonderful end, He has brought me to God.
M. T.

Peerless Worth

“What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard Him, and observed Him” Hos. 14:8.

Hast thou heard Him, seen Him, known Him?

Is not thine a captured heart?

“Chief among ten thousand” own Him,

Joyful choose the better part.

Idols once they won thee, charmed thee,

Lovely things of time and sense;

Gilded, thus does sin disarm thee,

Honey’d lest thou turn thee thence.

What has stripped the seeming beauty

From the idols of the earth?

Not the sense of right or duty,

But the sight of peerless worth.

Not the crushing of those idols,

With its bitter void and smart,

But the beaming of His beauty,

The unveiling of His heart.

Who extinguishes their taper

Till they hail the rising sun?

Who discards the garb of winter

Till the summer has begun?

‘Tis that look that melted Peter,

‘Tis that face that Stephen saw,

‘Tis that heart that wept with Mary,

Can alone from idols draw—

Draw, and win, and fill completely,

Till the cup o'erflow the brim;
What have we to do with idols.
Who have companied with Him?

The Rock Refuge

“Trust ye in Jehovah forever: for in Jah Jehovah is the Rock of Ages.”—Isa. 26:4,

In perfect peace Thou wilt him keep,

Who in Thy place is dwelling;

The storm may rage, and waters deep

Around him may be swelling;

But fixed is he, Thy word is sure,

No storm can reach that place secure,

Nor foe touch that Pavilion.

For from eternity that place

Was planned by God and founded,

Ere this round earth he hurled in space

Or lands by sea were bounded;

Aye, ere the stars, or ere the sun,

Or ere creation was begun,

‘Twas laid by the Eternal.

Yea! deep in His own inmost heart—

Oh, place of love unmeasured!

Where Thou the Son forever wert,

His loved One ever treasured;

And Thou that place hast opened wide,

By wound deep pierced in Thy side,

That we by faith might enter.

And loving souls, the tried, the true,

That fortress strong have entered,

Waiting till all things are made new,

And rule in Christ be centered.

Kept free from rage of angry foes,
From Satan's darts, raid sin's deep woes,
Safe sheltered in God's mansion.
Let man and devil do their worst!
Shall God be beaten? Never!
Their raging waves may madly burst,
To sink in foam forever—
And still God's rock unshaken stands,
For neither Satan, nor man's hands
Dare touch or reach God's Center.
And in that day when earth shall quake,
And all things shall be proved,
Creation to its limits shake,
And heaven itself be moved,
God's dwelling-place unhurt shall rest
And all who've entered it shall test
The Strength of God's Foundation.
W. M.

Roll up the Catalogue

Two gentlemen went to see an exhibition of paintings. They were connoisseurs; and one of them held in his hand a catalog of the various pictures on view. As they moved along the gallery, one of them touched his companion and said, "Look here! Did you ever see such a daub as that? What could have induced any one to send a thing like that to an exhibition? What a wretched production! And yet, no doubt he considers himself an artist! What a pity that some folk should be so blind to their own deficiencies!"

The friend who held the catalog in his hand drew back a little, and rolling it up in the form of a telescope, looked through it at one special point in the picture; and, the more closely he examined it, the more he discerned the evidence of real genius. He said to his friend, handing him the rolled up catalog, "Just stand here, and look through this at that one spot." He did so; and after a while exclaimed, "Well, that is beautiful; after all, he is an artist."

Now, this little incident conveys a most valuable lesson to us all, and one much needed in our intercourse with the Lord's people. It is a grand point, in looking at the character of any one with whom we may have to do, to look out for some redeeming feature, some good point, and dwell upon that. Too often, alas! we do just the opposite. We take a hasty view of a person, or our eye rests upon some flaw, some defect in the temper, disposition, or conduct, and we keep perpetually dwelling and harping on that, and lose sight of some most excellent trait in the character.

This is a most serious mistake, and one into which some of us are sadly prone to fall. There are few of us who have not some weak point, some drawback, some little inconsistency, something or other which calls for patience and forbearance on the part of those with whom we come in contact in daily life. Let us all remember this, and be on the look out, not for the weak point, but for some redeeming feature. Let us, when looking at others, "just roll up the catalog" and concentrate our vision upon some christian virtue, some good quality, some amiable feature. Let us dwell upon that, and speak of that, and nothing else; and we shall have to exclaim, "Well, after all, he is a Christian." This will help us marvelously to get on with people; and it will minister to our own happiness in a way we have little idea of.

For example, there is a person who is naturally of a close miserly disposition. He likes to drive a hard bargain; he would dispute with a cabman about a few pence; he can hardly ever make a purchase without trying to get a reduction in the price. This is very miserable indeed, very sad, very humiliating, greatly to be deplored. But, "just let us roll up the catalog" and look closely at this person's character, and we shall find him most liberal in the Lord's cause, and in helping the poor. Perhaps on the very clay on which he bargained with the cabman about sixpence, he gave a sovereign to a poor family. Let us think and speak of his liberality, and draw the curtain of silence over his niggardliness.

This is Christ-like. Let us cultivate this lovely habit. It is very terrible to allow ourselves the habit of dwelling upon the weak points in our brethren. It is really of Satan, and we must earnestly watch

against it, and pray against it. Let us “lay aside all evil speaking.” How deplorable to find ourselves indulging in the unworthy practice of exposing the foibles and infirmities of the Lord’s people, or turning them into ridicule! May the Lord deliver us from all this! May we judge it in ourselves, and then we shall have moral power to discountenance it in others. Whenever we hear any one speaking disparagingly of another, let us gently suggest to him to “roll up the catalog,” and fix his eye on what is of Christ in the person, and lose sight of all beside.

C. J. D., remembered by R. and M.

The Sanctuary

While the book of Psalm is, no doubt, the expression of the state of the God-fearing remnant of Israel in the latter day, and of Messiah's association with them, it also serves—as no other part of scripture does—as the expression of individual godliness and personal communion in all ages. When the difference between Jewish ground—righteousness—as seen in the Psalms, and Christian ground—grace—as seen in the Epistles, is well understood, what can be more refreshing, more nourishing, or more expressive of a deep-toned Christianity, than many of the divine breathings in the Psalms? Many of them, no doubt, are the breathings of the spirit of Christ in the suffering remnant, and of Christ Himself in sympathy with them. What a cordial to the heart, especially when under trial, persecution, or distress of any kind, are the inspired utterances of a deep, inward piety, a longing desire after God, nearness to Him, and confident dependence on Him! Eternal life, of course, is essentially the same in the Jew as in the Christian; though the relations of the latter are much higher and wider than those of the former.

And the Christian must also bear in mind, when reading the Psalms, that some of the expressions which were consistent with Jewish condition, would be positive unbelief for him to use—such as verse 7 of this psalm. “Will the Lord cast off forever? and will he be favorable no more?” The Jews are cast off as regards their national position and privileges; but not as regards the councils of God, as Paul plainly teaches in Rom. 11: “I say then, hath God cast away his people? God forbid.” But the Christian knows that God will never cast him off; and such a thought, even for a moment, should never cross his mind; though, alas! such thoughts will intrude, and may happen at an unguarded moment, with any one. But we can conceive of no deeper anguish for a soul to pass through in this life, than to be without the sense of the favor of God, when under His chastening hand. And this must always be the result when the shield is lowered, and the heart exposed to the fiery darts of the wicked. The Christian must never forget that he stands in present favor—the unchanging and unchangeable favor of God. This is his shield of faith. Whoever, whatever, else may change, the favor in which he stands knows no change. This must be held in the integrity of a faith which hangs on the word of God, though everything may appear to be going against him, and when there may be nothing else to rest upon.

Even the pious Jew, in this most touching psalm, thinks of former mercies; recollects how gracious God is, and turns to Him. “And I said. This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember the works of the Lord: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings. Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God?” This is Jewish, not christian experience, though the Christian, in measure, may sometimes pass through it. But this would be failure. There can be no interruption to the divine favor. But if the soul be communing with itself, indulging its own thoughts, and reasoning about its own troubles, in place of looking to God, and communing with Him in the sanctuary, it is sure to fall back into Jewish experience; and every Christian is exposed to this perplexity, in degree, who knows not God as He reveals Himself in the sanctuary.

There only God is known, as He has revealed Himself in the Person and work of the blessed Lord. There only we learn His thoughts and purposes towards us, even before the foundation of the world. It is God's speaking-place; and, through the power of the Holy Ghost, above the distracting influences of this present scene, the soul is silent, and listens to His voice through the word. And now the will is bowed, His way is seen to be in accordance with His perfect love, though His hand may be heavy upon us, and the soul is ready to exclaim, "The will of the Lord be done;" let His name be glorified, whatever course things may take.

"He always wins who sides with God,

To him no chance is lost;

God's will is sweetest to him, when

It triumphs at his cost."

But inquirest thou, dear reader, who may thus commune with God in the sanctuary, the place of His holiness, as well as of His love? It is surely the privileged place of all who are in Christ as risen and glorified—the children's place—the home of every believer. But art thou well assured of thy place and portion in Christ, through faith in Him? Then know thy Father's love, who gave thee to Christ before the foundation of the world, that He might fit thee for the most holy place, even as He Himself is fit to be there. As the apostle plainly says, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." (Eph. 1:4.) Christ, as the glorified Man, is the only standard of the sanctuary. To be at home there in happy liberty, we must be as He is. But the verse just quoted would be enough for faith, were our hearts in simple subjection to the word of God. Here we learn His purposes of love concerning us, long before the world was made, and before sin or redemption are referred to; so that we may fall back and rest, not only on the cross, but on the heart in which we had a place before time was.

When in the light and power of this truth, through the presence of the Holy Ghost, we are at home in the sanctuary. We may fail for the moment, under a sudden overwhelming sorrow, to realize that this is the way of love, but it cannot be anything else, however severe. He who spared nothing, not even His well-beloved Son, that we might be reconciled to Him, and morally fitted for the presence of His holiness, is only accomplishing the purposes of His love. When we have well examined and weighed verses 3, 4, 5, and 6 of Eph. 1, and received the precious truths they contain as the words of the living God, the heart will be at rest forever as to His thoughts, purposes, and faithful love. No calamity, however great; no affliction, however severe; no bereavement, however desolating, can alter these eternal realities. God's love, perfect and absolute, having its spring in His own heart, remains unchanged; the efficacy of redemption is unchangeable as the love which is its source; the glory of the exalted Savior at God's right hand is surely established forever, and we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in Him; and is not the Holy Ghost in us the seal, of all these blessings?

And let us also bear in mind that these four verses are revealed as the thoughts of God about His children, before either sin, redemption, or the church is spoken of, so that their full accomplishment rests on no condition but the good pleasure of His own will, and the praise of the glory of His grace.

But ought we not, some may inquire, to judge ourselves when laid aside, or when the Lord is evidently chastening us, and inquire whether we may not have displeased Him with some of our past ways? Self-judgment is always right, and ought to be a daily thing with us, whether in health or in sickness; indeed, without this, we must be practically unacquainted with the ways of the sanctuary. “If I wash thee not,” said the Lord to Peter, “thou hast no part with me.” Communion would be interrupted. Daily defilements need the daily use of the water of purification. But such exercise of soul ought not to weaken the believer’s hold of the purposes of God. These were formed long before he failed, and can never be changed. Our sins and shortcomings were all judged in the crass of the blessed Lord, so that in place of these things, hateful as we may see ourselves because of them, filling us with doubts and fears as to our welcome in the sanctuary, they ought to deepen our faith, and increase our love to Him. These are the very things, faith says, even my unworthy thoughts and feelings, for which my Savior died. But mark the effect of so looking at our shortcomings: we love Him more; the heart cannot refrain from exclaiming, Oh, what love to me! that He should have borne the judgment of God for my sins, and my every failure, in His own body on the tree; oh, how can I praise Him more! His precious blood cleanseth me from all sin, so that I can walk in the light even as God is in the light.

But as to inquiring or asking the reason why we are thus afflicted, the soul, in such a case, would be off the ground of faith. God gives no account of His ways. He reveals Himself in the sanctuary, but His ways are in the sea, His path in the great waters, and His footsteps are not known. But we must never lose hold of this grand truth—if we would be perfectly happy under trial—that, though God’s ways are in the sea—meaning untraceable—they are never inconsistent with His perfect love as revealed in the sanctuary. The same love that gave me to Christ, faith would say, has plunged me in the deep waters, not that I may be overwhelmed, but that I may learn one of the highest expressions of His love, even that I may be a partaker of His holiness—not merely that I may be holier, but that I may be a partaker of His own holiness.

The widowed heart, alone and desolate, feeble in body and oppressed in mind, may hear a whisper—Is this love? But what is to be the reply? If in the sanctuary, there is but one—a firm and decided Yes! —Yes! the feeble one replies, this is love—God’s perfect love, that seeks, not the gratification, but the good, of its object. Thus the shield of faith is raised, and the fiery dart falls powerless to the ground. But supposing for a moment that the wicked suggestion were entertained, and the bereaved one were to begin and reason why God should thus afflict her; and begin to speculate as to what she had done, what she had neglected, and how she had not valued and improved her privileges; we venture not to say what the misery of that soul would be. The shield of faith is lowered, for the moment, and the whole soul is exposed to the fiery darts of the wicked.

But should we, some may still inquire, under every trial, even such as we may have brought on ourselves, take refuge in the perfect love of God? Most assuredly! Flee at once to the sanctuary! Say of yourself what you please, but say of God that He changeth not—His love is the same. I have brought this on myself, I richly deserve it, you may say; but never forget that His love rules; and dishonor Him not by unbelief. Wave after wave may come; and when you have felt your feet touching the shore, and thought you were near to land, another wave has come and rolled you back into deeper and rougher waters than you had ever known before; still you can say, though well-nigh overwhelmed, It is the way of His love, the moral fitting of the soul for the “far more

exceeding and eternal weight of glory,” of which it will be the happy sharer forever and forever. And when you know that God is dealing with you in perfect love, and for the perfecting of your instruction—whatever the trial may be—you will rest in Him, and be happy, though suffering.

“He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous” is surely a word of the deepest consolation to the bereaved or suffering one. Oh, child of affliction, think of that eye, benignant, sleepless, watching over thee! Restless, weary, suffering thou mayest be, but He cannot take His eye off thee. Thou art the object of His complacent delight, even as Christ is; and when thy day of suffering is past, thou wilt find more material for praise than days of health could have given. And even now we are brought into greater nearness to Him. Through the power of the Holy Ghost, and the written word, a medium of communion is opened between the soul and the sanctuary which seems to have annihilated distance. These are the realities of faith, through the presence of an ungrieved Holy Spirit.

The ear is now prepared to listen to Christ, not to the tempter, for it knows His voice. The Spirit only reveals Christ, as our Lord Himself says, “At that day [the Spirit’s day] ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” What nearness! —I in my Father, ye in me, I in you! And this we are given to know, not merely to believe, but to have a present conscious enjoyment of the blessed reality. Drawn aside, separated from the outer world, in a very real way, by suffering, what lessons to be learned of His nearness to us, and our nearness to Him; and what consolation and strength may be found in these sweet whisperings of His love! And He would have us, blessed be His name, to be ever feasting on His love. It is pressed upon us without measure. “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.” What a portion for the soul in its solitude! As—so; as—so; and, “Continue ye in my love.” John 14:20; 15:9.

Let this be thy sanctuary, O tried and afflicted one! Thy Lord invites thee to dwell in His love, to make it thy hiding-place from the gathering storm, or the sweeping tempest; when all seems to be gone, His love remains unchanged amidst the ever-changing scenes of time. But, oh! on thy part, let patience have her perfect work. To have no will of our own is the perfect work of patience. Think not His answer to thy prayer is long in coming. He will not forget thee; it will come at the right moment and in the right way. We fail to realize His deep interest in us. How deeply moved His heart is when He sees thee suffering! but He would have us not to forget that He suffered in our stead. “Did not I give my life for thee?” we hear Him say; “and did not I suffer shame and agony on the cross for thee, that I might wash thee in my precious blood, and fit thee for the sanctuary above?” Thus the soul is brought into sweet communion with the Lord? and it will soon find many chambers in the sanctuary of His love. But venture not, I pray thee, to trace His footsteps in the sea, there thou couldst only be overwhelmed in deeper waters. Leave all in His hands, trust all to Him in uninquiring confidence; but ever abide in the sanctuary of His presence, where all His love and glory are revealed to thy faith, through the teaching and power of His Holy Spirit. At the same time, may we never forget that there is as much love in the sea as there is in the sanctuary.

Satisfied

Nothing, Savior, we believe it;
Nothing shall we need or crave.
Joyfully our souls receive it;
In Thy presence we shall have
All for which our souls have waited,
Every wish anticipated,
Every longing satiated,
Satisfied for evermore.
Asking nothing; simply reading
Lord, in Thine all-answering face,
All the mysteries of Thy leading,
All the marvels of Thy grace.
In Thy tender smile discerning,
Love's great work its fruit returning,
With its deep and patient yearning,
Satisfied for evermore.
Jesus, Lord, our hearts adore Thee,
And by faith behold that day,
When, in all Thy future glory
To the world thou wilt display,
How unmingled is the pleasure
Which Thyself and chosen treasure
Know without decrease or measure,
Satisfied for evermore.

The Seal and the Earnest

“Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” Eph. 4:30.

“In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession.” Eph. 1:13, 14.

In these verses we have the Spirit of God presented to us in two distinct ways, namely, first, as the seal which God puts upon all those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; and, secondly, as the earnest of the inheritance which the sealed heirs shall possess ere long.

All true believers are sealed with the Holy Ghost. We must, of course, distinguish between being quickened and sealed. The Holy Spirit quickens dead souls; He seals living believers; that is, He is Himself the seal. God does not seal sinners dead in trespasses and sins; He quickens them, leads them to repentance; and when, through grace, they believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ—crucified, risen, and glorified at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens—then He seals them by giving the Holy Spirit to dwell in them. Thus He sets His blessed mark on them, until the day of redemption.

It is very important to be clear as to the difference between quickening and sealing. Many persons find difficulty here, but scripture is as plain as possible on the subject. Take, for example, the opening paragraph of Acts 19: “It came to pass, that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul, having passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus; and finding certain disciples, he said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?” And they said unto him, “We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost”—or rather, “We did not even hear if the Holy Spirit was come.” “And he said unto them, Unto what, then, were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John’s baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on him who should come after, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.”

Here, then, we have, with great clearness and force, the distinction between quickening and sealing. Here were twelve men, who evidently were disciples, and who had received a measure of truth, but not the full truth of accomplished redemption, of a risen and glorified Savior, and of the Holy Ghost as the witness of these grand and glorious facts.

We are not to suppose that these disciples had never heard of the existence of the Holy Ghost. In this our Authorized Version is manifestly defective. What they had not heard was whether the Holy Ghost had come down as the witness and solid proof of the exaltation and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. John the Baptist, whose disciples they were, knew and spoke of the Holy Spirit, so that they must have known of that divine Person; but he did not, could not, know, and therefore could not speak of Him as the seal put upon all true believers.

And yet they were true disciples, really quickened souls, but not sealed. They were practically in the condition of Old Testament believers, or of the disciples during our Lord's life on earth. There was this difference, that the Holy Ghost had come on the day of Pentecost, and had been working for years, not only in quickening, but in sealing. Thousands of Jews at Jerusalem, many of the Samaritans, the household of Cornelius, had all received the Holy Ghost; and yet the twelve disciples at Ephesus had not even heard of His descent.

Hence, then, it is plain that persons may be quickened, but not sealed. What was true of those Ephesians, years after the day of Pentecost, may be equally true of souls now. How many of the Lord's beloved people, throughout the wide field of christian profession, are in this condition! They do not know what it is to be linked by the indwelling Spirit to a risen and glorified Head in heaven. They are virtually under the law; they do not know the blessedness of settled peace with God; they enjoy not the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free; they are in bondage, filled with doubts and fears. Many go on in this sad condition all their days, and perhaps on their deathbed, for the first time, they get a full view of a risen and glorified Christ, and, believing on Him, are there and then sealed, and brought into the glorious liberty of the gospel of God. They have been robbed all their lifetime of their precious privilege. Through legality, bad teaching, or some other cause, they have been kept in ignorance of "the things which are freely given to us of God;" and thus they have been groping on in darkness and distance, instead of enjoying that blessed nearness to God which is the portion of all those who simply believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ.

However, we shall not dwell farther just now on the important and interesting distinction between quickening and sealing—the former being the work of the Spirit, the latter His personal indwelling—but shall, ere closing this very brief article, call the serious attention of the christian reader to the weighty word of exhortation quoted above, "Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

This word assumes that the Christian knows himself to be a sealed one. All christian exhortation is based on the fact of our being in the enjoyment of christian position and privilege. We could not grieve the Holy Spirit, if He were not in us; but when we know what it is to have such a One as the Holy Spirit of God dwelling in us, making our body His temple, what a powerful motive to holy living! How careful we should be not to grieve Him! How we should watch against every thought, word, and act that would be offensive to the divine Guest who has taken up His abode in us! All lightness and frivolity, all unhallowed conversation, all evil speaking, all unkindness, moroseness, and irritability, all selfish ways, all worldly-mindedness, must be judged according to the standard of the Holy One by whom we are sealed unto the day of redemption. It is no longer a question of what is suitable or consistent for us, but for Him. This makes all the difference. Many a thing might be suitable for us which would be very grievous to Him. Our constant inquiry should be, "Will this thing grieve the Holy Spirit who dwells in me?" If so, let us, by the grace of God, judge and reject it with holy decision.

May the Lord enable us to bend our earnest attention to His most precious word of exhortation, that so His holy name may be more fully glorified in our daily life!

And, now, a very few words on the subject of "the Earnest." This is a most precious aspect of the Spirit's office and work. "He is the earnest of the inheritance until the redemption of the purchased

possession.” The inheritance is purchased; the price has been paid. But it is not yet redeemed; for this latter we wait; and while waiting, our God has, most graciously, given us the earnest of His Spirit, so that we are as sure of the inheritance as though we were already in possession of it. The earnest is apart of what we are to get. “Now he which stablisheth us with you is Christ”—most precious words!—“and hath anointed us in God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” 2 Cor. 1:21, 22.

We must carefully distinguish between purchase and redemption. Many confound them and thus suffer serious loss. Our Lord Christ has purchased the whole universe. He has paid the redemption price for the inheritance; but He has not yet laid His mighty hand, in redeeming power, thereupon. Redemption by price is one thing; redemption by power, quite another. In the year 1834, the British Legislature voted 20 millions of money to redeem the slaves in our Colonies. This was redemption by price. But then, notwithstanding the payment of this redemption price, some poor slaves might be found huddled together in a slave ship. What was needed in their case? Redemption by power in virtue of the price. British man of war might seize the slave ship and let go all the poor captives. This may, in some feeble manner, illustrate the difference between purchase and redemption.

In Rom. 8 we have a splendid passage which we must quote for the reader. “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who subjected it in hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only it, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body”

As regards the body of the believer, as in respect to the inheritance, the redemption price has been paid, but it is not yet redeemed, “we groan within ourselves.”

We sigh for the redemption. We wait for the moment of deliverance. “We look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change the body of our humiliation, that it may be fashioned like unto the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” Phil. 3:20, 21.

Glorious prospect! How precious for the weary suffering pilgrim who feels the burden of his poor crumbling tabernacle! The Lord is at hand. The voice of the archangel and the trump of God will soon be heard, and then mortality shall be swallowed up of life. Till then we are sealed with that blessed Spirit of God who is the earnest—not of His love which we possess, but—of the inheritance for which we wait.

Security Arising From Death

There are several lights in which we may view death. It is the wages of sin. (Rom. 6:23.) It came by man. (1 Cor. 15:21.) It has a claim on all the children of Adam, and all such are liable to enter into it. It terminates a man's existence upon earth, it cuts short all his plans in connection with this life, and manifests how really, because of sin, he is but a sojourner in the world. To the weary, the troubled, the distressed, it brings cessation from earthly toils, and earthly vexations. (Job 3:13-19.) To many it has come as the king of terrors. (Job 18:14; Hebrews 2:15.) To the unconverted, the impenitent, if at all alive to that which comes after it—judgment (Heb. 9:27), it is a most unwelcome intruder. The Christian, however, if at peace with God, without desiring it (2 Cor. 5:4), can yet quietly yield to it. For him its sting is gone (1 Cor. 15:55, 56), it is annulled (2 Tim. 1:10), and made subservient to his interests (1 Cor. 3:22); and, if called to pass through it, he will find it the door of exit from earth, through which he departs to be with Christ. (2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23.) There is, however, another light in which we can view it, for it makes secure beyond the possibility of revocation or change, that which is based upon it. "For a testament is of force after men are dead, otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." (Heb. 9:17.)

But this introduces the thought of the death of another by which we receive a benefit. The man of the world then may talk of the certainty of death, the Christian can speak of security which results from it; but the worldling will be thinking of his own, or other men's death, the Christian of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. To the worldling, if he continues such, death is certain, "for it is appointed unto men once to die." Death will come, and rob him of all that he possesses. Others may profit by his death as far as regards the things of this life, but to him death will be a robber, a spoiler, a captor. And it is the prospect of death which makes him feel, whether willing to confess it or not, how uncertain is his continuance on earth, and his tenure of the things of this life. Certainty of death, and insecurity arising from it, on these the man whose portion is in this life may sadly soliloquize, and descant. With the Christian how different! Of the uncertainty of his death he may speak, and on the security resulting from death, that his hopes shall be accomplished, he can confidently rely. If he thinks of death as affecting himself, he knows it cannot take from him one iota his proper portion. His inheritance lies beyond it, and is untouched by it, for it is "incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven, for those who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Pet. 1:4, 5.) If he thinks of the death of the Lord, he knows how secure is his future. Now the one who has taught us this is God, and in the darkness of night He gave His servant Abraham, and us also, to understand, that what is based upon death, can never be annulled, nor altered.

When Abraham first pitched his tent at Sichem (Gen. 12), God promised to give the land to his seed. When Lot separated from him, and chose the plain of Jordan, by Sodom, God renewed His promise to Abraham, that the land should be given to his seed, and accompanied the reiteration of His promise with the gracious addition of "forever." (Chap. 13:15) In chapter 15 God came to him in a vision, and Abraham asked for assurances both as to the existence of his seed, and as to their possession of the land. As regards his seed God gave him a fresh promise, and he believed God,

and it was counted to him for righteousness. As respects the inheritance of the land, God entered into a covenant to reassure him of it. Now this was not the first covenant God had made with men. But it was the first which was ratified by death.

God established His covenant with Noah, when He shut him into the ark, and kept him in safety throughout the flood. (Gen. 6:18.) He made a covenant too after the flood with the whole human race, and with every living creature with them, from all that went out of the ark, to every beast of the earth, that a flood should never again cut off all flesh, nor destroy the earth. (Gen. 9:9-17.) It was nothing new then on God's part to enter into a covenant engagement with man, when He graciously bound Himself to Abraham on that memorable night. But it was quite a new feature in any such engagement, as far as we are aware, for God to ratify it by death. In after years, too, God made covenants without any such ratification, for example, Exod. 34; Deut. 29:1 Sam. 23:5; but on this occasion He instructed Abraham as to what he was to do. When all was prepared, God bound Himself at sunset to bring back Abraham's seed to that land, and to judge those who should have afflicted them. And when darkness had overspread the earth, a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp passed between the pieces of the animals slain. The burning lamp was the token of the divine presence. (Exod. 20:18; Eze. 1:13; Dan. 10:6.) The smoking furnace seems to be the emblem of judgment (Psalm 21:9.; Isa. 31:9; Mai. 4:1); for judgment on their enemies, as well as deliverance of his seed, God bound Himself to Abraham to accomplish. We know how fully that was carried out. The same inspired word which tells us of the covenant, acquaints us with its fulfillment.

But why did God act in this way with Abraham?

He had promised in chapters 12 and 13 that his seed should have the land, and that forever. Why then, did God pass, as it were, through the pieces of the animals slain? It was to give the most complete assurance of the fulfillment of His promise, binding Himself in the most solemn way to perform the promise to Abraham's seed, after the patriarch's death. But why were the animals slain? Men might make a covenant after that manner, in token that they deserved death, if they broke it, as Jer. 34:18-20 shows us. But on God's part there could be no failure. Was not then God's action on this occasion an intimation to Abraham of the immutability of the covenant thus made? For where death has come in, one cannot revert to the condition of matters which existed before it. The life given up cannot be taken back, hence there can be no change in the engagement solemnly entered into. What is based upon death must therefore stand forever. Abraham, it would appear, perfectly understood this, for never again, that we read of, did he ask from God for any fresh assurance that his seed should inherit the land. All was made sure to him, since the covenant was ratified by death.

Now, if we read this narrative only as a chapter in the life of the patriarch, we could not but feel an interest in the account of that night's intercourse with God, when the Almighty was solemnly binding Himself to a creature to perform for his seed what He had already promised. But that would be all. Yet, surely no one, whose God is Abraham's God, should turn away from that history as one in which he has no concern. Of course in the fulfillment of the promise then confirmed to Abraham, we have no direct concern. In the ways of God, however, and His teaching, we are intimately concerned; for we learn what He is, who is the unchanging One, from what He has said, and from what He has done. And here we are taught by God Himself of the immutability of that

which rests upon death. In this principle then here first authoritatively set forth, we are all interested. For in the death of God's Son, we who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ are now deeply concerned. All then that rests on His death must abide immutable, and secure. Is this man's deduction merely? Nay. It is God's own gracious teaching from His ways with Abraham on that night.

Have we then forgiveness of sins by the blood of Christ? (Eph. 1:7.) That must stand good forever, for the blood, which is the life, has been shed, and the life so surrendered cannot be taken back. Death having come in there can be no going back to a previous condition of matters, and so no revocation of what has been affected by it. Are we justified by His blood? (Rom. 5:9.) Our justification must abide then forever. What has been done cannot be undone. Have we boldness to enter the holiest by His blood? (Heb. 10:19.) Of that right of entry we can never be deprived. All is secure and unchangeable which rests on death, and we can add the death of God's Son. And who teaches us this, and would settle the heart in this confidence? It is God, who has written this history of that light's intercourse between Himself and Abraham for our instruction, and the establishing, and joy of our hearts. C. E. S.

A Solid Foundation

It gives great rest to the heart to know, on the authority of the word of God, that our place, our portion, and our prospect, all flow from the eternal purpose of God; all is according to the love of His heart, and all to the glory of His great Name.

These three facts, we may say with all possible confidence, form the solid foundation of the believer's peace and rest; and they are presented with uncommon force and fullness in the opening sentences of the Ephesians. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in the heavenlies, in Christ."

What a place! What a portion! "In the heavenlies"—"In Christ"—"All spiritual blessings!" What perfect security is here! It is not like Israel of old, placed in the land of Canaan, in the enjoyment of an earthly inheritance, surrounded by enemies, liable to be dislodged from their position, and robbed of their portion; holding both the one and the other on the slender and slippery condition of their obedience.

How different in our case! Instead of certain temporal blessings, we have "all spiritual blessings." There is nothing wanting, not a single blessing omitted. And then, it is in the heavenlies, beyond the reach of every enemy and every hostile influence. We can say, "There is neither adversary nor evil occurrent" in the sphere of our blessings. True, we have to wrestle with spiritual wickednesses in seeking to make good our position and realize our portion. But we are blessed according to all the fullness of the expression used by the Holy Ghost, "all spiritual blessings," and these blessings are not temporal or earthly, but spiritual and in heaven—yea, in Christ. They are heavenly, eternal, divine. Nothing can touch them; no power of earth or hell, men or devils, can wrest a single one of our blessings out of the hand of Him in whom we possess them. Our Lord Christ has won them for us—won them by His death on the tree—won them in pursuance of God's eternal counsels, and according to all the love of His heart. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be Holy and without blame before him in love."

Here we are conducted to the very source of it all. And, oh, what a marvelous source! God's choice, God's purpose laid in Christ before the foundation of the world. Can anything touch this? Can anything occurring in time, anything in us or about us? Can aught hinder the accomplishment of God's purpose? Impossible! That purpose was formed in eternity, and founded in Christ, the eternal Son of the Father. Assuredly God will make good His own purpose, spite of every opposing influence. The devil thought to hinder, by leading the first man to commit sin; he thought he had gained his end by getting him put out of paradise.

But God was above him. His purpose, blessed be His name, was not based on the first man in paradise, but on the Eternal Son; and hence the first man's sin, and his expulsion from the garden, only furnished the occasion for God to bring forth from the treasury of His eternal counsels His purpose of love toward us. It was not possible that any creature, man, devil, or else could hinder the accomplishment of the blessed purpose of God. Eden itself might be overrun with thorns and

briers; the man who had been set up there in innocence, to dress it and keep it, might be turned out a complete wreck, a hopeless ruin. But Eden was not to be the sphere, or the first man the instrument, of our blessing. God's counsels could not find a solid foundation amid the dust of the old creation, or in the doings of the first man. No; this would never do; and hence, when sin entered, our ever gracious God took occasion from it to display the riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us by Christ Jesus.

Now, we hear nothing of grace amid the bowers of paradise, or throughout the fields of the old creation. We see power, wisdom, goodness, but no grace. There was no need. An innocent being was not a subject for grace. But when sin entered, when the first man had fallen irretrievably, then the divine purpose in grace was unfolded—a purpose, not to restore the ruin of the first man and of the old creation, but to introduce the second Man, and in Him the new creation, in which all things are of God, and in which—all praise to sovereign grace and redeeming love! —we have our place forever.

What a mistake the devil made in meddling with man in the garden of Eden! How completely he missed his mark! If, indeed, the purpose of God had been founded on Adam, if the sphere of its display was to be the first creation, then, verily, the enemy would have triumphed. But, thank God! it was not so. Adam was not the man, nor Eden the sphere, but “The Man Christ Jesus,” and “The new creation.”

We repeat, this gives perfect rest, settled and everlasting repose, to the heart. The matter is taken completely out of our hands, and off the ground of mere nature—whether innocent or guilty, fallen or unfallen. The whole fabric of the divine counsels, and of our blessing, rests, only and altogether, on the imperishable ground of accomplished redemption. The ruin is met, and met in such a way as to bring everlasting glory to God, and to put us on a better, higher, firmer ground than Adam in innocence could ever have occupied.

With what joyful emphasis, therefore, can we repeat the apostle's doxology, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”—not merely the God and Creator of Adam—“who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in the heavenlies, in Christ”—not temporal blessings in Eden. “According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy”—not merely innocent—“and without blame before him in love.”

How magnificent is all this! How it exceeds all human thought! It brings us back to the unfathomable depths of God's eternal mind, and unfolds before our eyes His marvelous counsels respecting us. Here we learn, to our unspeakable joy and deep consolation, that it was God's purpose to have us in His presence, “holy and blameless,” even as His own beloved Son. “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.”

Can aught exceed the moral grandeur and glory of all this? What can the devil do here? What can sin, or death, or aught else do? Who or what can prevent the Almighty God from accomplishing His eternal purpose? Can anything in the wide range of creation interfere, in the smallest degree, with the divine determination to have us in His presence, according to His own choice, and according to the love of His heart? If God was pleased to counsel, before the foundation of the

world, that from the midst of a world of wretched sinners, dead in trespasses and sins, He would elect some to be in His presence, holy and blameless, in the blessed relationship of sons, who or what can hinder? Who shall disannul the eternal purpose of God? Where is the power that shall frustrate His plans?

The christian reader will do well to get a very firm grasp of the truth on which we have been dwelling. It is the eternal purpose of God to have us in His presence, "holy and without blame." And not only so, but it is the joy of His heart to have us there before Him. We hear Him saying, "It is meet we should make merry and be glad."

The sense of this must assure the heart and set it at perfect liberty. "Perfect love casteth out fear." God would not have us in His presence with a single trace of fear or misgiving in our hearts. He must have us perfectly at home, perfectly at ease; and therefore He makes us fit to be there.

But we must remember that it cost God something to carry out His purpose, and gratify His heart with respect to us. For we were sinners—guilty, ruined, hell-deserving sinners—"Dead in trespasses and sins," "Walking according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the Spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

Now, the question is, how can a holy, sin-hating God, who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity—how can such an One have to do with us? If He cannot allow a single taint of sin in His holy presence, how can we be there? The enemy would raise this question. He would use the truth of divine holiness and human guilt and vileness, as an inseparable barrier to the carrying out of God's eternal purpose, to have us in His presence, "holy and without blame."

But, blessed forever be the God of all grace! He has, triumphantly and gloriously, answered this question. He has removed every barrier, and silenced, forever, the enemy and the avenger. "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son." And, then, we have the other side of this great subject, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up."

Here, the full, glorious truth shines before us. The Son of God was given—given in love—perfect love. But, the Son of man was lifted up—in righteousness—perfect righteousness. This is the solid foundation of the whole matter. God loved the world; but sin must be judged, must be utterly and eternally condemned. It will not do to take up merely one side of this stupendous question; we must have both. If God were to bring us to heaven in our sins, where were the righteousness? If He were to send us to hell, because of our sins, where were the love?

Mark the answer—the glorious answer to the question—the triumphant solution of the difficulty! God gave His Son, in love, and bruised Him, in righteousness. He loved the world, but He hated sin; and when we behold the Son of God and Son of man hanging on the tree, we read, in characters divinely deep and broad, God's love to sinners, and His eternal hatred and condemnation of sin. "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."

Yes, reader, sin must be punished, must be judged, must be eternally banished from the divine presence; and hence, ere ever God's marvelous counsels of grace could be carried into effect—ere ever His purpose could be made good, He had to give forth from His bosom, the Son of His love, and bruise Him on Calvary's cursed tree. Thus it is that "grace reigns through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Magnificent utterance! The very gist and marrow of the gospel! "Grace reigns"—not at the expense of but—"through righteousness;" and this, "unto eternal life;" and all, "by Jesus Christ our Lord."

The Lord be praised for such "A Solid Foundation."

A Song Amidst the Shadows

“Until the day break and the shadows flee away, turn my beloved, and be thou like a roe, or a young hart upon the mountains of division.” (Marg.) Song of Solomon 2:17.

“He saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night He cometh unto them.... and saith unto them, of good cheer: it is I: be not afraid.”

“These things I have spoken unto you that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world.” John 16:33.

“Is it well?.... and she answered, It is well.” 2 Kings 4:2G.

Sorrow and trial, Lord, Thou’st said

Must be our portion here:

And to Thy word our hearts would bow.

E’en though it cost us dear;

The darkest cloud will beam with light,

If Thou, Lord, drawest near!

“‘Tis well”! E’en though our path should lie

Through trials sore and deep;

And from our seeds of earthly joy,

A harvest sad, we reap!

Not always theirs the happiest lives,

Who never need to weep!

Earth’s fairest things must pass away,

The sweetest and the best

We must be taught how vain to seek

On earth continued rest:

To draw some flowers’ fragrance forth,

They must be sorely press’d!

Tis well we should be free from earth,

Tis better, happier far:

E'en though through life's long stormy night,
We see no cheering star;
"Well"; if we mount to heaven upon
Affliction's fiery car!
It needs, our souls should pant, and yearn—
And earthly streams grow dry,
And in our greatest depth of need,
No more our wants supply—
To find the unfailing fountain head,
Soul thirst to satisfy!
And blessed is the "want" which makes
Our hearts from this world flee;
And when the earthly pitcher breaks,
The heavenly light to see;
Blessed the storm, however dark,
Which drives us nearer Thee.
O Abba, Father; Savior-God!
Such sorrows must be blest;
Faith owns amidst the darkest scenes
Thou'rt working for the best.
And in Thy wisdom as Thy love,
Our hearts find perfect rest!
A.S.O.

Song of the Sparrow

“Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before GOD?”

“Fear ye not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.”

Luke 12:6, 7.

I'm only a little sparrow,
A bird of low degree;
My life is of little value,
But the dear Lord cares for me.
He gives me a coat of feathers—
It is very plain, I know;
Without a speck of crimson;
For it was not made for show.
But it keeps me warm in winter,
And it shields me from the rain;
Were it bordered with gold and purple,
Perhaps it would make me vain.
And now that the spring-time cometh,
I will build me a little nest,
With many a chirp of pleasure—
In the spot I like the best.
I have no barn or storehouse,
I neither sow nor reap;
God gives me a sparrow's portion,
And never a seed to keep.
If my meat is sometimes scanty,
Close pecking makes it sweet;
I have always enough to feed me,

And life is more than meat.
I know there are many sparrows; —
All over the world they are found
But our Heavenly Father knoweth
When one of us falls to the ground.
Though small, we are never forgotten,
Though weak, we are never afraid;
For we know that the dear Lord keepeth
The life of the creatures He made.
I fly through the thickest forest,
I alight on many a spray;
I have no chart nor compass,
But I never lose my way.
I just fold my wings at nightfall,
Wherever I happen to be;
For the Father is always watching,
And no harm can happen to me.
I am only a little sparrow,
A bird of low degree;
But I know that the Father loves me,
Dost thou know His love for thee?

The Source of Peace

You ask, my friend, how is it,
With every changing day,
That I can see so calmly,
Earth's prized things pass away?
My most abiding Treasure
Is with me though unseen;
And He will never leave me—
The One on whom I lean.
The world once smiled before me,
But quickly changed its tone,
And much I fear'd to travel
O'er life's rough paths alone!
But soon my best friend sought me—
A Heavenly Guide, unseen—
And strong, and firm, and faithful,
Is the Arm on which I lean!
Though riches, all uncertain,
Though health, with youth were gone;
Though poor and weak, and aged,
I had to journey on,
Though all earth's dear ones vanish'd
From life's still varying scene—
Yet Jesus ever liveth!
The one on whom I lean.
And since His grace hath led me
To shelter at His side,

Since He hath undertaken
My whole course to provide,
His own clear word proclaiming
How changeless is my Friend,
(For “whom Christ Jesus loveth, He loveth to the end,”)
What shall prevent my singing?
Not life, nor death nor power;
Naught—but the sin within me
That grieves Him hour by hour.
Even Sin! He hath subdued it,
And soon all conflict o'er,
His praise alone shall fill my song
On Canaan's blessed shore!
M. A. T.

That I May Win Christ

The brief sentence which forms the heading of this article presents to us the earnest aspiration of one who had found an absorbing and commanding object in Christ—the utterance of a soul whose one desire was to grow in the knowledge and appreciation of that blessed one who fills all heaven with His glory. The whole passage from which our motto is taken is full of power. We must quote it for the reader, “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ, Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.”

Let us specially mark the words, “what things were gain to me.” The apostle is not speaking of his sins, of his guilt, of things of which, as a man, he might justly be ashamed. No; he is referring to his gains, his honors, his distinctions, his religious, his intellectual, his moral, his political advantages—of such things as were calculated to make him an object of envy to his fellows. All these things he counted but loss that he might win Christ.

Alas! how few of us understand anything of this! How few of us grasp the meaning of the words—the real force of the expression, “That I may win Christ!” Most of us rest satisfied with thinking of Christ as God’s gift to sinners. We do not aim at winning Him as our prize, by the surrender of all those things which nature loves and values. The two things are quite distinct. As poor miserable, guilty, hell-deserving sinners, we are not asked to do, or to give, or to surrender anything. We are invited, yea commanded to take—take freely—take all. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.” The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. “If thou knewest the free giving of God, thou wouldst have asked.”

All this is blessedly true, thanks be to God for it! But, then, there is another side of the question. What did Paul mean by winning Christ? He already possessed Christ as God’s free gift to him as a sinner. What more did he want? He wanted to win Christ as his prize, even at the cost of all beside. As Christ, the true merchant man, sold all that He had, in order to possess Himself of what He esteemed “a pearl of great price”—laid aside His glory, stripped and emptied Himself of all—gave up all His claims as man, as Messiah, in order to possess Himself of the church; so, in his measure, that devoted Christian, whose words form our thesis, gave up everything in order to possess himself of that peerless object who had been revealed to his heart on the day of his conversion. He saw such beauty, such moral glory, such transcendent excellency in the Son of God, that he deliberately surrendered all the honors, the distinctions, the pleasures, the riches of earth, in order that Christ might fill every chamber of his heart, and absorb all the energies of his moral being. He longed to know Him not merely as the One who had put away his sins, but as the One who could satisfy all the longings of his soul, and utterly displace all that earth could offer or nature grasp.

Reader, let us gaze on this picture. It is indeed a fine study for us. It stands out in bold contrast with the cold, selfish, world-loving, pleasure-hunting, money-seeking spirit of this our day. It administers a severe rebuke to the heartless indifference of which we must all alas! be

conscious—an indifference expressing “itself in numberless and nameless ways. Where do we see aught that answers to the words, “That I may win Christ:

Thou Art the Christ, the Son of the Living God: Matthew 16:26

Thou art the Christ, Lord Jesus,
Son of the living God,
Worthy art Thou, most worthy,
To be by all adored.
Creator, Thou, of all things
In heaven and on earth,
All worlds are thine, Lord Jesus,
All owe to Thee their birth.
Humbled, rejected Savior,
Nailed to the cursed tree,
Bearing for guilty sinners,
Shame and indignity.
Oh! who can tell thy sorrows;
Or who conceive Thy pain;
When Thou by God forsaken,
Wast crucified and slain?
First-born of every creature,
Seated in glory now,
Head of the new creation,
Before Thy feet we bow.
Thou art the Christ, Lord Jesus,
Son of the living God,
We worship, we adore Thee,
The purchase of Thy blood.
M. S.S.

St. Petersburg, November 1877.

To Die Is Gain

“Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better.” Phil. 1:20-23.

There is one word in the above quoted beautiful testimony of the apostle, which the Lord gave for comfort and sustainment of heart in a time of sore bereavement. A time when the deepest, and truest human sympathy seemed perfectly powerless, attempting as it appeared to do, to fill the blank in, and comfort the heart which lay so sorely crushed, by the severance from one round whom its deepest and tenderest affections were so strongly entwined.

“The heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger intermeddleth not with it,” in such a season of sorrow. But “he who made the ear shall he not hear? He who formed the eye, shall he not see?” And we may surely add, He who framed the heart shall He not know, and be able to fathom its deepest and most hidden recesses, so far beyond the reach of human sympathy and love? Assuredly He can; and it is His joy to come in at such a time, and by His Spirit, minister that which exactly meets the unutterable longings, as well as soothes the wild bitter agony of the broken heart.

Thus the first gleam of light which broke into the thick darkness of those first days of agony, was conveyed by those four little words, “To die is gain.” And, day by day, the Lord brought the thought of his “gain” home with such increased power and certainty to the soul, that it enabled one, not merely to bow to His will, but to thank Him for taking one (who was far dearer than life) to the joy, and rest, and unspeakable blessedness of His presence. Away from all sorrow and possible loss here, to the certainty of eternal “gain” above!

It is with the earnest desire—in this world of bereaved homes and breaking hearts—to be “able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God,” that we desire to meditate upon this one little word “gain,” and have our hearts occupied with the present and eternal blessing of those dear to us, who have gone to be “with Christ.”

True it is— “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God;” and it is our sweet privilege and consolation to let in, so far as they are revealed to us, the joys and blessedness of “the home over there.” So that already its calm fair light may be filling our souls, and leading us to find all our repose in His presence, where those we love are, though “absent from the body,” present—at home—with Him there! Human reason and imagination must utterly fail to picture their perfect happiness. But faith gazing up into an opened heaven, can see the Welcomer and Receiver of all His people—as of Stephen—and rest in the assurance that “in his presence is fullness of joy,” so that the ready words rise to our lips—

“Great gain is thine, beloved one, exchanging

Thy sorrow’s hour, for everlasting joy;

And we, in thought, o’er all thy gladness ranging,

Find praise to God, our seemliest employ.”

We little know the trials they have been removed from; nor, how truly, “the righteous have been taken away from the evil” which would have sorely crushed their sensitive hearts. What storms they have been sheltered from! What sorrows spared! Time only reveals these things to us; but faith shows us, now and at once their perfect and present blessing, in the presence of the Lord!

Let us look back for a moment at the past. Was not every thought and desire of our hearts linked with their joy? Were we not made glad by their pleasure, and cheered by their prosperity? Was not sorrow for them, dreaded, because it could be so poorly shared by us? Was not their suffering agony to us? and would we not have been content—yea, most happy—to have secured their joy, though it were at the expense of all that made life bright and attractive to us? The loving heart will unreservedly answer, Yes. There was not a hope—there was not a joy—not an attraction this world could present, which would not have been most freely surrendered, to have secured their happiness.

Well, beloved reader, the Lord has done in His great love that which we so sadly failed in doing. And we may rest assured— “What His love ordaineth is better than our best.”

But oftentimes the question may rise in our hearts, Why is it God calls some of us to walk through life alone? —why does He remove from us those whose love and presence were all that made life sweet and pleasant to us here? One reason doubtless is, that He would seek by these means to make our hearts free for His love to get in. When one, absorbing earthly love, occupies our hearts, there is very little room left for His. Besides, He would have us enter more into what the sufferings of His Son were, when as a lonely sorrowful man, He walked this earth—a despised, rejected, broken-hearted man, who “looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but he found none;” and whose—

“Path uncheered by earthly smiles,

Led only to the cross.”

And doubtless, if our sympathies were right with the Lord Jesus now, if our hearts were in that intimacy of communion which the language of the Song of Solomon so vividly portrays, His death would have desolated this scene to us, as none other could. “Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the Bridegroom is with them?” are His own words. “But the days will come when the Bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast.” He counted upon His absence—His death—so darkening this scene to us, that we should find no rest or enjoyment save in the scene whence He had gone.

But alas! it is not so; and He can lovingly make allowance for those who slept in the presence of such agony as earth never witnessed before, and never will again—the agony of the Son of God, when “his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground”—with all the

unspeakable tenderness of One, who was even then “touched “ with the feeling of our infirmities—“The Spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

He too, who formed these relationships, whose own loving heart sought for human sympathy and attachment, who could say, “I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but found none.” He can feel for us, as the most tender and sensitive human heart would utterly fail to do, when that one round whom every fiber of our being was so strongly entwined, is taken from us, and we know that all the passionate yearning of our hearts can never bring him back. This is what calms the storm of our sorrow, as well as the assurance, brought home by His Spirit, that He is doing for our beloved one, far more, and far better than we could ever have done. Taken him away from our absorbing love truly, but taken him up to the Source and Giver of it all; taken him up to God, who “is Love.” Taken him from the pain and weakness of the poor, frail, sensitive body, to the enjoyment of that land, where “the inhabitant shall no more say, I am sick.” Taken him to be with the Man in Paradise—the Man who loved, and wept, and suffered, and died, and was buried down here; but now—up there in that bright scene—lives to die no more.

What an exchange! How it dries our tears; how it soothes our sorrow; how it sustains our heart to contemplate it! May it help our souls to rise more readily, more habitually to that bright scene, where old things are passed away, and “all things are become new, and all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ”—where there will be “no more sin, no more sorrow, no more separation, no more death” Where the wants and weariness of the way will be forgotten; and gazing upon the “Lamb as it had been slain,” our heart will find—

“All the sorrow yet remembered
In the else forgotten years;
His dark hour of bitter anguish
His strong crying and His tears.”

Well, as we think of these scenes into which He has taken our beloved ones, can we not say, He has done the best for them? What remains then for us, but to do the best we can for Him? There is no legality in this.

There can be no legality in love. Love delights to be used. Its deepest joy is to be able to serve its object. So the apostle can close that wondrous chapter of divine contrasts—of death and life, of weakness and power, of humiliation and glory, with the calm comforting exhortation, “Therefore my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” 1 Cor. 15:58.

Where is thy sting,
O Death? thy conquest, O thou conquered Grave?
Tears flow, Wounds bleed, but “Victory” we sing,
The Lord is strong to save!
Now nevermore

Thy spirit falters in its yearning quest,

Thy home is reached, thy strangership is o'er;

Sweet toil, yet sweeter rest.

The Father's heart,

Thy blessed refuge, is our shelter too;

We see thee still, are with thee, where thou art,

Hid, but from mortal view.

Gone unto God!

Gone to the Father in His house to dwell:

Gone through the shadowed vale that Jesus trod—

Beloved, it is well!

The Way of Happiness

“Are you happy, my dear girl?” said a visitor to a young friend who seemed to be drawing near her latter end. “Yes, quite happy,” was the reply. And raising her hand, she pointed to a Bible which was lying on her bed-side, and again repeating, “I am quite happy; I have Christ there.” Then laying her hand on her heart, she said, “And I have Christ here.” And again, pointing upwards, to where the object of her faith, her affections and her hopes were all centered, she repeated, “And I have Christ up there.”

What a source of happiness! we may well exclaim. A happiness far exceeding that of the brightest hosts on high who have never sinned. They know nothing of Christ as did the dying girl. She knew nothing else. It was all Christ! only Christ! But it was the Christ that loved her as no one else did or could, the Christ that died for her on the cross of Calvary, in presence of all intelligences. His love she could never deny, though she might be suffering the most excruciating pain; the whole universe is witness to His love. It may seem strange to nature that One who so loves should measure out to His loved ones such days and nights of weariness, and who, by a touch of the hem of His garment could dry up the deepest fountains of disease; but faith approves and would not have it otherwise until it be His holy and blessed will to come in with His healing power. The vessel that has to bear in heaven “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,” must be morally fitted here to bear that glory forever. Besides, the Lord in His love can make His suffering ones superior to all trouble, not by removing it, but by giving the faith that accepts all from His hands, still counting on His changeless love. “Trophimus have I left at Miletum, sick,” says Paul, “Epaphroditus was sick nigh unto death; but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.” But though these were Paul’s brethren and companions in labor, there was no thought of anything like a miracle, or any direct intervention to restore them. It was simply then as now, a question of faith and patience. 2 Tim. 4, Phil. 2.

What we see in the dear dying girl before us is, complete deliverance from occupation with herself. Nothing about her frames and feelings; nothing about her past ways, her present experience, her hopes or fears of recovery; nothing even as to her faith, her thoughts of God’s purposes, or her own anything. She had Christ—the Christ of God as He is revealed in the holy scriptures; as He dwells in the heart by faith; as He sits at God’s right hand in the glory. But it is not by means of great learning, or great attainments, that the soul thus enjoys Christ; it is possible that this girl could barely read her English Bible—we have known many such. But the Holy Ghost having come down from heaven when Christ, as the God-man, took His place in the glory, He makes good to the soul that is looking only to Christ, these blessed realities. It is thus that the wheels of the soul are all set in motion in the day of affliction, as the apostle says. “But we glory in tribulation also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us.” Rom. 5:3-5.

Although Christ is nowhere else revealed but in the holy scriptures, yet many misapprehend the Father's revelation of His Son. There are many who teach that Christ suffered and died on the cross, to reconcile His Father to us. This is gravely to mistake the way of peace and happiness in this world, especially in the day of adversity. There is no Father's love in this doctrine; God is seen as a judge; and the work of Christ as meeting and satisfying His justice. True, all who have faith in the work of Christ—the foundation of all blessing—are saved; but the theology of this school leaves mirrored on the soul the judicial character of God, and not the Father's love. To know the Christ of the Bible is to know Him, His mission, His work, and the sinner's salvation, as the fruit of God's eternal love. God never was the enemy of man, and needed not to be reconciled. The Bible bears witness to this as early as the days of Adam. The first word we hear from an offended God after man had sinned, is one of love— "Adam, where art thou?" Man was lost, and in tender mercy, God was seeking him. And in the days of our blessed Lord—the last Adam—we read, "That God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." 2 Cor. 5.

Sweeter far than man's theology are the sacred words of holy scripture. To know the Christ of the Bible we must begin our lesson with the heart of God. We speak not now of a newly awakened soul whose eye must be directed to the precious blood of Christ to meet His sense of guilt and troubled conscience; but rather of those who may have been Christians for many years, but strangers to the perfect repose, the single eye, of the dying girl. Yes, we must begin with the Father's love. He who lay deepest in the heart of God was not spared, but delivered up to accomplish the purposes of love; and a plea for every other blessing is founded on this great gift. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32.) As the lesser is included in the greater, so is every blessing that love can give bound up in the gift of Christ.

So the blessed Lord Himself always teaches. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Thus the Divine Master ever taught His disciples to trace all their mercies up to the Father's heart, and to accept all from His hands—health or sickness—as the fruit of His love. In place of Christ suffering on the cross to reconcile His Father to us; we are told, times without number, that it was the Father who gave us to Christ to be redeemed and fitted for His holy presence. "Thine they were," says Jesus, "and thou gavest them me.... Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are." Could love do more? Could love say more? "That they may be one as we are." The heart cannot receive it, it overflows all its limits. What perfect unity there must be between the "Holy Father," and His Son; and such is the believer's perfect blessedness in Christ. As He says further on: "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." How emphatically almost every line of scripture condemns the false doctrine that it was necessary for Christ to suffer and die in order to reconcile God to ruined man! One of the objects of the blessing here spoken of is, "That the world may believe that thou hast sent me." And now He adds the crowning blessing, "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me."

Surely nothing could be higher than this—in the same glory with Christ, and loved even as He is loved. Could the heart think of Him? In looking up to the exalted man in the glory, the poor, withered, weakly, bed-ridden, one may say, “See you that man in the glory? He is the perfect definition of what I am in my Father’s sight. That radiant glory which now surrounds His adorable Person, is mine now, and in its brightest beams I shall bask forever. And the complacent love of the Father in His Son, is His love to me. Think not of me as I am now. My Lord has given me to know in experience what the body of humiliation means; but He has also given me to look up, and say, when He comes, He will change this body of humiliation that it may be fashioned like unto His body of glory. Then, O then! In the same glory, loved with the same love, and in my new resurrection body, exactly like His own.” Mark the three unities in John 17:11, 21, 22-23.

Thus has my pen run on without stopping to think whether this was the most correct way of speaking of “Christ in the Bible.” Surely this might be done a hundred different ways; He fills the Bible; none of its different parts can be properly understood unless we have Him as our key. Still it is most important to know Him and all the blessings which are ours in Him, not only as the fruit of His cross and sufferings, but as the fruit of the Father’s love. We can then rise above the trials of the way, above the returning clouds after the rain, above the mutterings of the gathering storm, above the desolating tempest, above the shining hosts of heaven, above “all principality and power;” and repose on that heart whence all our blessings flow—the Father’s bosom.

But these sunny heights are not reached in a day, though they are ours from the time of our conversion. We must begin with the cross, with the deep sense of sin in the conscience, with the efficacy of the blood of Christ to cleanse it all away, with pardon and acceptance in the beloved, and oneness with Him as the Head of His body, the church, through the presence and indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Unless we know something of the relationship into which we are brought by our oneness with a risen Christ, nothing is known in power. That which constitutes Christianity and should characterize the Christian, flows from our union with Christ in resurrection. To know that we are one with Him beyond death and the grave, beyond the reach of sin, Satan, and the world, where no enemy can ever come, where nothing can ever arise to disturb this union, is solid peace, perfect rest, and heavenly joy. This is to be tasting the joys of heaven, though still on earth, and it may be, encompassed with the infirmities, and almost ready to sink with the weariness of the way.

The good Lord give all who read these pages, to know Christ as He is revealed in His great work on the cross, in His present position on the throne, and in His coming again to receive us to Himself; meanwhile He is sure to have His right place in the heart by the teaching and power of the Holy Spirit.

The Wedding Garment: Part 1

“And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding; and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise; and the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth; and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye, therefore, into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all, as many as they found, both bad and good; and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment; and he saith unto him, Friend, how earnest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few chosen.”

It will be needful for the reader, in order to understand the meaning and force of this most solemn parable, to look at it in immediate connection with the two which precede it. In all three we have vividly and forcibly set before us, first, man's incorrigible evil; and, secondly, the marvelous painstaking love and grace of God. All scripture, most surely, illustrates these things; but they are presented with peculiar point and power in this remarkable group of parables.

Let us turn for a moment to Matt. 21, and read at verse 21. “And when he was come into the temple”—the place which had been built for His worship, and where He surely ought to be honored—“the chief priests and elders of the people”—the very men who ought to have been foremost in leading the people to His feet, in adoring homage—“came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?”

Reader, ponder this, we pray you. Only think of the fact here set forth. God came into this world of ours, in perfect grace and goodness—came in love, to seek and to save that which was lost—came to meet man's need—came to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to lift the sinner from the depth of his ruin and misery, and bring him into everlasting blessedness and glory—came to do all this; and yet man had the audacity to ask Him for His authority! Only conceive—a wretched worm of the earth challenging God for His authority for coming into the world which His own hands had made, in order that He might remedy man's ruin! God, forsooth, must tell man whence He derived His authority for coming into His own world!

It will, doubtless, be said in reply, that those elders and chief priests did not know that Jesus of Nazareth was the God of Israel. But how will this mend their case? It is, alas! painfully evident that

they knew Him not; but why did they not? The very scriptures which were read in their synagogues every sabbath-day clearly set forth the truth that Jesus was the Son of God; yea, was God over all, blessed for evermore. Why did they not know this? Why were they grossly ignorant of a truth which shines, with heavenly luster, from beginning to end of those “lively oracles” in which they made their boast, and of which they ought to have been the faithful expositors to the people? The truth of the Godhead of Jesus is the keystone of the glorious arch of divine revelation. If you take away that, if you deny that, if you are ignorant of that, you have absolutely nothing left that is worth having. Not to see the Godhead of Jesus, is not to see the sun in the solar system. And how could you have a solar system without the sun?

But these elders and chief priests were blind—mentally, morally, spiritually blind. Just so; and how, then, could they teach the people? And is there not something peculiarly awful in the thought of men setting themselves up, or being set up by their fellows, as religious guides, leaders, and teachers of the professed people of God, and, all the while, ignorant of the grand foundation-truth that Jesus of Nazareth is very God as well as very man? How awful the condition of such men! How awful their end! How awful their eternal destiny! They may be very clever, very amiable, very moral, very benevolent, very philanthropic, highly cultivated, very refined; but what is all this without Christ? Nay, more; what is it all when connected with the denial of His essential Godhead?

It will avail nothing to talk of Christ as a good man, an example of lofty virtue, the very fairest sample of humanity ever exhibited in this world, as one who lived a blameless, benevolent life, and died in defense of His principles. All this is but to cast dust in our eyes; it is to deceive us with vain words; it is the veriest sham that could possibly be pawned upon us. And, as to our adorable Lord, it is but to add insult to injury—to betray Him with a kiss—to mock Him with flattery, while robbing Him of His divine rights, and blaspheming His sacred Person.

If Jesus was not God, what was He? Harken to these words, “For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.” John 5:21-23.

If the man that uttered these words was not God—not equal with the Father—what was He? Mark what He says. “That all should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father.” Nothing short of this will do. Nothing less than divine homage will avail. It will not do to place the Son on a level with Moses and Elias. When Peter, in utter ignorance of what he was saying, and in the confusion of the moment, suggested such a thing, a voice from the excellent Majesty instantly corrected him, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear him.” Moses and Elias disappeared, and Jesus was left alone.

Again, He says, “I and my Father are one.” If the utterer of these words was not God, was not equal with the Father, what was He? Could He possibly be termed a good man? Could a mere pretender to Godhead be esteemed a good man? Could He be viewed as an example of lofty virtue? Impossible. We cannot conceive anything more grossly or impiously absurd than to talk of Jesus as a good man, and yet deny His absolute Godhead, His essential Deity. The fact is as clear as a sunbeam; if Jesus of Nazareth was not God over all, blessed forever, He could only be looked upon as—we dare not pen the word.

Shall we be told that, to contend for the truth of the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, is mere dogma, and that the time for insisting upon dogma is past and gone? Can this be so? Nay, reader, it is not so. Men may talk like this; they may put forth high-sounding words about dogma, about mere opinions, about sectarian creeds, about bigotry and narrow-mindedness. They may talk largely about being liberal, about breadth of mind, about catholicity of spirit, and such like.

It is all vain, worse than vain. If a man does not worship Jesus of Nazareth as the true and living God, what does all his catholicity of spirit, his breadth of mind, his largeness of heart, amount to? Can I sit down at the same table, or stand on the same platform, or link myself in the same work—be that work what it may—with one who denies the Deity of my blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? God forbid! Can I own a man as a Christian at all who blasphemes the Son of God, and robs Him of His divine rights? Am I going to pay compliments to a man at the expense of the One who laid down His precious life to deliver my guilty soul from the flames of an everlasting hell?

We are not now speaking of ignorance. Religious leaders, teachers, and guides are not to be dealt with on any such ground. The chief priests, elders, and scribes were not ignorant men. They boasted in their knowledge; they were the professed depositaries of all the learning and religious lore of the day. And yet they denied the Godhead of Jesus, and, as we have said, had the terrible audacity to challenge Him for His authority for coming into His own world to do good. “By what authority doest thou these things? And who gave thee this authority?”

What terrible blindness and hardness of heart! What moral insensibility! What total inability to weigh evidence, or judge righteous judgment! Did not His works carry their own credentials with them? Did not His marvelous ministry prove its divine origin? Did not His whole life afford evidence sufficiently powerful to carry conviction to any mind not blinded and perverted by the god of this world? As He said, on another occasion, “The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me.”

But those religious leaders were utterly incapable of judging. Human authority they could understand and appreciate, because it was in virtue of that they held their place—to that they owed their influence and their reputation. Thus it is always. Man will not allow even God Himself to act without human authority. Divine power, without human authority, will not suffice. Human authority, without divine power, gift, or grace, is quite sufficient. It was so in Jerusalem, in the days of our Lord; it is so in Christendom, in the days of the Holy Ghost. If a man possess all the gifts, graces, and powers that the Holy Ghost can bestow, yet, unless he has human authority—unless he is ordained, licensed, or appointed by men—he cannot minister. But, if he possess human authority, although he be utterly destitute of gifts or grace—yea, though he be wholly unconverted—he may minister.

How awful the thought! How terrible the condition of things! How appalling the judgment that overhangs the professing church! Surely the Lord's people ought to rouse themselves to the consideration of this solemn matter. We are filled with horror—and justly so—at the thought of the chief priests and elders daring to challenge our adorable Lord and Savior for His authority in fulfilling His holy and gracious mission. But is it not as bad to reject the ministry of the Holy Ghost, unless it comes to us with the seal and sanction of human authority? If God is pleased to raise up a man in our midst, to endow him with spiritual gift, to fill him with the power of the Holy Ghost, to

fit him as an evangelist, a pastor, or a teacher, to use him largely in blessing to souls, whether in gathering them out of the world, or in building them up on their most holy faith—will such an one be received or owned in Christendom, unless he comes with a certificate signed by a human hand?

We leave the christian reader to consider this question, calmly and honestly, in the presence of God, while we return to our immediate theme, and contemplate the marvelous reply given by our blessed Lord to the men who presumed to challenge Him for His authority.

“And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven? or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, “If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, “Of men, we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.”

What wisdom is here! What power! What masterly dealing with the moral material before Him! Ought not these religious guides and teachers of the people have been able to decide upon such a question as the mission of John the Baptist? Were they competent to teach others, if they could not answer so simple a question as that? And if they could not decide as to John's authority, what business had they to challenge Christ for His?

And, not only so, but if they were really honest men, could they not give an honest, straightforward answer?

Why “reason with themselves”? Why weigh the consequences of their reply? Alas! there was neither moral honesty, nor spiritual competency, in these men. It was not the glory of God, nor yet the simple claims of truth, that ruled their hearts and dictated their answer. It was their own reputation, on the one hand, or their personal interest, on the other.

It is always a bad sign, always suspicious, when men “reason with themselves” as to the answer they shall give to a plain question. The moment a man begins to reason as to how far his answer will affect himself, he is not to be trusted. A thoroughly honest man will answer an honest question straight out, without any shuffling, or any reference to himself.

But these elders and priests were not honest. They did not own the ministry of John the Baptist, and hence they would not say it was from heaven; and yet they had not the courage to say what they would fain have said, that it was of men. They were afraid of the people. It was no question with them of God or His truth. Self was their standpoint, and hence their entire range of vision was false, and all their conclusions utterly erroneous. They were wholly incompetent to guide others, and therefore they had no sort of right or title to challenge anyone for his authority.

Nothing can exceed the wisdom and moral power of our Lord's reply to those priests and elders. They were left without a single hair's breadth of standing-ground. They were thoroughly exposed. They had presumed to challenge Him for His authority, but He showed them, plainly and pointedly, their utter unfitness for the position which they assumed, seeing they could not decide the question as to whether John's baptism was from heaven or of men. If they had understood that baptism, if they had owned it, if they had bowed under its mighty power, they would have had no

occasion to ask Christ for His authority. If they had taken their place in true repentance, if they had gone down under the water of Jordan, confessing their sins, they would have been in a moral condition to hail the ministry of that blessed One who came to bind up the broken-hearted, and pour the rich consolation of divine grace into every contrite spirit.

All this comes forcibly out in the parable of the two sons. "But what think ye? A certain man had two sons: and he came to the first, and said, Son, go, work today in my vineyard. He answered, and said, I will not; but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir; and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily, I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him; and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him."

The repentant son set forth the condition of the poor despised publicans and harlots. They were sinners, and they owned it. They bowed before the ministry of righteousness. They took the ground of true repentance—the only proper ground for a sinner—the ground on which the sovereign grace of God can meet him. The very moment a sinner takes the place of repentance and self-judgment, grace meets him, and conducts him, through the open door, right into the kingdom of God, where he is saved and blessed, according to all the love of the heart of God, and according to all the efficacy of Christ's precious sacrifice, and according to all the divine excellency and acceptability of His Person. The very moment a sinner truly confesses his sins, he is divinely, and therefore perfectly and eternally, forgiven. "I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Psalm 32 John 1.

It will be well for the reader to ponder deeply this weighty point. Repentance is the grand epoch in a sinner's history. It is the first step in that pathway of moral reality which not only leads straight to the kingdom of God, but which must ever characterize all who have entered that kingdom. Repentance is not a transient emotion, but an abiding moral condition—the permanent attitude of every soul that is really led and taught by the Spirit of God. The unrepentant, the unbroken, the self-trusting, those who are building upon their own righteousness—whatever that righteousness may consist of—all such, whoever and wherever they may be, are like the second son in the parable, who said, "I go, sir; and went not." There is empty profession, without one atom of reality. It is all a sham, a cheat, a delusion.

How is it possible for such persons to understand or appreciate divine grace? How can they taste the love of a Savior-God? How can they know aught of the value of the blood of Jesus Christ? They live in a region where all is fictitious; they breathe an atmosphere of unreality; they have never taken the very first step in the pathway of truth; they have never repented; never accepted the counsel of God against themselves; never bowed to the sentence of His holy word; never really owned themselves to be what God's word tells them they are; they are at issue with God about their own actual condition; their whole religious life is one great, palpable, egregious lie; there can be neither truth nor reality in the religion of an unrepentant soul. The ax of divine righteousness must, sooner or later, level every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit; and the only possible way of escape is to own that we are bad trees, and take refuge, by faith, in Christ, the

sinner's Substitute—God's full, free, and everlasting salvation.

It is the very height of religious folly for anyone to go on, day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, giving utterance to the false and impious formula, "I go, sir," while the whole practical life gives the lie to the utterance of the lips.

But, on the other hand, the first step in the pathway of true, heavenly wisdom, is to repent and turn to God, in true contrition, in real brokenness of spirit; and then we are in a condition to know the divine efficacy of the work of Christ, not only in the complete putting away of our sins, but also in introducing us into an entirely new condition, in which we are actually linked with Himself in all His perfectness, in the presence of God, so that we can take up the marvelous language of 1 John 4:17, and say, "As he is, so are we in this world."

Nothing can exceed this. Even the love of God could not go beyond this; and hence it is said to be the very perfection of divine love toward us; and it applies, in all its fullness, to any poor publican or harlot, yea, and to any poor scribe or pharisee who truly repents; but it has no application whatever to those who are content with a hollow and worthless, "I go, sir."

(To be continued, if God permit.)

The Wedding Garment: Part 2

We have now to call the attention of the reader to the second parable in the group, namely, that of the husbandmen. We shall quote it at full length, believing, as we do, most surely, that there is nothing like the veritable language of holy scripture—the actual words that fell from the lips of Him who spake as never man spake.

“Hear another parable. There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country. And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first; and they did unto them likewise. But, last of all, he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the lord, therefore, of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons. Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner; this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.” Matt. 21:33-44.

Now, while the primary application of this parable is obviously to the Jewish people, yet has it a moral bearing upon all who have been specially favored with religious advantages. For example, who would deny its application to all who have taken upon themselves the profession of Christ—all within the limits of baptized Christendom—all who have within their reach a copy of the holy scriptures? All such are placed under the most solemn responsibility, and will, most assuredly, have to render an account of all those privileges which have been placed within their reach.

But, primarily, as we have said, the parable of the vineyard applies to Israel, as the reader may clearly see by referring to Isa. 5 “Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved, touching his vineyard. My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill. And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein; and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done to it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now, go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard; I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down. And I will lay it waste; and it shall not be pruned nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns; I will also command

the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant; and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry." Isa. 5:1-7.

In the divine dealings with the house of Israel, we see man thoroughly tested—so tested, that Jehovah could say, "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done to it? "It was not merely that they broke the law; but, when brought into the land of Canaan, and put in possession of that fair inheritance, they miserably disappointed the heart of God. They failed to produce a single cluster of acceptable fruit; and not only so, but they stoned and shamefully treated the various messengers which, in patient grace, He sent unto them.

But there was more than this. Man was to be still further tested. "Last of all, he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son." It was the fond expectation of the heart of God, that His beloved Son would be received with the love and reverence due to Him. We have, in Luke's Gospel, a most exquisite touch. "Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; it may be they will reverence him when they see him"

How deeply affecting is this! How strikingly characteristic of Luke's Gospel—that precious treasury of all that is divinely human! "It may be, they will reverence my beloved Son the moment they see him." The Father's heart cherished the hope that that blessed One, in whom He found all His delight, would instantly command the reverence, love, and homage of the human heart.

Shall we be told that God knew how it would turn out—that He had no such expectation—that He knew the end from the beginning? No doubt God knew all that man would do; but that in nowise touches the fact set forth in our Lord's own words, "It may be." God had a right to expect that men would reverence His beloved and only-begotten Son. It may, with equal force, be said that God knew from the beginning that man would break the law; but how does this touch the question of man's responsibility? Had not God a right to expect obedience to His law? And was not man responsible to render that obedience? Assuredly. How, then, could God's knowledge affect the question? In nowise, unless, indeed, we are to listen to the arguments of a repulsive fatalism, which robs the divine dealings of all their mighty moral force, and reduces man to the level of a mere machine, without a single atom of moral responsibility.

So also as regards the vineyard. Had not God a right to expect fruit, after all the pains and labor expended upon it? And was not man responsible to render Him the fruit? Who would question it, save a fatalist, whose system completely falsifies the divine character, and man's position under the government of God.

If, then, it be thus as regards the vineyard and the law—if God was justified in demanding and expecting fruit and obedience, and if man was responsible to render both the one and the other, how much more might God expect that man would reverence His Son, and how much more was man responsible to yield that reverence! But he did not; he disappointed God in this as in all beside—in this more than all, inasmuch as the mission of the Son was the very highest act of grace on God's part, and the claims which were founded upon this mission were the most powerful that could possibly be put forth. It was bad enough to break the law, to stone the messengers sent to obtain the fruits of the vineyard; but the worst of all was to cast the Heir out of the vineyard, and crucify Him.

What an answer to the fond expectation of the Father's heart! "It may be they will reverence my Son when they see him." What a just expectation! How worthy was that Son of reverence, homage, and worship! But the human heart had none of these for Him. It preferred a robber and a murderer to the blessed Son of God—a robber and a murderer to God manifest in the flesh—God over all, blessed forever.

And, be it remembered, this was not the act of poor blind, ignorant heathen. No, reader, it was the act of those who had the scriptures in their hands, and who heard those scriptures read in their synagogues every sabbath-day. It was the act of those who were in the enjoyment of the very highest religious advantages—of those who were the responsible guides, leaders, and teachers of the professed people of God, —the chief priests, elders, and guides of the only people on the face of the earth with whom Jehovah had ever connected His Name.

How solemn is this fact! How it makes manifest the deep-seated enmity of the human heart to God! Never before had this enmity been so fully declared. The mission of the Son put man's heart to the test most thoroughly. This we learn from our Lord's own words, in John 15: "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hateth me, hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." Verses 22-24.

Now, it is of the very utmost importance to understand this aspect of the mission of the Son of God. We are apt to lose sight of it. We lose sight of the solemn truth set forth in the words just quoted. "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin." Had they not broken the law? Had they not slain the prophets? Had they not trampled underfoot the sacred institutions of the Mosaic economy? Alas! alas! they had done all this. And yet He says, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin." His coming and speaking to them made their sin fully manifest. The light that shone in Him left them wholly without excuse. By refusing Him, they proved their utter hatred of God. "They have both seen and hated both me and my Father."

Terrible fact! It was all over with man. There was not a single ray of hope, so far as he was concerned. Perfect goodness was lovingly displayed before man's eyes, in the Person and life of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was the image of the invisible God, the brightness of His glory, and the exact impression of His substance. He was the only perfect Man that ever trod this earth, the living impersonation of all that was pure, true, and good. In Him were perfectly combined, and blessedly displayed, every divine and human perfection. u He went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him." He was the ever-ready Servant of every form of human need. It was His delight to minister to all the varied wants of fallen and needy humanity. He touched the poor loathsome leper, and cleansed him. He opened the eyes of the blind, and unstopped the ears of the deaf. He fed the hungry, and dried the widow's tears; He made the lame to leap for joy. He healed the broken-hearted, and relieved the oppressed. In a word He was the perfect display of divine goodness in an absolutely perfect human life.

Such was the Man Christ Jesus—the eternal Son of the Father—the perfect embodiment of grace and truth, holiness and love, majesty and mercy, power and patience. And yet man hated Him. The human heart absolutely hated that morally glorious and perfect Being.

Now, we all know that facts are powerful arguments; and here is a tremendous fact recorded in the pages of inspiration, established, not merely by two or three, but by many, witnesses, used by the Holy Ghost to set it before us in all its moral turpitude. Man hated, rejected, and crucified the Son of God—that blessed One, who spent His life in doing good; “who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth”—the holy, harmless, gracious, loving Friend of man, who came from heaven, in perfect love, to serve and to give, to seek and to save that which was lost. Man deliberately preferred a robber and a murderer to this perfect Being. God came down into the world which His hands had made—came, in richest, purest, freest grace—came in the Person of Jesus, to bless men by His presence; and, not only did they challenge Him for His authority, but actually cast Him out, and nailed him to a cross between two thieves.

Terrible fact! What tongue, what pen, can adequately set forth the guilt and just deserts of such an act? How solemn will be the reckoning by-and-by! When the Almighty God shall make inquisition for the blood of His Son: when He shall unsheath the sword of judgment, to avenge the murder of His well-beloved and only-begotten One—as He most surely will—who shall be able to stand?

When our Lord, at the close of His weighty parable, put this pointed question to His hearers, “When the lord, therefore, of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?” they actually pronounced sentence on themselves; “They say unto him, he will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard to other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.” How little they knew what they were saying! It is one thing to pass sentence in some abstract case, and quite another to see the application of that sentence to ourselves. “He will miserably destroy those wicked men.” Yes; but where does the guilt lie? What about myself? How do I stand in relation to the awful transaction of Calvary? It will not do to say, “Those wicked men;” I must see my own part in the matter. If the crucifixion of the blessed Son of God was the act of the human heart—the act of man—the act of the world; then, if I am part and parcel of the world, if I am an unconverted man, if I have an unbroken, unrepentant human heart, if I have not bowed before God in true repentance, if I have not broken with the world, and taken God’s side against myself—I am verily guilty of the rejection of the Son of God. There is no middle ground. “He that is not for me is against me.”

This is most solemn. There are just the two classes, and the reader belongs to either the one or the other; there are those who own and worship the Son of God; and there are those who reject Him, those who, by their works and ways—the true index—say, a Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. It is easy to see how we stand in reference to Christ—easy to see the bent of our affections—the object of our hearts. If we really love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth, that love will express itself in a thousand ways, negatively and positively. It would be impossible to conceal it; in what we do, and what we do not do; in what we say, and in what we do not say; in where we go, and where we do not go; in everything, in short, the real bent of our hearts will come out.

It is a common saying amongst us, that a feather will tell the direction of the wind; so in the life of a person, the merest trifle may make manifest the real current of the soul. Take, for example, the simple matter of reading. Let the reader put this plain question to himself, “What do I really like to read?” Is it something about Christ, or something about the world? Whether does the Bible, or a novel, or a newspaper most command my heart? Whether would I rather read a chapter in the

New Testament, or the report of a trial in a criminal court?

Let us be honest with ourselves. It really resolves itself, after all, into the question, "This man, or Barabbas?" "What think ye of Christ?" Momentous question! "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." Christ is God's standard, His test for everyone and everything. The state of the heart toward Christ gives character to all we think, and say, and do, from morning till night, and from the beginning to the end of the year. How important it is, therefore, for each one of us to look well to the real attitude of the heart in reference to the Christ of God. We are either lovers or haters of the blessed Lord Jesus Christ. There is, positively, not the breadth of a hair of neutral ground.

Header, do, we entreat of you, weigh, in the very deepest depths of your soul, this weighty question, How am I treating the Heir? Am I reverencing or rejecting the Son of God? Consider, we beseech you, our Lord's solemn words at the close of His address to the chief priests and elders. Mark what He says about the rejected stone—that marvelous stone, the history of which runs all through the inspired volume, from Genesis to Revelation—from Jacob's prophetic address, to the foundation of the new Jerusalem.

Christ is that stone. He was presented to the builders of Israel; but, instead of building on Him, they stumbled over Him, and rejected Him. Where is He now? Exalted to the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, and proclaimed in the gospel of the grace of God, in order that every poor burdened, heavy laden, sin-sick, broken-hearted sinner may build on Him, in simple faith, and be saved with an everlasting salvation.

Hear those precious words of the prophet Isaiah—hear and believe: "Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion"—the seat and center of royal and triumphant grace—"for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not be confounded." Isa. 8.

Say, dear friend, are you satisfied with God's foundation? Is His precious Stone enough for your soul? Or do you want to add something of your own, be it what it may? God says, "I lay:" and what then? "He that believeth." God is satisfied with Christ without anything of yours. Are you satisfied? Can you trust God's foundation? He assures you that if you simply believe in His tried, chief Corner Stone, you shall never be confounded, world without end. If you build on aught else, you will be covered with everlasting confusion. The moment is rapidly approaching when the rejected Stone, now hidden in the heavens, shall fall, in crushing judgment, upon this wicked world, grinding to powder all that in which the human heart finds its delight and satisfaction.

What a moment will that be! How terrible for all who reject God's precious Stone! Oh, that the reader may not be among the number! No human language can set forth the awful condition of those who reject Christ, as all do who refuse to build upon Him now. A person may say, "I do not mean to reject Christ, I quite, I fully intend, someday, to give attention to these things; but it is time enough yet. I want a little more of the world, a little more pleasure, a little more gain."

Alas, what folly! This night thy soul may be required of thee; then what of thy pleasures and gains? How will they profit thee in the awful day of judgment? Be not deceived. Come now, we earnestly entreat thee, and find rest, peace, safety, and everlasting blessedness in God's precious Stone. Come to Jesus, just now, just as thou art! Give Him the full confidence of thy heart, and then, when

the hour of judgment comes, thou shalt be as exempt from judgment as the Judge Himself.
Amazing fact! —a fact only to be accounted for by the death of the Son of God.

(To be concluded in our next, If God permit.)

The Wedding Garment: Part 3

The parable of the marriage supper now claims our attention. In it we have further evidence of God's exceeding goodness, on the one hand; and of man's hopeless opposition and determined enmity, on the other. The truth is here made fully manifest, that, if man is to participate at all in the rich and precious grace of God, he must be compelled to do so.

"And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son."

Here we have an entirely new thing. It is not now a question of law, as in the case of the two sons; nor a question of ordinances or religious advantages, as in the case of the husbandmen; God is about to make a marriage for His Son, and He sends forth His messengers to invite men to come to the marriage feast. He does not ask them for anything. He is not saying, "Go, work," or, "Give fruit," but simply inviting them to a feast, the object of which is to do honor to His Son.

We are not told in this parable anything about the bride, whether it be the earthly Jerusalem, or the church; neither have we the least intimation as to the sphere of the nuptials. The moment had not arrived for the unfolding of aught of this. We have a similitude of the kingdom of heaven, in one special aspect of it. We never find anything premature in the word of God. Hence our blessed Lord could not bring out the truth of the church in the parable now under our consideration. It is simply a comparison of the kingdom of heaven. It is like a certain king who made a marriage for his son. We know who the King is, and we know who the Son is; but, as to the bride, we know nothing from this parable. It does not come within its scope to speak of her. The grand object is to show forth the marvelous grace of God—His loving purpose and determination to have to do with us poor sinners, even in spite of ourselves. If man will not go work when he is told, if he will not give fruit when he is asked, the question is, will he come to the marriage feast if he be invited?

This is the question. We shall soon see the answer. "He sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding; and they would not come." This occurred in our Lord's life here upon earth. He sent forth the twelve and the seventy—sent them exclusively to Israel. They were expressly forbidden to go in the way of the Gentiles, or enter any city of the Samaritans. Their mission was only "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." The invitation is one of purest grace. There is no demand made. The precious word is, "Come to the wedding."

But, alas, they would not come! There was no heart for the King, no heart for His Son. If they had been asked to contribute anything toward the feast, they might urge the plea of poverty and inability. But, as everybody knows, when people are invited to a feast, the very thought of their bringing anything toward it, would be a positive insult to the host.

Now, let the reader distinctly understand that we are not by any means denying man's responsibility. So far from this, we distinctly maintain it. Man is, most assuredly, responsible. He was responsible to keep the law when he got it. He was responsible to yield some return for all those religious advantages placed within his reach under the Levitical ceremonial. To deny human

responsibility, we should consider a very grave error indeed. Man is not a mere machine. He is a responsible being, with whom God has been dealing, in bygone ages, in various ways, to see if haply anything could be made of him.

But man has been proved a hopeless ruin; yea, more, an implacable enemy. He does not want to have anything to do with God or His Son. He has no heart for that nuptial feast, given in honor of the King's Son. This is proved by his conduct—the true index of character—the real proof of the heart's bent. Man, when told to “go work,” might plead want of strength. When asked to give fruit, he might plead inability to produce it. Not that the plea is admissible for a moment before the throne of God; for we must never lose sight of the solemn, clearly established, truth of man's responsibility.

But a call to a wedding affords no possible ground for excuse, and hence the refusal to come only proves that the heart has no interest in the King or His Son. “They would not come.” It is not said they could not come. They did not want to come. Man never does, until he is compelled. There will not be so much as a single merely invited guest at the marriage supper. Not one would ever be found there, if he had not been compelled to come.

There is not, in the entire compass of the human heart, a single desire after God or heavenly things, not one atom of taste for what is divine or spiritual. Man, if left to himself, would never come to God. He does not want to go to hell; he shrinks from the thought of pain, torment, and misery; and, seeing that heaven is a place of entire freedom from all such, he would rather go there than to an everlasting hell. Beyond this he has no thought or wish as to heaven; and as to the presence of God, it is the very last place in the wide universe he would like to find himself; he could not endure it; it would be absolutely intolerable to him.

In order to enjoy the divine presence, there must not only be a divine title, but the divine nature; and the unrenewed man has neither the one nor the other; he has no right to the place, and no capacity for the enjoyment of it. A beggar in rags would be sadly out of place and uncomfortable in the queen's drawing-room; how much more, unrenewed nature in heaven!

But we must proceed with our parable, and in so doing, we may just remark that the first invitation to the wedding was given in our Lord's own lifetime. But in the second, we observe a very considerable advance in the moral ground of the invitation; the king can put forth much stronger claims upon the hearts of those invited. “Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which were bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come unto the marriage.”

Here we have vividly illustrated the call to Israel, on the ground of accomplished redemption, as in the preaching of the apostles on the day of Pentecost. During our Lord's ministry, the invitation had gone forth. He had sent forth His messengers to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; but, after his death and resurrection, the Holy Ghost came down, and filled the apostles and others with new power to urge upon the people the blessed invitation, grounded upon the glorious fact that the atoning work was done; that God had glorified His Son Jesus; that all things were ready. “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.....Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that

God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.” And again, “Unto you first, God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, by turning away everyone of you from his iniquities.”

What was the result, as regards the nation and its leaders? Deliberate rejection. Many were compelled to come, they were made willing in the day of the Spirit’s power. Thousands were bowed in true repentance before God, and thankfully accepted the blessed invitation to come to the wedding. But, as regards the great mass of the people, it was exactly according to the words of our parable, “They made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise.”

Alas! thus it is to this very day. People “make light” of the precious gospel of Christ. The sweet invitation of divine love is pressed upon them; the grand realities of eternity are presented to them—the joys of heaven, the horrors of an everlasting hell—the unspeakable value of their immortal souls—all these things are solemnly, earnestly, lovingly brought before them, and urged upon their attention; but they make light of them, and go their ways; the farm, the merchandise, the money-making, pleasure, vanity, folly, fashion, and gaiety command their hearts, and engross their energies; they care not for the marriage supper; they have no heart for the King or His Son, or the nuptial feast—no care for the salvation of their immortal souls—no true desire to make their escape from the terrible wrath that must, ere long, overtake all who refuse the blessed message of God’s salvation—all who die in their sins.

There is, however, more than heartless indifference; this we see in the great mass of people. There is positive enmity. “The remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.” This is in full and melancholy keeping with the solemn address of Stephen, in Acts 7, a few moments before his martyrdom. “Ye stiff-necked, and uncircumcised, in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers. Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it. When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.....Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him.”

The historic record is in perfect unison with the teaching of the parable. Every effort of divine grace, all the painstaking of divine love, is met by the determined hatred of the human heart. The law broken; the prophets stoned; the Son rejected and crucified; the vessel of the Holy Ghost martyred. The case was hopeless—the evil incorrigible; nothing remained but for judgment to take its course. “When the king heard thereof, he was wroth; and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.”

How literally this was fulfilled in the awful history of Jerusalem, we need not say. It is known to all. The horrors of that dreadful siege are enough to make the blood congeal in our veins, even as we read them on the page of history. What must the facts have been! And yet they were as nothing when compared with the sufferings of those who shall find their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. But, be it well remembered, that as surely as Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans—as surely as the apostate Jews endured the appalling

sufferings which the pen of the historian has recorded, so surely shall all who reject the gospel of the grace of God have to endure the unutterable agony and anguish of that place where hope can never come. The one is as true as the other, and comes out with equal force and solemnity in our parable.

“Then saith the king to his servants, the wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy; go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all, as many as they found, both bad and good; and the wedding was furnished with guests.”

Here we see the rich and precious grace of God flowing out to the Gentiles. All the barriers are swept away, and the shining river of God's salvation sends its refreshing and life-giving stream to the ends of the earth. “The salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it.”

We have from the inspired pen of the evangelist Luke, a most exquisite point in connection with this subject. “And the Lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.”

It is not possible to conceive anything more lovely or more glorious than this. It is pure, absolute, sovereign grace. It is not a question of man's responsibility; all that is closed. It is not, “Go work;” it is not “Give fruit;” it is not even “Come.” All these methods have been tried, and tried in vain. He would not work; he would not give; he would not even come.

What remains! Just this—God's compelling grace! He says to the sinner, “If you will not have anything to say to me, I am determined to have to say to you. I will save you in spite of yourself. I will compel you to come. I am determined to fill my house with guests. I will fit you and clothe you with a wedding garment. It matters not who you are or what you are; I shall have you in my presence, and at my feast in a manner worthy of myself. I have made ample provision; I have made out the title, found the ransom, done all; and not only so, but I shall make you come. I know that, if left to yourself, you would never come at all; I have proved this—proved it beyond all question; and now I shall not leave you to yourself; I shall not allow you to stay away; I shall give you a clean deliverance from yourself, from your sins, from the devil, from the world, from all your liabilities and responsibilities, as a lost, ruined, guilty sinner; and I shall bring you to my table clothed in garments of salvation—yea, clothed in my righteousness, accepted in all the acceptability of my own Son. I will give you a title, give you a capacity, give you a nature, give you all, make you all, do all for you; you shall be my guest forever; and if anyone shall inquire, How can all this be? The answer is, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honor. It is all grace from first to last—all to the praise of the glory of my grace. I do not ask you for an atom; I do not ask you to put forth a single effort: I know it would be of no possible use to do so, for if it were all made to depend on your moving your eyelash, you would not do it. I have taken the whole matter into my own hands, from first to last, and you shall be, to all eternity, a monument of my saving, quickening, compelling grace.”

Header, we ask you, is not all this most marvelous? Can aught exceed it? May not angels well desire to look into it? May not principalities and powers gaze with wonder at it? Who but God could speak and act like this? Only think of His dealing thus with the being that had broken His law, stoned His prophets, murdered His Son, resisted His Spirit. What matchless, transcendent,

adorable grace! God would fill His house with guests, who, if left to themselves, would have turned their backs forever upon Him, and rushed headlong to an everlasting hell.

Need we say there are holy responsibilities flowing out of all this marvelous grace—powerful claims upon all those who are the happy, privileged subjects thereof? Surely there are. If our responsibility, as sinners, has issued in the most complete and hopeless, failure and ruin; if it has forever closed in the cross of the Son of God; if grace has compelled us to come within the hallowed circle of God's salvation: if we are saved, blessed, cleansed, clothed, accepted in the beloved, endowed with every privilege that God could bestow upon us, if all this be true, and it is true, true as the truth of God can make it—then, may we not ask, what manner of persons ought we to be? If we are saved, ought we not to live as such? If we have gotten the wedding garment, ought we not to wear it, and to appear in it continually? Are we not called to put on Christ, in our daily life? Should not our habits, our manners, our temper, our style, our spirit, our whole practical life and character declare whose we are and whom we serve? Can it be that any one professing to have the wedding garment, could be found going after the folly, vanity, frivolity, and ridiculous fashions of this wretched world?

Alas! alas! there is a terrible amount of heartless, worthless profession in our midst. The doctrines of grace are talked about, but where is the fruit? There is nothing more terrible, nothing more sad and humiliating than to see persons professing to be saved by the free grace of God, and yet exhibiting gross selfishness and earthly mindedness in their daily private life. It was this that broke the blessed apostle's heart, and made him weep bitter tears, as he tells us in his epistle to his beloved Philippians. And if it was so, in his day, what is it now?

We may, perhaps, be asked, "What has all this to do with the parable of the wedding garment?" We reply, much, every way. Let us read the closing sentences and see if they do not bear down, in awful solemnity upon all who take their place, professedly, among "the guests," but are not really clothed in the wedding garment. "And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment; and he saith unto him, Friend, how earnest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few chosen."

How solemn! How soul-subduing! How appalling! How dreadful for anyone to appear among the guests, to take a place among the saved, to profess to be a subject of grace, and yet not have on the wedding garment! "How earnest thou in hither?" It is an open, daring insult to the King, to His Son, and to the nuptial feast—the very highest offense against the grace of God. The idea of appearing amongst the Lord's people, being at His table, professing to belong to Him, and yet not being really clothed upon with Christ—the true wedding garment; presuming to belong to a scene in which one has neither part nor lot—this is a sin only to be found among the ranks of baptized profession. It is characteristic of Christendom; it is sinning against and despising the very richest, highest, grandest display of grace that ever was or could be made in this world.

"How earnest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment?" There is no excuse. He cannot say, "I could not afford to buy one." All is free. The garment is as free as the feast. There is no hindrance. All is of grace—free, sovereign, compelling grace. Otherwise there would be no force in the "How?" But there is tremendous force in it; such force indeed as leaves the man "speechless."

He has nothing to say. His case is desperate.

And be it remembered, this is a sample case—a case, we hesitate not to say, bearing, with terrible emphasis, upon thousands of professors around us. Let us remember the words, “The kingdom of heaven is like.” In another place we read, “Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened.” But our parable is a similitude of the kingdom now; and it indicates the sure and dreadful destiny and portion of all those who, though appearing amongst the guests, do not really belong to Christ, are not truly converted, are merely self-indulgent, world-loving professors.

How appalling the end of such! There is no hope, no remedy, no plea. It is the utter rejection of Christ, the neglect of the great salvation, the refusal of the wedding garment; and, all the while, professing to be a Christian. In fact it is the very highest order of wickedness, the condemning sin of this day of high and wide-spread evangelical profession. As nothing can exceed the grace that shines in the gospel of God, as now preached, so nothing can exceed the guilt of those who in heart neglect it, while professing to have it. “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?”

“Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” We cannot attempt to dwell upon this. It needs no comment. Human exposition could but weaken its force. The Holy Ghost alone can apply it to all those whom it may concern. But we earnestly pray that the reader of these lines may never be cast into that outer darkness—that place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. God grant that he may not only appear among the guests, but really have on the wedding garment, to the praise of that compelling grace to which we owe our present peace and everlasting glory.

What Is a Christian?

According to the word of God, a Christian is one who, as a sinner in the presence of God, has learned and bowed to the truth of his lost condition by nature and by practice (Eph. 2:3-12; Luke 5:8, but who has learned also through grace, and believed, that his sins are forever blotted out through the blood of Christ, (Heb. 9:14; Rom. 3:24, never more to be remembered. (Heb. 10:17, 18) That he is reconciled to God (Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:18, justified from all things (Acts 13:39), cleared from every charge, (Rom. 8:33, 34), and now made meet for glory, (Col. 1:12), having met God in Christ (2 Cor. 5:19 j, he is at peace with God, and happy in His presence, (Rom. 5:9, 11), no longer looked upon as being in the flesh, but in the Spirit (Rom. 8:9; 2 Cor. 5:17), he is sealed with the Holy Ghost (Eph. 1:13; 2 Cor. 5:5), a member of Christ's body (1 Cor. 12:13), a child of God (Gal. 3:26; 1 John 3:1), an heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ (Gal. 4:7; Rom. 8:16, 17), and having died with Christ, he is brought into present association with Him, risen in glory (Eph. 2:6), now in possession of a life (eternal life) secure (John 10:28, 29), and beyond the reach of every hostile power (Col. 3:3); he is a priest separated unto God to serve now as a worshipper in the heavenly sanctuary, which the Lord hath pitched and not man (Rev. 1:6; Heb. 10:19; 8:2); delivered from the world (Gal. 1:4), to be separated practically from it (John 17:16, 17; Rom. 12:2), he is a citizen of, and belonging to heaven (Phil. 3:20); he has a bright future—eternal glory with God's Son (John 17:24); the present object of his heart—Christ in glory (Philippians 3:14); the purpose of his present life—Christ (chap. 1:21); his present hope—waiting for Him (1 Thess. 1:10; 1 Cor. 1:7), soon to see Him (1 John 3:2), and to be like Him. (Philippians 3:21.)

Is it not then a wonderful thing to be a Christian? and is it not a poor thing to be anything else, even in this world? But, "What manner of person ought such to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" 1 John 2:6; 4:17. W.

Without God in the World

What a wonderful moment it is for a sinner when he finds himself in the presence of God!—when he is conscious that God has spoken to him. Have you, reader, ever thought to inquire what it was that brought the Philippian jailor, a pagan sinner, without God in the world, to the feet of Paul and Silas, and constrained him to cry out, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” “Why,” you will perhaps say, “there was enough to alarm him; for at midnight there was a great earthquake, and the foundations of the prison were shaken, and every one’s bands were loosed.” It certainly must have been a tremendous shaking, when such buildings as the ancients used to erect, the massive ruins of which still testify, in many places, to their ponderous strength, rocked to the very foundations, those foundations being commonly of stones of such immense size and weight, that modern architects are often puzzled to know how they were lifted, carried, and put into their destined situations without injury.

The shaking must have been something terrible, when stocks too, and other means of confining and torturing the poor prisoners, were all so knocked about, that every man was set free, while the massive doors (made often of one enormous stone, folding in grooves, without hinges, and fitting like a leaf), barred, chained, and bolted, were burst open by the mere concussion produced by the earthquake. “Enough,” you will say, “to make the jailor tremble.”

No doubt of it; but if the earthquake made him tremble (though I do not read that it did), the supposed results made him seek to kill himself. Now self-murder is a widely different thing from wanting to be saved; and clearly the very first thing the jailor did, when awakened out of his sleep by the tremendous and really awful shaking produced by the earthquake, was, that “he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself.” Terror-stricken, no doubt, he was, but not so much from the earthquake itself, as from what he supposed it had affected, namely, the escape of all the prisoners.

Under Roman government and laws, the jailor or sentinel who allowed prisoners to escape was dishonored, and forfeited his life. Herod had the sentinels or keepers of Peter’s prison first examined by torture, and then put to death. It was for this reason also that the soldiers who had charge of Paul and other prisoners, on their way to Rome, wanted to kill them all, lest they should escape.

Now, the jailor appears to have set little store by his life, for he was going to take that with his own hand. It was not so much the fear of death as of dishonor that terrified him. His proud heart could not brook that shame and obloquy should rest on his name. But what has that to do with wanting to be saved? “Nothing at all,” you will say; “the two conditions are totally different, in fact diametrically opposed to each other.” Of course they are. The pride of heart that would rather commit self-murder than brook dishonor, is assuredly quite opposed to the brokenness of spirit that cries out for salvation.

But we read of a far more terrible earthquake in Rev. 6, and whether we understand it figuratively or literally, it makes no difference as to this point, namely, that neither judgments, nor what are called natural phenomena, work “repentance toward God.” Their effect is rather to drive the sinner to desire to be saved from God, not to Him. “Hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.”

Grace alone brings to God—never judgment. The men of Jericho (Josh, ii.) sought to destroy Jehovah’s servants, they saw only judgment: the harlot Rahab saw that too, but she saw something beyond, and that was grace, or at the least “kindness.” “Show kindness unto my father’s house;” yes, not to me alone, but “to my father’s house;” she saw kindness enough for that! A poor harlot too. How beautiful!

Saul does not repent towards God, even when told he would be in hades the very next day. It is judgment, deserved judgment, and nothing else. And he “fell straightway all along on the earth, and was sore afraid because of the words of Samuel.” And that is all; no repentance toward God, no crying out, “What must I do to be saved?”

The rich man in hades itself, suffering the just judgment of God, has no thought of Him. His own torment, his father’s house, his past life and present awful circumstances, fill his cup of misery to overflowing; but his heart, harder than the nether millstone, grows harder in the flame, and he would fain have the once poor beggar Lazarus wait at his bidding, even in hell itself!

No; judgment does not lead the sinner to God. It is here that the “universalists” and “non-eternity” teachers show their utter ignorance both of God and man, and the entire sphere of truth. But it is not with them we are now concerned, but with the jailor of Philippi. Attempted self-murder, the effort to plunge away from God and man into utter night, was the direct result of what he may have looked upon as a judgment coming down on him and his charge, for his cruelty to God’s servants; such phenomena were commonly regarded by pagans as “judgments” or proofs of “the wrath of the gods,” and are so still.

But the jailor’s proud spirit will not bow. Official punishment and degradation, open shame, and death at the hands of the public executioners, he will not stoop to bear. Alone in the darkness and secrecy of his own chamber, he seeks to hide his shame from man—himself from God, in death! Can any condition be more antagonistic to that in which we find him immediately afterward?

Well, what wrought a change, as sudden as it was complete? What broke down that proud spirit, and brought him a suppliant to the very feet of his own prisoners—a suppliant for salvation—he, the would-be self-murderer? I answer, the voice of God, and nothing else. The earthquake had nothing to do with this result. With or without it the voice of God would have produced it. The effects and consequences of the one stand in dark and solemn contrast to the other, and are doubtless meant to do so, if only to rebuke the “universalists.” But it does far more than this. It tells that direct personal contact with God Himself alone can save the sinner. It is not in the wind, nor the earthquake, nor the fire, that the Lord is found, but in the “still small voice.” 1 Kings 19

And it was thus the jailor found him. Read the narrative, and see. He is alone, as I have said, alone in the dark, where no eye but God’s can see him, and he knows it. His murderous weapon is at his heart, and the thoughts of that heart can only be known to himself and to God. Suddenly he hears from out of the deep recesses of “the inner prison,” the lowest, deepest dungeon there, a voice,

which goes at once to the inmost depths of his dark, heathen soul: "Do thyself no harm, for we are all here!" It tells that his secret deeds, his inmost thoughts, are known; it bespeaks compassion; divine, super abounding compassion breathes in every word, beseeching him to do himself "no harm," and dispelling in a moment all the fears that were driving him to suicide!

Who but God could, or would, do this? He had done harm enough to God's dear servants—thrusting them into the inner prison, and making their feet fast in the stocks; not such stocks as once stood in our villages, but such as kept the poor prisoners in a constrained and painful position all through the weary night. No wonder God burst them asunder, when His servants could sing His praises thus! And can He meet their tormentor so graciously? He does; it is His voice, and no other's, though the words are the words of a man who could not know the secret deed, much less the thoughts, of the jailor.

But how startling to be thus suddenly arrested in the very act of self-murder, in darkness, in despair! How terrible to such a sinner to find himself all at once, and all alone, in the presence of God! "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," his whole course is changed! He is a convicted sinner, a quickened soul, the voice of the Son of God has spoken him from death unto life.

"Then he called for a light," for his deeds of darkness are now forever at an end. He can face his fellow-man, he has nothing to hide, for he has had to do with God. And then we read, he "sprang in, and came trembling," for what will make a sinner tremble so much as to find himself face to face with God? Till he heard the voice of God in the inspired words of His servant, he may have trembled for his reputation, but now he trembles for his soul—that which he would have cast away as nothing in his pride of heart! And how utterly that pride is broken, for he prostrates himself at their very feet!

Repentance, too, is declared in his very first act, as is always the case where the sinner is brought to have to do consciously with God. "He brought them out," out of that inner prison into which he had so maliciously cast them but a few hours before; yes, "he brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" There is repentance toward God;" and then "faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ" follows, when, in answer to the cry of his convicted soul, they answer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house;" and further set before him "the word of the Lord," the gospel of his salvation!

Dear reader, have you ever had to do with God Himself? Have you ever heard His voice? "The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." Have you ever heard His voice speaking to you personally in and by His word, as the jailor heard it, bringing you under conviction as a sinner confessed before God, and then leading you to the only refuge, the only "name under heaven given amongst men whereby we must be saved?" If not, if you cannot even understand what it means, what it is to have to do with God, to hear his voice, to know Himself, I beseech you to rest not until you do; for until then you are in nature's darkness, "having no hope," no well-founded hope, and "without God in the world."

J. L. K.

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